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# Using Student Perception Data as Evidence for Changes in Library Credit- Course Curriculum

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# Using Student Perception Data as Evidence for Changes in Library Credit-Course Curriculum



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## ABSTRACT

This research examines Criminal Justice students' perceptions of a required library course, *LIB 160: Criminal Justice Library Research*, on their success in research and writing intensive Criminal Justice courses, and the possible impact of the course on student GPA in two Criminal Justice courses. Student perception data was used to make changes in curriculum in University Libraries and Criminology & Criminal Justice courses.

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## Methods

In order to understand students' perceptions of LIB 160, we implemented an online survey that included:

- Close-ended questions on demographics, perceptions of LIB 160, and perceptions of performance in writing and research intensive courses
- Open-ended questions that allowed us to qualitatively assess student perceptions

## Participants

The participants in our online survey consisted of current and former Criminology & Criminal Justice majors who had taken LIB 160 by the end of Spring 2015. Below is the demographic breakdown of this population:

- 82 responses out of 318 potential respondents - 25.7% response rate
- Majority female (56.1%)
- Majority white (67.1%)
- Majority received some sort of financial aid (76.8%) or scholarship (51.2%) during their college career
- 39% first generation students

## Curriculum Changes

The results of our online survey led to the following curricular changes:

- Removed online sections of LIB 160 from course offerings based on student feedback
- Made LIB 160 a prerequisite for both CRJ 380 and CRJ 480

## Results

### DID STUDENTS TAKE LIB 160 AT THE RIGHT TIME IN THEIR COLLEGE CAREER?

Most respondents strongly agreed (23.2%) or agreed (35.4%) that they took LIB 160 at the right time in their college career. To further test this relationship, a chi-square was conducted to analyze the impact grade level had on whether they took LIB 160 at the right time in their college career ( $\chi^2 = 21.98$ ;  $p \leq .05$ ).

*"Taking LIB 160 prior to taking methods and research was an excellent plan and worked quite well as it gave me good skills which translated nicely to the other classes."*

*"I should have taken it freshmen year instead of waiting to take it."*

### DID LIB 160 HELP STUDENTS IN CRJ 380 AND CRJ 480?

Of the students who took both LIB 160, CRJ 380 and CRJ 480, a modest percentage either strongly agreed or agreed that LIB 160 benefited them in CRJ 380 (28.0% and 15.9%) and CRJ 480 (18.3% and 11.0%). Only, 15% of the respondents indicated that they did not think that LIB 160 benefited them in subsequent courses.

To determine if grade received in LIB 160 was associated with grade received in CRJ 380 or CRJ 480, a chi-square test was conducted and those who indicated that they had not yet taken CRJ 380 and CRJ 480 were omitted from the bivariate analysis.

Results from this analysis showed that grade received in LIB 160 was associated with grade received in CRJ 380 ( $\chi^2 = 21.48$ ;  $p \leq .05$ ) but not statistically significantly related to grade received in CRJ 480 ( $\chi^2 = 5.64$ ;  $p = .465$ ).

*"It benefitted me in all my classes, although I don't know if it particularly did for CRJ 480 just because we didn't have a lot of writing or research in this class, it was more using the SPSS system and imputing information but when we were learning about the research aspect of CRJ 480, having LIB 160 was helpful."*

*It was a wonderful class because it teaches you how to write a research paper from start to finish. Without this class I would not be able to write research papers. This class would be great to take earlier for classes that require research papers but I really relied on the class for my research methods and statistics courses.*

*"It absolutely didn't benefit me."*

*"I agree it helped me with CRJ 380 because it helped me with the organization of the paper, and the in text citations and such. Also because I learned how to look for information in our library website such as the journal articles."*

### WHAT ARE THE PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF TAKING LIB 160?

Learning to properly use APA style was the largest benefit for 60% of the respondents. Half of the respondents said they benefited by learning how to use online databases. A large percentage (45.1%) indicated they learned how to retrieve academic journals and how to properly use library resources (34.1%). However, a vast majority (81.7%) did not feel that the course helped with developing a research question, evaluating sources (80.5%), or presentation skills (89.0%).

*"I would not have maintained a 3.0 in college if it was not for this class. The professors at UNC expect students to write papers that are formatted correctly and that have resources that are relevant. If LIB 160 was not required I would have failed every paper and I would have not sought out my master's degree."*

## Next Steps

To continue this research, we plan on implementing the following steps:

- Collect student perception data in CRJ 480 starting Fall 2019
- Increase communication between Libraries faculty and Criminology & Criminal Justice faculty about student needs in CRJ 380 and CRJ 480
- Update curriculum for writing a research question, in consultation with CRJ faculty
- Update curriculum for evaluating information sources