Dartmouth Library Activities and Practices Supporting First Year Students' Transition to College Life

Matariki Network of Universities Library Benchmarking Project

Dartmouth College Library

Contents

Survey Questions

In this survey we are considering library activities and practice for programs that support the transition of first year students to university life.

The first element of each of the statements listed below outlines the main body of the request. The bullet points that follow the first element provide guidelines to consider when responding to this request. Each partner is invited to respond to each of these requests with regards to the cohort that is being reported on.

(Data will be gathered from the Libraries and not from the students)

Describe the cohort.

- Include details on size, specific characteristics, and identified learning needs.

Explain how the library works with the cohort.

- Briefly outline the history of this relationship
- Include details of the other groups in the University who work with this cohort.
- Highlight the way the library and these other groups work together.

Outline the policy framework that supports the specific programme that is provided for the cohort.

- Include details on the organisational structure, the library setting, the wider institutional priorities, and government influences.
- Indicate how important these are in determining library activities and services.

Outline the training and support provided to library staff to ensure that they can successfully participate in the specific programme that is provided for the cohort.

- List the skills and characteristics required by library staff.
- Provide examples of resources used in the library staff practice.

Provide details on the programme that is provided for the cohort.

- Include information on staff resources, contact hours, technology, techniques, and materials / resources used.

Explain how the specific programme provided for the cohort aligns with the wider library teaching and learning programme.

- Indicate what elements of the specific programme are usable and transferable
- Detail what constraints the library has experienced in developing the specific programme.

Detail the data / information that the library uses to inform the effectiveness of the specific programme that is provided for the cohort.

- Include what data is gathered on the specific cohort before the specific programme is run.
- Include other data gathered during or following the conclusion of the specific programme.
- Highlight any specific qualitative or quantitative data that demonstrates impact.

In considering the data / information gathered by the library on the specific programme provided for the cohort provide details on what works and what could work better.

Describe the cohort.
- Include details on size, specific characteristics, and identified learning needs.

Answers are based on the current first-year class:

Class Size: 1,113

■ Male ■ Female

Backgrounds

■ African-American ■ Asian-American ■ Latino ■ Native American ■ Multi-racial ■ Caucasian
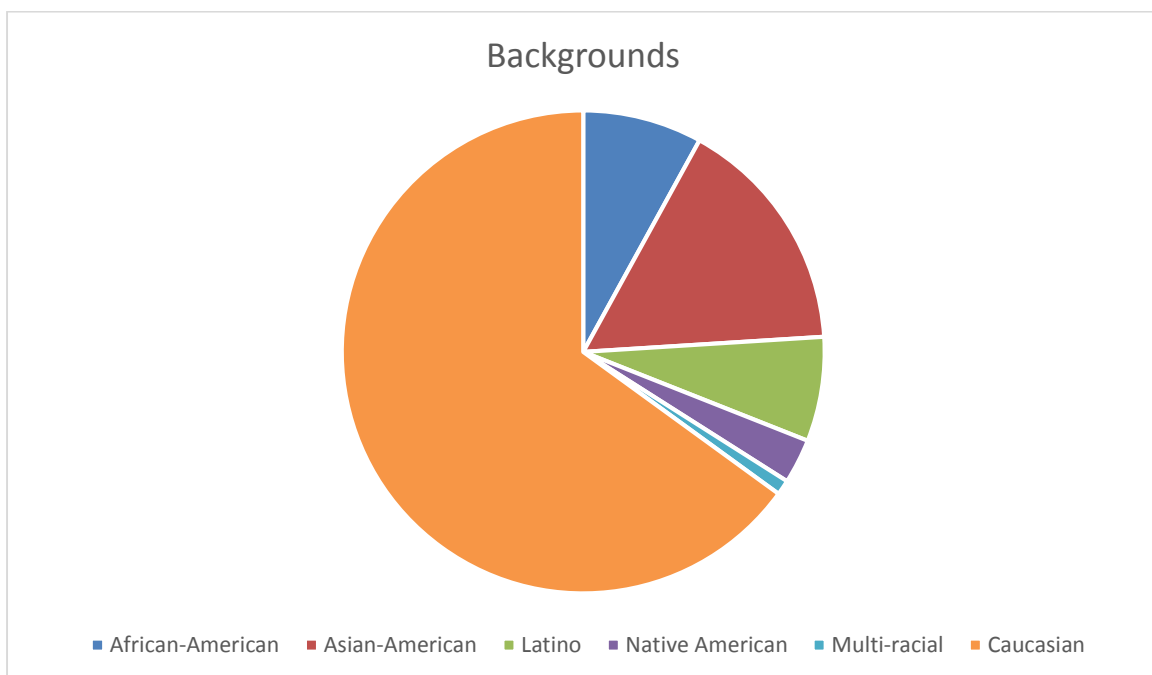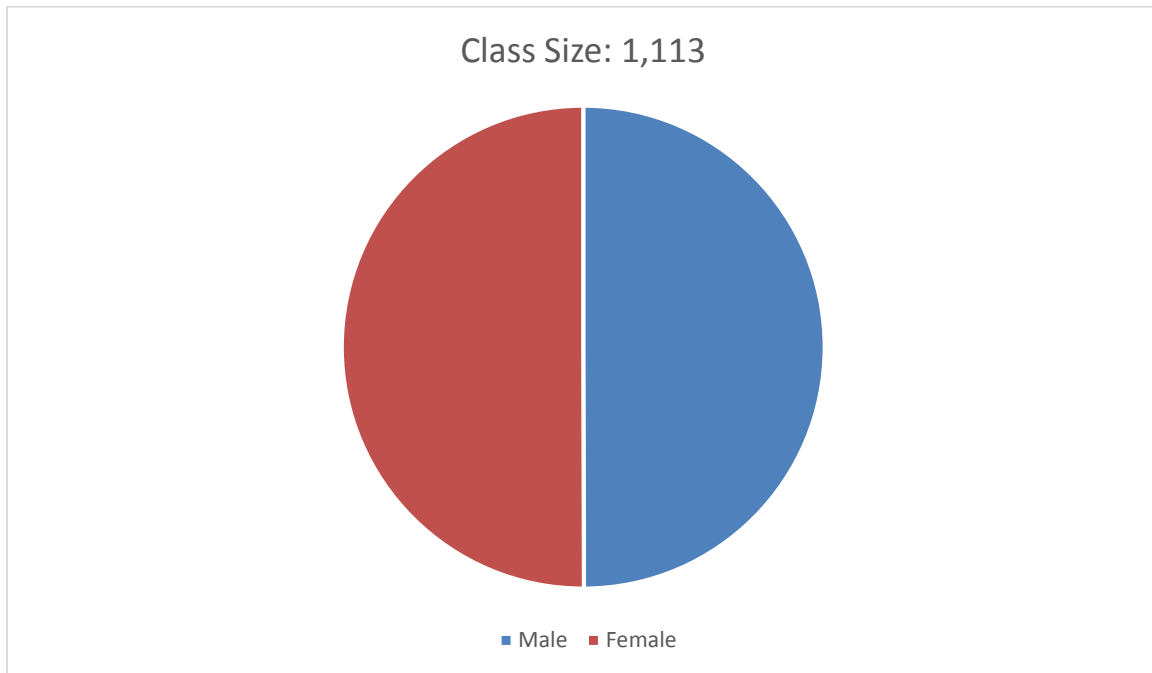
Top 10% of graduating high school class: 90%
First generation in college: 10%
Interarntional students: 7%

Explain how the library works with the cohort.
- *Briefly outline the history of this relationship*
- *Include details of the other groups in the University who work with this cohort.*
- *Highlight the way the library and these other groups work together.*

First Year Open House
The Library reaches out to incoming and new first-year students in a variety of ways. Our major event for incoming first-year students, the Library Open House, takes place during orientation week just before the start of fall term classes. Approximately 500 students (almost half of the entering class) attend this event. We have hosted this event for approximately seven years. This event highlights the people, services, and resources of the Library at a fun and lively event. This event is not hosted collaboratively, but we do involve our colleagues from Information Technology in the event so they can reach out to new students.

Dimensions
In the spring of each year, students who were accepted to Dartmouth are invited to a weekend program called Dimensions. The Library division that is most involved in this event is Rauner Special Collections Library. They host a fun, well-received, late-evening event for the students that engages them with special collections and archival materials relating to the history of the college. This event is coordinated in collaboration with the Admissions department.

International Student Orientation
During orientation week we host an orientation specifically for new international students. This is coordinated with the broader international student orientation. The specific needs of international students are addressed in this active, hands-on session.

First-year writing courses
The Library has a strong collaborative relationship with the Institute for Writing and Rhetoric, which offers all of the first-year writing courses. Currently a large majority of first-year students take one of these courses, and starting this fall of 2012 100% of first-year students will take a first-year writing course. Librarians are embedded in most of these classes and, therefore, provide library instruction to a large majority of first-year students.

Indicate the current status of the programme that is provided for the cohort.
- *Include details on the progress of the specific programme as it relates to the wider library teaching and learning programme.*
- *Highlight any trends of interest, opportunities, and challenges in this area.*

All of the programs highlighted above are strong and successful. All of them tie in with one of our eight library-wide strategic goals: "Teach members of the Dartmouth community to be effective users and producers of information to meet their current academic needs and prepare them for a lifetime of learning and of responsible leadership." An upcoming challenge for a number of these programs, those offered during orientation week, is that our academic calendar is changing this year. While in past years we had a five week intersession between spring a summer term, beginning this year we will have only a one week intersession. There is much more than one week's worth of programming (new faculty orientations, tutor training, first-year orientation, etc.) to be offered. Additionally, in regard to the first-year writing courses, the increase in the number of sections offered to meet the new requirement that 100% of first-year students take these courses, will pose a challenge for the Library.

Outline the policy framework that supports the specific programme that is provided for the cohort.

- *Include details on the organisational structure, the library setting, the wider institutional priorities, and government influences.*
- *Indicate how important these are in determining library activities and services.*

The First Year Open House and the International Student orientation are both organized by committees within the library, and the membership of these committees can change annually. The Open House committee is comprised of approximately 6 members from throughout the Library, and the International Student Orientation planning group is comprised of 2-3 people and falls under the Education & Outreach program. Both of these programs support library and institutional priorities of fostering engagement, learning, and a welcoming atmosphere for new students. The Dimensions programming is run by staff from the Rauner Special Collections Library, and similarly supports library and institutional priorities.

The Library's subject librarian for English Language and Literature plays a key role in connecting the Library with the Institute for Writing and Rhetoric (IWR) and with the first year writing courses offered through this program. The Library's Education & Outreach program and the Research and Instruction Services department (the English Librarian is a member of both E&O and RIS) also play key roles in supporting the IWR and the writing courses. This collaboration supports the well-developed learning outcomes for first year writing courses which include information literacy outcomes (though they are not described with that language). This collaboration also supports the Library's mission, as described earlier.

Outline the training and support provided to library staff to ensure that they can successfully participate in the specific programme that is provided for the cohort.

- *List the skills and characteristics required by library staff.*
- *Provide examples of resources used in the library staff practice.*

The Library provides much support for the programs offered, most significantly budgetary resources and staff time. The work with the first-year writing courses requires the most significant amount of expertise as the librarians who work with these courses can participate in course and assignment design, classroom instruction, and even grading. The Library provides much support for librarians to develop professionally as teachers in the form of funding to attend national conferences (e.g. the ACRL Immersion Program which focuses on various aspects of teaching), and significant support for the development of in-house professional development offerings (e.g. collaborations with our campus teaching center, support for quarterly professional development series focused on teaching, and the development of special programs such as the Dartmouth Librarians Active Learning Institute).

Provide details on the programme that is provided for the cohort.

- *Include information on staff resources, contact hours, technology, techniques, and materials / resources used.*

Given that we offer a variety of programs, the resources are equally broad. Over 60 staff members participate in the Open House, ten or more librarians teach with first-year writing classes, etc. We use technology to some degree in all the programs, but it varies throughout each (e.g. clickers, pre- and post-class surveys, basic web and computing resources).

Explain how the specific programme provided for the cohort aligns with the wider library teaching and learning programme.

- Indicate what elements of the specific programme are usable and transferable
- Detail what constraints the library has experienced in developing the specific programme.

We aim for all of the programs' content to be transferable to the students' academic work in the future. We focus on connecting students with staff, on teaching them research skills that they will use throughout their Dartmouth careers (and beyond). In the First-Year Open House we aim to present the Library as a friendly and inviting place and, by hosting the event in our main library, to get them in the door and developing comfort with the physical space. We also, in the writing courses and in the Dimensions weekend in particular, want the students to understand the scope of our collections and to develop an awareness of the broad range of materials available to them. As I mentioned above, all of this supports our Library-wide goal, "Teach members of the Dartmouth community to be effective users and producers of information to meet their current academic needs and prepare them for a lifetime of learning and of responsible leadership."

Detail the data / information that the library uses to inform the effectiveness of the specific programme that is provided for the cohort.

- *Include what data is gathered on the specific cohort before the specific programme is run.*
- *Include other data gathered during or following the conclusion of the specific programme.*
- *Highlight any specific qualitative or quantitative data that demonstrates impact.*

FY Open House
We gather attendance statistics for this event each year, and use those to assess the success of the program. We have been happily with increasing, then steadily high numbers of participation which allow us to interact with approximately half of the incoming class before the even begin classes.

Dimensions
While Rauner Special Collections Library gathers attendance statistics for their session (approximately 100-150 attendees), the programmatic assessment is done by the Admissions office which runs the College-wide Dimensions program. I assume one factor in their assessment is the percentage of Dimensions participants who choose to enroll in Dartmouth.

International Student Orientation
We measure success by a "find a book" activity that is integrated in the two hour session. They're successful if they find their assigned book in the stack and bring back the slip of paper from the book (we've had full success). Steve Silver, from the international programs office, has also informally shared feedback about the orientation with us.

First-Year Writing Courses
In FY writing courses, in general, we measure success by

- The enthusiasm of the students for the research process (certainly a qualitative and subjective metric!)
- The level of engagement that students have with the "scholarly conversation" as evidenced by the quality of sources in their research papers and assignments.
- At the individual course-level (rather than the program level) librarians and/or may measure success by evaluating assignments that rely on the information literacy skills taught.

In considering the data / information gathered by the library on the specific programme provided for the cohort provide details on what works and what could work better.

The program for which I can provide the best answer to this is the involvement with the first year writing courses. If students in FY writing courses with librarian involvement have increased engagement in and enthusiasm for the research process (keeping in mind that correlation is not causation), we would want to work toward making sure all FY writing courses have librarian involvement.