Evaluating the Effect of Course-specific Library Instruction on Student Success

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Abstract

Using records of course-specific instruction provided by the IUB Libraries, this study will evaluate the impact of library instruction sessions on measures of students' academic success and educational development. In particular, this study will seek to understand the types of library instruction that are most effective, the times during a student's course of study that this instruction is most impactful, and what groups of students may especially benefit from additional instructional interventions. Additionally, this study will evaluate the potential cumulative and long-term effects of library instruction on students' success and will create a model that will facilitate the assessment of the Libraries instructional programs that will assist the allocation of instructional resources and development of course-level and curriculum-level instructional interventions that are most effective, impactful and sustainable.

Purpose

Each year, IUB Librarians, conduct over 200 course-specific instruction and consultation sessions impacting more than 5000 students.

While this represents a significant commitment of time and effort for the Libraries' faculty, the Libraries presently lack an effective model for measuring the impact of these instruction sessions, and particularly the potential cumulative and long-term effects of library instruction on students' academic success and educational development.

This project will address this information gap by developing and implementing a model for evaluating the effect of library instruction and consultation sessions on various measures of student success such as first-year and overall retention, retention in major, course, in-major and overall GPA, and the development of information literacy[1] and critical thinking skills.

In particular, this study will seek to understand what type of library instruction is most effective, what points during a student's course of study library instruction is most impactful, and to identify the characteristics of any groups of students that might especially benefit from additional instructional interventions.

This study will utilize a dataset of all course-related instruction conducted by IUB librarians during AY 2014-2015. This dataset can be linked to student-level data via enrollment records and the course CLA number which will enable the investigation of the impact of library instruction on student success indicators. Additionally, this dataset can be linked to the results of the Standardized Assessment of Information Literacy Skills (SAILS) survey conducted in Fall 2015, which measures students' abilities across eight skill sets related to identifying, locating, retrieving, evaluating and documenting information sources, as well as assignment-level rubric-based assessments collected as part of the Libraries' Information Literacy Grants program in AY15-16. Together, these datasets will allow this study to evaluate the effectiveness of

[1] Information literacy is defined as the set of abilities required for individuals to recognize when information is needed and to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information.

information literacy development as a measure of student success, as well as to investigate how the interrelationships between course sequences, library instruction, and information literacy skill affect other student success measures.

Significance & Outcomes

This research will help identify the points during students' course of study where information literacy instruction is most impactful and what type of instructional interventions are most successful, and will suggest best practices for integrating library and information literacy instruction within existing curricula.

The results of this study will provide a basis for measuring the long-term benefits of library and information literacy instruction, especially the cumulative effect of multiple library instruction sessions on measures of student success. Historically, library instruction has typically been more prevalent in particular disciplines (e.g. business), and survey data collected by the Libraries has suggested that students' experience with library instruction varies significantly with their chosen course of study. This study will therefore seek to ascertain if the greater degree of contact with the library instruction that students in some disciplines have received has an observable effect on these students' information literacy development and other measures of academic success.

By creating a model that will allow the Libraries to evaluate the effectiveness of their instructional programs over time, this study will assist the Libraries in allocating instructional resources and developing course-level and curriculum-level instructional interventions that are most effective, impactful and sustainable.

Methods

Using variables from the library instruction dataset, institutional student records data, and the SAILS survey, this study will employ a combination of correlation, ANOVA, and regression (simple, multiple & stepwise) analyses to identify and evaluate the effects to library instruction on various measures of student success. Since much of this study is exploratory, it will especially concentrate on identifying relationships between variables.

Measures of Success

Developing a methodology for evaluating the impact of library instruction that can be applied longitudinally to the IUB Libraries annual instructional data is a key measure of success for this project. Once this model is created, this project will provide the basis for ongoing assessments of the impact of library instruction, and the results will gain additional explanatory power as multiple years are added to the dataset.

Previous Research Results

During AY 2014-2015 I completed a preliminary analysis in collaboration with Bloomington Assessment and Research (BAR) of a similar instructional dataset consisting library instruction conducted with courses in the biology department between 2006 and 2014. This analysis suggested that library instructional sessions had a positive that students' final course grade, and had a greater impaction on students in the lower range of academic achievement (measured by

expected GPA in course). These results will provide a starting point for this more general study and suggest fruitful initial avenues for inquiry.