
Project title: Assessment in Action: Academic Libraries and Student Success

Partners: Association for Institutional Research (AIR) and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU)

Overview

As part of its Value of Academic Libraries Initiative, a multiyear project designed to assist

Harrington School of Communication and Media at the University of Rhode Island in Kingston, Rhode Island.

We actively recruited applicants both inside and outside the library profession. Our selection of Miles, who is not a librarian but serves as disciplinary faculty member, provides complementary strength for the facilitation team. With a solid team of designer/facilitators in place, work began in earnest in January 2013 to develop the professional development curriculum for the librarian team leaders. We have used a variety of techniques and tools to maintain our momentum and connection, including in person meetings, regular phone calls, and online tools to test out approaches we are considering implementing within the program.

Teams Selected

In mid-January 2013 the online application was available and was promoted broadly by ACRL and our partners. We received 99 applications for the 75 available slots by the early March deadline, and a review panel of ACRL member leaders selected the 75 teams in early April. (AiA facilitators were excluded from the review process.) The institutional teams for AiA were selected through a competitive application process designed to ensure representation from an array of geographic regions and postsecondary institutions (i.e., community colleges, colleges, and universities).

The teams come from 29 U.S. states and 3 Canadian provinces spanning 7 time zones (from Hawaii to Nova Scotia). The colleges and universities these teams represent are accredited by the full spectrum of regional accrediting bodies: 15 by Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, Middle States Commission on Higher Education; 9 by New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Commission on Institutions of Higher Education; 21 by North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, The Higher Learning Commission; 4 by Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities; 12 by Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges; 3 by Western Association of Schools and Colleges, Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges; and 6 by Western Association of Schools and Colleges, Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities. There are also four accredited by Canadian bodies, and one institution is accredited by a medical accreditor.

In addition to geographic diversity, the selected teams represent all types of postsecondary institutions, as follows: 10 are two-year/technical colleges, 9 are four-year/baccalaureate-granting colleges, 31 are comprehensive (undergraduate/graduate) institutions, and 25 are universities (research/doctoral granting).

The strongest applications can be characterized in several ways:

- They were distinguished by the team composition and their readiness.
- They contained clear project goals with specific topics to investigate and close alignment with institutional priorities.
- They had the most potential to contribute to the greater library and higher education community.
- They contained statements of specific institutional support to help the teams see their projects through to completion.

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- Cohort Poster Creation
 - Gallery Walk of the Posters
 - Generating Themes and the Learning Agenda
 - Direct Instruction on Community of Practice
 - Cohort Leadership Roles
 - Direct Instruction on the Assessment Cycle
 - Direct Instruction on Writing Outcomes
 - Developing Outcomes from the Case Study
 - Developing an Outcome for Your Own Project
 - Getting Cohort Feedback on Your Outcome
 - Giving Cohort Feedback on Their Outcomes
 - Direct Instruction on Writing Criteria
 - Developing Criteria with Your Cohort

Asynchronous Forums

Using the Moodle elearning platform, facilitators regularly post questions, resources, and exercises for the AiA librarian team leaders. The bulk of the threaded discussions take place within each cohort of five librarian team leaders, but some open general discussion forums are posted for broader sharing. Sometimes facilitators present a reading, video, or set of questions to prompt discussion, other times members of the cohort lead and facilitate discussion on key concepts. The discussion topics follow.

Cohort based threaded discussion topics

Campus Team Overviews (Due April 23)

Campus Team Project Description (Due April 26)

Key Concepts (Complete Discussion by May 3)

Background Research Reflection (Due May 10)

Local Information Gathering (Due May 17)

Research Ethics Exploration (Due May 24)

Project Commonalities and Differences across the Cohort (Due June 7)

Inquiry Questions (Due June 14)

Mapping Your Project (Due June 21)

Leading a Team (Due June 21)

Discussion Post-Chicago

The AiA Workshop Experience and Your Leadership Role

Developing a Community of Practice

Setting Criteria and Getting Feedback (Due August 14)

Leadership and Communication – Big Picture (Due September 13 and 27)

Cross cohort threaded discussion topics

Getting to Know Each Other

Librarian as Team Leader

Sharing Resources for Background Research

Jam sessions

In July, we introduced optional Jam Sessions, which are live events, held in an Adobe Connect online meeting room with audio, text chat, and document sharing. These are intended to give team leaders another chance to talk through a topic and to engage in shared discussion and exploration with interested fellow team leaders and one facilitator. Topics have included the outcomes and criteria concepts in the assessment cycle and correlation/causation, which included discussion of commonalities and differences of assessment and research. Jam Sessions are approximately 45 minutes in length, depending on the number of participants and depth of discussion.

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To foster collegial relationships and increase the ability to easily connect, we organized several informal (pay on your own) opportunities for participants to connect with one another during conferences, as follows:

- We invited newly admitted librarian team leaders to a “meet and greet” on April 12, held in conjunction with ACRL 2013 in Indianapolis, Indiana. Facilitators were present as were the ACRL president, executive director, and other member leaders.
- We asked librarian team leaders to tell institutional researchers from their teams to join in an informal dinner meet up on May 19, held in conjunction with the AIR annual conference in Long Beach, California. One facilitator was present, and our AIR partners helped us secure space and include the event in their schedule.
- We asked librarian team leaders to tell assessment officers from their teams to join in an informal dinner meet up on June 4, held in conjunction with the Association for the Assessment of Learning in Higher Education in Lexington, Kentucky. One facilitator was present.
- We organized optional “dine around” opportunities for librarian team leaders on June 27, held in conjunction with the ALA Annual Conference in Chicago, Illinois. By making reservations for tables of eight at several local restaurants and providing sign-up sheets on site, we encouraged groups to continue connecting and supporting each other by cohort, type of institution, project topic, or assessment method.

Analyzing Progress

Although ACRL has a long history of initiating and sponsoring innovative training, an approach that focuses on blended, peer-to-peer learning is an enhancement to the existing models. The AiA professional development program differs from oth

