

University of Washington Bothell - Academic Services: User Needs Committee

Cascadia Community College Focus Groups 2006-2007

Primary Themes and Recommendations

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Introduction

This is a summary report of eight focus groups that took place between December 2006 and February 2007, organized by the UWB Academic Services User Needs Committee. The focus groups asked in-depth questions of Cascadia Community College students and faculty about their experiences with, and opinions about, the University of Washington Bothell/Cascadia Community College Campus Library and Media Center. A total of eight focus groups with Cascadia Community College students and faculty were held, with six student focus groups and two faculty focus groups. The student focus groups included one pilot focus group, which was a mix of students, three Integrated Studies (IS) focus groups, one English as a Second Language (ESL) focus group, and one Business and Information Technology (BIT) focus group. The faculty focus groups included one group of IS and ESL faculty and the second group included one IS faculty. A summary of student and faculty comments and recommendations is included in this report.

Themes and Recommendations

Facilities and Environment/Space

Student focus group participants emphasized their frequent use of the Library as a study and work space. Different students preferred to do their work in different areas of the library, underscoring the importance of maintaining different types of space within the Library to meet patron's needs. For example, some students reported

appreciating the availability of soft chairs they could relax in, while others appreciated the hard, rigid chairs at tables so they could focus while studying. The lighting, study rooms, and nice views from the plentiful windows were all given very positive reviews. By all student focus groups, the Library is generally viewed as a comfortable, quiet place with various resources on hand that allows for group and individual work. Some students also like the noisier places to study.

Students expressed a need for several possible improvements to create a more comfortable Library space. For the study rooms, students suggested that they should have the ability to play music and have more soft chairs available. Students also expressed a desire for a small café or coffee shop inside the Library. Ergonomic keyboards were requested by students in the BIT focus group.

Faculty suggested several activities they thought the Library's space would host well. This included a suggestion of scheduling quarterly informal gatherings, or open-houses, for both UW Bothell and Cascadia faculty to discuss assignments, databases, and teaching strategies in the Library. These forums on topical issues, such as technology (i.e. blogs and wikis), issues relating to information literacy, and Library services would be useful to faculty at both institutions. Faculty also reported that our Library has less "gatherings" than others, and perhaps if we invited speakers and hosted more events it would become more of a hub on campus.

Recommendations:

- Small café or coffee shop inside the library space.
- Quarterly informal gatherings, or open-houses, for both UW Bothell and Cascadia Faculty to discuss assignments, databases, and teaching strategies.
- Consider hosting more campus events.

Important theme: Have a variety of environments

- Both quiet and noisy places to study were appreciated.
- Soft and hard chairs (people have different ideas about what comfortable seating means).

Services

Student and faculty focus group participants expressed the overwhelming opinion that library staff are very helpful, that they like what they are doing, they are eager to help, and are very friendly. It was positively noted that our staff will walk the students through Library services, resources, and processes, rather than sending them on their way. Participants also commented that staff are good at recommending resources.

Both students and faculty expressed appreciation for Library Reserves. Students valued having their text books available to them in the Library. Faculty were highly appreciative of the speed and quality of service the Reserves staff continually offer, specifically mentioning E-Reserves.

In general, participants responded that the Library hours are good. One student did request adding more Friday evening hours. Another student wanted longer weekend hours.

A few student suggestions were made regarding how to improve Library services and access to Library services. One student wanted phone notification when items were due. Another participant suggested that each floor of the Library should be staffed, and there should be a reference desk on each floor, so that their questions about books and periodicals could be answered at their point of need. One participant suggested we produce a business card with our hours listed on it. A weekly email featuring a Library resource (so students can learn about various library resources) was recommended.

A theme frequently mentioned in the student focus groups was the need for increased and better signage. This was especially important to the ESL students who requested pamphlets and signs in different languages and in more simple English, utilizing the ESL AmeriCorps office, if needed. This group of students also expressed a need for visual signage and maps pointing out where everything in the library is, including the ESL and Recreational Reading collections. Some student focus group participants were unsure of the existence and location of the book drop boxes. The student focus groups also pointed out the need to more clearly state where the “stacks” are, instruction on using LCCS after many of them are used to Dewey, clear signage with printing instructions in the Information Commons, and more general publicity about services, resources and facilities available at the library.

Recommendations:

- Improve signage directing patrons to the Stacks.
 - From the library catalog, make the book/resource location links more relevant.
- Create and make available “How to Use Library of Congress Call Number” handouts.
- Provide brochures in different languages and/or more simple English.
- Improve visibility and quality of “how to print” signs.
- Post signs of the location of the drop boxes in more places and on the webpage.

Important theme: More signage needed

- Create a visual directory of library services at the entrance of the Library.
- Create more visual signage (as opposed to text-based signs).

Technology

Students reported that they liked the Library’s wireless access, the up-to-date technologies offered, and that they can bring in their own laptops to the Library. More technology in the study rooms and free printing, like at CCC, were also requested. A request was also made that “UW Restricted” library databases be accessible through Blackboard. IS student participants requested more computers in general and more scanners. BIT students requested the availability of course-

specific software and more computers for students with disabilities. Student focus group participants commented on the difficulty of setting up a UW Net ID, and that this account adds to their already large number of user names and passwords as CCC students.

Faculty and students discussed trouble with CCC passwords accounts in the Library and in general.

Recommendations:

- Increase technology in the study rooms.
- Increase number of computer stations in the Information commons.

Collections

Students like the variety of the resources available in the Library and Media Center and having access to their textbooks on reserve in the Library. Faculty also like the depth of the collections available here. Both students and faculty appreciated having access to all of the UW collections and resources.

Recommendations:

- Make more maps and/or signage available to help patrons locate books. Some students did not know how to find books.
- Create “recommended reading” lists by discipline.

Librarians

Faculty focus group participants view Campus Librarians as colleagues who are important partners in their classes. They favor the information literacy instruction focus, librarian’s awareness of the developmental progression that students go through, and connecting students with appropriate resources. Librarians are perceived as the most interdisciplinary group on campus. Faculty value the librarians’ role in providing a link between faculty at CCC, UWB and the UW. Librarians at the Campus Library were described by faculty as smart, educated, having a breadth and depth of knowledge, available, helpful, and easy to ask if help is needed.

One IS faculty member commented that it would be helpful to have a specific meeting time at the beginning of the year with both their Librarian liaison and a Campus Media Center staff person. Also suggested was that the Library should provide an “open house” meeting with the librarian liaisons at the start of the academic year.

Recommendations:

- Have a specific meeting time at the beginning of the year with faculty, librarians, and the CMC.
- Provide an “open house” for new faculty and their Library liaisons each fall.

Library Instruction

Faculty remarked that embedded and course-integrated Library/information literacy instruction is appreciated. One IS faculty member mentioned that the most important instruction theme is evaluating sources within the disciplines, and evaluating sources in general.

The student focus group participants liked having a librarian for each class and discipline and noted that librarians are helpful in knowing where resources are and how to focus in specific areas. A student commented that she liked library instruction sessions that have visuals.

Campus Media Center

Students and Faculty alike appreciate the Campus Media Centers' collection, equipment, good and fast service, and its connection to the UW collections and Summit. Students reported a lack of exposure to everything the Campus Media Center has to offer, however. A suggestion was made to have an online database of all of the media equipment available for student use and circulation. Even students who have not used the Media Center did appreciate knowing about this campus resource.

Besides increased publicity, students made several suggestions for the Campus Media Center. One student suggested the Campus Media Center have more Anime films available. Another student suggested getting rid of the requirement to have instructor permission in order to check out cameras. It was also mentioned that sometimes the media equipment does not work upon checkout and that staff should check batteries before circulating equipment.

Faculty value the Campus Media Center's role in their classrooms. Classroom technology support is very quick. They appreciate all of the equipment made available for student use.

Recommendations:

- Increase publicity/marketing for the CMC around campus.
- Make the list of circulating equipment more obvious from CMC's homepage.

Tours

There was a general consensus amongst student focus group participants that have a guided tour of the Library preferable to a scavenger hunt or similar activity. Students felt that during the scavenger hunt they are either running around frantically attempting to answer the questions, or copying the answers from someone else who ran around frantically. Some also felt that they are not being treated as adults when asked to complete the scavenger hunt. They want key services and resources (like study rooms, the Commons, the collections) pointed out to them during the tour. There were some mixed feelings on the tours themselves: some students requested more tours for both individual and groups, while others thought that Library orientations were long and boring.

Faculty bounced around the idea of requiring certain lower level courses to hold a basic Library tour or orientation so all students receive a Library introduction, covering fundamental information, at least once. Faculty reported that they receive student feedback that students have already learned about the Library, so they don't want to come in for another orientation in any particular class.

Recommendations:

- For S.O.A.R. introductory sessions in the Library, offer tours instead of scavenger hunts.

Conclusion

Overall positive comments were made by both students and faculty about the staff and services that the Campus Library and Media Center offers. Both groups also expressed their appreciation of the benefits they receive from the co-location of the CCC/UWB campus and how it augments their on-campus experiences.