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Criminal Justice Students' Perceptions of a Required Library Research Course

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What do Faculty Want?

Faculty want students to “have the skills to recognize when they need additional information to make decisions, and must be able to find and use that information” (Nelson, Killoran, & Dunham, 1995).

Programs have goals of teaching critical thinking, improving writing, have students understand research, have students read and comprehend research in the discipline (Moriartt, 2006)



Assessing Library Courses

- Pre-Post Test
- Final Paper Analysis
- Impact on GPA, Persistence, & Graduation Rates
- Student Perceptions



The Current Study

1. How do Criminal Justice students perceive the influence of the required LIB course on their academic career at UNC?
2. How do Criminal Justice students perceive the influence of the required LIB course on their success in *CRJ 380: Justice Research & Statistics I* and *CRJ 480: Justice Research & Statistics II*?
3. What do students perceive as the major benefit of *LIB 160: Criminal Justice Library Research*?
4. Do students perceive that they took *LIB 160: Criminal Justice Library Research* at the right time in their college career?



Methods

- Survey administered online to 318 students
- n=82
- Response Rate: 25.7%

Survey Question Examples:

1. I took LIB 160 at the right time in my college career.
 - 1a. Please discuss why you either agreed or disagreed with the previous statement.

2. LIB 160 benefitted me in CRJ 380.
 - 2a. Please discuss why you either agreed or disagreed with the previous statement.



Demographics

Gender	Male	34 (41.5%)
	Female	46 (56.1%)
	Missing	2 (2.4%)
Race/Ethnicity	Caucasian/White	55 (67.1%)
	African-American	6 (7.3%)
	Hispanic	15 (18.3%)
	Other	4 (4.9%)
	Missing	2 (2.4%)
First Generation	Yes	32 (39.0%)
	No	48 (58.5%)
	Missing	2 (2.4%)



Findings

Timing of taking the course: $\chi^2 = 21.98$; $p < .05$

“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.”



Findings

LIB 160 grade associated with CRJ 380 grade: $\chi^2 = 21.48; p < .05$

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 ho[w] to look for information in our library website such as the journal articles.”

“I don’t know if it particularly did for CRJ 480 just because ... 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.”



Findings

“Online class should be canceled”



Findings

Perceived Benefit	Yes	No
APA Citation	51 (62.2%)	31 (37.8%)
Retrieving Academic Journals	37 (45.1%)	45 (54.9%)
Developing a Research Question	15 (18.3%)	67 (81.7%)
Learning to Use Library Resources	28 (34.1%)	54 (65.9%)
Learning Online Databases	41 (50.0%)	41 (50.0%)
Source Evaluation	16 (19.5%)	66 (80.5%)
Presentation Skills	9 (11.0%)	73 (89.0%)



Findings

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.



Limitations

- Incomplete email lists/online survey
- Self-report GPA
- Not all students had taken CRJ courses at the time of the survey



Future Directions

- Experimental Design
- Criminal Justice faculty perceptions of LIB 160
- Comparison with other LIB required courses
- Continued assessment after improvements



Suggestions for Implementation

- Prerequisite to 300 and 400 level courses
- Communication between library faculty and CJ faculty
- Research about online/remove online
- Continuous assessment in upper-division courses



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