Program Track Project: Background Study

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Background

City University (CityU) is a private, nonprofit university headquartered in Bellevue, Washington. Our students are primarily working adults, almost half of our courses are taught via distance education, and most of our teaching faculty are adjunct instructors.

CityU was founded in Seattle1973 as City College, a private educational institution with the mission of developing and offering programs designed to meet the needs of working adults and their employers. The name of the institution was changed to City University in 1982. The institutional model that was adopted was based on the "university without walls" concept.

In 2004 City University awarded degrees to students at nearly 20 branch locations throughout Washington, Hawaii, Canada, Europe, and Asia. Today the enrollment of City University exceeds 11,000 worldwide with an FTE count of 6,100, making it the largest private university in the Northwest. Median age for undergraduate students is 31 in the U.S. and 37 for graduate students. City University offers more than 50 programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels in five disciplines: business, computer systems, education, general studies, and psychology within three Schools. Slightly less than half of all students take classes via distance education, both online and through traditional correspondence courses. City University has an open enrollment policy and there is no resident student population. CityU has 116 full-time senior faculty and 964 part-time adjunct faculty members and uses the practitioner model of instruction, relying on instructors who are professionals in the fields in which they teach.

Institutional Environment and Priorities

I have been at City University since December 2002. In the short time that I have been here there has been seemingly constant change, all of which has had an effect on the Library. The information technology department was reorganized, a separate online learning unit was created and subsequently dissolved, and during the past six months the top three leadership positions at the university have turned over. A new Executive Vice President of Administrative Services (i.e., CFO) started in March, a new Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs started in April, and an interim President started in May. The current leadership is excellent and has begun work on a comprehensive strategic plan that is designed to move the University forward. The new EVP of Academics, to whom all Schools and the Library report, has worked with the academic leadership to set six goals for Academic Affairs for this fiscal year. The goal that has the greatest impact on our information literacy instruction program is to review and refine the City University teaching/learning model.

The emerging CityU teaching/learning model is an articulation of the values and expectations that shape the learning experiences that take place in all delivery modes of education provided by the university. It is meant to provide an ideological structure for implementing CityU's mission of providing a rigorous and accessible educational experience, primarily for an audience of adult learners. The teaching/learning model emphasizes that learning should be outcomes-focused, with learning experiences designed

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to support clearly articulated learning outcomes at the course, program, and institutional levels.

The model sets forth the institutional learning goals that characterize a City University education. These goals are realized in different ways defined by the three Schools, depending on discipline and program. An institutional goal has been set that specifically addresses information literacy, *City University graduates are lifelong learners who are self-directed and information literate in seeking out ways to continue their learning throughout their lifetimes.*

Librarians have worked hard to make information literacy an institutional priority. I and my colleagues have given a number of presentations to a variety of groups designed to raise awareness of the subject of creating information literacy. One year ago a university-wide Information Literacy Task Force was commissioned by the Deans Council and charged with developing a mission, goals, and objectives for a university-wide information literacy program. I was appointed as co-chair along with a faculty member from the School of Business and Management (SOBM).

The environment that currently exists at City University encourages collaboration. Collaboration occurs on both a micro level, e.g., between librarians and senior faculty/adjunct faculty, and on a macro level, e.g., between the library and each School as well as with CityU's Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT).

There are many likely partners for our information literacy efforts. We use the liaison model of librarianship, and each of our subject librarians collaborates with faculty from his or her School in a variety of ways. CityU uses standardized syllabi which help to ensure consistency throughout the curriculum, and librarians are involved to varying degrees in the course development process.

Organizational Placement of Library's Instructional Efforts

I am the Director of Library Operations. My two main responsibilities are to oversee the day-to-day operations of the Library and to coordinate the information literacy instruction program. I am also the liaison to the School of Human Services and Applied Behavioral Sciences (HSABS), but these responsibilities will be ceded to a new librarian who will be starting in August. We have five full-time librarians: four who serve as liaisons to the School of Education (SOE) and one who works with the faculty of the SOBM. We all report to the Dean of Library Services. Each full-time librarian provides instruction as well as hires, trains, and supervises part-time librarians who also provide instruction.

In its current iteration, our instructional program is a collection of activities. There is no clearly defined model of instruction. Each individual is responsible for creating his or her own lesson plans. The focus is on assignments and courses rather than programs and outcomes. Most of the information literacy instruction that is now offered at CityU is lecture-based bibliographic instruction that focuses on how to use the tools. Skills are taught in isolation and generally not tied to program or course outcomes. Our instruction varies from class to class and program to program and does not build over time in a logical manner. The new model of information literacy instruction that we are working to develop puts the Library in alignment with the emerging teaching/learning model that seeks to develop more outcomes based, learner centered programs.

Librarians have the opportunity to participate in all available on-campus continuing education opportunities. Both full-time and part-time library faculty have taken CELT's five-

week online certification course that focuses on online pedagogy and facilitation of online learning. Classroom observations of part-time library faculty by their supervising librarians occur on a regular basis. Attendance at one major conference is funded each year for all full-time librarians. Librarians can choose to attend local, state, or national conferences. The Dean of Library Services is extremely supportive of professional development activities and encourages staff to take advantage of as many opportunities as possible. I attend both the ALA Annual Conference and the Midwinter Meeting. Last year I attended an ACRL pre-conference titled, *Planning Instructional Opportunities for Targeted Populations,* and in June I traveled to Boise, Idaho for a LOEX-of-the-West pre-conference on *Partnering to Integrate Information Competence into the Learning Outcomes of Academic Departments.*

The Library places a heavy emphasis on graduating information literate students. Our stated mission is to support the university's educational goals by coordinating library services and information literacy instruction for students and faculty at all locations, including in the virtual environment, and by providing access to materials and services to support degree programs and faculty development. Our strategic plan includes as one of its goals to facilitate the integration of information literacy concepts into the curriculum, in support of the teaching-learning model. The objectives that are associated with this goal are: to facilitate discussion throughout the university on what information literacy is and why it is important; to facilitate incorporation throughout the curriculum of information theory, concepts, and skills; and to develop an adequately large library teaching faculty pool that is well versed in current information literacy theory and practice, and well supported in its implementation.

The Library's definition of information literacy is City University's definition of information literacy as it was written by the Information Literacy Task Force. This definition is based on *ACRL's Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education*. Most librarians understand the conceptual difference between information literacy and bibliographic instruction, though they struggle at times when it comes to integrating the competencies into the curriculum.

Instruction Program Content

The information literacy instruction that occurs is strictly on a course-by-course basis and is primarily skills-based. The amount and type of instruction that occurs varies greatly from class to class, course to course, program to program, and school to school. At one end of the continuum is the M.Ed. program, which has an integrated core that contains a two-credit library component. At the opposite end of the spectrum is the M.A.C.P. program, in which structured library instruction does not occur at all. The other degree programs are somewhere in between. All CityU undergraduates in SOBM and in HSABS are required to take *BC 302: Writing for the Professions* which contains some bibliographic instruction. However, the amount and type of instruction differs in this course according to delivery mode. In general, there is very little instruction in the online version of this course. The amount of instruction also varies according to instructor despite the fact that CityU uses standardized syllabi.

Since the students at CityU are geographically dispersed there is no structured orientation to the physical library. Emphasis is instead placed on the online offerings made available through the library. Students and faculty are oriented to these resources and services through information on the Library's pages in the CityU portal, through brochures that are distributed in-class and through the mail, and during instruction sessions. New faculty are also introduced to the Library during a New Instructor Seminar. An online orientation for all faculty and staff is currently being planned.
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Selected Elements (which will be addressed by the Portfolio or Action Plan):

The programmatic element I would most like to address is assessment. Ideally I would like to address both the big picture of assessment (i.e., assessment of the overall information literacy instruction program at CityU), and the small picture of assessment, (i.e., assessing individual student learning). What are relevant institutional, program, and course level assessments of student learning? What evidence do we have that student learning has occurred? Each year CityU conducts a student survey that includes several questions about library services. This survey is designed to measure student satisfaction rather than student learning. How can we tell if the stated goals of our program have been achieved? If not, why not and how should the program and outcomes be modified so as to increase student learning? I want to learn more about formal, informal, formative, and summative assessment. This knowledge will help me work more effectively with faculty to write program and course outcomes as they relate to information literacy. In the information literacy at CityU mission statement, we state that we seek to "develop accomplished information users." How can we measure and thereby prove that this is happening?

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