


Chapter 13


Guiding Research, Building Belonging: Librarians' Role in Honors Undergraduate Research

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ABSTRACT

Participation in high-impact educational practices (HIPs) such as living-learning programs (LLPs) and undergraduate research are continually cited as strong indicators of student engagement in higher education. The current literature shows students participating in HIPs exhibit a stronger sense of belonging on their campus. While academic libraries have regularly provided support to HIPs in higher education, much of the literature has focused on academic libraries as institutional support, instead of academic librarians as individual support. This case study of an undergraduate research-focused LLP at the University of Maryland, College Park investigated how mentorship from academic librarians is positively contributing to students' sense of belonging on campus.

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INTRODUCTION

High-impact educational practices (HIPs) have been widely recognized for their role in improving student engagement, persistence, and success (Kuh, 2008; Brownell & Swaner, 2009). Among these practices, living-learning programs (LLPs) provide immersive academic and social experiences that help students transition to college, develop intellectual curiosity, and build lasting connections within their institutions (Inkelas & Soldner, 2011). While HIPs emphasize faculty and peer collaboration, less attention has been given to the role of academic librarians as mentors within these frameworks. This gap is particularly evident in undergraduate research, where students often struggle with navigating scholarly information, synthesizing knowledge, and developing research self-efficacy.

This chapter explores the intersection of HIPs, librarian mentorship, and student engagement through a case study of the Gemstone Honors Program at the University of Maryland (UMD). Gemstone is a four-year LLP that embeds students in team-based research projects, providing an ideal setting to examine how librarian mentorship shapes students' academic experiences. Drawing on ten years of qualitative data from student applications to the University Libraries Award for Outstanding Gemstone Team, this study investigates how librarian mentorship contributes to student research engagement, sense of belonging, and academic success.

By examining the partnership between Gemstone and UMD Libraries, this chapter offers a replicable model for embedding librarians in undergraduate research initiatives. It highlights the transformative role of librarian mentorship in fostering student success and provides insights into how academic libraries can deepen their engagement with high-impact learning environments.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on high-impact practices (HIPs) and student engagement demonstrates the importance of structured academic experience in fostering student persistence, intellectual development, and sense of belonging. HIPs, particularly those that emphasize collaboration, undergraduate learning, and co-curricular engagement have been shown to positively affect student outcomes. Living Learning Programs (LLPs) combine multiple HIPs to integrate residential and academic experiences to enhance students' transition to college and academic success. Additionally, academic libraries play a fundamental role in supporting student learning, yet research on their contribution to HIPs - particularly in undergraduate research - remains limited. This literature review offers a brief synthesis of existing research on HIPs, LLPs, and the

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