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Literacy Fellow Ninth Cohort, 2016-2017--Paper Assignment (Final report)

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Literacy Fellow Ninth Cohort, 2016-2017--Paper Assignment

As new faculty at Fayetteville State University, I was interested in service based programs that would help me gain additional skills to assist my students. After my first semester here, I realized that many of my students struggled with academic writing and information literacy. The upper level courses that I teach require students to write academic papers frequently. I choose to participate in the Literacy Fellow program as a way to provide my Spring 2017 students with resources and assistance regarding information literacy prior to any additional assignments. I choose to apply the information that I gain in this pathway to my CRJC 313: Victimology course. This class is an elective, usually taken the year prior to the Senior Seminar course, which is a requirement for our students. My hope was that by applying and focusing on information literacy in this particular course, that students would gain necessary skills to also be successful in the Senior Seminar course.

I found the workshop beneficial, specifically the time that I was able to work independently with the librarian assigned to me, Ms. Vera Hooks. Ms. Hooks was able to go over my original and revised course syllabus and analyze its content to ensure that the specific assignments that I created incorporated ACRL Standards. I also found speaking to other faculty to be very helpful. It appeared that many of us had the same issues with our students and had the desire to help them become successful in all of their classes. Collegiate success absolutely requires the ability to not only write academic papers, but to be able to identify and utilize appropriate material.

My original CRJC 313 Fall 2016 syllabus required students to write two papers and they were graded not only on content, but academic writing, correct in-text citation and reference page(3), and the ability to paraphrase correctly. With the assistance of Ms. Hooks, I created four

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assignments which were each smaller in scope than the two assignments from the previous semester. This allowed me more opportunity to provide students with feedback and appeared to be less stressful for students, as each assignment was worth a modest amount of points. My reviewing four assignments instead of two, I was able to acknowledge issues with information literacy early on, and help students correct these issues. Prior to the submission of any of the four assignments (titled Assignment #1-#4), students were required to complete a module in Canvas which gave them additional resources regarding information literacy and approved resources (journal and media).

I administered the pre-test on 01/20/17 and it was completed by 23 students. Two students were sophomores, eleven juniors, and ten seniors. 22 out of the 23 students were criminal justice majors. The average pre-test score was 13.83/20.00. Remarkably, the vast majority of students reported that they were “confident” or “very confident” with ACRL standards. However, the average pre-test score does not reflect this. In addition, the top two places that students reported finding information was Google and Wikipedia.

27 students attended the information literacy presentation at the library on 1/23/17. 27 students completed the post-test on 1/25/17. The average post-test score was 14.70/20.00. I was disappointed in the results of the post test, considering that students had attended the workshop and were required to view the Canvas modules which contained this information (this was a “points” assignment). However, more students took the post-test, which might explain some of the variation regarding only the slight increase in score. In addition, after viewing in detail the responses of each posttest, it appeared that some students simply did not pay attention or answered questions quickly without giving each question much thought.

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However, over the course of the semester I saw great improvement for many of my students in their assignments (Assignment #1-#3). While each assignment was completed separately, each built off the other. Students selected a form of victimization and answered specific questions for each assignment. Students were given a rubric for each assignment which outlined not only what was expected, but exactly how they would be graded. They were graded on content, academic writing (including grammar/spelling), correct reference page(s), in-text citations, and information literacy. In addition, Assignment #1-3 addressed all 5 ACRL standards.

Following submission of Assignment #1, I provided each student with specific feedback, and edited their assignment line by line. They were expected to address each issue and apply it to the following assignments. In addition to providing students with feedback, the literacy information presentation PowerPoint was also available for students review in Canvas. For students who spent the time addressing each edit and acknowledging what they needed to work on, I saw great improvement in areas they were graded on. More specifically, for the students who applied the necessary changes, Assignment #2 reflected a 9% (approximate) grade percentage improvement. Assignment #2 reflected a more modest 2% grade percentage improvement.

The pathway really made me rethink the way that I approached information literacy. Prior to the workshop I was concerned about academic writing, without considering that students might not understand how to identify and access the information they would need prior to writing an academic paper. The pathway workshop helped me correct this error. I think one way that the pathway might be improved is by a re-evaluation of the pre and posttest, and students

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reported that some of the questions were confusing. In addition, it would be largely beneficial to allow faculty and librarians more time to work one on one.

For all 300 level courses and above, the information literacy module will be provided via Canvas and will constitute a graded assignment for students. I will continue to require information literacy/writing activities for all my upper level courses and will maintain the numerous smaller assignments as a way for students to get more practice and to receive more feedback.