Where Do We Start? Building a Library Mentorship Program for Undergraduate Students
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Abstract

Mentorship programs mutually benefit academic libraries and student mentees. The main benefit of library mentorship programs to academic libraries is that they supplement the workforce and increase student employee morale. In addition, mentorship programs help students acquire and strengthen skills essential for academic success and future employment. This article articulates how Mercy University Libraries developed an experiential learning opportunity for its student employees. The authors also highlight their experiences and identify aspects of a mentorship program that must be considered before implementation.

Introduction

Academic libraries rely on student employees to support services, particularly in times of declining or flat budgets (Denda and Hunter 2016). Students also benefit from their work experiences in a library (Everett and Bischoff 2021). In the fall of 2022, Mercy University Libraries (MUL) created an experiential learning opportunity for students that combined an internship and mentorship program. Denda and Hunter (2016) assert that internships are meant to extend a student’s education through practical application (255). Mentorship programs, however, supplement the educational experience as the mentor facilitates the “growth and expansion of personal learning and professional networks” (Denda and Hunter 2016, 255). Although internship and mentorship programs have some nuanced differences (Denda and Hunter 2016), the MUL Mentorship Program was designed to incorporate elements from both experiential learning activities.
In this article, the authors will articulate how the mentorship program was successfully implemented. More specifically, it focuses on the challenges faced during implementation and what the future goals are for the program. This article also offers suggestions for creating a similar mentorship model.

Literature Review

According to recent library and information science literature, mentorship programs mutually benefit academic libraries and student mentees. One benefit to academic libraries, as noted by Charles, Lotts, and Todorinova (2017), is that student employees provide the library with a look into the undergraduate population. York, Groves, and Black (2010) echo this idea that when librarians engage in experiential learning with students, “librarians get a glimpse of what students think is important, overlooked, or confusing about the library” (196). Another advantage student employees provide is that they supplement the workforce during times of declining or flat budgets (Denda and Hunter 2016). According to Everett and Bischoff (2021), “employing students in academic libraries serves a dual purpose of facilitating library services while augmenting student education through practical work experience” (1). They further argue that libraries that develop and mentor student employees realize numerous benefits.

Unfortunately, the literature on student employment highlights that library student employees may not realize or be able to explain the benefits or skills gained during their time in libraries to future employers (Charles, Lotts, and Todorinova 2017; Rinto, Mitola, and Otto 2019). One way to combat this is to create a specific mentorship program to give student employees a better understanding of their library work and how it can be applied to myriad careers.

A mentorship program that focuses on experiential learning can support students regardless of career choice because it helps them obtain relevant skills for the workforce (Everett and Bischoff 2021). Experiential learning focuses on the individual student actively doing work themselves and then reflecting on this experience (York, Groves, and Black 2010). Some skills acquired and strengthened by mentored experiential learning include critical thinking, communication, and information literacy (Everett and Bischoff 2021). Kelly, Hoelscher, and Gauder (2014) found that library mentees leave mentorship programs with “better research skills and a deeper understanding of library services” (14). Furthermore, library mentorship programs proved invaluable in students’ paths forward. As students navigate through their current course work and decide on their future endeavors, mentors “help demystify higher
education by sharing their valuable insight and personal experiences, connecting their mentee to important resources that may assist them in overcoming a challenge or in advancing their goals” (Rinto, Mitola, and Otto 2019, 69). Beyond their current student status, these programs help students apply to graduate school or secure job interviews (Kelly, Hoelscher, and Gauder 2014). Meyer and Torreano (2017) also noted that besides learning skills that could be applied to any job, such as “punctuality, honesty, and time management,” student employees “develop transferable skill sets in addition to professional poise” (50).

Meyer and Torreano (2017) found that academic libraries benefit from having students serve in leadership roles. Student mentees who take on leadership roles take ownership of their work responsibilities and become “natural ambassadors” of the library. Meyer and Torreano (2017) note that student mentees’ unique perspectives and experiences provide valuable insights into library services, policies, and spaces. Student mentees also help the library demonstrate its value to the institution and bring positive publicity (Meyer and Torreano 2017). Mentorship programs can also increase employment retention for students by helping them feel better connected to the library and their work. McKenna (2020) writes that student employees who think their mentor is invested in their professional success will be more dedicated to their job. Kelly, Hoelscher, and Gauder (2014) reported that library mentorship programs address the “pressures felt by higher education institutions to provide co-curricular and skill building internships” (3). Library mentorship programs can also serve as a professional development opportunity for librarians. Kelly, Hoelscher, and Gauder (2014) noted that mentorship programs are a “resume building and training experience for librarians” (13). They argued further that mentorship programs allow entry-level librarians to gain managerial experience (Kelly, Hoelscher, and Gauder 2014).

Examples of Library Mentorship and Internship Programs

Current library and information science literature offers a look at academic libraries’ experiential and high-practice mentorship and internship programs. At Rutgers University, undergraduate and library and information science (LIS) students worked on the Douglass Alumnae Oral History Project (DAOHP) using a team-based engagement model (Denda and Hunter 2016). Team-based engagement models incorporate feminist pedagogy and aspects of Paulo Freire’s “critical works on education where the importance of broad experience as a source of knowledge is influenced by the vision of social justice” (258). The mentees had the
“opportunity to gain familiarity and experience with multimedia production and related skills, in addition to knowledge of digital preservation issues and processes” (260).

At Grand Valley State University, student employees were placed in leadership roles to encourage ownership of the library’s space, services, and learning environment (Meyer and Torreano 2017). The students were asked to answer patron questions, handle operations, collect survey data about spaces, and provide library tours (Meyer and Torreano 2017). The students also participated in candidate interviews and helped make hiring decisions (Meyer and Torreano 2017). Brigham Young University (BYU) student employees also participated in experiential learning projects (Everett and Bischoff 2021). Student mentees were responsible for designing an interactive history exhibit. Throughout the process, students were allowed to “apply their knowledge, experience, and talents while learning new things” (Everett and Bischoff 2021, 9), such as designing the exhibit branding and marketing materials.

The University of Dayton’s internship program pairs an intern with a librarian in one of three departments—Marketing and Events, Research and Instruction, and U.S. Catholic Special Collections (Kelly, Hoelscher, and Gauder 2014). Each intern balances duties within their assigned department with a project directly related to their field. The mentors found that this connection between the library work and the students’ interests increased the students' investment in the projects and library. This program also provides concrete work experience on the students’ resumes, indicating “a discrete block of time learning new skills and completing projects” (Kelly, Hoelscher, and Gauder 2014, 14).

While these examples highlight established mentorship and internship programs, there is a gap in the literature regarding the creation and planning of these programs. Tasks and project examples are shared, but there are no explanations on how these programs were formed and the thought processes behind the timelines and activities. Though these programs espoused the career-readiness benefits to student employees, there was no specific mention of these being highlighted or explained to students. Librarians hoping to use the literature to create their own mentorship or internship program would be able to use the end goals of these examples but would need to formulate their programs on their own.

The recent literature also skews toward larger-scale programs at sizable universities. For example, the University of Dayton employs 21 faculty librarians, and Rutgers University employed 350 undergraduate student employees in the Fall of 2014 (Kelly, Hoelscher, and Gauder 2014; Charles, Lotts, and Todorinova 2017; Denda and Hunter 2016). Smaller institutions may not have access to the same budgets and personnel. One common recommendation for student employees is to allow for leadership using graduate or established
student employees to train and supervise their peers (Rinto, Mitola, and Otto 2019). Another frequent suggestion for high-impact experiential learning is to have students work together in teams (Denda and Hunter 2016; Everett and Bischoff 2021). For libraries with smaller numbers of student employees, many of whom may be tied to vital circulation tasks to keep the library running, having student employees take time to work together on in-depth projects may be challenging.

In terms of cost, McKenna (2020) recognizes the primary consideration that funding can be for libraries by arguing that “some colleges do not have enough federal work-study students to go around, and libraries may have a small or non-existent budget to pay student employees” (81). Even considerably sized libraries may need to find alternative forms of funding. For example, the University of Dayton’s paid internship is supplemented by partnering with the university’s Honors program (Kelly, Hoelscher, and Gauder 2014). Smaller libraries may be constrained to only their current librarian and student employee pools without additional resources or time.

Finally, many examples of student mentorship and internship programs acknowledge the career skills gained by student employees but do not discuss how librarians communicate and contextualize these skills for the students’ future employment. Instead, projects in many of the programs tend to focus on the library, with students realizing through their work how the skills they are using may be helpful to them in future careers (Denda and Hunter 2016; Charles, Lotts, and Todorinova 2017; Everett and Bischoff 2021).

This article aims to fill the information gap for smaller libraries on how to create a mentorship program and choose what skills or tasks they would like students to learn. For this article, a mentorship program is defined as a co-curricular activity that is facilitated by a library professional for the purpose of expanding the personal and professional learning of the mentor and mentee.

Planning of the MUL Mentorship Program

As noted by McKenna (2020), student employees “are an invaluable asset to academic libraries” (1). As they increasingly help libraries with tasks such as circulation and technology, librarians have come to rely on student employees, with Starkel (2014) calling them “the unsung heroes of most modern academic libraries” (83). And as much as libraries benefit from student employees, so can these workers benefit from their time at academic libraries.
During the fall 2022 semester, MUL employed five student employees at the Westchester campus and six student employees at the Manhattan campus, all of whom were undergraduates. The goal was to develop a short-term program for two student employees (mentees) that could be managed by two librarians (mentors) at no additional cost to the libraries.

The mentorship team consisted of the director of libraries, the head librarian of the Manhattan campus library (mentor), and a reference and instruction librarian from the Westchester campus library (mentor). The team met nine times between the end of the spring 2022 semester and the fall 2022 semester. The first step in devising a mentorship program was identifying skills that benefit library student employees, such as interpersonal communication, professionalism, and customer service. These skills are beneficial because they are transferrable to any work environment. To ensure a mix of hard and soft skills, information literacy, time management, and project management were included, along with technology such as libanswers and libguides.

After identifying essential skills, the next step was to formalize a way to cover and teach these skills to the mentees. Given the limited contact time with the students, the weekly tasks had to be consolidated within five hours. The time spent with mentees needed to include training and reinforcement of information literacy concepts. One of the main library service areas covered in the program was reference and the basics of handling chat questions. This required time for both training and practice throughout the program. In the planning stages, consideration was also given to allowing the mentees enough time to complete their respective final projects. Again, this included training time on the libguide software, sufficient time to research their topics, create the guides, and make any changes suggested by mentor feedback.

Fostering a Partnership with Career and Professional Development

Although the mentorship team had identified the elements of librarianship that would benefit student employees, there was a need to incorporate career readiness skills and training. To expose the mentees to career skills, the libraries partnered with Mercy University’s Career and Professional Development (C&PD) office by asking for assistance in selecting resources on job readiness and contextualizing the skills gained in library work for future student careers.

At Mercy University, C&PD prepares students for the workforce, helping them look for jobs and connecting them with potential employers. C&PD services included workshops on various career topics, resume and cover letter review, interview preparation, and a professional closet, wherein students were welcomed to pick a professional outfit to keep. The mentorship
team regularly met with the C&PD director to discuss areas where their department could scaffold what was reviewed with the mentees each week. Each mentee was provided with online videos, recorded webinars, and personalized assistance.

The main advantage of this partnership was connecting the mentees with the services provided by the C&PD office. While their offerings are widely publicized, neither mentee had used any of its services before this program. As a result, both mentees benefited from the concrete, personalized help. Finally, the videos and webinars provided by C&PD prompted rich conversations between the mentors and mentees. The mentors would dive deeper into each subject throughout the program after the mentees watched the videos. For example, the webinar on professional clothing led to a discussion on discrimination in the workplace, and the video on salary negotiation led to a talk on expected salaries and typical full-time benefits.

**Mentorship Program Pilot**

The pilot program was held in the fall of 2022, from mid-September to mid-November. Student selection varied by campus. The mentorship team agreed on this timeframe so the mentors and mentees had time to acclimate to the new semester. It was also crucial for the program to align with C&PD’s and the libraries' work schedules. At the beginning of December, the libraries are typically busy helping students finish their coursework. At the Westchester campus library, the mentee was recommended by the circulation supervisor, who works directly with the student employees. This mentee was chosen based on prior work experience (they had worked at the library the previous year as a student employee) and class standing (the student was a senior who could benefit from participating in a program about career readiness). The Manhattan campus mentee was selected shortly after being hired. This mentee had no previous library experience and was a sophomore.

The differences in library experience and academic level greatly impacted the program for each mentee. As the Westchester campus mentee had worked in the library the previous year, they were already familiar with the content involving the integrated library system’s (ILS) circulation module. On the other hand, the Manhattan campus mentee had to learn the libraries' circulation procedures. The Manhattan campus mentee also spent time learning about the different types of libraries and the purpose of an academic library. Additionally, career videos that targeted those new to job searching benefited the incoming Manhattan campus mentee, whereas the Westchester campus mentee had more work experience, making some of the
content redundant. Adaptability was vital to meet each mentee on their specific knowledge or comfort level for each week’s topic.

Throughout the program, the mentors met periodically through Zoom. During those meetings, minor changes were made as the mentors discovered what worked well and what could be improved. One example of this was when it was found that one of the mentors would be away for a week. The mentors extended the program an extra week, giving the mentees additional time to complete their projects. Another change implemented was canceling a scheduled mock interview. During the program’s final week, mentors originally planned to have their mentees meet with C&PD to do a mock interview and get direct feedback. However, as the program drew to a close, it became apparent that the mentees needed additional time to work on their final projects, so the mock interview was dropped from the schedule.

**Mentorship Program Activities**

The finalized mentorship program paired one student mentee with a librarian mentor at their campus. The mentees met with their mentors for five hours each week. Every week a new aspect of librarianship was introduced (Table 1).

**Table 1. Weekly Learning Modules and Tasks**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Learning Module</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Circulation</td>
<td>Introduce the circulation module of the libraries’ integrated library system.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Review the parameters of the final project.</td>
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<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>Introduce LibAnswers software.</td>
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<td>Review best practices for answering directional questions at the reference desk.</td>
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<td>Review procedures for making referrals to librarians in person and on chat.</td>
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<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Virtual library campuses</td>
<td>Introduce mentees to their corresponding campus to compare how different academic libraries function.</td>
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<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Professionalism</td>
<td>Introduce the concept of professionalism, highlighting dressing appropriately for work environments and managing a professional online presence.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Review reference techniques and begin monitoring the libraries’ online chat system.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Resumes and cover letters</td>
<td>Cover best practices for resumes and cover letters. Schedule mentees’ meeting with Career and Professional Development for personalized feedback on mentee resumes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>Interviewing</td>
<td>Review best practices for professional interviews. Share feedback on the mentees' final project.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 7</td>
<td>Interviews and program reflection</td>
<td>Discuss job searching and acceptance, including benefits and salary negotiation. Introduce the final reflection.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 8</td>
<td>Project Wrap-Up</td>
<td>Submit final reflections, complete projects, and schedule exit interviews.</td>
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The program had a mix of tasks, such as watching C&PD videos, monitoring the libraries’ online chat, and discussing the week’s topic with the mentee and the mentor. There were also more in-depth activities. For example, in the third week, each mentee visited the other campus and spent time with the mentor there. Another task had the mentees meet with a C&PD advisor during the fifth week to get feedback on their resumes and cover letters. Meeting with C&PD even prompted a bonus activity, inspiring the Westchester campus mentor and mentee to look at Handshake, the universities’ employment and internship search platform, for potential career choices and discuss what to look for in a job posting.

Time was also given throughout the weeks for the program’s final project. It was crucial to the mentors that time was allotted for mentees to work on their projects within the five-hour weekly meeting time. For the final project, each mentee was tasked with creating a libguide on a subject of their choice. The libguides had to include resources available through the library, though the format and any additional information were entirely at their discretion. The mentees were trained on how to create content based on potential audiences. Having students create a guide served to increase their technical skills and helped reinforce information literacy skills gained by working with the libraries’ collections. The mentees were given the freedom to choose their project topic and how they approached creating the guide. As pointed out by Kelly, Hoelscher, and Gauder (2014), allowing students to make such decisions and utilize their creativity increases engagement and helps students to “feel a stronger connection to their work” (9). When assessing the libguides, the mentorship team looked at the types of resources used and whether they were appropriate for their chosen topic. The team also checked for broken links and whether citations within the guide were correct.
During the program’s final week, mentees were allowed to reflect on their experiences in the program. The mentees stated that they benefited from their relationships with the librarians. The mentees also believed one-on-one training with the librarians helped improve their research skills, particularly searching for journals. They also shared how they appreciated having time to work with C&PD on resumes and job searching skills that would help them secure employment. Both mentees believed the C&PD video on project management was not helpful. Neither of the mentees felt it applied to what they worked on in the program. In the future iteration of this program, the plan is to revamp the weekly structure and give the mentees time to work with the library director. At that time, the director would share how to manage a project effectively and efficiently.

Successes and Accomplishments

To evaluate the program’s effectiveness, the mentorship team had to look at the original goals set for the program. The team not only wanted to highlight certain skills but also help the mentees grow professionally while also taking the time to share even more aspects of librarianship. The team was pleased with the mentees’ final libguide projects and the feedback they shared about their experiences. The libguides incorporated a mix of peer-reviewed articles, websites, and books, which the librarians considered a best practice. The mentorship team was also encouraged that the mentees believed their training with the mentors helped refine their research skills.

Through videos and discussions with their mentors, mentees learned about the skills they already utilized in their library work and how these could be applied to their career interests. In addition to the skills, mentees noted that the videos and discussions on fundamental future career considerations would be helpful. For example, neither mentee knew that negotiating a salary was possible.

Both mentees also said the mentorship program allowed them to learn more about MUL. Even as a senior, the Westchester campus mentee had yet to fully utilize advanced database searching, a new skill that would help them pursue a career as a medical researcher. As a sophomore, the Manhattan campus mentee was new to the libraries’ collections and said that this program was an introduction to how to use the libraries’ resources and helped them to see the library from the librarians’ point of view.

A significant success of the program was the mentee-created libguides. Both mentees talked about their guides as one of their favorite parts of the program. As hoped, the mentees saw the guides as an opportunity to use the skills they were learning in their fields of interest.
This created a deep sense of responsibility and engagement with the guide. In addition to the fun of making the guide, each student created a tangible end-product they could share with future employers.

Another achievement of the program was the partnership with Career and Professional Development. This collaboration created a better relationship between the libraries and C&PD, and the resources they provided were invaluable. They helped the mentors focus on career skills, job searching, and future work expectations. In addition to C&PD’s assistance to the mentors, the opportunity for the mentees to meet with career advisors was valuable and timely. For example, the Westchester campus mentee was in their senior year and beginning to start job searching. The Manhattan campus mentee mentioned in the exit interview that they looked forward to having their resume reviewed by C&PD. A scheduled resume and cover letter review provided a direct way for students to see the advantages of participating in the mentorship program.

The mentorship team thought the most significant benefit of the program was the deep bonds it forged between the mentor and mentee. Both mentees raved about the time spent with each of their mentors in their exit interviews. Spending a set amount of one-on-one time each week allowed the mentors and mentees to connect in a way that would not have been possible during regular work hours. These connections created a more profound sense of belonging to the library and as a member of the library staff. The mentorship team was thrilled to see that the pilot program was able to help students build future career skills and foster bonds with the librarians.

Lessons Learned

There were several lessons learned while running the mentorship program. The first of these was in the student selection process. Initially, it was planned for the Provost’s Office to assign a student employee to the program. The mentorship team hoped this would aid in selecting a responsible candidate who needed internship experience before graduation. When this did not happen, the possibility of working with C&PD to pair with a student actively looking for an internship was discussed. However, due to time and budget constraints, selecting a mentee from the libraries’ student employees was the best path forward. This came with the challenge of choosing from the student employees who would be the mentees. Initially, the team discussed creating an application for selecting a mentee. After several conversations, it was decided not to have a formal application process because of time constraints. By the time the mentorship team chose to use student employees as candidates, it was the end of August, and
the program was set to start in mid-September. The consensus was that there was not enough
time to create an application, have students complete the application (while also beginning their
classes), review the submissions, and then choose and onboard the student employee to the
program. Instead, the team offered the opportunity to students from the current and incoming
student worker pools.

Once the mentees were selected, another challenge for the mentors was expecting both
groups to do the same tasks during the same weeks. The two mentees were at very different
levels of professional and library knowledge. This incongruity of library and professional
experience led to some difficulties in the mentors keeping pace with each other. For the more
experienced mentee, some essential career advice seemed obvious, whereas, for the newer
mentee, some topics were too advanced and required more explanation. For example, when
discussing negotiating salaries, the more experienced mentee could delve into the intricacies of
expected wages and living costs, whereas the newer mentee spent this time discussing savings
accounts and budgeting. Having a topic each week worked well, but having materials relevant to
a mentee at any level required more flexibility than given in the original outline.

In the future, the authors will comprehensively examine how students are selected for
participation. By coordinating student selection earlier in the summer semester, mentors will
have a greater opportunity to seek mentees at similar levels and additional time to personalize
specific tasks and potential discussions based on the mentees’ interests and past experiences.
Additionally, the program’s weekly outline will be more broadly designed and considered a living
document that will be fluid enough to make modifications upon the mentors’ periodic meetings.
Accepting mentees in the summer and creating enough space for individualization in the weekly
outline will allow mentors and mentees more freedom to explore relevant topics at each
mentee’s level without the pressure of both mentees covering the same tasks.

Finally, the mentors discovered as the program unfolded that the original schedule
needed to allow adequate time for mentees to complete their final projects. While videos and
training had been accounted for, the mentorship team had not anticipated the time spent
conversing with mentees. As the program neared completion, both mentors saw that the
mentees had insufficient time to work on their libguides. Because the mentors did not want to
create undue pressure for them to finish, they agreed to remove a mock interview between the
mentee and C&PD. Going forward, to keep the program within eight weeks, some of the
scheduled tasks will be altered or removed. Mentees will be given fewer specified activities each
week, allowing them to cover topics relevant to them personally. For example, in the pilot
program, mentees watched six hours of videos throughout the eight weeks. Removing some of the videos from the schedule will give mentees additional time to work on their projects.

Even though there were only two mentees, the mentorship team learned some lessons about creating an experiential learning program for students. Based on experience, several things must be contemplated before instituting an experiential learning program. First, libraries should formulate a plan for student selection as early as possible. Libraries must consider where the student pool comes from and the selection criteria. Second, the experience level of the mentees should be considered. Will the program be for students at a specific experience level (either in terms of the library or professional work)? Do all students need to be at similar stages, and how will the program change if they differ? Finally, buffer time needs to be included in the planning. Inevitably, mentees or mentors may need to miss a session, discussions may go long, or projects may take longer than anticipated. Libraries will need to be flexible so that schedule changes cause minimal disruptions in the goals of the learning experience.

Academic libraries considering instituting a mentorship program should be aware of the challenges. Mentorship programs can be time consuming. For an effective program, mentors must create weekly tasks for mentees that are reasonable to monitor. Aligning weekly activities with the mentors' work responsibilities would benefit the mentee and may lessen the mentors' workload. For example, it would be advantageous to cover reference interviews for a portion of the time the librarian might be at the reference desk, allowing the mentee to observe the mentor in real-time.

Conclusion

Although the mentorship team felt this experiential learning activity was successful, some changes to the program will be made in the spring of 2024. The libraries plan to offer more students this learning opportunity next academic year. Since the mentorship initiative required considerable time and effort in carrying out the learning modules, the team size will be reconsidered. In preparation, the mentorship team has begun recruiting additional stakeholders to participate in the program. To expand in a scalable way, additional library personnel will take on some of the responsibility for managing the learning activities of the mentees.

In addition to expanding the mentorship program, the next step is to gather data on the learning activities’ impact on the mentees’ academic success. Although the mentees explained the program’s benefits in the exit interview, collecting data on whether the learning experience helped them with coursework would be prudent. Therefore, the future strategy is to create a pre-
and post-survey that captures the mentees’ perception of the mentorship program’s impact on their college experience.

A pre- and post-survey on the mentees’ career goals will also be given to the next cohort of mentees. It is worth understanding how the mentorship program may have affected their career decisions. Both mentees chose to create a libguide on a topic that pertained to the profession they wanted to pursue. Even though the mentees could have chosen any topic, they decided to build a libguide that piqued their career interests. One mentee created a guide on Alzheimer’s because of their career interest in psychology. The other mentee constructed a guide on criminal justice, which helped them explore what careers are available. Librarians should consider building a mentorship program that tracks how it may help students determine career goals. The program should also leave flexibility in its learning objectives to allow students to explore their career options more deeply.

More research needs to be done on how experiential learning activities, such as mentorship programs, impact undergraduate student success and career outcomes. Although this pilot program only had two mentees, having more students would help illuminate a mentorship program’s impact on academic and career success. A recommendation for advancing this research would be to examine the career outcomes of library mentees after graduation. Another suggestion would be to track student success metrics for mentees throughout their time working in the library. These metrics include retention rates, graduation rates, and academic performance. Given the limited literature on implementing library mentorship programs, this paper and the works cited would help develop an experiential learning opportunity for student employees.

References


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