

Quality Enhancement Program Proposal: Information Literacy across the Curriculum

Respectfully submitted by Sarah Sutton on January 31, 2008

Information literacy defined

“Information literacy...is an intellectual framework for understanding, finding, evaluating, and using information—activities which may be accomplished in part by fluency with information technology, in part by sound investigative methods, but most important, through critical discernment and reasoning. Information literacy initiates, sustains, and extends lifelong learning through abilities which may use technologies but are ultimately independent of them” (ACRL 2000).

The Association of College and Research Libraries identifies information literacy skills as the ability to recognize a need for information and fulfill it effectively and efficiently using appropriate sources. They also include the ability to think critically about information once it is obtained and to use it ethically and legally for a specific purpose (ACRL, 2000). Information literacy is vital to learning, education, and research. Information literate persons are lifelong learners who are able to engage with the vast amount of information available in the 21st century and come away from the encounter enriched and informed.

The ACRL sets out five standards for information literacy upon which are based their recommended performance indicators and student learning outcomes:

1. The information literate student determines the nature and extent of the information needed.
2. The information literate student accesses needed information effectively and efficiently.
3. The information literate student evaluates information and its sources critically and incorporates selected information into his or her knowledge base and value system.
4. The information literate student, individually or as a member of a group, uses information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose.
5. The information literate student understands many of the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information and accesses and uses information ethically and legally (ACRL, 2000).

Information literacy skills are rarely self-taught. This proposal will recommend the use of the ACRL definition of information literacy and their standards as a basis for implementing a Quality Enhancement Program for embedding information literacy into the curriculum at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi. SACS standard 3.8 addresses library and other learning resources. Specifically, this standard calls for the institution to provide “facilities, services, and learning/information resources” (3.8.1) and that it “ensures that users have access to regular and timely instruction in the use of the library and other learning/information resources” (3.8.2).

Information Literacy at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi

During 2007, the Mary & Jeff Bell Library participated in a national survey of academic library users about the quality of their library experience designed by ACRL called LibQual+. Results

related to information literacy and library instruction indicate that overall, the library is not meeting the campus community's desired levels information literacy through library instruction although it is providing it at a level above their minimum acceptable level. In response to questions about information sources, 67.5 percent of all respondents (n=326) use non-library resources on a daily basis compared to 30.5% who use library resources either online or in the library. Among undergraduate respondents (n=179), 74% use non-library resources daily while 35% use library resources daily.

The library has evaluated instruction sessions conducted by librarians since the 2003-04 academic year. The number of students who participated in evaluation of library instruction sessions increased each year from 614 in 2003-04 to 1,653 in 2006-07 and students' self-reported ratings of their knowledge levels increases after instruction sessions. In fall 2007, 47.9 percent students participating in library instruction evaluation rated their knowledge of information resources prior to the session as good or very good. After the session 92.7 percent rated their knowledge of information resources as good or very good. Ninety-six percent rated the usefulness of instruction sessions to them in their academic careers as useful or very useful.

Anecdotal evidence of the need for increased information literacy training at TAMU-CC also exists. Incidents of plagiarism rank highly as a concern among faculty and administration as do issues of privacy and the legal use of information under copyright. The ACRL (2000) includes among its Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education an understanding of "the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information" and the ability to use and access information ethically and legally.

Clearly information literacy efforts are beneficial to our students. Students are using information sources provided by the library as well as others available on the World Wide Web. But fewer than 20% of students enrolled are currently reaping the benefits of information literacy programs offered through the library. By adopting information literacy as a QEP, the university could provide information literacy skills to a larger proportion of TAMU-CC students.

Supporting the University Mission, Goals, and Institutional Principals

"Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi is devoted to discovering, communicating, and applying knowledge in a complex and changing world. The university identifies, attracts, and graduates students of high potential, especially those from groups who have been historically under-represented in Texas higher education. Through a commitment to excellence in teaching, research, and service, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi prepares students for lifelong learning and for responsible participation in the global community."

The TAMU-CC Mission well describes the importance of developing information literacy in our students. As defined by ACRL, information literacy is critical to "discovering, communicating, and applying knowledge in a complex and changing world". It is also a required skill for life long learning. In fact, life long learners must not only be information literate, they must continue to develop their skills in order to remain information literate as technology enables new media in which information is contained and new channels for its communication. As advances in communication technology enrich the global community, information literacy has become a

significant component of preparing students for “responsible participation in the global community.” Clearly information literacy plays a critical role in our “commitment to excellence in teaching, research, and service.” From the perspective of the University’s mission, by accepting the mission, we have already embraced and agreed upon the importance of developing information literate students.

Similarly, TAMU-CC’s Goals and Institutional Principals reflect the importance of developing an information literate community. “Faculty dedicated to the continuous improvement of teaching, learning, scholarly research, and creative activity” are certainly information literate and promote information literacy in students by its inclusion in the curriculum as well as by their example. Information literacy is the infrastructure upon which high quality research is built. In order to advance the University’s goal to earn “a statewide reputation for an exemplary undergraduate education” and support and enhance undergraduate research we must develop information literate researchers beginning at the undergraduate level. Information literate undergraduates are better prepared to enter and excel in masters’ and doctoral programs both at TAMU-CC and elsewhere.

Benefits of an information literacy QEP to Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi

An information literacy QEP would assist non-traditional students (particularly older students returning to college) to learn to use technology efficiently. Student research and writing would improve allowing faculty to maintain higher standards for student work. A QEP focused on educating students about “the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information” and to use “information ethically and legally” would result in a reduction of plagiarism and breaches of copyright and increase students’ awareness of privacy issues, particularly as related to networked telecommunications. Doctoral students in the College of Education have already shown an interest in research projects and dissertations related to the First Year Learning Communities program. Data gathering in support of assessing the progress and success of an information literacy QEP would provide additional opportunities for masters’ and doctoral level research (including dissertations).

Improved scores on accreditation and assessments of the university, of individual departments, and of individual students resulting from information literacy QEP would enhance the reputation of the university. Increasing student success on such assessments and in their coursework would improve student retention and graduation rates and assist in their preparation to conduct research at all academic levels. Information literacy is a library-related objective in the SACS accreditation process. Expanded programs to enhance information literacy across the curriculum and involving the entire university community in achieving it would likely enhance the University’s ultimate achievement of reaffirmation of accreditation.

Building upon existing programs

An information literacy QEP has the benefit of building upon existing University and departmental initiatives and programs. The library enjoys a liaison program with each academic department through which library instruction is currently delivered that could be built upon and expanded for the QEP. The Faculty Renaissance Center excels at delivering learning

opportunities for faculty that could be used to distribute workshops and opportunities for outside speakers on incorporating information literacy components into the curriculum. The First Year Learning Communities, the Honors Program, capstone courses, senior seminars, and service learning projects provide additional points of delivery for information literacy.

In conjunction with the Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness, the library has an assessment program in place for evaluating library instruction. This could serve as a starting point for assessing the effectiveness of an information literacy QEP and which could be expanded to incorporate the ACRL's standards and performance indicators. The Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness has recently published an Introduction to Student Learning Assessment at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi into which the ACRL standards could be incorporated.

A number of excellent suggestions for a QEP topic were made during campus conversations during the fall of 2007. Many of them could be approached from and incorporated into an information literacy QEP. For example, a center for undergraduate excellence and engagement could be devoted to developing information literate students. If it were embedded in our first year programs, information literacy would certainly enhance them. It would also enhance the campus intellectual environment by making us a community of effective, efficient, and ethical information users. Student engagement, particularly civic engagement could be embedded in an information literacy QEP in the form of opportunities for students to share their information literacy skills in the local community. While not a cure-all, by making information literacy a campus wide effort rather than simply a library goal, information literacy would be a basis for achieving many of the enhancements we seek for our students as well as building on existing programs.

Evaluation and Assessment of an Information Literacy QEP

In addition to existing programs at TAMU-CC and the ACRL standards, a number of information literacy evaluation instruments exist having been developed by other institutions that have selected information literacy as their QEP.

- The First Year Information Literacy in the Liberal Arts Assessment (FYILLAA), <http://www.nitle.org/index.php/nitle/collaborations/fyillaa>
- Information Literacy Assessment Scale for Education, from: Penny Beile, Ph.D., Curriculum and Instruction, University of Central Florida, Orlando, FL, 2005.
- The Information Literacy Assessment Matrix, King's College. Terry Mech (tfmech@kings.edu) at King's College has been developing and refining an ACRL standards-aligned assessment tool since 2000.
- Information Literacy Survey, Mittermeyer, Diane and Diane Quirion. "Information literacy: study of incoming first-year undergraduates in Quebec." Conférence des recteurs

All of these tools would be useful points from which to begin developing evaluation instruments for an information literacy QEP at TAMU-CC. It is likely that the creation of an information literacy QEP customized for TAMU-CC would contribute the creation of a set of evaluations

tools unique to this institution. Such a set would like also include course level assessments, performance indicators an outcomes.

Goals of the plan

Specific goals, objectives, and action items would need to be developed were information literacy selected as TAMU-CC's QEP. The following steps are offered as a point of departure for the development of an information literacy QEP:

- In the first year (2007-08): fully develop the program via collaboration among librarians, faculty, administrators, and students.
- In the second year (2008-09):
 - Obtain needed resources.
 - Identify courses in which information literacy skills and outcome measures might be most effectively incorporated.
 - Develop University-wide assessment tool(s), modules of which could be incorporated into individual courses.
- In the third year (2009-10):
 - Begin delivering information literacy via course integration.
 - Initial assessment at the end of the year.
- In the fourth year (2010-11):
 - Refine program elements including assessment mechanisms based on initial assessment.
 - Continue delivering information literacy via course integration.
 - Continue assessment.
 - Create a repository of assignments designed to incorporate information literacy and assessment tools.
- In the fifth year (2011-12), sixth year (2012-13), and seventh year (2013-14):
 - Continue refinements, delivery, and assessment
 - Begin assessments based on retention and graduation rates.
- In the eight year (2014-15):
 - Final assessment (in conjunction with other Momentum 2015 assessments).

Resource requirements

Resources needed for the implementation of an information literacy QEP include funding for workshops and speakers that would aid in the development of initial curriculum and assessment tools. At least one and possibly two additional librarian positions focused on instructional design and library instruction would be essential for success. There is also the potential need for additional classroom/computer lab space, possibly within the library, in which to conduct hands on information literacy training and personnel to support such a lab. Such space already exists in the library, if the College of Business lab is vacated as the college moves into its new space or if the Tutoring and Learning Center is relocated to new space following the opening of new recreational facilities on campus.

References

Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL).. Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education. Chicago: American Library Association, 2000.