

Breaking Down Silos to Build Up Student Success: Library, Faculty, and Student Support Partnerships in Credit-Bearing Classes

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Introduction

First-year seminars are courses that use regular meeting times with first-year students to promote community development and deepen student learning through small class sizes and increased student engagement. “The highest-quality first-year experiences place a strong emphasis on critical inquiry, frequent writing, information literacy, collaborative learning, and other skills that develop students’ intellectual and practical competencies” (Kuh 2008). In addition to academic outcomes, many first-year experience programs orient students to what it means to be a successful college student by acquainting them with resources and offices on campus and helping them further to develop “time management, study skills, career planning, [and awareness of and appreciation for] cultural

diversity” (Barefoot and Fidler 1992). There are several approaches to first-year seminar structures, and Barefoot and Fidler describe five categories of the most common first-year seminar types (1992). Grand View University’s Core Seminar I has developed into a hybrid of three of the types described: “extended orientation seminars,” “academic seminars with generally uniform academic content across sections,” and “academic seminars on various topics” (1992). Core Seminar I is a three-credit course in which students meet either two or three times per week, depending on scheduling, for an entire semester. Grand View University’s Core Seminar I course was developed to address university concerns regarding student engagement, retention, and progression and designed to integrate critical inquiry, writing, and information literacy, aligning closely with the above-mentioned recommended areas of emphasis from Kuh and the Association of American Colleges and Universities (2008). All sections include common writing, research, academic planning, and financial literacy assignments. Typically taken within a first-year student’s fall semester, each section of Core Seminar I serves between twenty and twenty-five students and is a requirement for all incoming traditional first-year students. Though it varies depending on university enrollment, generally there are between sixteen and eighteen sections in the fall and two to three in the spring. Each section has a separate theme, and students are able to select a theme that aligns with their curiosity, interests, or general discipline of study. The Grand View University Library performs an essential role in supporting student learning as part of student success programs that begin at admission and extend through graduation. Each librarian is responsible for four to seven sections in the fall, with the percentage of time individual librarians devote to Core Seminar I varying depending on the time of year and type of position. In the fall, core seminar commitments take up between 60 and 80 percent of each librarian’s position and are divided between Core Seminar I and Core Seminar II, discussed later in this chapter.

Core Seminar I is staffed by three instructional team members or partners. A faculty member is responsible for course theme, grading, and mentoring. The course’s embedded librarian becomes the personal librarian for students. The final partner is a completion coach, representing a program unique to Grand View called GV Complete. Completion coaches are trained as student success professionals, provide financial planning support, and serve as academic advisers in the first year. By connecting students with this multifaceted support team, Grand View University truly

brings to life its mission by approaching student success holistically (2019).

The pros and cons, as well as a more comprehensive explanation of this program, are presented in the following pages, beginning with an overview of the institution, historical context, and campus-wide curriculum revisions and moving into more detail regarding implementation, construction, assessment, and evolution of the program. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the implications for the future.

In 2012, the Grand View University Library participated in a successful pilot project that partnered teaching faculty and librarians in a course designed to give new college students the academic competencies and connections necessary to be successful. The collaboration was later expanded to include student success professionals. Core Seminar I was created as part of a full core curriculum revision. The piloting of this high-impact course was the culmination of a four-year process begun with the arrival of a new provost in 2008 and resulting in a total general education core curriculum revision.

Grand View University Overview

A description of the campus environment will help to put this seminar into context. Grand View University is a private, not-for-profit, Lutheran (ELCA) university located in Des Moines, Iowa. Des Moines is a metropolitan area of more than a half a million people. Grand View itself has a student population of about 2,000 with an average full-time enrollment of around 1,650 students. It offers forty undergraduate and four graduate degrees. About half of the students live on the sixty-acre campus (Grand View University 2014, 78). Although Grand View is a liberal arts institution, its largest majors are business administration, nursing, and education. Approximately 20 percent of the incoming first-year students are non-Caucasian, and 50 percent of first-year students are the first in their families to attend college (Grand View University 2018a, 19). The Grand View University Library staff currently consists of three full-time librarians, 2.75 support staff, and ten part-time student employees. The library's collection includes nearly 90,000 titles and approximately 120,000 volumes.

Curriculum Revisions

Grand View University's previous general education curriculum consisted of fifty-six separate outcomes that were "essentially too broad to

accurately assess” (Grand View University 2014, 78). Early in the revision process, it was determined that assessment would be built into the new general education curriculum. As a result, the Core Curriculum Subcommittee, consisting of both faculty and staff, created mandatory rubrics for assessment of any of the new core outcomes. In addition, there was a shift from a requirement-based model to one based upon a set of competencies (Grand View University 2014, 81). It is believed that, for students to truly master these competencies, they must repeatedly practice them in various academic settings. This led to the creation of Outcome Iterations. These iterations are Critical Inquiry, Written Communication, Oral Communication, Global Awareness, Vocation, and Information Literacy (Grand View University 2014, 82). The redesign requires students to take a certain number of courses in which each of these iterations have been embedded. For example, a first-year student would need to take a minimum of four courses throughout their college career in which information literacy is a significant component (a transfer student would need fewer iterations). To facilitate this shift, three core seminars were created. The focus of this chapter, Core Seminar I, incorporates Critical Inquiry, Written Communication, and Information Literacy. Core Seminar II has an emphasis on Global Awareness and Information Literacy, while Core Seminar III explores Vocation. All students, including those transferring in at any level, must take Core Seminar II and Core Seminar III, and all first-year students must take Core Seminar I regardless of preadmission coursework (Grand View University 2014, 81–82). The remainder of the required iterations are integrated into major-specific coursework.

Information Literacy Curriculum Revisions

Concurrent with the core curriculum restructuring, the Grand View Library was also struggling with structural weaknesses in its information literacy curriculum. Like many academic libraries, single sessions were the most commonly used mode of instruction. It was the practice of librarians to teach one of these sessions in all sections of the first-year English courses (English 101). In these single sessions, librarians would cover topics such as information analysis, online search strategies, resources use, thesis statements, databases, and citations in one class period. Additionally, it was not uncommon for instructors in other 100-level courses to request similar library instruction. This duplication of instruction, coupled with the fact that an increasing number of students were not taking the first-year English course because they had already met the requirement in other ways (e.g., transferring in advanced

placement credits or community college credits taken while in high school), created a situation in which the library's curriculum was both redundant and unsystematic. Early concerns about not being able to provide information literacy instruction to all first-year students were confirmed in 2013, when the Grand View Library headed up a statewide study to assess the information literacy skills of these students. In this study, the *TRAILS* ninth grade-level test, developed by Kent State University Libraries, was administered to all incoming first-year students enrolled at participating institutions (Kent State University Libraries, 2019). Results on individual questions varied, but overall, the study indicated that students were graduating from high school without mastering ninth grade-level information literacy concepts. There will be further discussion of this study later in the chapter.

Information Fluency Campus Plan

Two events occurred that made the new Information Fluency Campus Plan possible. First, the library director was appointed to the Core Curriculum Subcommittee, placing her in the perfect position to bring forward issues with the current information literacy curriculum in a forum where change could be facilitated. Second, the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) put out a call for teams to attend the Information Fluency in the Disciplines: *Literature Workshop*. Grand View University assembled a team that consisted of the provost, the chair of the Core Curriculum Subcommittee, the library director, and a member of the literature faculty and successfully secured a workshop scholarship. From this, the library director developed the Information Fluency Campus Plan, built around the structure of the developing general education curriculum. In the plan, introductory information literacy instruction would be included in the newly created Core Seminar I. Each of the librarians would be embedded in several sections of this required course (Rees 2010, 2–3). Intermediate information literacy skills and concepts would be taught in Core Seminar II, which also carried an Information Literacy iteration (Rees 2010, 3). This, again, would be taught by an embedded librarian, but in fewer, more focused, sessions. Finally, advanced information literacy sessions would be taught in upper-division courses, mostly the capstone course, by a combination of librarians and teaching faculty (Rees 2010, 3). This new approach remedied many of the problems with the previous information literacy curriculum. Since all incoming first-year students had to take Core Seminar I, it ensured that they would receive the same level of instruction. This assured teaching faculty that students

would be prepared to engage in college-level research moving forward and eliminated the need to offer this level of instruction in any other lower-level courses.

Library Instruction Modules

Once the new general education core curriculum structure and Information Fluency Campus Plan were in place, librarians developed a new library instruction curriculum. All Core Seminar I sections have required common elements that are designed to help students begin to understand information creation and evaluation, academic honesty, scholarly conversation in relation to their own research and writing, and general academic expectations at the college level. The culminating common assignment that brings together students' Written Communication, Critical Inquiry, and Information Literacy outcomes for the course is the Synthesis Project.

The library instruction modules were designed to provide consistency with Core Seminar I information literacy outcomes while allowing for flexibility within the course themes determined by the individual sections' teaching faculty (Appendix 3.1). These modules include required and optional supplementary sessions that are sequenced throughout the semester. Ideally these are delivered at the point of need where information literacy skills would be directly applied within an assignment or activity. To help with communication and planning, a chart was created articulating the focus of a given information literacy session (or module, using those terms interchangeably), session details, and how that session relates to course information literacy outcomes based on the university's Information Literacy Rubric. This chart continues to be essential in the planning and scheduling process each semester as well as helpful with new Core Seminar I faculty as they grow in their understanding of the course partnerships.

Module Content

Though the information literacy modules can be delivered throughout the semester in almost any sequence, they are most often introduced to the Core Seminar I faculty in the order listed below.

Core Modules (Required)

- Introduction to the Librarian and Library Services: This brief introduction to library personnel, services, and resources helps to emphasize the

partnership between the faculty member, the embedded librarian, and the completion coach and serves as a way to help students recognize their student support network (Cottrill Lloyd 2018, 4). This typically happens within the first week of classes and is a pop-in-style appearance in the classroom. In some instances, the librarian and the completion coach may also stay for the rest of the class period in order to participate in the remaining activities and better get to know the students.

- **Finding and Evaluating Sources: Open Web:** While many students come with basic search engine skills, they often do not understand what is appropriate to use at a college level. This session addresses advanced web search techniques and works with them to teach about website evaluation criteria such as authority, accuracy, purpose, currency, and bias. Librarians work with students to learn more about where to look to inform their evaluation and determine the value and relevance of a website for course use. This addresses the information gathering and differentiation criteria within the university's Information Literacy Rubric (Cottrill Lloyd 2018, 4).
- **Finding and Evaluating Sources—Print/Formal Publishing:** Depending on the embedded librarian's schedule, the arc of the course as envisioned by the instructor, and the nature of scholarly publishing within the course theme, this module may be presented as either one or two sessions and focuses on information gathering and differentiation. In it, students are introduced to the library's catalog and WorldCat.org and learn about the library's borrowing policies. Additionally, students learn how to use the library's subscription databases, database limiters, and effective search strategies to retrieve and refine results. As part of the module, students work to assess the value of a resource in relation to their information needs and work to identify and utilize elements of a scholarly resource. Most sections break this module into two sessions, allowing time for students to process session content while leaving plenty of opportunity for individual searching. During open work time, a librarian moves throughout the classroom and answers questions (Cottrill Lloyd 2018, 4).
- **Resource Use and Analysis:** In this module, students grapple with the difficult tasks of detecting and understanding author bias and resource viewpoint, determining relevance at a deeper level, and digging more deeply into the article or resource structure to better understand how to read and interpret what a resource presents. Activities guide students in answering questions such as:
 - How is a scholarly article structured?
 - What makes an article relevant?
 - What factors (beyond related keywords) need to be present for a resource to be useful for the assignment?

Differentiation and evaluation are the targeted rubric criteria from this module (Cottrill Lloyd 2018, 4).

- Citations: Depending on the section, students will use either *APA*, *MLA*, or *Chicago* (author-date) format as their citation style. Though some faculty may not have a preference as to which style their students use, the librarians have found it best for each instructor to select a single citation style for their students to use throughout the entire semester rather than allowing students to choose a citation style on their own. This helps with consistency, allows students to seek out assistance from their peers for basic questions, and better helps the embedded librarian prepare examples and lesson activities. In addition to learning the basics of formatting citations in a specific style, students are introduced to quotations, summaries, and paraphrasing (Cottrill Lloyd 2018, 4). This module addresses responsible use and integration from the Information Literacy Rubric.
- Plagiarism: In this module, activities designed by the librarian help students develop a better functional understanding of what plagiarism is and how to avoid it, recognize differences between plagiarism and copyright, and identify different types of plagiarism. Though this module does have some overlap with the citations module and the two are often presented around the same point in the semester, the two modules are typically delivered separately to allow time for activities and examples (Cottrill Lloyd 2018, 4). These activities address elements found within the responsible use criterion on the course's Information Literacy Rubric.

It is important to note that, while all the core modules help provide consistency in terms of student learning outcomes, they are not prescriptive. Embedded librarians have agency to formulate their own approach to lesson planning and delivery so long as information literacy criteria are addressed. This not only allows the embedded librarian to be authentic in instruction, it also allows them to tailor their lessons to the Core Seminar I course theme, address specific concerns of the faculty member, and be responsive to student needs.

Optional Modules

The optional modules focus more specifically on scaffolded projects faculty use to incorporate information literacy elements or library-related technologies. Examples include:

- Using technology tools to create a poster for presentation
- Engaging in all stages of the research process, from topic selection to revising final drafts
- Shifting from a large, general topic to a specific thesis or research question

- Crafting annotated bibliographies (which could also be incorporated into the citations module)
- Guided workdays within the library's computer lab classroom
- Individual research consultations

Implementation

Implementation of the Core Seminar I embedded librarian program began in collaboration with the Core Seminar I coordinator. Together, they established a shared understanding of information literacy in the Core Seminar context and developed general guidelines for the information literacy-related common assignments and modules. The librarians held information sessions for those interested in serving as Core Seminar I faculty. The library also coordinated with the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) to provide formalized presentations and workshops for faculty. These workshops articulated the Grand View University definition of and expectations for embedded librarians and how the Information Literacy iteration should be addressed within the course.

In these workshops, library staff explained that the embedded librarian is a true instructional partner in the course, not only teaching the information literacy modules, but also helping design research assignments and classroom activities, assisting students with technology (including the university's learning management software), assisting with institutional assessment, and occasionally grading information literacy activities and assignments. Librarians helped teaching faculty orient themselves to the university's Information Literacy Rubric as well as the menu of embedded modules offered for Core Seminar I.

In addition to the above CETL workshops, the Core Seminar I coordinator administers a required annual workshop for faculty, embedded librarians, and completion coaches involved with Core Seminar I course implementation. Typically held in late May, the work done in the annual Core Seminar I Faculty Training helps to reinforce the collaborative nature of the course in planning, delivery, and assessment as well as the need for consistent student output and outcomes. This workshop emphasizes the need for faculty to be engaged in the modules delivered by both embedded librarians and completion coaches.

Because each embedded librarian has worked with an average of five to six sections each semester over the course of several semesters, they have a cross-sectional view of Core Seminar I and can provide guidance to

faculty and each other regarding best practices with assignments, modules, and the common requirements and lessons learned. This is particularly helpful for those who are new to the course to address gaps or inconsistencies between sections.

Librarians meet with faculty to work backward with the final projects and outcomes in mind, scaffolding assignments and activities along the way. These meetings between the embedded librarian and faculty member should take place well before the start of the semester in order to discuss expectations for each role, coordinate module schedules and instruction spaces/computer labs, and brainstorm activities specific to the section theme. An added benefit from these partnerships is that faculty and embedded librarians consult not only about Core Seminar I but also discuss integrating information literacy instruction into other courses, upcoming professional development workshops, and other campus happenings.

Faculty new to Core Seminar I are naturally enthusiastic about their course theme and may overload the course with thematic content at the expense of learning outcomes. Embedded librarians can also help to ensure that the focus of each section remains on the overall outcomes and doesn't drift too far into that instructor's chosen theme. A few of the themes that worked particularly well as a vehicle for Core Seminar I's Written Communication, Information Literacy, and Critical Inquiry outcomes were:

- “The Pursuit of Happiness,” which explored the roots of happiness, how it is cultivated, and examined the history, psychology, and ethics of happiness in relation to the hectic nature of modern lives.
- “Lying, Deception and Fraud,” which examined why people lie; the mechanics of dishonesty; what makes people susceptible to “deception, wacky superstitions, phony scientific claims, and all manner of cheap hustles”; and how to recognize them.
- “Surviving the Zombie Apocalypse” helped students imagine and research ways to survive in an apocalypse; combining science, sci-fi, and fantasy, they explored topics from several disciplines. (Grand View University 2018b)

Campus Relationships

In a survey of faculty who have utilized an embedded librarian in their classes, a vast majority indicated the relationship to be beneficial. In 2013, 92.59 percent indicated satisfaction with the program, and in 2015, that percentage increased to 94.74 percent (Rees et al. 2017, 39). In 2017,

100 percent of survey respondents rated their experience partnering with an embedded librarian as either beneficial, very beneficial, or extremely beneficial (Rees 2017). In addition to overall satisfaction, faculty have felt well supported by their embedded librarian, with the responses averaging 4.81 on a five-point Likert scale, with five indicating most supported. Similarly, faculty felt the embedded librarian partnership helped contribute to their success as an instructor, with the responses averaging 4.44 on a five-point scale. Faculty also felt embedded librarians contributed to the success of the students enrolled in their course, averaging 4.63 on a five-point scale.

Selected quotes from faculty who have partnered with embedded librarians include: “I was skeptical at first, since I had never worked that closely with an embedded librarian, but learned quickly how valuable a resource he was going to be.” Another instructor noted, “Class is always better when I have a librarian to collaborate with.” Yet another offered, “They add a dimension that helps convey the idea of the class being a joint exploration of a topic by the students and those teaching the class.” In terms of student skill development, one faculty member shared, “I think that this has contributed a great deal to the success of Freshmen in developing information literacy skills.” In relationship to developing lasting connections with students, one faculty member observed, “The embedded librarians are vitally important to student success, adding another resource for the students to help them early on in their academic journey. I see students continue to access these librarians even after the course is over” (Rees et al. 2016).

Beyond strengthened relationships across campus with teaching faculty, the partnerships have led to improved relationships with students. Library staff have seen increased one-on-one research consultations from students who return to their librarian for help with classes beyond Core Seminar I. By interacting so closely with a librarian in their first year, the students recognize the library as an essential part of their support network on campus, which is one of the program’s main goals. Additionally, students indicate on course assessments that the library instruction was helpful in completing assignments and that they would ask a librarian for help in the future (Rees et al. 2017, 32).

Implementation Challenges

As is the case with many first-year seminar courses, it can be difficult to find the appropriate balance between course outcomes and course content. It is easy for Core Seminar I to be seen as a catchall and “try to

accomplish too much with incoming [first-year students],” as one faculty member indicated (Rees et al. 2016). Additionally, some faculty may voice support, but not necessarily build a culture of collaboration within the classroom that is evident to both students and the rest of the partnered support team. One faculty member shared, “Some of the students weren’t receptive to having separate classes within a class, if that makes sense. I think it overwhelmed some of them and felt like busy work. It’s probably my own fault at needing to integrate it more smoothly” (Rees et al. 2016).

This type of partnership also presents challenges in terms of library schedules, staffing service points, and instruction preparation. When the Core Seminar I curriculum was first implemented, library staff consisted of four librarians. Since then, librarian staff has been reduced to just three librarians working with 2.75 support staff and evening student worker staff to cover all aspects of library collections and services. It is important to recognize that this program would not be possible without the contributions of flexible support staff. During peak times in the semester, all three librarians may be in meetings or teaching and unavailable to help with walk-in patron needs or requests. It is crucial that support staff be flexible and that the library provide adequate training for them to grow in their expertise to be able to manage these added responsibilities.

Additionally, scheduling instruction often depends on space availability. With just one computer lab available within the library, embedded librarians often coordinate with faculty and campus staff to find alternate locations. Sometimes this may mean utilizing other busy technology spaces on campus, reconfiguring the course schedule, or redesigning information literacy activities to work around the need for a computer lab.

Because Core Seminar I is a course beyond any single discipline’s scope, it can be difficult to find consistent faculty staffing. Also, even with a standardized course format, the rigor of mandatory assignments and faculty and students’ expectations varied across sections, and students discussed these disparities with their peers. In addition, themes such as “superheroes” or “hip-hop” were ill suited to the course’s purpose and hard to equate with academic outcomes in the minds of students. They often misinterpret the purpose of the course, missing the fact that the theme should be treated as a framework through which course outcomes are met.

Furthermore, in Core Seminar I’s earliest form, faculty both taught the course and served as academic advisers for their cohort until the end of students’ first full academic year, when students were reassigned to their departmental advisers. In many cases, this advising responsibility added significantly to faculty workload. Moreover, transferring students to new

advisers after a single year sometimes led to a lack of continuity or a feeling of being “passed around.” While ongoing professional development has been successful in addressing many of the aforementioned conceptual problems, a separate approach was taken in tackling issues with the first-year advising structure. In order to alleviate some of the pressure on faculty, decrease student dissatisfaction, and increase faculty retention as well as remedy capacity concerns related to the GV Complete program, the university elected to take a novel approach. Specifically, completion coaches were added as embedded partners as an integral component of Core Seminar I.

Evolution with GV Complete

By adding Completion Coaches to Core Seminar I, the university built a more explicit bridge between financial/business services, student services, and academic units and enhanced campus support networks for students. This expansion built upon the existing GV Complete program.

Initiated in 2014, GV Complete is a whole-degree planning program created by and implemented at Grand View University to provide financial and academic planning support to its students. By helping students plan for their entire degree, both financially and academically, the program’s goal is to help students lower the overall cost of their degree, reduce borrowing, and complete their degree in a timely fashion without sacrificing the experience of having a personalized, supportive educational environment. GV Complete is physically located in the Student Life Office suite and organizationally reports to both Academic Affairs and Enrollment Management. One of the desired outcomes of the program is to help break down silos and to nurture interdepartmental service for our students.

All the completion coaches have master’s degrees, ranging from counseling to educational leadership to higher education administration. Academic advising training is provided by the academic departments and academic affairs leaders on campus. The financial aid and business offices train coaches to better address students’ college-related financial planning needs.

Completion coaches are partnered with first-year students to create a four-year financial plan, projecting potential loan debt and clarifying plans for out-of-pocket expenses. Early in the program’s implementation, this financial planning support has proved to be beneficial to the students, as they are more engaged in the financial process and have demonstrated a better understanding of their financial choices. Initially this was

accomplished primarily through one-on-one required meetings; however, as the program began to scale up, capacity for these meetings became a concern, and relationship building became a greater challenge due to time constraints, making these thirty-minute sessions more transactional in nature.

In response to the above challenges, the program was expanded in fall 2017 to include the partnership with first-year seminars and completion coaches serving as first-year academic advisers. They continue to partner with their Core I students through degree completion, even after the advising responsibility transfers to a faculty member in the student's area(s) of study. The addition of completion coaches to Core Seminar I helped reduce faculty advising loads and furthered interconnection among the students, Core Seminar I faculty, embedded librarians, and the completion coaches themselves. In essence, a comprehensive support network for first-year students was established. It also allowed for the ability to deliver academic planning and financial literacy in a group setting, scaffolded through a full semester rather than a "one and done" meeting format.

Currently, the GV Complete team includes six full-time completion coaches as well as one half-time colleague. Each completion coach partners with either two or three sections of Core Seminar I, with that work comprising approximately 25 percent of their overall responsibilities. Completion coaches deliver a minimum of four modules within each section throughout the semester. Modules include introductions (a session where the support network is explained and goals are discussed; this is typically held in conjunction with the embedded librarian introductions early in the semester), two modules involving self-service academic planning software training/developing a comprehensive plan of study, an engaging financial literacy session reviewing the FAFSA filing process, and a budgeting simulation session designed to address money management and consumer choice (Cottrill Lloyd 2018, 3). Early on, it became clear that establishing a working relationship with the faculty, embedded librarians, and completion coaches was key in crafting an experience that was cohesive, timely, and flowed smoothly. While these additions further compressed the amount of thematic content faculty were able to emphasize within the class, continued faculty development worked with faculty to help them understand that thematic content was a vehicle for course outcomes rather than the primary focus of the class. As a result, this transition went fairly well.

Integration into Core Seminar I has been beneficial in that this allows for completion coaches to get to know students over a longer period as

they navigate and grow in their first year. Through this purposeful incorporation into the classroom, completion coaches can observe the students in an academic setting, noting how they are adapting to college and how they communicate with faculty and connect with their peers.

Establishing Assessment Practices

Early in the core curriculum revisions, the library staff knew how essential it would be to have librarian voices as a part of the assessment process. The librarians crafted an information literacy assessment rubric based on the ACRL (2000) *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* (Appendix 3.2). This rubric was designed to evaluate students' understanding and application of information literacy concepts and was approved by the Core Curriculum Subcommittee.

The rubric focuses on student skill development and application surrounding purpose (designing or defining a clear thesis or research question), information gathering, evaluation, differentiation, integration, and responsible use (Core Oversight Committee 2014, 2). With the introduction of the ACRL *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education*, the Grand View University librarians cross-referenced the Frames with the existing rubric to ensure course outcomes and student skill development still aligned with evolving information literacy standards. Given the university's commitment to ACRL Standards, the librarians concluded enough overlap existed and decided not to propose a core curriculum Information Literacy Rubric revision, as the existing rubric was and continues to be a relevant and important tool for longitudinal assessment using consistent criteria.

Students' information literacy skills are evaluated using the above-mentioned rubric to assess their synthesis project. In addition to this direct measure, the library also receives feedback regarding student perceptions of their own learning and experiences via end-of-the-semester reflection papers and library-related questions included on the university-wide course-specific instructional assessment tool.

The completion coaches also use existing assessment artifacts, namely the reflection papers. Historically, GV Complete has also conducted surveys and focus groups; however, these tools examined the program holistically and did not isolate attitudes specifically related to Core Seminar I. Additionally, completion coaches previously used a proprietary tool designed to improve and assess student understanding of financial literacy. Recently this tool became unavailable due to vendor discontinuation.

As a result, the completion coaches recognize the need for more assessment and are seeking new methods for data collection.

Embedded Librarian Assessment

The collaboration between embedded librarians and teaching faculty in Core Seminar I has been very successful. As of fall 2018, the librarians have partnered in a total of 121 sections.

The statewide study mentioned earlier helped embedded librarians determine a comparative baseline for student achievement and benchmark Grand View students' skills against similar student populations. The results of the study indicated that incoming students at Grand View and several other colleges were underprepared for academic research (Grand View University 2014, 145). The study, simply referred to as Information Literacy Skills—Statewide Pilot was conducted at five academic institutions in Iowa at the beginning of the 2013–2014 and 2014–2015 academic years. Institutions were asked to administer the assessment before any information literacy instruction had occurred. Overall, across all participating institutions, students achieved “D” range scores with average percentages in the mid-to-low sixties (Rees et al. 2015). During both studies, there were five questions for which fewer than 50 percent of the respondents gave “fully correct” responses (some of the questions required more than one of the provided options be selected by respondents to be considered a correct answer) (Rees et al. 2015). The concepts assessed within those questions were topic focus, resource selection, identifying bias, and reading citations (Rees et al. 2015). The results of the study were shared with participants and the broader Iowa library community during sessions at two statewide conferences in 2015. Particularly for the institutions in the study, the results showed a troubling trend, but also established the need for extensive basic instruction.

Through the use of both direct and indirect measures, librarians have been evaluating student advancement toward information literacy proficiency as well as monitoring the effectiveness of library instruction. Information literacy performance improvements can be seen as students advance through the core curriculum and continue through their major course of study. The rubric for information literacy evaluates student performance of the six criteria mentioned earlier. Student performance is evaluated by the teaching faculty in courses with a major information literacy component using a five-point scale (excellent, good, satisfactory, poor, and unsatisfactory), and the raw data is made internally available. Librarians regularly analyze this data as a direct measure of student achievement.

In order to examine overall program assessment, student performance improvement is measured using the same rubric throughout their entire academic career. A first-year research paper is judged based upon expectations placed upon a senior-level research paper. To fully comprehend the impact of the library curriculum on student achievement of outcomes, one must also study data from Core Seminar II. Like Core Seminar I, librarians in Core Seminar II teach collaboratively with faculty, but in this course, the emphasis is on more advanced information literacy skills. In addition, all transfer students must take this class, so partnering in these sections provides librarians the opportunity to deliver information literacy instruction to these students early enough in their university acclimatization to have an impact.

The library has analyzed data from both these courses, along with that of upper division courses. This section focuses on assessment data collected over the 2017–2018 academic year (AY) and compares it to that of previous years. Given that students are assessed on the basis of senior-level expectations, Core Seminar I scores are better than one might expect. Overall averages for Core Seminar I were poor in 2017–2018 AY (Core Oversight Committee 2018). This is fairly consistent with those from previous years. Based on 2017–2018 AY data, first-year students had the most difficulty with integration, differentiation, and evaluation. These score averages ranged from low-satisfactory to poor, but it is worth noting that none were within the unsatisfactory range. Although recent averages are a promising start, a marked improvement can be seen when compared with Core Seminar II scores where overall averages moved from poor to good as compared to Core I. This is an improvement of two rubric performance categories. There was also a noticeable growth in achievement of all five criteria with students performing at satisfactory or above and nearly reaching excellent achievement in the responsible use category (Core Oversight Committee 2018).

Another measure of the success of the teaching faculty/embedded librarian collaboration in Core Seminar I can be seen in student perceptions of their experiences in the course. Grand View University regularly administers an assessment intended to measure students' perceptions of their own learning. Students are asked to reflect on whether or not the library instruction was helpful in completing their research and if they would be inclined to seek out a librarian for future projects. Students react to these questions on a five-point scale, with five reflecting the most positive response. The cumulative average of responses to the "helpfulness" question is consistently between 3.8 and 4.4. Scores for the "future projects" question are slightly lower, but still positive, ranging from 3.6 to 4.1.

In addition, faculty in several sections of Core Seminar I assign a reflection paper in which students are asked to respond to a set of prompts designed to inspire thoughtful examination of their experiences in Core Seminar I. Responses varied but, for the most part, reflected the same attitudes demonstrated in the course assessment results. Namely, students felt that sessions and librarians were helpful, learned where to find credible information, and knew where to go to find citation help. Although these narratives are not necessarily an indicator of student information literacy skill application, they do offer clues as to what students are retaining during instruction and what they believe to be important.

Dr. Brittany Cottrill Lloyd, Core Seminar I coordinator and Core Seminar I teaching faculty, offered her own observations on the responses she has received from the reflection papers and her perceptions of the effect having an embedded librarian in her classes has had on her students. She shared, “in course reflections, students talk about how supported they feel by the team and how much they learned” (Brittany Cottrill Lloyd, email message to author, January 10, 2019). She has also seen evidence that students create connections with librarians as a result of having an embedded librarian in class. “It’s great in other classes, like [Composition] to be doing a lesson on research and ask students ‘Who could you get help from if you’re struggling to find research for this assignment?’ There are always students who chime in and name their embedded librarians from seminar, even though the librarians aren’t embedded parts of [Composition]. I had students write thank you letters last year to someone on campus who had an impact on them: several wrote to our librarian and several wrote to our completion coach” (Brittany Cottrill Lloyd, email message to author, January 10, 2019). Again, although this anecdotal evidence is hard to quantify, it is nonetheless an indication of the positive impact of having librarians embedded in key courses like Core Seminar I.

Even though most of the data has been favorable, some results suggested the need for additional instruction. Assessment data from the first few years of Core Seminar I showed that, even after completing the seminar, students still struggled with the concepts of purpose, information gathering, responsible use, and evaluation. Around that same time, the campus experienced an increase in instances of plagiarism, and faculty requested more support to improve compliance. As a result, the librarians began placing a greater emphasis on these topics and added more activities to increase awareness and practice. This methodology has had a clear impact. However, students continue to demonstrate difficulty with evaluating sources, emphasizing the need for further curriculum adjustment. To aid in any future restructuring, librarians would like to see the

inclusion of a new preassessment of student information literacy proficiency, preferably within the first two weeks of classes. This would clearly determine which rubric criteria needs more instructional focus. This approach would be more efficient and more useful to students, as it would highlight those gaps and would also allow librarians to better determine the effectiveness of instructional methods.

GV Complete Assessment

One goal of the GV Complete program is to impact retention and graduation rates. Research suggests that comprehensive student support is effective in improving these rates, particularly an “integrated approach to [their] retention efforts that incorporates both academic and non-academic factors into the design and development of programs to create a socially inclusive and supportive academic environment that addresses the social, emotional, and academic needs of students,” with early alert, assessment, and monitoring systems (Lotkowski et. al. 2004, viii). By weaving academic, financial, transition to higher education, path to graduation, relationship-building, and problem-solving experiences into these seminars, a socially inclusive and supportive academic environment is in place. Grand View has seen a 5.6 percent increase in students registered for fall 2018 as well as a 4.7 percent increase in fall-to-fall first-year retention (Pamela Christoffers, email message to author, August 21, 2018). While it is too early to measure graduation rates, early indications are that positive change in that direction is also underway.

Anecdotally, students indicate that this course is helpful as a foundation for their university education. One student shared,

This has helped me take control of my education and remain responsible for it through making sure that I register for the correct courses, stay on top of the work within the courses, and turn in quality work to obtain the grades I need and want. I make sure that I am taking the accurate courses that I need, turning in my work on time, correcting my work, getting help if needed, and study for test and examines [sic] in order to stay on track with my degree path.

Another wrote, “One thing I love about Grand View is they are very invested in my future and my outcome with the nursing program. I also really enjoy always having someone available to me, I never feel like I’m completely lost because there is always someone around to help.”

This level of support and relationship requires a great deal of “person power.” Each seminar has more than twenty students enrolled in each section, and committing the teaching faculty, embedded librarians, and completion coaches staffing is an undertaking not easily accomplished. The embedded librarians and completion coaches also have administrative responsibilities that can be difficult to balance with the time it takes to provide personalized attention to each of their students. Grand View’s commitment to this challenge supports the collaborative vision necessary for this model to work. In reflecting on the course design, Dr. Cottrill Lloyd said,

I think the three-team-approach also shows that GV actually stands behind supporting students holistically: on transitional issues, on academic issues, on research support, and on academic and financial planning. The relationship between the three also models collaboration, which is good for students to see and shows that all parts of campus believe in students’ ability to be successful. (Brittany Cottrill Lloyd, email message to author, January 10, 2019)

A formal assessment plan for the GV Complete collaboration with the Core Seminar I is currently being developed, as previous data has been difficult to systematically quantify and one of the tools used for financial literacy assessment was discontinued by the vendor.

Implications for the Future

While there are many successes from the Core Seminar I partnerships, it is also important to regularly evaluate programs to ensure the outcomes continue to serve students and align with university goals. Grand View University is currently examining a few concerning trends surrounding student progression. Problems with teaching faculty turnover, inconsistent expectations between sections, and poor course theme selection have been previously discussed and contribute to some student dissatisfaction with the course. However, over the last few years, deeper concerns have come to the forefront as a result of a high number of students receiving a D or an F in the course. According to Ms. Pamela Christoffers, associate vice president for institutional effectiveness, this is largely due to a significant number of students who stop attending class at or near the Thanksgiving break. This behavior often results in the student’s failure to complete or submit key assignments, which in turn, has a significant impact on grades and grade point averages (Pamela Christoffers, associate

vice president for institutional effectiveness, in discussion with the author, January 11, 2019). A student earning a low grade point average in the first semester is problematic; according to Ms. Christoffers, internal research has shown that students with grade point averages at or below 2.4 after the first semester are less likely to progress to graduation (Pamela Christoffers, associate vice president for institutional effectiveness, in discussion with the author, January 11, 2019).

These issues, coupled with the importance Grand View University places on persistence and completion, made it evident that a course redesign was imperative. In response, several groups were tasked with studying course outcomes, common assignments, and pedagogies. Although discussions of potential modifications are ongoing, several recommendations have already been proposed. What has been most encouraging about this process is that it has only served to reinforce the faculty's commitment to the foundational principles around which the course was originally built. Goals such as preparing students for the rigors of academic pursuits continue to be the central outcome of the course. Moreover, the importance of information literacy as a primary academic competency, along with recognition of the value of the collaborative instructional model in improving student success, has also been validated.

Grand View University launched this program with the intention of addressing issues related to student engagement, retention, and progression. Though every program has challenges, the university has found the Core Seminar I collaborative approach to be a valuable model for effectively supporting student academic success and developing a sense of community, belonging, and personal growth. Dr. Cottrill Lloyd, Core Seminar I coordinator, summarizes it this way:

[Core Seminar I] engages students by connecting the various components of their education really concretely. The course and instructional setup of the course connects the transitional issues students are going through, the issue of making choices and considering consequences, and the development of intellectual curiosity and becoming a critical consumer of information. (Brittany Cottrill Lloyd, email message to author, January 10, 2019)

It has also produced complementary outcomes. In breaking down the silos rampant in higher education, Dr. Cottrill Lloyd added,

Personally, I think the relationships and understanding of how other parts of the institution work has been most valuable (related to the way the

system works; obviously student growth and relationships with them is also super valuable). I think academia can be very insular at times. It's nice to work against the norm and work with others to understand how things work and how to best support students. (Brittany Cottrill Lloyd, email message to author, January 10, 2019)

Grand View University has found instructional partnerships such as those in Core Seminar I to be valuable to student success. With each partner bringing expertise from their own fields, the team is better aligned to meet students where they are and more holistically support students in the first year.

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Grand View Library General Embedded Modules

Focus of Session	Session	Course Outcomes from Rubric
Introduction to the Librarian and Library Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of library personnel, resources and services. • Help students recognize why a librarian is a part of the class. 	
Plagiarism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the different types of plagiarism, i.e. intentional, unintentional, paraphrasing, summary, quoting, etc. • What constitutes plagiarism and how do you avoid it? • Copyright discussion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible Use <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will follow laws, regulations and institutional policies regarding access to and use of information resources, and demonstrate an understanding of plagiarism, including accurate use of bibliographic citations.
Citations: Annotated Bibliography, Reference Pages, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn how to use APA, MLA or Chicago (Author-Date) citation format. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible Use <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will follow laws, regulations and institutional policies regarding access to

(Continued)

Focus of Session	Session	Course Outcomes from Rubric
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proper use and citation of quotations, summaries and paraphrasing. • Creation of a good annotated bibliography. How is it structured? What should be included? 	<p>and use of information resources, and demonstrate an understanding of plagiarism, including accurate use of bibliographic citations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will synthesize the ideas or information from multiple authors into a product using one's own words and direct quotes appropriately.
Resource Use and Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detect and understand author bias and viewpoint. • How is a scholarly article structured? How do you read, understand and analyze a scholarly article? • What makes an article relevant? What factors other than keywords need to be present for it to be useful for the assignment? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differentiation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will differentiate between types of sources and use them appropriately. • Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will analyze sources critically and accurately by assessing accuracy, authority, currency, relevance and bias.
Finding and Evaluating Information: Websites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced web search techniques. • Evaluate websites to determine author, accuracy, authority, purpose, currency, and bias. • Determine the value of a website and articulate it in an annotated bibliography. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information Gathering <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will access relevant, needed information using a wider variety of sources, most being quality resources. • Differentiation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will differentiate between types of sources and use them appropriately.

Focus of Session	Session	Course Outcomes from Rubric
Finding and Evaluating Information: Books	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the library catalog and World Cat to find quality books; will also discuss associated borrowing policies. Identify and utilize various parts of a book, i.e., table of contents, index, introduction. Determine the value of a book and articulate it in an annotated bibliography. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information Gathering <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will access relevant, needed information using a wider variety of sources, most being quality resources. Differentiation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will differentiate between types of sources and use them appropriately.
Finding and Evaluating Information: Journal Articles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use electronic databases to find scholarly articles; use search strategies and limiters to refine results. Identify the parts of an article. Identify the characteristics that make a periodical scholarly or non-scholarly. Determine the value of an article and articulate it in an annotated bibliography. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information Gathering <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will access relevant, needed information using a wider variety of sources, most being quality resources. Differentiation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will differentiate between types of sources and use them appropriately.

General Embedded Modules (Optional)

Focus of Session	Session	Course Outcomes
Technology session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This session is flexible and tailored to fit the course needs and objectives. Possible topics include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce technologies, such as video software and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will synthesize the ideas or information from multiple authors into a product using one's own words and direct quotes appropriately.

(Continued)

Focus of Session	Session	Course Outcomes
The Research Process	<p>Prezi, that will enable students to create an innovative project beyond the traditional paper.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce technologies that will assist students with managing information. • Choose a good research topic. • Creating an outline. • Drafting and revising process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will define a question, thesis, or problem to investigate.

Source: Grand View University, reprinted with permission.

Grand View University Information Literacy Rubric

Criteria	Excellent	Good
Purpose	Designs focused and concise question, thesis, or problem recognizing all relevant concepts	Designs focused and concise question, thesis, or problem recognizing many relevant concepts
Information Gathering	Accesses high quality, subject-specific, research-based information from a broad range of sources and types	Accesses high quality, subject-specific, research-based information using multiple sources and types
Evaluation	Analyzes research-based, subject-specific information from a broad range of sources in various formats, and assesses accuracy, authority, currency, relevance, and bias	Analyzes research-based, subject-specific information from multiple sources and assesses accuracy, authority, currency, relevance, and bias
Differentiation	Differentiates between multiple sources and nearly always uses them appropriately	Differentiates between multiple sources and typically uses them appropriately
Integration	Synthesizes concepts and information from multiple research-based sources in various formats with one's own ideas to create a high-quality original product	Synthesizes concepts and information from multiple research-based sources to create an original product
Responsible Use	Consistently follows laws, regulations, and institutional policies regarding access to and use of information resources and demonstrates an understanding of plagiarism, including accurate use of bibliographic citations	Consistently follows laws, regulations, and institutional policies regarding access to and use of information resources and demonstrates an understanding of plagiarism, usually including accurate use of all types of bibliographic citations