

Improving Library, Faculty and Student Performance through Assessment

Assessment strategies are becoming more and more important for success in today's competitive environment. Gathering meaningful data to measure how well students are attaining important learning outcomes can be used to help faculty and institutions improve curricular design and effective teaching methods for student learning and performance.

In this case study*, we review how librarians at a large community college in the Midwest used assessment data gathered through their first year experience initiative to measure student progress and improve the quality of instruction provided by librarians and faculty. After the FYE steering community identified which learning outcomes they wanted to track, the librarian created rubrics to consistently gauge student performance using their school's LMS.

5 rules to make the most of your assessment data:

- 1 Clearly define learning outcomes
- 2 Consistently measure and collect data
- 3 Include the broadest possible sample size for the most accurate results
- 4 Use results to inform future changes to the program, or to individual instructors
- 5 Broadcast results far and wide to demonstrate the value of the library

Where to Begin

Assessment does not occur at random. It's imperative someone (e.g. the FYE steering committee, library leadership, etc.) first create goals and objectives to decide which student learning outcomes should be prioritized, and then design an assessment strategy to measure them accordingly. Of the steering committee's desired learning outcomes, "Uses Information Effectively," was explicitly connected to library instruction. They agreed on four skill indicators:

- ✓ Developing a search strategy
- ✓ Using technology
- ✓ Evaluating information
- ✓ Using information responsibly



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Collection and Measurement

The librarian designed a rubric to assess whether a student “uses information effectively.” This included the four performance indicators, each of which could be measured against a benchmark (starting point), two milestones, and eventually a capstone to show the skill had been mastered. They decided the best way to accomplish data collection was through the school’s LMS, combined with other course artifacts.

The assessments proved students were benefiting greatly from their information literacy instruction sessions. Additionally, faculty use of library services and requests for instruction have been on the rise since the start of this initiative!

Prior to the librarian-led instruction session, only 4 out of 10 students rated their ability to do college-level research as Good or Excellent; afterwards, this rose to 83%.

Putting Data to Use!

Confirming instruction had a positive impact on student performance achieved the Steering Committee’s goals, but the institution decided to take the assessment results a few steps further:

- ✓ **Professional development:** The librarian applied for and received a professional development grant to participate in the ACRL’s “Assessment in Action Project”.
- ✓ **Faculty buy-in and support:** Librarians and faculty studied the data to spot areas they could improve for future sessions.
- ✓ **Future improvement opportunities:** Data was also analyzed by the FYE steering committee to inform future changes to the program.

Creating a culture of assessment and improvement isn’t easy, but the benefits to faculty, librarians, and students are undeniable. This community college library’s success was predicated on making their voice heard on the FYE steering committee and assessment committee, clearly defining their goals, collecting data consistently, and showcasing the impact once the numbers were analyzed.

**This case study features the story of one institution discussed in a submission to the 2018 FYE Innovation Awards, sponsored by Credo and Case Western Reserve University.*