

Date: October 12, 2004

To: Librarians and Faculty Senate Library Committee

From: Kathy Dabbour, Library Assessment Coordinator

Subject: CSUN Information Literacy Survey Preliminary Results

Background: In July 2002, the U.S. Dept. of Education awarded the Oviatt Library at California State University, Northridge a five-year, \$1.6 million grant under the Title V Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) program. Entitled, "Improving Student Success through Strengthening Library Collections, Archives, and Information Competence," one of the objectives of the grant project focuses on creating and administering valid and reliable information literacy assessment tools to CSUN students. Our main hypotheses are:

- Students who have had previous library instruction will score better on the test questions than those who have not had previous library instruction.
- Students who report greater frequency of use of library collections and/or its electronic resources will score better on the test questions than those who do not.

Method: A survey utilizing close-ended, multiple-choice questions was developed in a scantron format (see attached). Test questions were based on standards for information literacy developed by the Association of College and Research Libraries, and demographic questions included previous library experience and self-reported rating of information literacy skills. The survey was piloted for readability on a University 100 freshman seminar class and a Chicana/o Studies 230 research methods class. Human Subject approval was applied for and the project was approved as exempt in the fall 2003. One thousand students or ~3% of the fall 2002 headcount was the sample target. In early March 2004, the office of Institutional Research generated a random sample of 67 classes representing 2,233 enrolled students from across all colleges, class levels, and time schedules. Excluded from the sample was University 100 (which takes a similar survey as a pretest/posttest to their required weeklong library instruction session) and classes that participated in the National Survey of Student Engagement.

Faculty were contacted via email (or campus mail only if no email was found), then by a campus mail follow-up. Phone calls were also made to increase the return rate. Selected faculty were asked for 15 minutes of class time to have a library employee administer the survey. Prior to administration, students were informed that the survey was voluntary and anonymous, and anyone under 18 years old was asked not to participate.

We sent requests to 67 classes. Two of these classes were not in the class schedule and may be invalid, but for now, the analysis will be based on the original sample size of 67 classes and 2,233 enrolled students.

- 45 classes took the survey (67%)
- 22 classes did not take the survey (33%)
- 1,025 surveys were completed, representing a return rate of 46% of the total students sampled. However, since our goal was to reach 1,000 students, Institutional Research over-sampled to allow

for possible negative or no response. Therefore, we believe our sample will be adequate to make correlations.

Analysis: The attached tables represent the frequency and percent, or in some cases, a count of responses to the survey questions. They are listed in the order asked on the scantron form. The demographic questions are in tables 1-9 and 23-30. The test questions are in tables 11-22. The correct answers to the test questions are highlighted in **bold**.

Virtually all of the respondents (95.7%) have declared majors. Further analysis of the scantron surveys needs to be done to determine which majors were written in. Most are full-time students (87.5%) and 69.5% are either juniors or seniors. Over half (50.9%) started CSUN as transfer students. In terms of demographics: 65.1% of the respondents were female and 34.9% were male, with females represented about 5% more than the total fall 2003 student population.¹ About half of the students indicated they were aged 22 and under; most were in the 21 to 23 year-old age range. More analysis needs to be performed to determine the average age for undergrads and grads as compared to the campus data. For race/ethnicity, respondents were almost exactly representative of the total fall 2003 student population.²

Internet and library use frequency were also asked of the respondents. Seventy-three percent said that they access the Internet most often from home; about 14% said they use the CSUN library or computer lab. Students were also asked the number of hours per week they search the Internet for school, work, or personal interest versus the hours spent searching library catalogs or databases. Whereas 36% used the Internet 3-5 hours per week, 12.3% used library online resources that same number of hours; with 35.4% indicating that they use library databases less than one hour per week. In terms of use of the physical library, most indicated that in the last year they came in to study or relax, followed by looking up information in reference books, and using computers to read email, access the Internet or use other software. Checking out or reading library books, asking a reference librarian for help, and searching library databases were next highest in frequency. Only 39 out of a possible 1,025 respondents indicated that they had not used the library for any of the stated reasons during the past year.

Library instruction experience, a self-rating of research skills, and attitudes toward both were also queried. Before coming to CSUN, 71.4% indicated that they had formal library instruction; since entering CSUN, 74% had library instruction. Almost 77% rated their library/Internet research skills as good to excellent, a statement that will be correlated with the scores from the test questions. In terms of attitudes, almost 63% agreed or strongly agreed that their experience with library instruction has helped them do better on research assignments; almost 71% agreed or strongly agreed that their library/Internet research skills contributed to their academic success.

In the test section, eight out of 13 questions were correct an average of 70% of the time. The questions that the respondents did not do as well included knowing where to search for magazine articles (question #13), how to determine if a publication is peer-reviewed (question #16), use of the Boolean “and” (question #20), critically thinking about the Internet (questions #21), and avoiding plagiarism (question #22). Further analysis, including scoring each survey and correlations need to be done before meaningful conclusions can be drawn from the data.

Next Steps:

- During the fall/winter 2004:

¹ “Student Demographics.” *Quick Facts about California State University, Northridge*. October 2004. 12 October 2004.

<<http://www.csun.edu/%7Epreso/c/quickfacts.html>>

² Ibid.

- Score individual surveys
 - Perform correlations
 - Write up results as a “white paper” for campus faculty and administrators
 - Disseminate results via librarian liaisons to departments and/or via events (i.e., CELT?)
- By spring 2005, submit article for publication in a peer-reviewed library or general higher education journal