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Information Literacy Faculty Fellows program

Building a faculty-librarian framework community of practice

The Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education (Framework) calls upon librarians to think of information literacy as a concept to be applied beyond the one-shot session, suggesting that the “Framework...is intended to be developmentally and systematically integrated into the student’s academic program at a variety of levels.”¹

At the University of North Carolina-Wilmington (UNCW), information literacy is integrated into the undergraduate curriculum through a general education requirement at the introductory level and in the student’s major.² However, this requirement, established in 2012, is based on the now-rescinded Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education³ and has heavily relied on the one-shot librarian-led model of information literacy instruction for implementation. Librarians at UNCW viewed the publication of the Framework as an opportunity to both update the teaching faculty’s understanding of information literacy concepts and to re-establish information literacy as a collaborative partnership between teaching faculty and librarians.

UNCW’s Information Literacy Faculty Fellows (ILFF) program, inaugurated in the spring 2018 semester, trains faculty and instructors from across the university in the knowledge practices, dispositions, and threshold concepts embedded in the

Framework. Faculty develop concrete plans for integrating one or more of these concepts into their courses by working with liaison librarians and each other. Our hope is to develop a community of practice at UNCW surrounding information literacy and to embed the Framework throughout the curriculum. The program encourages librarians and teaching faculty to view information literacy as a shared responsibility, one that doesn’t end at the library door but is integrated throughout the academic experience.

Program description

In fall 2017, a small group of Research and Instructional Services (RIS) librarians at UNCW proposed funding to create a program for faculty and instructors who were already working with classes that included the general studies information literacy competency requirement. Our goal was for participants to learn enough about the Framework to apply its concepts to their own instruction and to be-

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come information literacy “ambassadors” to their academic departments and elsewhere on campus. The program’s learning outcomes were to:

1. learn about the Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education,
2. generate practical ideas for applying one or more Framework concepts to their information literacy classes,
3. gain a cohort of other faculty interested in these ideas,
4. work closely with their liaison librarian on information literacy concepts, and
5. generate a concrete assignment, lesson plan, or syllabus that integrates one or more of these concepts.

We envisioned the program as a weekly series of six workshops, each focused on one frame. To increase buy-in, we agreed that funding for the program would include stipends for faculty who completed the workshops and submitted a final product based on the Framework. We secured internal funding to support the stipends, lunches, and materials for participants. We marketed the program in January 2018 through liaison librarians and a widely read email newsletter. Potential Fellows were encouraged to apply for the program through an online form.

The first ILFF cohort included ten faculty from English, First-Year Seminar, geology, music, nursing, philosophy and religion, political science, public health, and sociology. Although two colleges (education and business) went unrepresented, and the sciences were somewhat underrepresented, we met our overall goal of including a wide variety of disciplines.

Prior to the first meeting, held in mid-March 2018, each Fellow read the Framework document and completed a pre-program reflection. Participants were asked to describe the information literacy concepts with which they were already comfortable and their goals for the program. At the first meeting, we discussed

these goals as a group. We also addressed the library’s goals for the program and provided a general introduction and overview of the Framework, including the broad ideas inherent to understanding the Framework: metaliteracy, threshold concepts, knowledge practices, and dispositions.

To reinforce the idea of the shared responsibility of teaching information literacy concepts, different librarians facilitated each session. Each workshop included a presentation on one frame, a combination of guided small-group and large-group discussions surrounding questions that were particularly pertinent to the frame, and a brainstorming session on how to incorporate that week’s frame into instructional practice. We required the facilitating librarians to follow the same broad format but encouraged creativity with the activities.

For example, during the week on “Research as Inquiry,” the facilitators began by handing out index cards. Each Fellow was asked to briefly write about their research process on one side of the card and their students’ research process on the other side. Next, each Fellow shared their responses. This process led to a small group discussion about any differences between the approaches and how faculty generally guide their students through the process of research. Following a brief overview of the knowledge practices and dispositions within the frame, the Fellows watched a short video on topic selection.⁴ Finally, faculty did a modified “think-pair-share” activity in which they reflected on the applications of “Research as Inquiry” to their own teaching, discussed these ideas with a small group, and then had a full-group conversation to share ideas and offer suggestions to others.

The main outcome at the end of the six-week program was to concretize an idea for incorporating one or more frames into an upcoming course. Fellows were given a month after the final workshop

to submit their plans, which were made available to UNCW faculty through the library's website.⁵

Assessment

Assessment was a critical component of the program at each stage: the Fellows' applications, Fellows' perceptions of their and their students' comfort with information literacy concepts prior to the program, Fellows' perceptions of the program at its conclusion, the final products, and participating librarians' perceptions of the program at its conclusion. In addition, we anticipate conducting a longer-term assessment of the impact of the program for Fellows, their departments, and their students at their one-year anniversary. This assessment will be administered as an online survey asking the same questions as the pre-reflection questionnaire.

Fellows' applications

Our first assessment activity was the scoring of applications. Applicants were asked the following:

1. What do you hope to gain from being an IL Faculty Fellow?
2. Describe what you have previously done to integrate information literacy into your courses.
3. Describe how you plan to use the content from this program to strengthen your department's information literacy curriculum.

Each member of the planning group scored the responses using a rubric.⁶ We then discussed our scores as a group to make a selection of ten Fellows.

Familiarity and understanding of information literacy concepts

We distributed a pre-program reflection⁷ to Fellows prior to the initial meeting, asking participants to reflect on their knowledge and comfort with information literacy concepts, as well as their

students'. Overall, they assessed their own familiarity with information literacy at 3.5 and their students at 2 on a scale of 1 (Not at all) to 5 (Very).

One of the most interesting, and yet unsurprising, aspects of the reflection responses was the variety of information literacy definitions. Some definitions were lengthy and touched on multiple aspects of information literacy, for example, the value of information to citizenship and civic discourse, the creation of information, the connection of information literacy to other literacies. Other definitions were brief and focused on traditional ways of thinking of information literacy—finding and using sources.

Fellows' perceptions of the program

After the final session, we asked Fellows to complete an online post-program reflection.⁸ Feedback was positive. Faculty touched upon areas such as format, structure, focusing future cohorts on specific interest groups (e.g., English composition or first-year experience instructors), and content.

The final product

After Fellows submitted their post-program reflection, they were asked to submit a description of their final products through an online form. The planning group and each Fellow's liaison librarian reviewed the final products. While all Fellows created and submitted a final project, the quality and depth of the project reports varied. We are creating a rubric that will be provided to the next group of Fellows at the beginning of the program and again at the time of final project submission. Our hope is that the rubric will provide guidance for participants, as well as a formal means to assess the projects.

Librarians' perceptions of the program

RIS librarians evaluated the ILFF program through email and through an in-person meeting with the planning group.

Feedback from librarians was also positive, with many expressing that they felt more comfortable with the Framework after participating in the program.

Next steps

The inaugural program was comprised of six sessions over six weeks and focused on a different frame per session. On reflection, some of the Frames could be combined since the subject matter overlapped, which may allow for more in-depth discussion, exploration of collaboration opportunities, and assignment development.

For example, “Research as Inquiry” and “Searching as Strategic Exploration” work hand-in-hand throughout the research process. By combining these frames into one longer session, we could provide more active learning activities and a more effective session. Additionally, moving from weekly one-hour sessions to two-hour sessions would allow for more in-depth contact between the faculty and liaison librarians. We are also considering putting Fellows in small working groups for the duration of the program to further assist them in developing their final product.

The Framework’s threshold concepts, dispositions, and knowledge practices were quite useful to faculty, but we discovered a need for expanded definitions and more targeted resources, such as those found on the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy Sandbox website.⁹ These resources will provide future Fellows with concrete examples of ways the Framework has been applied, giving them more specific ideas for their final products and showcasing the flexibility of the Framework.

In order to strengthen the liaison-faculty connection, we also plan to provide more time for collaboration on assignment creation, information literacy instruction session work, and one-on-one discussion to deepen understanding

of the Framework. We are also considering the option of requiring librarian involvement in the final project. Lastly, we plan to continue efforts to focus on students as contributors to the academic conversation, not just passive recipients of knowledge.

We feel our work to expand UNCW’s information literacy community of practice beyond librarians continues to grow, and our Information Literacy Faculty Fellows program has been one successful tool in these efforts.

Notes

1. “Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education” ACRL, www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org.acrl/files/content/issues/infolit/Framework_ILHE.pdf (accessed November 21, 2018).
2. University Studies Advisory Committee, “Information Literacy,” University of North Carolina-Wilmington, <https://uncw.edu/usac/informationliteracy.html> (accessed November 21, 2018).
3. “Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education” ACRL, www.ala.org/Template.cfm?Section=Home&template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=33553 (accessed November 21, 2018).
4. Anne Burke, et al., “Picking Your Topic IS Research!” North Carolina State University Libraries, https://www.lib.ncsu.edu/tutorials/picking_topic/ (accessed January 11, 2019).
5. William Madison Randall Library Bridges to Information Literacy, “Information Literacy Faculty Fellows Projects,” University of North Carolina-Wilmington, https://library.uncw.edu/info_lit/il-fellows-projects (accessed November 21, 2018).
6. See appendix at https://library.uncw.edu/info_lit/sites/default/files/pdfs/crlnewsappendix.pdf.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. “ACRL Framework for Information Literacy Sandbox,” ACRL, <http://sandbox.acrl.org/> (accessed January 11, 2019). **ZZ**