University Libraries Leading the Way Through Choppy Waters

The Library’s Role in Student Retention

37th Annual IATUL Conference in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada
June 5-9, 2016

Silas M. Oliveira, Ph.D.
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• Retention and student attrition are high priority for post-secondary education today around the world.
Student retention and graduation rates are currently among the most discussed foci of institutional missions. (ACRL’s Value of Academic Libraries Report, 2011)

“Retention has been a perennial challenge for higher education... Student withdrawals have been recognized as a major enigma all across the country” (Gilchrist, 2011, p.1)

“A high rate of attrition is indicative of a failure” (Mezick, 2007, p. 56)
“A diverse array of over 30 million Americans have enrolled...but never completed a degree”.
(American Council of Education, 2013, p. 2)

“Only 40% of students who enroll go on to graduate”
(Cota, Jayaram & Laboissiere, 2011, p. 1)

“Overall, 56% of those who started college in 2007 have finished their coursework”
(The Huffington Post, 2013, p.1)

Out of 23 criteria of institutional quality, high school seniors placed graduation rates in 5th place.
(Cook & Hartle, 2011)
Retention and student attrition are high priority for post-secondary education today around the world.

Causes of attrition:

- Higher education costs
- Competition
- Time needed for graduation
- Quality of education
- Negative academic experience
“It is widely understood that students’ perceptions of how well their institution supports the learning process can predict a student’s likelihood of persisting in college.”

(Allen, 2014, p. 10)
CURTIN UNIVERSITY

2009 – 40 Interventions
84.1% Retention Rate
89.7% International Students
(Curtin, 2011)

ELIZABETH CITY STATE UNIVERSITY

Student Center Approach
76% Retention Rate
Other Schools – 64%
(Gilchrist, 2011)

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FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO RETENTION

- Sense of fitness
- High grades
- Academic achievement
- Quality of students’ experience
- Engagement and integration
- Social Involvement

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FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO RETENTION

- University’s Student Philosophy
- Academic Experience
- Non-Academic Experience
- Personal Factors

Engagement
Integration
Involvement
Participation

Higher GPA
Academic Success
Institutional Fit
Learning

Satisfaction
Sense of Identity
Sense of Belonging

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RETENTION IS A CAMPUS-WIDE EFFORT

“Virtually every aspect of the University has some direct or indirect impact on the quality of the student experience.”
(Curtin, 2011, p.1)

“Universities are now intensifying their efforts to improve retention, and expect all parts of their institutions, including the university library, to contribute.”
(Hagel et al., 2012, p. 214)
RETENTION IS A CAMPUS-WIDE EFFORT

- Dennis, 2007
- Bell, 2008
- Mallinckrodt & Sedlacek, 2009
- ACT, 2010
- Hagel et al., 2012

Study Rooms
Library Orientations
Workshops
Facilities

Play key roles in student engagement, learning, and retention.

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LIBRARIES CONTRIBUTE TO RETENTION

Porter & Swing (2006)

Most important factors affecting intention to persist

- Study Skills
- Academic Engagement

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LIBRARIES CONTRIBUTE TO RETENTION

Kramer & Kramer (1968)

USED THE LIBRARY
73.7% Returned

DID NOT USE THE LIBRARY
57% Did NOT Return

“This study seems to show a strong and statistically significant correlation between library use and student persistence.” (p. 312)
There is strong evidence that students who spend more time using libraries, interact with library staff, and engage with library services are more likely to persist than those who either use less or actually don’t.

- Haddow & Joseph, 2010
- Stone, Pattern & Ramsden, 2012
- Haddow, 2013
- Soria, Franse & Nacerud, 2013, 2014
- Eng & Stadler, 2015
### LIBRARY RESOURCES AND SERVICES RELATED TO ACADEMIC SUCCESS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESOURCES</th>
<th>SERVICES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Electronic Journals Accessed</td>
<td>Peer Research consultation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Reading Materials</td>
<td>Library’s Workstations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Databases Log-ins</td>
<td>Circulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC Log-ins to Library’s Website</td>
<td>In-person Reference Interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library Space/Facilities</td>
<td>Research Workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtual Reference Chat</td>
<td>Library Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Learning Environment</td>
<td>Improves GPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library Expenditures</td>
<td>Number of Professional Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Employment</td>
<td>Interlibrary Loans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Commons</td>
<td>Total Library Materials Costs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*See original paper for sources*
ACRL’s Assessment in Action (AiA) 3 Year Program
(200 Institutions)

FOUR EVIDENCES FOR LIBRARY CONTRIBUTIONS TO STUDENT LEARNING SUCCESS

- Students benefit from library instruction
- Students achieve higher GPAs & retention
- Collaborative programs/services
- Info literacy strengthens education outcomes

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INCREASING RETENTION THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

STRATEGIES

Housing Academic Services
- IT
- Writing Center
- Student Outreach
- Student Success

Outreach to Programs
- Office of Diversity to assist students at risk
- Train students to be peer-to-peer library advocates
- Participate in inter-departmental intervention teams
- Provide library facilities for collaborative in Student Affairs Office
- Embed library links into course management platforms

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INCREASING RETENTION THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

- DR. CLOSSER’S TESTIMONY
- ANDREWS UNIVERSITY’S DISTANCE LEARNING INITIATIVE
- CAS’S RUBRICA
CONCLUSION

- Retention is a major concern for higher education today.

- Retention should be a concern of all the Departments across campus.

- By helping students achieve academic success, libraries make their most significant contribution to retention.
CONCLUSION: Ways Libraries Can Contribute

- Create bonds and interact with students.
- Provide social learning opportunities and facilities
- Info and research instruction programs
- Provide for peer counseling and tutorials
- Partnership with faculty (i.e. assignments)
- Reference Interaction (Technology & Administrative)
- User friendly access to info resources
“The future of library retention efforts lay not so much in the isolated efforts of librarians, but in librarians working with other departments to retain students through graduation”  
(Allen, 2014, p. 16)
Librarians need to redefine their role to meet the challenges that student retention represents. They need to internalize the fact that they are partners in the academic endeavor, and not mere collaborators.

The service mentality places libraries as a student support entity (second-string) which collaborates with other academic departments. Libraries need to acquire the image of a pro-active organism, and not simply re-active to the institution’s academic and social needs.
We need to excel in working side-by-side, shoulder-to-shoulder with students, faculty, administrators, counselors, and student affairs personnel to influence students’ persistence and increase degree attainment levels.
University Libraries Leading the Way Through Choppy Waters

This is the only way university libraries will lead the way through today’s higher education choppy waters.
James White Library is doing its part leading Andrews University to a safer harbor!
HAVE ALL A NICE DAY IN CALMER WATERS
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