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Reaching Out to Transfer Students: USC Upstate's Foundation in Information Literacy

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How do you "catch" transfer students to ensure that they receive timely instruction in information literacy?

We found that one good way to reach transfer students was during the admissions process:

- We are able to contact all new transfer students through announcement cards and e-mail messages.
- We can use the Blackboard course management system, introduced to students during the admissions process.
- Collaboration with Enrollment Services and Student Success Center gives more departments a stake in our information literacy efforts.

What kind of intervention will be compatible with library staff and budgetary considerations?

We were not in a position to consider a credit-bearing course and wanted more than just offering drop-in workshops. We decided on an online tutorial administered during the admissions process.

- Team of four librarians created and revised the Foundation in Information Literacy (FIL) and supporting LibGuides.
- Two librarians have access as instructors to a Blackboard course containing FIL, and maintain it, send announcements to students, and compile results for each administration.
- Once established, revision and maintenance take a modest amount of time.

What kind of outreach is likely to gain the support of the institution?

We feel that an online tutorial has gained support because it addresses an institutional need to better serve our transfer students. Our collaboration with Enrollment Services and the Student Success Center has been positive and has led to further collaboration on a new transfer student web site (still under construction). It is important to develop a portrait of your transfer students and to find out:

- What proportion of your students are transfers?
- What proportion of your graduates entered as transfer students?
- Are there concentrations of transfers anywhere on campus, on another campus, as distance education students?
- Where do your transfer students come from?
- Do you have articulation agreements that facilitate transfers from community colleges?

Foundation in Information Literacy (FIL) At a Glance

- FIL is a 15-question "inventory" of information literacy skills based on the five information literacy standards.
- FIL is administered using the test feature in Blackboard. Students are enrolled in a special Blackboard course by Enrollment Services.
- FIL is neither a true test (we are not evaluating students on what we have taught them) nor a true tutorial (only some questions involving local peculiarities have explanatory introductions).
- Designed to be taken in about 30 minutes, FIL contains multiple-choice and matching formats.
- Level of questions is based on what we expect of students who have completed our First-year Information Literacy Program.
- Students are able to see the results with feedback and explanations for each question after they have completed the inventory.
- Students who complete FIL are sent a link to a LibGuide based on topics covered in FIL as additional follow-up.
- Although intended to alert students to the level of research skills we expect at Upstate, FIL has given us valuable information on the information literacy abilities of our transfer students.
- We hope to continue developing FIL, making it a more interactive, game-like experience in which students will discover the right answer as they play.

Bibliography

These are some useful articles on transfer students. Phillips and Atwood have an excellent literature review that includes additional sources from the education literature.

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