

Coffee with Calantha: Measuring the Impact of a Discussion-Based Series for Graduate Students

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Abstract

In order to serve the needs of Information Sciences graduate students at the University of Tennessee Knoxville (UTK), a collaboration between the subject librarian and the student chapter leaders of the American Library Association (ALA) and Special Libraries Association (SLA) was established. Through this relationship, the two parties crafted a synchronous event series called “Coffee with Calantha” (CwC) that centers around career readiness. Participants of multiple sessions responded to a survey concerning the efficacy of the series in preparing them for post-graduation employment and building community while still in graduate school. Data collected through this survey revealed how participating in these events benefited attendees' skills in those areas. Additional emerging themes included the supportive dialogue and differing

perspectives present throughout the discussions and the specific needs of distance learners in the educational process.

Keywords: graduate students, collaboration, career readiness, community building, distance learners, post-graduation employment, discussion-based events, master's in information science

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Introduction

During Amy Snyder's master's degree candidacy at the School of Information Sciences (SIS) at the University of Tennessee, they served as president of the SIS student chapters of the American Library Association (ALA) and Special Libraries Association (SLA). In these roles, they arranged presentations for members given by practicing information science professionals. After brainstorming with their cabinet, they recruited Calantha Tillotson to give a presentation about their academic career path. The resulting event was successful. The two collaborators reconnected after the event and decided to begin a series that prioritized open peer-to-peer dialogue on topics of concern for career preparedness in the information sciences field. Thus, "Coffee with Calantha" (CwC) established itself and grew to encompass multiple iterations of collaborators from the SIS graduate student leadership, including a research study on the efficacy of the event format.

Literature Review

Much has been written about creating sustainable and effective library events. At Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), standalone sessions proved the most successful in terms of attendance versus a series of sequential and related events (Peacemaker & Roseberry, 2017). Further, those VCU graduate students preferred these standalone sessions to be offered as webinars, even though most of the graduate student population is located locally (Peacemaker & Roseberry, 2017). At George Mason University (GMU), graduate students preferred synchronous sessions led by library staff over asynchronous online tutorials (Roszkowski & Reynolds, 2013). Our team replicated these insights by offering synchronous, online sessions on standalone topics that became popular with the graduate student population.

As academia and the workforce continue to rapidly change in the digital age, libraries must increasingly prioritize outreach that emphasizes skills that encourage student success and professional advancement. When developing new programs, academic libraries should focus on topics that directly impact student success in relation to "graduation, retention, career success, and diversity, equity, and inclusion" (Santiago et al., 2019, p. 364). One of the more unique research studies to come out in recent years involved the Dinner with Your Librarian series at Texas A&M University Libraries. As the Performance Studies and Graduate Studies Librarians, Budzise-Weaver and Anders (2016) invited graduate students in departments across the College of Liberal Arts out to dinner. This informal and smaller setting allowed the librarians to facilitate conversation that more specifically addressed student needs, such as library services and research sources for their graduate theses and dissertations. Students at GMU

sought similar specialized event topics related to research in their fields, gray literature, and publishing (Roszkowski & Reynolds, 2013). Tangentially, social sciences graduate students at Rutgers University-Newark looked for sessions related to research support and career support, specifically on acquiring grant funding (Fong et al., 2016). Graduate students require not only outreach related to library services to help in school, but also support for their own careers and goals outside of their programs. These topics organically embedded themselves in the CwC events to supplement the students' curriculum.

While academic libraries need to continue to support the academic and professional interests of their graduate students, the importance of socialization opportunities for students pursuing advanced degrees can often be overlooked. Having spaces available for students to learn about things outside of the classroom and make personal connections with peers or potential mentors "support[s] the wellbeing of students" (Vadnais & Weiss, 2022, p. 220). In their assessment of their graduate event series on grant funding opportunities, Forbes et al. (2017) determined that graduate students appreciate opportunities to socialize with other graduate students on campus. Rowan University's initiative to work with their Graduate Advisory Council was based upon that same understanding, to "help increase graduate students' feelings of belonging and connectedness to the institution, and thereby encourage them to persist in their programs" (Lierman, 2023, p. 163). They saw and acted upon the importance of fostering a community to help individuals and institutions succeed in their respective goals. Given that the UTK MSIS graduate program is primarily virtual, CwC was created to be a social event as much as an informational one since there are few opportunities for students to connect outside of class. Community building cannot be underestimated as a tool for ensuring student success.

These efforts to foster community rarely work as intended during the first try, so librarians need to "[be] open to revising or changing a failed event or outreach attempt" (Merrill, 2019, p. 553). This will allow librarians to "[create] outreach that is welcomed by your community" (Merrill, 2019, p. 555). Many librarians create events without student input first and question why they have lower attendance than desired. Collaboration with graduate students can help academic librarians better understand the needs and desires of this specific demographic. Leadership in the graduate student population may be able to suggest programming ideas that most resonate with their peers (Merrill, 2019). Since students tend to "take away different topics or themes from each [event]," further refinement and discussion on how to bridge the gap between librarians and students for each following outreach attempt is required (Vuletich et al., 2023, p. 10). Ultimately, the goal of these events should be to "understand the

connection between their personal goals and interests and schoolwork” (Klipfel, 2015, p. 122). Throughout the CwC series, student leaders and the subject librarian constantly collaborated and revised plans to better tailor both the personal and professional connections with the students. Creating relationships with students where they are in their programs and lives can help them achieve far more than just instructing them on how to access library services.

Background

Tillotson and Snyder were excited for a one-off guest lecture, but neither envisioned an ongoing series during their initial communications. The original presentation was to discuss how Tillotson had gotten into the field of librarianship and answer questions attendees may have about their experience or advice for their own blossoming careers. Soon after, Tillotson and Snyder met and discussed doing more events in the spring semester based on questions and feedback provided by engaged attendees. Thus, they organized two spring events called “Job Seeking” and “Collaboration Best Practices” under the series title “Coffee with Calantha” (CwC) to indicate the format was more discussion-based than lecture-based. The first two events were held over Zoom, but the third was held in the university’s library, making it the first in-person event.

Snyder graduated from the program following these events and worked with Tillotson to connect them to the incoming graduate student leadership and new CwC collaborators. Matthew Delgado and Julia Noll took over as the presidents of the student chapters of SLA and ALA for the following school year and took on that role. A research component to the series began soon after with a co-created institutional review board (IRB) application in the fall semester by all four collaborators and data gathering occurring upon IRB approval in the spring semester. Reflecting on the themes raised most by attendees during the previous year’s discussions, Tillotson presented on combating burnout and vocational awe as both graduate students and future librarians. In addition, four recent MSIS alum were recruited from four distinct library fields (i.e., school, public, academic, and special) to discuss how they navigated their job searches. This virtual job seeking panel was moderated by Tillotson in early spring, and the in-person iteration held later that semester consisted of a discussion on “crafting professional identities” as a method to mitigate the effects of vocational awe when entering the field of librarianship. Delgado and Noll graduated after these events, and they worked with Tillotson to identify the incoming leadership to continue the series. With the assistance of these new student leaders, the “Combating Burnout and

Imposter Syndrome” and “Job Seeking Panel” events were chosen to repeat during the next school year, given their high attendance and enthusiastic participation.

Tillotson and Snyder set the precedent for how a vibrant collaboration between a librarian and student leaders could function moving forward. The librarian schedules semi-regular virtual meetings using the chosen calendar application with clearly stated agendas and assigned action items. During these meetings, student leaders choose the topics and format (panel or single presenter), while the librarian facilitates a Zoom link and the physical space (as needed). Additionally, the librarian creates the presentation slides and marketing materials in coordination with their library’s marketing department. The student leaders then handle the distribution of marketing materials once materials are received, as well as providing refreshments from student organization budgets for the one hybrid event that occurs at the end of every spring semester. During each event, the librarian introduces the topic and moderates the open discussion while the student leaders manage the chat discussions and share a feedback survey at the end. For the panel events, all collaborators work to recruit from recent alumni, while the librarian serves as the point of contact for the chosen panelists, co-creates the discussion questions with said panelists, and acts as moderator during the event itself. As discovered by the first set of collaborators (Tillotson and Snyder), the success of each iteration is predicated on these roles and the division of labor being clearly stated and agreed upon by all collaborators involved. There must also be trust and transparency by all parties that tasks assigned will be completed as designed or barriers will be communicated in a timely fashion.

Methodology

For the research portion of CwC, the research team provided a Qualtrics survey to participants at the end of two events in one academic year (see Appendix A for the recruitment statement). The survey consisted of a statement of consent and 13 questions: six multiple choice and seven free text (see Appendices B and C for the statement of consent and survey). Of the 10 total survey respondents, only eight completed all 13 of the questions. Questions were designed to gather feedback regarding the format used and its efficacy on career preparation and community building within the library and information sciences (LIS) context.

The research team analyzed the survey data both quantitatively (multiple choice results) and qualitatively (free text responses). For the free text questions, the team transferred the data into an Excel spreadsheet organized by question number. A

random sampling of responses was selected for each of the free text questions for a preliminary round of in vivo coding. Two coders reviewed the samples together and drafted an initial list of possible codes that would be most effective at describing the nature of responses provided by participants, which provided the foundation for the codebook (see Appendix D for the codebook).

For the first formal round of coding, the researchers utilized elemental in vivo coding independently to engage with the full scope of free text responses. The coders then reconvened to compare their coding results and collaborate on pattern coding to find consistent themes. The second round reduced any redundancy within the codebook and reassigned updated codes. Lastly, the coders reengaged and updated the free text responses with the finalized codes (see Appendix E for the coding process example).

Upon coding completion, the results were quantified to visualize what patterns and themes were most commonly highlighted by participants' responses. The following most common themes describing participants experiences with CwC were identified:

- Practicing professionals:
 - The coders defined this as anytime discussion included peers working in and best practices for entering the field of LIS.
 - Participants mentioned this in 25% of their responses.
- Comfortable:
 - The coders defined this as both an environmental and experiential state of being for participants.
 - Participants mentioned this in 12% of their responses.
- Community building:
 - The coders defined this as the act of networking and identifying with peers both in and outside of the Master of Science in Information Sciences (MSIS) program.
 - Participants mentioned this in 12% of their responses.
- Supportive dialogue:
 - The coders defined this as reinforcement of perspectives and experiences through empathetic discussion.
 - Participants mentioned this in 11% of their responses.
- Distance education:
 - The coders defined this as students attending remotely for their courses and the CwC events.
 - Participants mentioned this in 11% of their responses.

- Differing perspectives:
 - The coders defined this as offering or presenting new perspectives that might be either challenging or insightful to attendees.
 - Participants mentioned this in 5% of their responses.

These additional four themes were identified in fewer than 5% of responses: attendance, frequency, validation, and hybrid format (see Appendix F for coding analysis). Three of the themes (attendance, frequency, and hybrid format) all occurred in concordance with statements about the specific needs of distance education students. Additionally, participants spoke about validation in connection with practicing professionals and community building. All of these themes will be explored further in the following sections focused on results and takeaways (see Appendix G for survey results).

Results

Career Connection

The beginning of the survey asked respondents to describe their relationship to the School of Information Sciences (SIS) and indicate the type of librarianship in which they were specializing. All respondents indicated they were graduate students in the program. In addition, the majority of the respondents chose academic librarianship, while the others chose public librarianship or archives and records management. This was welcome news, as the events are geared specifically to graduate students in SIS, and the chosen topics tend to lean heavily towards the academic librarian experience while still seeking to be relevant across the Library and Information Science (LIS) profession.

Crafting Comfortable Community

The third and fourth questions asked respondents to rate how comfortable they felt participating in the lively discussions encouraged throughout CwC events, and all of the responses confirmed they were either “extremely comfortable” or “somewhat comfortable.” The free text comments mentioned their comfort in the face of differing perspectives due to the supportive dialogue that was present. For example, one student noted “Calantha creates a welcoming atmosphere, and I felt I could share my thoughts easily.” Another respondent mentioned the number of attendees impacted their level of comfort participating, as “the more participants show up, the more comfortable I feel. It's harder when it's a small group.” All of these comments were heartening to hear, as

the event organizers prioritize creating a welcoming environment where attendees can feel comfortable speaking openly.

The fifth and sixth questions inquired if participating in CwC events helped students build community with peers within and beyond the SIS program. The majority said “yes” and only one stated “neither yes or no,” with the free text mentioning how the presence of supportive dialogue, differing perspectives, and practicing professionals all facilitate a rich community building atmosphere. For example, one student noted, “I was able to voice something that has been weighing on my mind, and received a nice response. It made me feel like I was not alone in my worries.” Meanwhile, another mentioned CwC “opens up the opportunity to engage with current and former students and like-minded folks.” This was wonderful to hear, as one of the main motivations of the event series is to foster community within the SIS community, particularly as many students are distance learners.

The next two questions sought to investigate if the CwC events impacted how prepared participants felt entering the librarianship field post-graduation. Most respondents affirmed participation helped them feel better about their career readiness, with one response remaining neutral. The comments emphasized the importance of these seminars to building a sense of community within the discipline and the validation of sharing perspectives, either differing or similar. Responses were typically oriented towards the development of professional identities constructed from conversations with practitioners who shared valuable experiences within the LIS field and immediately after the completion of their MSIS degrees. Through engagement in this constructive dialogue, participants recognized how conversing with their peers and practitioners can best situate them for post-graduate careers within the field. For example, one student mentioned “It validated the worries and feelings I’ve experienced...” and another stated “I realize that I am not the only one who struggles with imposter syndrome. I feel more confident in my future place as an information science professional.”

Constructive Commentary

The ninth question was meant to determine the frequency of attendance of participants and to gauge the engagement from new students. Responses for this question further emphasized the theme of hybrid and distance learning components as essential aspects of facilitating engagement, professional development, and community building. A majority of the respondents attended the events “online,” demonstrating the importance of remote events that engage students who are predominantly working professionals seeking a career in LIS.

The tenth and eleventh questions were focused on how the hybrid format (including both in-person and online components) influenced the participants' engagement and experience. A majority of the responses said the type of format (online or in-person) impacted how comfortable they felt participating in the discussion and described the hybrid format as especially supportive for the specific needs of distance education students. Free-text responses described the benefits of being able to engage remotely, stating how comfortable they felt discussing their perspectives with other participants. Respondents specifically referenced the overarching themes of community building and supportive dialogues as a product of CwC events.

The twelfth question was geared toward assessing and describing what components of CwC were seen as most beneficial to the participants. A substantial number of participants described the event as a facilitator for supportive dialogue with their peers and practicing professionals, with one respondent commenting "being able to learn about the strategies alumni employed to get hired as well [as] develop a sense of community with them was very lovely." Participants felt empowered to share concerns and voice opinions about the LIS profession, which they are preparing to enter. A couple of responses addressed concerns specific to entering the LIS field and how these concerns were addressed through engagement and dialogue. One student in particular stated "understanding that Calantha and other speakers are approachable and willing to help...helps to overcome my imposter syndrome."

The last question of the survey sought to gather final thoughts and recommendations for future CwC events in order to enhance the experience of future attendees. Recommendations by participants focused primarily on increasing engagement with new students to the MSIS program and continuing to expand the presence of existing librarian professionals in future CwC events. Participants had positive feedback regarding the discussion and format but felt that future CwC events could be enhanced by greater marketing visibility and earlier intervention akin to an "orientation" with incoming cohorts of new students. Furthermore, a couple of responses elaborated by describing a need for "peer-to-peer" discussion between current and new students within the program.

Takeaways

Creating Similar Events

From our team's experiences conducting and hosting the CwC events over the course of several semesters, we have developed a plethora of helpful guidelines for

optimizing student engagement and outcomes. These recommendations range from how these events are advertised to how organizers should engage with participants, as well as how to craft community amongst peers and facilitate the connection between students, staff, faculty, and other library professionals. The goal of these takeaways is to offer tangible and applicable strategies to other libraries and collaborators seeking to enhance community building, professional identity development, and facilitate a space for discourse all while tackling potential challenges and pitfalls that may arise.

One of the primary takeaways observed from each CwC event was a need for mindful marketing of the event to promote attendance with a manageable amount for discussion-based programming. Robust conversations are harder to foster in large group environments, so marketing efforts should not be focused on quantity and instead recruit attendees who are willing and able to engage fully. For example, CwC open dialogue worked best with around ten actively participating attendees. More would require splitting the attendees into groups (either through online breakout rooms or multiple in-person spaces). To keep attendance focused on current students, the CwC team recommends relying almost exclusively on collaborating student leaders to promote through their individual and student organization channels (i.e., “word of mouth,” social media, etc.), as peer-to-peer marketing mirrors the peer-to-peer conversations promoted at the events themselves. This strategic approach will also limit the number of attendees to the relevant programs and/or type of attendees (i.e., graduate students in information sciences). To replicate this, the CwC team recommends starting the planning process with a brainstorming session with student leaders to formulate a list of who they wish to attend the events, what community channels are in place to reach those desired attendees, and which partner would be responsible for what marketing step.

Some participants referenced a greater need for utilization of the LIS faculty to increase the visibility of the events. The CwC team acknowledges that faculty support is invaluable in the success of events focused on career preparedness, particularly as they may provide access to department level marketing channels and serve as career mentors when topics discussed overlap with their expertise. That being said, the CwC team cautions against relying too heavily on faculty as both promoters and event facilitators, as the differential power structure in academia could cause their students to feel an institutional pressure to attend or edit their responses to be perceived positively by the faculty in attendance. Additionally, collaboration with student organizations empowered graduate student leaders to engage in peer-to-peer marketing while diffusing institutional pressure for attendance. To seek a more balanced approach, the CwC team plans to limit faculty recruitment to professors of practice/lecturers (i.e.,

those with practical experience in the field) and/or tenure-track faculty whose research aligns with the topics being discussed. These individuals will be especially well-suited as guest speakers and recruiters for recent graduates working in the field who can join the annual alumni job seeking panel. On the other hand, choosing the themes, marketing the events, and leading the discussions should remain under the sole discretion of the student leaders with advice upon request from their subject expert librarian.

Given the inherent diversity of perspectives that will likely be present at these events, organizers and student leaders must prioritize fostering a healthy environment so that differing perspectives can be productively shared. Hosts and organizers should promote a “courageous” space in which discomfort is respected as a necessary function of the learning and networking process. In order to demonstrate and support respectful discussion, the CwC team recommends creating “rules of engagement” to be shared at the beginning of every iteration of the event series to help define respectful and considerate discourse during these events. These ground rules can be as vague or specific as needed, but mechanisms for allowing equal speaking time and resolving conflict should be clear. For example, the discussion leader(s) might want to consider explicitly stating that all participants will be given a chance to respond to a prompt either through chat (if online) or verbally before the next one is shared; this may help quieter attendees feel more comfortable knowing they will have a chance to consider their response before sharing and are encouraged to share in the format they are most confident using. In addition, it is advisable to include a statement about the steps that will be followed by event organizers if participants refuse to abide by the rules of engagement. In particular, the discussion leader(s) should be clear if or when participants might be asked to leave the space and after how many warnings. The goal is not to have to eject participants though, so de-escalation training might be a wise choice for new discussion leaders. At its core, CwC (and similar events) should foster differing experiences amongst peers and professionals, as this may help diffuse anxieties or concerns contrasted by either limited experience or perspective.

Organizers of events similar to CwC need to prioritize facilitating proactive and supportive discourse that empowers participants to voice potentially shared concerns, interests, and opinions. In particular, facilitators should encourage peer-to-peer led discussions allowing for a more personalized experience and assists in building community ties in a primarily online learning environment. This could mean encouraging student leaders to take on the discussion leader role on topics they feel especially passionate about and surveying peers about potential topics, speakers, or program improvement. Insights gained from student leadership allows discussions to

be built upon shared experiences amongst graduate students and enhances participants' sense of belonging and confidence in participating. Additional strategies to consider include asking student leaders to create conversation prompts focused on how comfortable participants feel about entering their discipline's professional world, dividing sessions into smaller groups to engage in more intimate peer conversations about individual experiences, and using ice breaker activities that allows participants to introduce themselves to the broader group with a more personalized touch.

Given the nature of remote learning as an essential component of the ever-evolving higher education ecosystem, event organizers should consider the format that best meets the needs of their chosen population, even if that means adding on the challenge of creating an equitable experience across hybrid platforms. In the case of CwC, the vast majority of the population the team focused on (i.e., information sciences graduate students) are distance learners, but many institutional and program events are still engineered for in-person populations. In light of this knowledge, the CwC team chose to prioritize hosting their events solely online, finding these had larger attendances and garnered positive feedback from distance learners who felt seen and included. For the first two years, CwC also included one hybrid event annually and while the few in-person attendees spoke highly of their experiences, these events were more sparsely attended and the online attendees were less engaged in conversation. Given these repeated observations, the team chose not to repeat a hybrid event in the third year, but they remain open to the possibility as needs may change. For similar events at institutions or with populations necessitating hybrid events, the CwC team recommends experimenting with some strategies that might alleviate the disconnect between in-person and online participants. For example, although engaging in hybrid events can be challenging, some tools help knit attendees across different formats together, and plenty of tools such as responsive microphones or a Meeting OWL camera can allow for more "conversational style" observation of in-person attendees for those attending online. In addition, assigning separate discussion leaders to the in-person and online spaces (with the online leader only attending through the chosen format) will allow each type of attendee to feel represented and responded to in a timely manner.

Feeling represented extends beyond the format, into the realm of chosen speakers and topics. The CwC team observed how hungry students preparing to enter the field are for the opportunity to interact with practicing professionals, as the most attended and best received event every year continues to be the panel of alumni who share their job seeking journeys and practical tips for following specific pathways into the profession. These events always prove highly interactive, as current students pepper the panel with questions relevant to the pathway they are most interested in pursuing.

While CwC focuses solely on information sciences, any number of disciplines are well suited to similar events, particularly professional programs such as nursing, education, business, social work, law, and journalism. These events offer a perfect opportunity for professionals (whether they are new or established) to share their unique professional experiences to help alleviate students' anxieties surrounding entering a new professional field. The CwC team recommends organizers of similar events focus on including cross-disciplinary voices to best represent all the varying options for budding professionals to pursue. This means relying on discipline-specific collaborators to provide insight into the diversity present within the field and how best to represent that intersectionality. This is where faculty from those departments (specifically professors of practice or lecturers) would be best aligned for collaboration, as they will have the inside perspective necessary to keep the discussions relevant to the current professional environment.

Future Research

Through conducting this series, a variety of questions came to light that were not initially addressed during the creation of our research plan or the conducting of the events themselves. For example, some lingering queries are as follows:

- What are the specific effects of event delivery (remote vs. hybrid vs. in-person) on depth of participation or achievement of learning outcomes?
- How would the comfort level of graduate students be enhanced or reduced by the inclusion of other types of participants (faculty, postdocs, undergraduates, etc.)?
- Would breakout rooms be an effective tool to increase participants' confidence in sharing their lived experiences and professional concerns with peers?
- How can the topics be expanded to include exposure and exploration of non-traditional or specialized librarianship?
- Would a longitudinal study be effective in connecting career preparation programming and professional outcomes for participants?

We recognize that future research on discussion-based programming and career preparation for LIS students has a wide swath of possible directions to explore. We hope that our work on the CwC series will inspire other LIS professionals and graduate students to collaborate on similar programming and scholarship that dives even deeper into building community and smoothing the transition between graduate students and practicing professionals.

Conclusion

The findings demonstrated how recurring student-led discussion events are an excellent way to prepare graduates seeking employment through fostering community building, encouraging thoughtful engagement, and sharing practicing professionals' experiences in the field. Markedly, discourse surrounding developing trends within the profession left student attendees feeling confident in finding new careers post-graduation. These insights reveal that librarians and other faculty could play an important role as mentors, offering meaningful professional experiences in addition to discipline and industry knowledge. Additionally, similar peer discussion opportunities may help graduate programs seeking to remain consistently aligned with workplace or professional trends in their respective disciplines.

An additional key takeaway was the usage of peer-to-peer conversations to enhance community amongst graduate students and existing practicing professionals while simultaneously diffusing anxieties that may be shared by peers within the program. The CwC team was successful in leveraging student-led chapters of professional organizations to greatly improve marketing and empower students within these events. We found that utilizing student organizations greatly benefited participants' sense of community and identity. Peer learning can reduce barriers for participation and improve students' confidence to share their experiences through supportive and mediated conversations.

Given the presence of hybrid students, there is a need for faculty and librarians to offer accessible means for students to be able to engage fully. Surveyed participants emphasized their needs for remote engagement to improve inclusivity. Through repetition and dedication to hosting these events consistently, the implementation and effectiveness of these conversations can increase over time and improve the overall quality of graduate students' experiences.

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Appendix A

Research Recruitment

You are invited to participate in a research study to survey University of Tennessee Knoxville graduate students, alumni, and staff or faculty members affiliated with the School of Information Sciences about their experiences with the Coffee with Calantha (CwC) event series.

This research study will administer a survey to better understand each academic unit's experiences with the CwC event series. Participants will be asked to respond to questions via an online survey (10 minutes) in Qualtrics based on their experiences with the CwC event series. This survey is for anyone who has participated in at least one CwC event, co-hosted by the University of Tennessee's liaison librarian Calantha and the School of Information Sciences. All submissions are anonymous.

This project has been reviewed by the University of Tennessee Knoxville Institutional Review Board.

If you have questions at any time about the research study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study), you may contact the researchers, Calantha Tillotson (ctillot1@utk.edu; 865-974-9015), Matthew Delgado (mdelgad8@vols.utk.edu), or Julia Noll (jnoll4@vols.utk.edu). If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer at utkirb@utk.edu or (865) 974-7697.

Click here to access the survey: [Survey Link]

Appendix B

Statement of Consent

Consent for Research Participation

Coffee with Calantha: Measuring the impact and value of a discussion-based series for graduate students

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We are asking you to be in this research study because you are a graduate student at the University of Tennessee who has previously attended a Coffee with Calantha event. You must be aged 18 or older to participate in the study. The information in this consent form is to help you decide if you want to be in this research study. Please take your time reading this form and contact the researcher to ask questions if there is anything you do not understand.

Why is the research being done?

The purpose of this research study is to better understand the impact of discussion-based engagement events on the career preparedness of LIS graduate students.

What will I do in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, you will complete an online survey. The survey includes questions about your experiences with these 'Coffee with Calantha' events and should take you about 10 minutes to complete. You can skip questions that you do not want to answer.

Can I say "No"?

Being in this study is up to you. You can stop up until you submit the survey. After you submit the survey, we cannot remove your responses because we will not know which responses came from you. Either way, your decision won't affect your relationship with UT Libraries, the respective student organizations, or the research services and resources you and your academic unit receive.

Are there any risks to me?

There are no foreseeable risks to you in taking this survey. Any details about you and your experiences with UT Libraries will be kept completely confidential. Survey results will be kept under password protection for three years following the survey. Most research involves some risk to confidentiality and it is possible that someone could find out you were in this study or see your study information, but the investigator believes this risk is unlikely because of the procedures that will be followed to protect your information.

Are there any benefits to me?

There is a possibility that you may benefit from being in the study, but there is no guarantee that will happen. Possible benefits include improvements, expansions, and personalization of library services to you and/or your academic unit. Even if you don't benefit from being in the study, your participation may help us to learn more about the impact and value of discussion-based events on career preparedness.

What will happen with the information collected for this study?

The survey is anonymous, and no one will be able to link your responses back to you. Your responses to the survey will not be linked to your computer, email address, or other electronic identifiers. Please do not include your name or other information that could be used to identify you in your survey responses. Information provided in this survey can only be kept as secure as any other online communication. Information collected for this study will be published and possibly presented at scholarly meetings.

Who can answer my questions about this research study?

If you have questions or concerns about this study, or have experienced a research related problem or injury, contact the researcher: Calantha Tillotson, ctillot1@utk.edu, 865-974-9015. For questions or concerns about your rights or to speak with someone other than the research team about the study, please contact:

Institutional Review Board
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville
2240 Sutherland Ave., Suite 2
Knoxville, TN 37919
Phone: 865-974-7697
Email: utkirb@utk.edu

Statement of Consent

I have read this form, been given the chance to ask questions and have my questions answered. If I have more questions, I have been told who to contact. By clicking "I consent," I am agreeing to be in this study. I can print or save a copy of this consent information for future reference. If I do not want to be in this study, I can close my internet browser or click "I do not consent."

Please click "I consent" below to proceed with participating in this study.

Appendix C

Survey

1. Please indicate your relationship to the School of Information Sciences (SIS):
 - a. Graduate student
 - b. Alumni
 - c. Staff or faculty member
 - d. Other
2. Please indicate the SIS track that you are completing or the type of librarianship that you practice:
 - a. Academic librarianship
 - b. Public librarianship
 - c. School librarianship
 - d. Archives and records management
 - e. Museumship
 - f. User experience or web design
 - g. Other
3. How comfortable do you feel contributing to the open conversations at Coffee with Calantha events by sharing personal insights, raising questions, etc.?
 - a. Extremely comfortable
 - b. Somewhat comfortable
 - c. Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable
 - d. Somewhat uncomfortable
 - e. Extremely uncomfortable
4. Please explain your previous response:
5. Did participating in one or more Coffee with Calantha events help you build community with other MSIS students, alumni, etc.?
 - a. Yes
 - b. Neither yes nor no
 - c. No
6. Why or why not?
7. Did participating in one or more Coffee with Calantha events impact how prepared you feel to enter the field post-graduation?
 - a. Yes
 - b. Neither yes nor no
 - c. No
8. Why or why not?
9. Did you attend the most recent Coffee with Calantha event online or in-person?
 - a. Online
 - b. In-person
10. Does the format (online or in-person) of Coffee with Calantha events impact how comfortable you feel contributing to the conversation?
 - a. Yes

- b. Neither yes nor no
 - c. No
11. Why or why not?
 12. What was the most impactful aspect of the Coffee with Calantha event(s) for you?
 13. Please provide any recommendations for changes to future Coffee with Calantha events and/or suggestions for future event topics:

Appendix D

Codebook

Codebook Instructions

- [Context is indicated in brackets]
- don't use subcodes
- copy and paste codes from the codebook to transcripts when coding
- use lowercase with few exceptions (PDFs, USDA, etc.)
- add any new codes to the codebook
- limit 2 codes per response
- Use semicolon between multiple codes
- Highlight outliers (only 1 instance of a code) in yellow

Overarching Themes -

[relevant across multiple questions]

- practicing professionals
- comfortable
- community building
- supportive dialogue
- distance education
- differing perspectives

Q4 -

[How comfortable do you feel contributing to the open conversations at Coffee with Calantha events by sharing personal insights, raising questions, etc.? Please explain]

- supportive dialogue
- comfortable [instead of engaging or welcoming]
- attendance
- differing perspectives [instead of conflict, age, or generational divide]

Q6 -

[Did participating in one or more Coffee with Calantha events help you build community with other MSIS students, alumni, etc.? Why or Why Not?]

- differing perspectives
- frequency
- distance education
- practicing professionals [instead of alumni or practical insight]
- community building [instead of engaging]

- supportive dialogue

Q8 -

[Did participating in one or more Coffee with Calantha events impact how prepared you feel to enter the field post-graduation? Why or Why Not?]

- practicing professionals [instead of professional identity]
- validation
- community building [both positive and negative; lack of in one instance; otherwise instead of differing perspectives at times]
- differing perspectives

Q11-

[Does the format (online or in-person) of Coffee with Calantha events impact how comfortable you feel contributing to the conversation? Why or Why Not?]

- comfortable [instead of indifferent and beneficial]
- distance education

Q12-

[What was the most impactful aspect of the Coffee with Calantha event(s) for you?]

- practicing professionals [instead of peers, professional challenges, alumni, or practical insight]
- supportive dialogue [instead of discussion or approachable]
- community building

Q13-

[Please provide any recommendations for changes to future Coffee with Calantha events and/or suggestions for future event topics]

- communication [instead of marketing or networking]
- distance education
- practicing professionals [instead of panel or professional balance]
- peer teaching [instead of MSIS curriculum or new students' needs]
- hybrid format

Appendix E

Coding Process Example

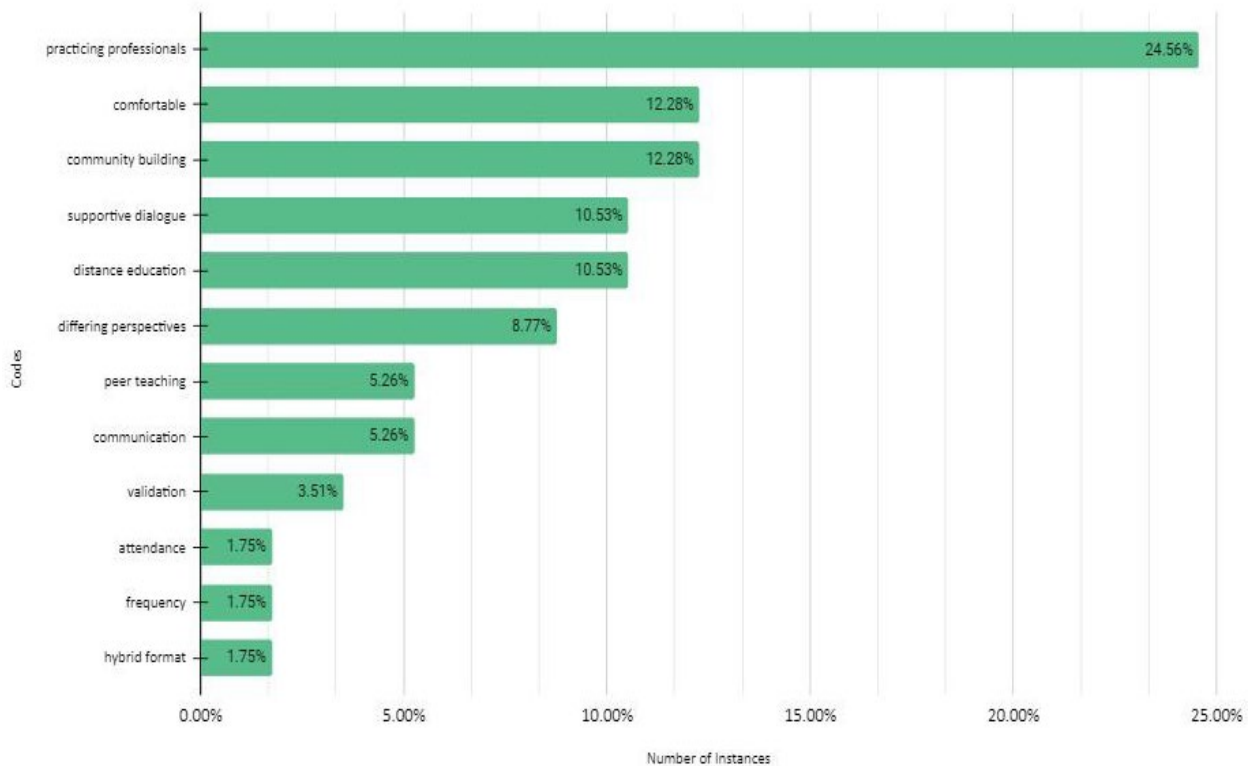
Question	Quotation	Coder 1	Coder 2	Finalized Codes
Q 4	Very open and engaging discussion. Felt I could ask questions without fear of looking dumb	comfortable; supportive dialogue	supportive dialogue; comfortable	supportive dialogue; comfortable
Q6	I was able to voice something that has been weighing on my mind, and received a nice response. It made me feel like I was not alone in my worries.	perspective; community building	supportive dialogue; community building	community building; supportive dialogue
Q8	Great interview tips from recent grads with skills and perspectives of the hiring process	perspective; professional identity	differing perspectives; practicing professionals	differing perspectives; practicing professionals
Q11	I have stage-fright whether it's behind a camera or in-person. I am shy. I guess being able to utilize the chat while on zoom is helpful, because I don't have to actually speak in front of everyone.	comfortable	comfortable	comfortable
Q12	Being able to learn about the strategies Alumni employed to get hired as well develop a sense of community with them was very lovely. I am extremely appreciative :)	comfort; alumni	practicing professionals, community building	practicing professionals; community building
Q13	Job seeking panel was wonderful. Would suggest (wish I had done) program focused for new-ish MSIS sTudents with best/most useful/least useful classes	practicing professionals, peer teaching	practicing professionals; peer teaching	practicing professionals; peer teaching

Appendix F

Coding Analysis

Codes	Number of Instances	Comments
practicing professionals	24.56%	Most frequent utilized code by large margin (6).
comfortable	12.28%	2nd Most frequently utilized code
community building	12.28%	3rd Most Frequently utilized code
supportive dialogue	10.53%	4th Most frequently utilized code
distance education	10.53%	4th Most frequently utilized code
differing perspectives	8.77%	
peer teaching	5.26%	
communication	5.26%	
validation	3.51%	
attendance	1.75%	
frequency	1.75%	
hybrid format	1.75%	

Frequency of Code Usage



Appendix G

Survey Results

1. Please indicate your relationship to the School of Information Sciences (SIS):
 - a. **Graduate student [Percentage - 100%; Count - 8]**
 - b. Alumni [Count - 0]
 - c. Staff or faculty member [Count - 0]
 - d. Other [Count - 0]
2. Please indicate the SIS track that you are completing or the type of librarianship that you practice:
 - a. **Academic librarianship [Percentage - 75%; Count - 6]**
 - b. Public librarianship [Percentage - 13%; Count - 1]
 - c. School librarianship [Count - 0]
 - d. Archives and records management [Percentage - 13%; Count - 1]
 - e. Museumship [Count - 0]
 - f. User experience or web design [Count - 0]
 - g. Other [Count - 0]
3. How comfortable do you feel contributing to the open conversations at Coffee with Calantha events by sharing personal insights, raising questions, etc.?
 - a. **Extremely comfortable [Percentage - 63%; Count - 5]**
 - b. Somewhat comfortable [Percentage - 38%; Count - 3]
 - c. Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable [Count - 0]
 - d. Somewhat uncomfortable [Count - 0]
 - e. Extremely uncomfortable [Count - 0]
4. Please explain your previous response:
 - a. Very open and engaging discussion. Felt I could ask questions without fear of looking dumb
 - b. Calantha and the Panel were very friendly and engaging. I felt very comfortable asking questions :)
 - c. The more participants show up, the more comfortable I feel. It's harder when it's a small group.
 - d. Calantha creates a welcoming atmosphere, and I felt I could share my thoughts easily.
 - e. I am an older graduate student (mid-50s) and my outlook certain topics are more aligned with my generation than the younger students. I'm not as comfortable speaking out on those as I am concerned that my perspective will be negatively viewed. For instance, my definition of "professionalism" is VERY different and not at all as negative as was voiced in the recent zoom. I fear creating conflict.
5. Did participating in one or more Coffee with Calantha events help you build community with other MSIS students, alumni, etc.?
 - a. **Yes [Percentage - 88%; Count - 7]**
 - b. Neither yes nor no [Percentage - 13%; Count - 1]

- c. No [Count - 0]
- 6. Why or why not?
 - a. Brings a different perspective to my education. Coming to this field later than most, it is informative to see how the Information Science field works and outlook from practitioners.
 - b. I was able to voice something that has been weighing on my mind, and received a nice response. It made me feel like I was not alone in my worries.
 - c. As a DE student we're at a disadvantage not being face-to-face. I think the events help with that a little, but more participation and more frequency may help more.
 - d. I learned more about the Alumni who very recently graduated the program, their experiences on the job hunt, and lessons learned.
 - e. Opens up the opportunity to engage with current and former students and like minded folks
- 7. Did participating in one or more Coffee with Calantha events impact how prepared you feel to enter the field post-graduation?
 - a. **Yes [Percentage - 88%; Count - 7]**
 - b. Neither yes nor no [Percentage - 13%; Count - 1]
 - c. No [Count - 0]
- 8. Why or why not?
 - a. Great interview tips from recent grads with skills and perspectives of the hiring process
 - b. I received specific information about what strategies worked and those that did not.
 - c. I followed up with [professor's name]. She informed me that the Graduate Student who arranged the event did not keep her informed of the event development process which limited her ability to contribute to the event.
 - d. It validated the worries and feelings I've experienced and helps to know others feel the same way.
 - e. I realize that I am not the only one who struggles with imposter syndrome. I feel more confident in my future place as an information science professional.
 - f. Good perspectives from currently working professionals to let me understand this new career field
- 9. Did you attend the most recent Coffee with Calantha event online or in-person?
 - a. **Online [Percentage - 88%; Count - 7]**
 - b. In-person [Percentage - 13%; Count - 1]
- 10. Does the format (online or in-person) of Coffee with Calantha events impact how comfortable you feel contributing to the conversation?
 - a. **Yes [Percentage - 88%; Count - 7]**
 - b. Neither yes nor no [Percentage - 13%; Count - 1]
 - c. No [Count - 0]
- 11. Why or why not?

- a. DE student so online is a great forum. I am able to attend remotely and am more comfortable (see previous comments).
 - b. I have stage-fright whether it's behind a camera or in-person. I am shy. I guess being able to utilize the chat while on zoom is helpful, because I don't have to actually speak in front of everyone.
 - c. I'm equally comfortable contributing in either format.
 - d. I am a distance-education student.
 - e. I am a distance education student. The format was ideal for my needs!
 - f. Distance student so only way to participate is online. If in Knoxville, would attend in person
12. What was the most impactful aspect of the Coffee with Calantha event(s) for you?
- a. Information from recent grads in varying fields of librarianship as to their job search process and tips for my upcoming search
 - b. Being able to learn about the strategies Alumni employed to get hired as well develop a sense of community with them was very lovely. I am extremely appreciative :)
 - c. Being able to speak various [university abbreviation] Librarians was helpful.
 - d. Discussion with others.
 - e. Voicing my worries and having others relate to what I was saying.
 - f. Understanding that Calantha and other speakers are approachable and willing to help. Helps to overcome my imposter syndrome.
13. Please provide any recommendations for changes to future Coffee with Calantha events and/or suggestions for future event topics
- a. Perhaps have a 'new student' orientation version where current students/library staff help orient new grad students to Calantha and the field in general (I would have appreciated that).
 - b. Maybe balancing school and work and life. As a new grad student, I have been struggling with this balance since the beginning of the semester.
 - c. I'd love to see more participation and I wonder if all my DE classmates are aware of these events! Maybe more publicity through additional outlets might help?
 - d. Ensure that [professor's name]/the MSIS practicum coordinator is kept fully involved so that they can maximize their contribution.
 - e. I really enjoyed the format and am extremely grateful UTK made it available through Zoom!
 - f. Job seeking panel was wonderful. Would suggest (wish I had done) program focused for new-ish MSIS sTudents with best/most useful/least useful classes