Undergraduate Student Success and Library Use: A Multimethod Approach

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Undergraduate Student Success and Library Use: A Multimethod Approach

Overview:
How does use of specific library services correlate to persistence for resources and services? The library has what you need. Space: Tasks determine destination in the library. What role can or does the library play in student academic success? Place: The library is a place people know and want to be.

How do students define academic success? Cumulative GPA in the linear model. Step 1 included all the control variables and in the various step 2s, we use to explain persistence to and cumulative GPA in spring 2018.

Findings: Quantitative
The quantitative data demonstrates that at the macro level, University Libraries has a positive correlation with improved student success. The data shows a clear connection between library use and an increase in the probability of persisting to the next year. However, the link to an improved GPA is minimal, but looking at how our students define academic success and their focus on building knowledge and developing a growth mindset, we are not discouraged by the GPA results.

Students who have attended an instruction session have an 89% higher probability of persisting – that number increases by 30% with each session attended.

Students who check out at least one item from the library have a 124% higher probability of persisting.

Qualitative
From our interviews, we learned that students hold strong and varying opinions about the library. They overwhelmingly value the library as a distinct place on campus. We identified four major themes regarding the perceived role of the library in students’ academic achievement: space; people; place; and resources and services.

Space: Tasks Determine Destination in the Library. This theme focuses on the physical space of the library. Students particularly valued the quiet study spaces in the University Libraries, study rooms, and the variety of furniture types available.

People: Sometimes a Distraction, but Can Offer Help and Comfort. For this theme, students discussed both library employees and library users. Specifically, interviewees acknowledged the “helpful” employees, underutilized librarians, and the “social environment” of Michener.

Place: The Library is a Place People Know and Want to Be. Building off both the space and people themes, this theme focused on the library as place for the academic community. Some students referred to Michener as their “safe space” while others noted a desire for more community-oriented programming.

Resources and Services: The Library Has What You Need to Get Things Done. Lastly, this theme explored the resources and services offered by the libraries. Students mentioned the benefit of having access to electronic resources, laptops for check-out, and expensive software packages.

What’s Next?
We anticipate the findings of this study will have significant impacts on decision making in the University Libraries in terms of how we can increasingly contribute to our students’ articulated sense of belonging when they use the library, which in turn impacts their academic success in the form of persistence. This research will have the potential to inform future steps to improve student academic success in terms of our programming, pedagogical decisions, material and equipment purchases, outreach and marketing priorities, and project planning. After all, improving services for students to help them succeed was the main driver of this study.

Research Team:
- Jen Mayer, Associate Professor, Head of Library Research Services, University Libraries
- Rachel Dineen, Assistant Professor, Information Literacy and Outreach Librarian, University Libraries
- Angela Rockwell, Data Analyst and Report Writer, Office of Institutional Reporting and Analysis Services
- Jayne Bledgitt, Interim Dean of Libraries, University Libraries

“I really like coming here [Michener Library] because it’s an area specifically for focus, so I don’t have the same distractions as I do at home and just the overall feel makes me stay more productive”