

UNC Greensboro: A diverse program for a diverse campus

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Abstract:

UNC Greensboro (UNCG) is a public university within the University of North Carolina system. UNCG had just over 20,000 students enrolled in fall 2018.[1] The university “offers 82 undergraduate majors in more than 100 areas of study, 74 masters programs and 32 doctoral programs.”[2] Our Carnegie classification is “Doctoral Universities: High research activity,” and we also hold a Carnegie classification for community engagement.[3] In practice, this means that the university is committed to both teaching and research, and we have developed many strong community partnerships.

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Book chapter:

*****Note: Full text of article below**



Chapter 25

UNC Greensboro

A Diverse Program for a Diverse Campus

Jenny Dale

Population Served

UNC Greensboro (UNCG) is a public university within the University of North Carolina system. UNCG had just over 20,000 students enrolled in fall 2018.¹ The university “offers 82 undergraduate majors in more than 100 areas of study, 74 masters programs and 32 doctoral programs.”² Our Carnegie classification is “Doctoral Universities: High research activity,” and we also hold a Carnegie classification for community engagement.³ In practice, this means that the university is committed to both teaching and research, and we have developed many strong community partnerships.

UNCG is classified as a minority-serving institution (MSI). In fall 2018, 49.4 percent of enrolled students identified as belonging to a racial or ethnic minority.⁴ Pell eligibility is a key performance indicator for UNCG, and since 2015 more than half of our students have been Pell eligible.⁵ Our program serves students from diverse backgrounds, which shapes the way we approach information literacy because our instruction needs to be engaging and accessible to students coming in with varying levels of experience and preparation.

Student success—particularly as shown by retention and graduation rates—has been a major area of focus for the university in recent years. The current university-level strategic plan at the time of writing (*Taking Giant Steps*) highlights three areas of transformation that both reflect and impact the information literacy work of the University Libraries. The first of these areas is student transformation, which “occurs when students acquire knowledge and develop skills and habits of mind necessary to be life-long learners, informed and engaged members of society, and successful in life and work.”⁶ Our information literacy program strives to align our work with this area, focusing particularly on critical analysis of and engagement with information both within and beyond the academic context. The second is knowledge transformation, which “occurs when understanding is enhanced through research, creative activity, critical analysis, and translation of research

to practice.”⁷⁷ The third, regional transformation, “occurs when local economies are strong and well-aligned with current and future needs, and when equitable access is provided to a reasonable standard of living and quality of life for all.”⁷⁸ In service of this goal, our program provides information literacy support for external populations (including local high schools) to promote equitable access to resources and support lifelong learning.

Operations

All liaison librarians teach, though teaching loads vary depending on the needs of our liaison areas. While our First-Year Instruction Librarians tend to have particularly heavy loads, our Business Librarian, our Social Science Data Librarian, our department head, and I also each taught at least eighty classes during the 2017–18 academic year. Additionally, there is no central mechanism for distributing instruction sessions. Research, Outreach, and Instruction librarians all promote, schedule, design, teach, assess, and document information literacy sessions in their own areas of responsibility, requesting help from colleagues as needed. We are very much an “all hands on deck” group.

As the Information Literacy Coordinator, I also coordinate with administratively separate departments within the University Libraries beyond the Research, Outreach, and Instruction (ROI) department teaching and learning efforts. Our Special Collections and University Archives (SCUA) department has an active instruction program of its own, and I frequently work with the Instruction and Outreach Archivist to foster collaboration in our work with disciplinary faculty between our two programs. I similarly coordinate with the teaching faculty and staff in the Digital Media Commons (DMC), a department within the libraries that focuses on instruction and support related to multimedia and digital design projects.

The libraries’ current liaison structure was put in place in 2013. At that time, we implemented a team structure with subject-specific teams (Humanities, Science, Social Science) and overlapping functional teams (Collection Management, Information Literacy, and Scholarly Communication). When I moved into my current role, I took over leadership of the Information Literacy functional team, which includes representatives from the three subject teams. In the past, this team has primarily been responsible for leading workshops and providing other opportunities for professional development on information literacy-related topics. For example, in summer 2016, we sponsored a “Teaching Tuesdays” series in which team members led short discussions on teaching topics. The functional team structure is currently under review, and we are discussing the possibility of the Information Literacy functional team becoming more of a community of practice. This is largely because my job description includes responsibility for providing professional development programming on teaching-related topics.

Finally, information literacy is the core focus of the libraries’ Critical Analysis and Digital Literacy Engagement (CANDLE) initiative, a task force formed in 2017 charged to “expand our existing programs to embrace and implement a broad range of information literacies including primary source literacy, digital literacy, media literacy, visual literacy, health literacy and data literacy.”⁷⁹ The initiative team includes members of ROI, SCUA, DMC, and the University Libraries’ administration unit and consults with disciplinary faculty and other university stakeholders about information literacy within the context of the undergraduate curriculum.

Program Scope

To address the scope of UNCG's information literacy program, I need to first address the program's structure. Organizationally, the program exists in the ROI department of the University Libraries. As the Information Literacy Coordinator, I also serve as a liaison and I report directly to the head of that department, as do seven other librarians who also have a combination of functional and liaison responsibilities. However, I also supervise two First-Year Instruction Librarians who share the primary responsibility for our First-Year Instruction program.¹⁰ One result of this reporting structure, however, is that my colleagues often conflate the boundaries of my supervisory responsibilities and my coordination work, seeing information literacy as primarily the concern of first-year instruction instead having pedagogical and programmatic implications for the whole department.

The First-Year Instruction Librarians target key 100-level general education courses for information literacy instruction, such as English 101 (College Writing I) and Communication Studies 105 (Introduction to Communication Studies). During the 2017–18 academic year, they provided more than 200 face-to-face instruction sessions for these and other first-year courses, reaching an aggregate total of more than 4,300 students. However, because we do not collect student-level data on our instruction sessions (such as student identification numbers), we are not able to take into account students who might come to multiple sessions in a year, making estimations of the percentage of our student body reached by the First-Year Instruction program nearly impossible.

As previously mentioned, in addition to our varied functional roles, all twelve librarians in the ROI department (including the two First-Year Instruction Librarians, myself, and the ROI department head) serve as liaisons to academic departments on campus. Liaisons taught more than 500 sessions in their academic liaison areas, primarily face-to-face, course-integrated, and assignment-driven workshops at all levels of the undergraduate and graduate curricula. Liaison-driven information literacy activities are not under my supervisory purview, but administratively are considered part of the larger information literacy program. According to my position description, my responsibilities include

- Lead instruction initiatives for the liaisons and take a leadership role in information literacy for the University Libraries
- Collaborate with First-Year Instruction team and other liaison librarians on innovative teaching practices and assessment
- Develop and implement an assessment plan for information literacy
- Provide professional development to other liaison librarians on teaching-related topics
- Maintain statistics and create annual reports on library instruction programs and initiatives
- Stay abreast of trends in information literacy and teaching

In other words, many of these responsibilities involve coordinating teaching and assessment activities for librarians who do not report to me. I sometimes feel uncomfortable “coordinating” the colleagues I don’t actually supervise. In some cases, I have needed to rely on my department head to ask colleagues to participate in information literacy and assessment initiatives so that the request is seen as having more authority.

While the bulk of the teaching in our information literacy program is face-to-face, an Online Learning Librarian in ROI works with liaisons to facilitate both synchronous and asynchronous instructional materials for an increasing number of online students. I am currently working with the Online Learning Librarian and the ROI department head to develop a new information literacy tutorial, which will be modular and designed around our information literacy learning goals.

Marketing

We take a pretty decentralized approach to marketing information literacy instruction and other collaborative work, especially in the one-shot format. Individual librarians tend to communicate directly with faculty and instructors in their areas of responsibility; most of us continuously promote one-shot instruction, often through direct email communication. Considering the teaching loads mentioned above, I consider us to be at (or beyond) full capacity for one-shot instruction, especially since many of the librarians in ROI pursue more time-intensive forms of course-integrated instruction alongside teaching one-shots. Nine teaching librarians in ROI averaged seventy-eight one-shot sessions last year, with four of those librarians teaching ninety or more sessions. The demand for information literacy instruction from disciplinary faculty has trended upward over the years, though our staffing has not increased at a commensurate rate.

Collaboration

First-Year Instruction Librarians lead workshops for new College Writing program and basic communication course instructors. These programs are also some of our biggest allies and advocates on campus, and we tend to be very well integrated in both. We have also cultivated a core group of information literacy advocates among UNCG faculty by offering Information Literacy Course Development Awards each year. I inherited this program from my predecessor (now the department head), and it continues to be an excellent marketing tool for the information literacy program. Faculty members apply to redesign courses to meaningfully integrate information literacy by partnering with a librarian or archivist. Successful faculty receive \$1,000 stipends, funded by the Libraries with the approval of the Dean of the University Libraries. As of fall 2018, we have had fifteen award recipients. Many of these faculty members have continued to integrate information literacy in later semesters, developing or deepening partnerships with libraries’ faculty.

We have used information literacy as a tool to extend our collaboration work outside the library with many other campus and community partners. For example, we provide information literacy workshops for federal TRiO programs and Frontier Set programs on our campus, including the McNair Scholars Program, which supports first-generation or

underrepresented minority undergraduate students who plan to seek doctoral degrees. Our McNair collaboration is a recent development, but a rich collaboration. Each McNair Scholar has a dedicated librarian mentor in addition to a faculty mentor, and we provide one-on-one research support as well as group instruction on topics such as literature searching and citation management. We have implemented a scaffolded program of support for the Middle College, a public high school that is located on our campus. We work with other high school groups as well, providing information literacy instruction and resource access for a number of high school programs in Greensboro and surrounding counties.

Assessment

One of the responsibilities listed in the Information Literacy Coordinator position description is to “develop and implement an assessment plan for information literacy.” This has been a major goal for me since I transitioned into the position in January 2017. ROI librarians have been encouraged to assess information literacy sessions since before I arrived at UNCG; however, that assessment has traditionally been done individually, idiosyncratically, and with inconsistent reporting. When documenting instruction sessions in our statistical software, ROI librarians are required to indicate whether they assessed the session, to describe what type of assessment was used, and to indicate what learning outcomes were assessed. Reporting beyond this basic information has been very inconsistent as we have not had a clear plan for sharing the results of our assessment efforts.

During the 2017–18 academic year, I began work toward developing and implementing an assessment plan for information literacy by setting out to revise our then-current information literacy student learning outcomes, which had last been updated in 2012.¹¹ At the beginning of the redesign process, I asked library liaisons to submit ideas for understandings and essential questions (based on Wiggins and McTighe’s *Understanding by Design*) related to information literacy for learners at different levels.¹² Librarians from ROI and SCUA submitted ideas, and I worked with our First-Year Instruction/Humanities Librarian to code the resulting qualitative data using an iterative process that drew on the work of Hall and colleagues and of Cornish, Gillespie, and Zittoun.¹³ Based on the results of this process, I drafted a set of information literacy learning goals for the University Libraries as a whole, then mapped these goals to student learning outcomes at the first-year/general education, disciplinary/major, and graduate levels. I workshopped these goals and outcomes in a series of meetings with liaisons, with representatives from SCUA and the DMC, and with the CANDLE team members and made them available for comment online in July 2018. The final draft was adopted at our liaison retreat on July 26, 2018.¹⁴ I am proud that, because they were developed through a consensus-building process, these goals reflect the University Libraries’ values as they relate to information literacy.

When the learning goals and outcomes were approved, our Associate Dean for Public Services brought together an ad hoc group of librarians involved in assessment of information literacy skills (several members of CANDLE and other liaison librarians) and charged us with taking a coordinated approach to assessment. In 2019, we are focusing on gathering assessment data related to the goal “Students will feel empowered to locate, access, and select information sources appropriate to their information needs.” The outcomes associated with this goal are

- Students will develop and use effective search terms for their information needs. (First-Year/General Education)
- Students will select appropriate general databases, catalogs, archival resources, and search engines for their information needs. (First-Year/General Education)
- Students will revise search strategies based on search results. (Disciplinary/Major)
- Students will identify appropriate discipline-specific databases and resources for their information needs. (Disciplinary/Major)
- Students will demonstrate expertise in using discipline-specific databases and resources. (Graduate)

We determined that we would collect and report assessment on an annual cycle, focusing on one goal each year. Working with this ad hoc group, I will analyze assessment data from ROI and SCUA instruction sessions (typically in the form of Google Forms surveys or more authentic instruments like worksheets) at the end of each academic year with the goal of drawing some general conclusions about student learning in the category selected for emphasis.

For many years, ROI librarians have been asked to collect data from in-class assessments. For the past three years, we have had a departmental goal related to final product assessment. Each liaison has been asked to assess final products (typically research papers or speeches) in at least one course they support. This assessment initiative has strengthened existing teaching partnerships, as liaisons tend to engage in final product assessment with classes they work with regularly. Anecdotally, liaisons have shared with me that they use final product assessment to inform instructional design when they work with the same or similar courses in subsequent semesters. I have led departmental workshops on final product assessment and authentic assessment in order to facilitate this process and often consult with other librarians at their request about their assessment approaches. I encourage all liaisons to assess these final products based on a rubric (many of them use the AAC&U Information Literacy VALUE Rubric),¹⁵ but I can require only the two librarians that I supervise to complete and submit this assessment.

Information literacy assessment is a major area of focus for me, and I continue to work with my department head and our Associate Dean for Public Services to determine the best ways to collect, store, analyze, and share assessment data in a more systematic way among all of our teaching librarians.

Pedagogical Highlights

As is the case for many academic libraries, most of UNCG's library instruction takes the form of one-shot workshops. The limitation of this format is well documented and familiar to all instruction librarians. However, I am proud of the pedagogical approach we take to the one-shot, which is student-centered and focuses on active learning, inclusive teaching, and authentic assessment. This approach is reflected in our information

literacy goals and outcomes, which emphasize the cognitive and affective dimensions of information literacy. While our one-shot-heavy program makes it difficult to engage in deeper teaching collaborations with disciplinary faculty on the same scale, several of our librarians do have opportunities to embed in courses as teaching partners, work with faculty on assignment design and assessment, and act as research mentors for capstone students, graduate students, and McNair Scholars.

One of my job responsibilities (and probably one of my favorites) is to provide professional development to other liaison librarians on teaching-related topics. I enjoy leading workshops for my teaching librarian colleagues on topics ranging from classroom assessment techniques to developing rubrics for authentic assessment to integrating concepts from the ACRL *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* into one-shot sessions.¹⁶ I also try to lead regular reflective teaching workshops to give teaching librarians some time and space to reflect on their practice.

Administrative Highlights

In many ways, our program is a well-oiled machine in terms of basic administrative mechanisms. We use a shared Google calendar for scheduling our instructional spaces and keep our personal calendars updated to show our individual availabilities for meetings and student consultations. However, we have recently reworked our instruction statistics portal to help foster more collaboration with other teaching units. This involved aligning the ROI, SCUA, and DMC instruction forms to collect data on what literacies we are teaching (based on the work of the CANDLE initiative) and which broad categories

| | |
|--|---|
| Which Student Learning Outcomes did you include in your session? Choose all that apply. ? | <input type="checkbox"/> Find |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluate |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Use |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Credit |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Create |
| Which literacies did you address in your session? Choose all that apply. ? | <input type="checkbox"/> Information Literacy |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Primary Source Literacy |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Digital Literacy |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Visual Literacy |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Media Literacy |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Personal Health Literacy |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Data Literacy |

of learning outcomes were covered (based on our established UNCG Libraries Learning Goals and Outcomes; see figure 25.1). Standardizing our statistics across all of the University Libraries instruction programs will also help us see which disciplinary instructors and courses work with more than one library unit and get a picture of whether and to what extent students are receiving comprehensive instruction on multiple literacies over the course of their educations.

Figure 25.1

Screenshot of LibInsight fields for tracking student learning outcomes categories and literacies addressed in instruction sessions

Another highlight relates to one of our instructional spaces, which reflects our approach to teaching by supporting active learning and peer teaching or group work. Until 2015, we had a single computer instruction lab in Jackson Library, UNCG's main campus library. However, I had the opportunity (as the then-First-Year Instruction Coordinator) to work with the previous Information Literacy Coordinator and the Associate Dean for Public Services to design a second instructional lab with Information Technology Services (ITS). While ITS maintains the lab and all of the technology in it, our program has first priority for scheduling the lab for instruction sessions. Because we were invited into the design process, we were able to contribute ideas that led to a larger instruction lab (40 computers) that is more conducive to collaborative work than our original lab.

Information Literacy Coordinator Profile

I officially became Information Literacy Coordinator and took on supervisory responsibility after serving as the First-Year Instruction Coordinator at UNCG for seven years. While this position was created in 2009, it did not initially have supervisory responsibilities. My predecessor has referred to her work in that position as “leading from the side,” a phrase that captures the tension between having coordination responsibilities for a program and having limited official supervisory control over that program. When she was promoted to the department head for ROI, the insight she had into this role based on her experience helped her advocate for some structural changes to this position.

My role is formal, but I have supervisory purview over only the First-Year Instruction program even though significant information literacy work happens in the liaison program. Because, like most teaching librarians, I wear a lot of hats, it is difficult to pinpoint exactly what percentage of my role is coordination. Since librarians primarily promote and schedule their own information literacy sessions, I do not spend much time on the logistics of assigning and scheduling classes. My regular coordination responsibilities are more in the areas of professional development for colleagues, assessment, and maintaining statistics related to the information literacy program.

What I Wish People Knew

One piece of advice I would give to new information literacy program coordinators would be to seek out opportunities to get involved in campus curriculum initiatives. This not only provides insight into the processes that go into curriculum development, but also affords an opportunity to remind faculty colleagues that information literacy has a place in the curriculum and that it is a shared responsibility, not belonging to only the library. I currently serve on the General Education Revision Task Force and my inclusion at the table has given me opportunities to dispel some misconceptions (information literacy is not just about searching the library catalog) and to advocate for thoughtful inclusion of information literacy and critical thinking in the next iteration of our General Education Program.

I transitioned into this role after seven years of teaching 100 to 150 information literacy sessions each year. I was tired, and I saw this as an opportunity to step back and have more time to spend on continuing to develop the information literacy program itself. What I learned is that a reduced teaching load did not magically free up my time to write a flawless assessment plan or to integrate revolutionary pedagogical approaches. I'm not any less tired or less busy with fewer classes to teach, but I do have more time to spend thinking about our program and how to make it the best that it can be for this institution. This involves a lot of trial and error, which is often invisible labor. It also involves staying current in the profession and being aware of trends and developments in pedagogy, which is fun but can also feel daunting and endless. I've learned—and am still learning—that you don't have to be perfect to be a good leader and a good advocate for the program.

Notes

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