

Rationale & Background

Redefining Q: Individual Ability in Learning

to become, **Independent Critical Inquiry and Information Literacy**

1. **General Rationale for the Proposal:**

“Q” designated courses, which include independent study, honors projects, advanced seminars, collaborative research projects, and internships all share at their heart an emphasis on research-based critical inquiry. Information Literacy skills and knowledge helps students translate their general research skills into discipline-specific contexts in their majors. A summary needs assessment of Hamline’s current practices shows that although we are successful at introducing information literacy skills to the majority of first year students we do not have a standardized, identifiable path for expanding student learning in this area of general education once students move into disciplinary coursework. Similarly, assessment of student learning in this competency ends in the first year. These practices do not align with our university learning outcomes.

In April 2010 Bush Library provided a proposal to UCC which addressed a way to revise the Hamline Plan and provide a framework for undergraduate students to reach competency in the University learning outcome, “A Hamline graduate will be able to use information and technology competently and responsibly.” This proposal formalizes and scaffolds opportunities for information literacy instruction and assessment throughout undergraduate students’ time at Hamline and expands this best practice to all degree programs.

Information Literacy is a competency that serves our students in both higher education and in lifelong learning.

- **Employers** seek these skills, as outlined in the 2010 report commissioned by AAC&U and produced by Hart Associates, http://www.aacu.org/leap/documents/2009_EmployerSurvey.pdf. In this nationwide survey of employers, skills taught through information literacy instruction were highly coveted in higher education graduates.
- There is a **national context** for this move. In a proclamation declaring October 2009 as Information Literacy Awareness Month, President Barack Obama explained why higher education needs to step up to the task of creating an information literate society. He goes on to specifically differentiate this new skill from other types of literacy: “In addition to the basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic, it is equally important that our students are given the tools required to take advantage of the information

available to them.”¹

- **Higher Education** and its related professional and disciplinary organizations recognize the importance of Information Literacy. Supporting documents include:
 - (a) Information Competency Standards for Higher Education, from the Association of College and Research Libraries²
 - (b) VALUE rubric (Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education) for Information Literacy from the Association of American Colleges & Universities.³
- Now is the opportune time to add Information Literacy to our general education requirements because **Hamline** is reviewing the entire Hamline Plan and can easily see where gaps occur and where opportunities exist.

2. **The underlying principles which anchor our proposal are:**

- (1) Support for Hamline’s mission and academic goals
- (2) Build upon the current foundations which introduce information literacy in the first year by allowing students the opportunity to:
 - (a) Transfer, apply, and be assessed on these skills in their disciplinary courses
 - (b) understand the role of information in a democratic society
 - (c) demonstrate lifelong learning skills as ethical consumer and producers of information.

Moving Hamline into line with other colleges and universities regarding information literacy:

A. Our comparator group:

- Information Literacy has been a part of the Drake General Education curriculum for ten years.⁴
- Elon University has proposed that Information Literacy be infused in their curriculum as part of their 2012-2017 Quality Enhancement Plan.⁵
- Information Literacy is identified as a core skill in the University of Portland’s core curriculum.⁶
- Valparaiso University has incorporated Information Literacy standards into the curriculum based on their Strategic Plan Action 1.6.1.⁷
- Belmont University has integrated Information Literacy skills sequentially into the general education curriculum.⁸

The following strategic planning comparator institutions have created scaffolded Information Literacy programs but have not integrated IL into their general education curriculum:

- Chapman University
- John Carroll University
- Stetson University

- University of Redlands
- University of Scranton

The following universities are furthest behind in developing comprehensive Information Literacy programs:

- Lewis & Clark University
- Providence College
- St. Mary's College of California.

B. National Academic Libraries:

The most recent American Library Survey (ALS) report contains data about Information Literacy in the United States. This comes from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the primary federal entity for collecting, analyzing, and reporting data related to education in the United States. The total number of post-secondary libraries reporting was 3,689. Although there was no specific question about an information literacy curricular requirement, a majority of academic institutions have defined information literacy or an information literate student (50.3%).

Phan, T., Hardesty, L., Hug, J., and Sheckells, C. (2011). Academic Libraries: 2010 (NCES 2012-365). U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved [date] from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch>. Table 13.

3. Implementation

An Information Literacy competency has been incorporated into the existing Hamline Plan letter, "Q" because of the natural relationship to some of the activities which occur in a Q-designated class. Currently, courses designated with a Q require students to design, gather evidence, implement and assess a research project or be a senior capstone experience. Information literacy dovetails with these research-based critical inquiry activities when students incorporate previous coursework related to a new subject matter, and as they select, analyze, evaluate and use bibliographic sources to support their ideas.

Pipeline indicates that many academic programs already offer courses at both the 3000 and 5000 level which are designated with a Hamline Plan Q, (which would allow for the scaffolding of IL skills). Some degree programs may need to reassess how their students are provided opportunities to develop information literacy skills in their course sequences.

Degree programs should be able to transition to the practice outlined in our proposal by reviewing and updating the program level learning outcomes and the curriculum maps they created as part of Hamline's strategic planning process on learning outcomes assessment.

Once the known paths for Information Literacy competency have been articulated in each degree program, if requested, the library liaison to the program will

- a. work with faculty to ensure that course assignments contain opportunities for students to advance their IL skills
- b. provide a standardized rubric to assess information literacy competencies
- c. provide assistance in collecting and analyzing the IL competency assessments and provide feedback to faculty and students.

The implementation schedule set forth by UCC, with recommendations from Registration will be carried out following full faculty vote and approval.

To ensure “quality control” we recommend updating the online application for Hamline Plan letter Q designation to include a section where the applicant can articulate how their course will address the new information literacy competency requirements. Bush Library will be happy to provide faculty with information literacy learning outcomes statements which can be included in syllabi and in reporting mechanisms. The library now posts IL learning outcomes on each the research guides we create to support sections of English 1110 and FYSEM. Details can be found here: http://bushlibraryguides.hamline.edu/IL_assessment

If "Q" experiences are embedded in generally required courses (FYSem and ENG 1110, and methods courses in the majors etc.), then the regular process of transferring courses should largely address issues for transfer students. Chairs would look for a research component in course when considering whether to count an outside course as the methods course in that major. Capstones and final creative projects must be completed at Hamline.

Resource Implications

Our proposal does not require, but does allow faculty to request the assistance of a librarian in covering Information Literacy learning outcomes in their 3000 and 5000 level classes. Bush Library will offer faculty development in assignment design or redesign to ensure that IL learning outcomes are measurable. Librarians will also offer faculty the option of including upper level disciplinary focused “computer lab sessions” for their students; where IL skills in the discipline will be the focus. Current staffing levels from the team of Academic Librarians at Bush Library should be sufficient to carry out this proposal. A director or coordinator of the program will need to be appointed.

4. Strategic Planning

This proposal supports the following Strategic Plan Initiatives:

- 1.2A Define and advance the concepts of liberal education as a philosophy of education that imparts essential learning outcomes that transcend individual disciplines, provide the skills to participate in a globally connected society, and develop individual capacity.

- 2.2A Implement learning outcomes that ensure that a Hamline graduate will be able to: use information and technology competently and responsibly.

References

- ¹ U.S. Presidential Proclamation. (2009). National information literacy awareness month Proclamation 8429. Federal register 74, no. 193 (7 October):51445-51446.
- ² Association of College and Research Libraries. (2000). *Information Literacy Standards for Higher Education*. Report available at <http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/standards/standards.pdf> . Last accessed July 10, 2011.
- ³ Rhodes, T. ed. (2010). *Assessing Outcomes and Improving Achievement: Tips and Tools for Using Rubrics*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.
- ⁴ Gilbert, B. (Nov. 29, 2010). *Information Literacy at Drake: the Curricular Imperative*. Available at <http://library.drake.edu/pages/information-literacy-drake-curricular-imperative> . Last accessed January 11, 2010.
- ⁵ Elon University. (2011). *Information Literacy Proposal*. Available at <http://www.elon.edu/docs/e-web/administration/provost/gep/comments/InformationLiteracyProposal.pdf> . Last accessed January 11, 2012.
- ⁶ University of Portland. (2012). *Library: Information Literacy @ UP*. Available at <http://library.up.edu/print.aspx?cid=11087&pid=59> . Last accessed January 11, 2012.
- ⁷ Valparaiso University. (Sept. 23, 2011). *Faculty Resources For Teaching and Research Support*. Available at <http://libguides.valpo.edu/content.php?pid=242137&sid=1999577> . Last accessed January 11, 2012.
- ⁸ Belmont University. (October 3, 2011). *Information Literacy @ Belmont*. Available at <http://belmont.libguides.com/infolit>. Last accessed January 11, 2012.