



Library Instruction Reach for First Year Experience

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Background

The United States Military Academy (USMA) is a four-year undergraduate liberal arts college with a strong core curriculum requiring all students to take English, history, math, science, and engineering courses. All graduates are commissioned into the United States Army as 2nd Lieutenants and serve a minimum of 5 years on active duty.

Like many other libraries, our programs to teach freshman students developed individually over time, in partnership between an individual department and the liaison librarian. During the last few years, we worked on the process to develop an integrated first year experience across the freshman class. We started by asking how many students are enrolled in courses that we conduct library instruction in.

Methodology

We asked for freshman course enrollment for the core curriculum. Analyzing the course enrollment data helped determine the potential percentage of students reached with library instruction in the core curriculum.

This analysis clarified the number of students receiving no library instruction versus the number who received repetitive briefs. This also led us to prioritize our efforts for classes in which our instruction reaches the largest student population.



Above: Corps of Cadets parade in front of Jefferson Hall (home of USMA Library)

? How many students receive repetitive instruction or none at all?

How we did it:

We analyzed enrollment data for all supported classes to determine how many cadets are receiving instruction. We also conducted outreach to academic departments to determine library support needed in each class. We used this information to map the timing of library classes across Plebe year to clearly see sequence of instruction and determined priorities for future freshman library instruction.

	AY 2017-2018	AY 2018-2019	AY 2019-2020	Potential Reach
EN 101 (English Composition)	38%	37%	80%	90%
EN 102 (English Literature)	57%	10%	10%	88%
RS 100/101 (Study Skills)	23%	28%	27%	23-28%

Result

This is supporting our effort to coordinate library instruction, bringing multiple separate programs under the umbrella of a dedicated first year experience. Using Blackboard (our LMS), personal emails, and a variety of library instruction classes, our coordinated First Year program has significantly touched our Plebe (freshman) population across multiple areas and disciplines, including outreach, orientation, and academic research instruction.

What we learned:

Repetition less of a concern than we initially thought. We also learned that we invested a tremendous amount of staff time for an orientation activity for RS 100/101 Study Skills that only reached a quarter of freshman students, which was justification to change the style of orientation. We also decided that because 90% of freshman take EN101 in the fall, that should be our main instruction effort. That change is reflected in the table shown. In AY20-21, all students taking EN101 participated in online asynchronous library instruction.

Why it matters:

This effort demonstrated to the larger academic community the contribution and value of library instruction and resources, and where students receive that instruction. We used this information to show the maximum potential impact of library instruction versus how many students we reached, and this also supports advocating for library instruction in all English and History courses, not only in some sections.

Challenges & Opportunities:

We are continuing to adapt instruction to respond to curriculum changes made recently at USMA, particularly in the Department of History freshman courses. As part of this process, we are in the process of clearly articulating learning objectives for library instruction classes and relate them to the supported courses for a comprehensive scaffolding of freshman library instruction.

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