Development of a Peer Research Consultant (PRC) Program

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NDLA Annual Conference
September 26, 2019
ACRL reported that at U.S. university libraries
– 57% decline in reference questions
from 2001 to 2012
Responsibilities and Priorities

Librarian responsibilities
- Staff desk
- Library instruction
- Collection development
- In-depth research appointments
- Serve on committees
Start a PRC Program

Two main reasons:

1. Stop tying up librarians’ time in a declining service
   - Librarians will stop staffing desk
   - More time for library instruction

2. Implement High Impact Practice (HIP) of peer mentoring
   - Value students’ contribution
   - Prepare students for the workplace
PRC Timeline

- 2015 – Initial Idea
- 2018 – Information Gathering
- Spring 2019 – Built Framework
- Summer 2019 – Program Development
- Fall 2019 – Pilot begins
- Fall 2020 – Knowledge Commons Integration
  - Writing Center
  - Academic Support
  - Career Services
Information Gathering

- Literature Review
  - Student autonomy
  - PRCs and supervisor
- Discussions
  - Administration
  - Librarians
  - Student library employees
Discussion with Administration

• Must have buy-in
  – Library Dean
  – President / Provost

• Aligns with UND Goals
  – Liberal arts foundation
  – Increase graduation rates
  – Enhance discovery

• Paying PRCs
  – Justify higher wages
  – Find funding

https://und.edu/about/strategic-plan/
Discussion with Librarians

- Buy-in from librarians
  - Start with core group
- Losing a favorite task
- Concern about students taking over their job duties
  - Knowing when to refer?
  - Knowing boundaries?
- Creation of PRC expectations document
Rebranding Services

Ask A Librarian changed to Ask Us
Background

• Access Services
  – Strong training program
  – Student promotions
    • Evaluation of Learning Outcomes
    • Strong customer service skills
    • Reference training
• More prepared
Discussion with Student Workers

• Expressed desire to:
  – Be more helpful for students using the library databases and online resources
  – Understand library research better
• Going beyond triage at the desk
  – offer more in-depth, personalized sessions
  – role in instruction
• Understand the struggle - taken some of the same classes.
• “There is a lot of information that I wish I knew as an undergraduate. My overall goal is to make you a better researcher.”
Job Description

- Nine months
- Peer reference assistance
- Assist librarians
- Attend trainings
- Available during business hours
Required Qualifications

- Minimum of three semesters
- Reference training
- Resume, cover letter, class schedule
- Essay
- Communication & customer service
- Critical thinking
- Understand referral process
- Collaboration
- Demonstrated accountability
Preferences

• Evaluation 35/40
• English 130
• 3.0 GPA

Hours & Wages

• 10-15 per week
• $11.10 per hour
Training Tools

• Basic training already complete
• Literature & Libraries
  – Interactive games
  – Group discussion
  – Roleplay
  – Online tutorials
  – Videos
• Student requests
  – Checklists
  – Benchmarks
https://libguides.und.edu/prc_training
How to Begin

Reference Interview

- RUSA
- Narrowing Topics
- How to Begin
- Extras
- Practice

How to Begin

- First Steps
- Doing an interview
- Help for Interview 2 and beyond
Introducing the Work

- Start them where they’re at
- Give topic and list of resources to find
- Track progress on worksheet
### Tracking Progress

**Who:**

**What:**

**Where:**

**When:**

**Why / Issues:**

**Contingency Plan:**

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**Search Results:**
Getting In-depth

- Subject specific assistance
  - When to use specific database topics
  - Unique search strategies
- Sample questions from subject librarians
- Time for training from each subject librarian
- Furthered librarian buy-in for PRC program
  - PRCs could demonstrate their learning
  - Opportunity to clear up misunderstandings
Going Live

• Ask Us Desk
  – Shadow in Fall, on own in Spring
  – Primarily serving walk-up patrons
• Research Appointments
  – “Office Hours” in Starfish
• Instruction
  – English 130 Composition Courses
• Will hire 2 more PRCs
Program Assessment

Source: Barkley & Major, Learning Assessment Techniques, 2016
Goals / Objectives / Outcomes

• See the Target
  Clear vision BEFORE beginning PRC recruitment

• Aim for the Target
  NACE standards / RUSA

• Hit the Target
  Program Improvement / Campus Buy-in
Evaluation Tools

- Rubric based on RUSA guidelines
- Evaluations by subject librarians
  - Documenting research strategies
  - Permalinking results
  - Creation of topic maps
  - Creating a reference dialogue
- Self-reflections with prompts
- Weekly debrief meetings
- Patron feedback (*forthcoming*)
Final Thoughts / Benefits

• Highly sought-after employment skills including research, communication, leadership, peer supervision, conflict management, and critical thinking skills.

• Giving student employees increased responsibility can increase pride in their work. The energy and enthusiasm of student employees can be contagious for all library staff and increase staff morale.
References


Thank You! Questions?

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