L&C named in two Institute of Museum and Library Sciences Grants

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GODFREY – As a leader in the field of academic data analytics, Lewis and Clark Community College was recently named in two grant projects being funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

Altogether, there were 73 proposals submitted to IMLS and 14 were selected for a funding total of $3,207,711.

The first grant, for $243,885, will allow the Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois (CARLI), in partnership with the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Library and Lewis and Clark Community College, to develop a continuing education immersion program that prepares librarians to make effective use of research findings on the impact of academic libraries on student success.

The second, awarded to lead institution Syracuse University, names L&C as the only community college partner. The $50,000 grant will aim to perform preliminary planning activities to pioneer the integration of library data in institutional learning analytics and develop detailed proofs of concept and models to guide academic libraries preparing to engage in this emerging and important use of data to support student success.

Other partner institutions include Syracuse University, University of Minnesota, University of Michigan, University of California – Berkeley, Susquehanna University, DePaul University, EDUCAUSE, IMS Global Learning Consortium, Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL) and Online Computer Library Center (OCLC).

In 2014-2015, Lewis and Clark implemented a campus-wide initiative focused on increasing student retention and completion. Since then, faculty and staff have taken several steps to help students successfully complete their academic goals.

Learning analytics, which has become a major focus of the college, has played a fundamental part in those initiatives.

When students utilize library reference and instruction services at Reid Memorial Library, they check in through a technology platform that links such usage with grades and retention rates. That data is then analyzed for the purposes of understanding and optimizing student learning and learning environments.

"The only other academic library that has adopted this same model for tracking student usage of library services is the University of Minnesota," said Dennis Krieb, L&C director of Library and Institutional Services. "Traditionally, academic libraries have relied upon qualitative surveys to assess their impact upon student success – however, there is increasing demand that correlational, quantitative evidence be provided."

L&C Vice President of Academic Affairs Linda Chapman said technology has been central to the dramatic shift in recent years toward using quantitative data to better understand the factors that contribute to student retention and success in college.

"At L&C, data – in the hands of curious and motivated educators – has resulted in notable increases in student success and retention," Chapman said.

L&C's technology infrastructure utilizes a data warehouse that allows the college to more quickly and accurately detect correlational trends in student behaviors than ever before.

"We are also fortunate to have an institutional culture that encourages this type of research and dedicated librarians that deeply care about the success of our students," Krieb said.

L&C data shows that a student who attends a library instruction class improves their fall-to-fall retention rate by 24.7 percent compared to a student who does not.

"We also have discovered that students who seek assistance from a reference librarian on an English class assignment will improve their chances of getting an A, B or C in the class by 19.4 percent," Krieb said. "For a psychology class assignment, their chances improve by 21.3 percent."

First generation college students who attend a library instruction class have a retention rate of 54.4 percent compared to 45.4 percent for all first-generation students. For male students, retention increases from 47.7 percent to 65.7 percent for those who ask a reference question.

"Because the field of library analytics is so new, outreach and education to other academic libraries is the next step," Krieb said. "Both IMLS grants are designed to guide other academic libraries in this new field. It's really an exciting opportunity for the college to share with other national universities and colleges about how we are able to have such great correlational data that connects our library services to student success without compromising the students' right of privacy when using the library."

Over the past few years, Lewis and Clark has been approached by several colleges and universities about the college's use of library analytics. Recent examples include DePaul University, Governors State University, Robert Morris University and Illinois Central College.

L&C's experts have also been asked to talk to new academic library directors in Illinois about using library analytics as a part of a speaker series offered through the CARLI consortium at the University of Illinois.

For more information, contact Krieb at (618) 468-4300 or dkrieb@lc.edu.

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Krieb, D. (2018). Assessing the Impact of Reference Assistance and Library Instruction on Retention and Grades Using Student Tracking Technology. Evidence Based Library and Information Practice, 13(2), 2-12. https://doi.org/10.18438/ eblip29402