First-year Seminar Program, Monmouth University, launched Fall 2010

Stage One: Attended several FY Faculty Seminar Workshops (AY 08-09)

Stage Two: Presented for FY Faculty Seminar Workshop (Aug. 2009)

Stage Three: Developed Ongoing Communication with FY

Seminar Program Directors—demonstrated knowledge of pedagogy & learning theory was crucial in establishing credibility

Stage Four: Accessed (download) course syllabi; requested all remaining approved course syllabi

OUTREACH :
STAGES 1 & 2: AY 08-09

Information Literacy, Epistemological Beliefs, and the First-year Student Researcher: How Librarians Can Help

Dr. M. Beth Meszaros

First-year Seminar Workshop

August 2009

What Librarians Can Do

- Librarians are experts at teaching search strategies for effective retrieval; we offer instructional sessions designed to help your students get started and we encourage subsequent follow-up supervised research sessions for students; we can also offer on-on-one assistance by appointment and we are now on-site in the Campus Writing Center.

- But librarians are not just about searching; ACRL standards have broadened the librarian's support role; we are just as concerned as you are that students evaluate information and use it effectively and ethically; good thinking and good writing matters to us too!

- We can help you incorporate **IL Objectives** into your assignments and suggest doable grading rubrics

- We can ensure that resources are available for students

- We understand that knowledge construction is discipline-inflected. We can guide you to ACRL IL standards that have been developed **specifically for your subject matter**.

What Instructional Faculty Can Do

- Bring your classes to the library for (an) instructional session(s) and/or for supervised research.

- Seek how-to advice for weaving IL outcomes and objectives into your course assignments and/or for designing a grading criteria rubric. You need not cover every outcome. Start small.

- Since First-year students have not had time to acquire a disciplinary vocabulary, try to provide lots of support and scaffolding if you assign peer-reviewed literature. Multi-subject databases and quality journalism are often better choices for freshman research.

- Don't assume good gross reading comprehension. Model active reading strategies (or ask us for help) and frequently test student comprehension. Ask students to summarize what they read.

- Check with us first to ensure that we have on hand the resources your students will need; ensure that your assignment is practical and doable by carrying it out yourself.

What Instructional Faculty Can Do

- Encourage metacognition by asking students to keep research journals or logs. These need not be onerous to grade, and they provide a wealth of information about how students are conducting their research

- If practicable, require submission of an annotated bibliography, one that requires students to weigh evidence and evaluate knowledge claims

- Tell us what we can do to serve you and your students better!

FY Seminar Course Objectives (assessable learning outcomes – "students will be able to…"):   3-credit course. transition + academic content

1. *Students will demonstrate critical thinking as they actively engage in course material.

2. *Students will be able to seek out, evaluate and integrate information from multiple sources based on a course topic.

3. Students will demonstrate awareness of ethical debates pertaining to the course topic.

4. *Students will demonstrate awareness of **ethical considerations of academic life.**

5. ***Students will articulate and evaluate their experience with college resources** (such as but not necessarily limited to one **academic** and one non academic **resource**).

6. Students will demonstrate strategies for improving academic skills (such as but not necessarily limited to time management, stress management, and study skills).

7. **Students will demonstrate an understanding of academic culture and its norms, values, and practices, including the differences between college and high school intellectual activity and work.**

52 syllabi analyzed for activities, assignments and outcomes that pertain to Information Literacy, broadly construed (May-June 2010) See handout for list of course syllabi approved.

STAGE 4: ANALYSIS OF COURSE SYLLABI

Lists…

- Instructors requesting tour and/or library instructional session (+ tentative dates)

- Instructors expressing particular concerns about plagiarism

- Instructors assigning metacognitive activities, e.g. research narrative

- Instructors mandating use of at least some library resources

More Lists

- Instructors requiring students to work with Writing Center tutor (have draft read)

- Instructors providing guidance regarding use of web sites

- Instructors specifying number of sources

- Instructors forbidding use of non-academic sources

- Instructors requiring summary and/or comparison of popular vs academic sources

Customized email to each instructor.

Letters specifically addressed each course syllabus in terms of library support offered. Syllabus quoted in email. Released June 2010.

Follow-up reminder email August 16, 2010. (Not customized.)

OUTREACH, STAGE 2

Number of FY Seminar Sessions offered Fall 2010	Number of One-shot Sessions Booked & Delivered	Number of Supervised Research Sessions Booked	Number of Tours
45	36 (80%)	5	2

Bookings Fall 2010

Assignment-specific LibGuides

- [Evil and Human Cruelty](#)

required 2 research assignments, one focused on course content, the other focused on the "transition element"—common problems encountered by first-year students

- [Tea Appreciation](#)

required the student to seek out, evaluate, and integrate findings from scholarly sources (i.e., peer-reviewed journal articles) in order to characterize the influence of tea on a particular health outcome; student also required to discuss draft with writing center tutor

End-of-semester Faculty "Debriefing"

- "I overestimated their reading level"
- "We have too many learning objectives"
- "They don't seem to know what is going on in the world"; "I overestimated their knowledge of American cultural history"
- "Some students didn't think this would be a challenging course—they had to be prodded"
- "Many aren't doing the readings"

Feedback from One Instructor

- "Lots of variation in the extent to which the students engaged in critical thinking…"

- "For many …being asked to draw upon several sources to answer a focused question was an entirely new experience. Some did not understand the connection…"

- "At first, some reacted as if I had invaded their privacy by setting deadlines and insisting on having approval of their focused questions in advance. "

- "…students used the Web page created for us. …verbal feedback suggested that they found it helpful and immensely convenient (they also gave high marks to the targeted lesson in the library)."

Advantages/Disadvantages of Themed, Discipline-specific vs. Common Reader Approach

advantages

- High buy-in from students—they can choose what interests them
- High buy-in from faculty—they get to teach their "passion"
- High buy-in from librarians—no burn-out due to repetitious one-shot delivery; deeper engagement of faculty & students resulted in more engaging class sessions

disadvantages

- Some students may pay insufficient attention to course descriptions… "I didn't get any history majors…"
- The transition elements were sometimes seen as vying with course content
- No common academic content—no opportunity to assess information literacy component; left to discretion of course instructor; **no access to student papers**
- More labor and time-intensive for librarians

Going forward…..

How to move from tools-based one-shots

- to deeper involvement with assignment design and assessment rubrics in terms of fostering critical thinking/information literacy objectives?

- to a more collaborative model of faculty/librarian interaction?

- to addressing faculty concerns such as student reading comprehension issues and faculty "overload" in terms of multiple learning outcomes?

One thing at a time! Slow and steady wins the race….

- Provide faculty workshop addressing assignment design ("piggybacking" information literacy outcomes with other learning outcomes) utilizing successful faculty-produced examples

- Provide follow-up faculty workshop to help foster active reading in students (directed reading activities)—train the trainer

- Sensitize program directors to benefits of multi-sessions (as opposed to one-shots) and true partnership