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Instruction Internship
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Learning to Teach: An Internship Experience

During the spring semester I completed a 110-hour internship in instruction at the Consortium Library on the University of Alaska Anchorage campus. Over the course of the semester I went from having no experience and moderate confidence in teaching to successfully teaching library one-shot sessions independently with great confidence. At the beginning of the internship, my supervisor and I came up with an internship plan to follow. We agreed that the top priority was to get me in front of a class as quickly as possible. The second priority was to have me observe practicing librarians as much as possible so I may learn from them.

Observation.

Over the course of the spring semester, I observed eighteen one shot library instruction sessions taught by ten different librarians. In twelve of those sessions, I went a step beyond observing and assisted students individually, helping them follow along during the lecture and helping them practice what was covered during hands-on portions.

Performing Instruction.

After observing numerous sessions I began collaborating with Interim English Liaison Librarian, Michael Catoggio. I observed several of his English 111 classes before moving on to team-teaching five sessions with him. In each of those sessions, I conducted approximately thirty minutes of instruction independently and assisted students individually when I wasn't teaching.

When I transitioned to teaching solo, I redesigned and reorganized the session be more of a workshop. I changed priorities and time spent on various topics, and incorporated more hands-on time

spread out throughout the hour and fifteen minutes to encourage engagement and opportunities to apply concepts. I also implemented an exercise for English 111 that guided students through tasks because I noticed many students floundered when freed to practice searching. Those who were successful would focus on only one thing (such as searching for books or journal articles, but not both). For Guidance 150 (Study Skills), I stuck with the content of the standard lecture but made some changes to the exercise used for the session that improved flow and clarity.

I taught nine sessions independently, including two Guidance 150 classes and seven English 111 classes. For each class, I contacted the course instructor in advance for the assignment and to talk about the his or her priorities to ensure sessions were appropriately tailored. My internship supervisor observed the first five sessions to offer feedback. I also solicited feedback from the students, simply asking them what was most valuable and what was still confusing. Based on the feedback, my own self-assessment, and the priorities expressed by each instructor, I adjusted and improved my sessions each time.

In addition to teaching students library and research skills, I also did some internal teaching. I led a tour of the Learning Resources Center and a Q & A session for the librarians so they could learn about this somewhat isolated department on campus. I also presented the highlights of the ACRL conference presentations, workshops, and pre-conferences that were relevant to instruction to the librarians (I was the only one of the group that was able to attend). At the end of my internship, I did another presentation sharing the highlights of my internship and lessons learned through observation.

Mentor Meetings.

My observations and instruction experiences were supplemented by regular mentor meetings with my supervisor. During these meetings we discussed various issues in instruction, pulled out the notable and not-so-effective elements of each session I observed or taught. She helped give a broader perspective and helped me think things through.

Outcome.

I leave this internship having accomplished all the major goals I had set forth. I observed different teaching styles and strategies and incorporated them into my own instruction. I not only have the essential teaching experience vital to my resume but also the confidence that I can walk into any entry level academic library position requiring instruction and begin teaching right away.