Meeting the library needs of UW-L graduate students
Presented to UW-L Graduate Council

As we look at ways to meet the needs of graduate students, one possibility is to follow the parallel example of the Master of Education-Professional Development (ME-PD) Learning Community (LC) members. Several years ago, the distance-based ME-PD Learning Community students were identified as a group of motivated library users whose needs were not being completely met. In response, the library created a comprehensive set of resources for this specific group (described below).

The current situation with on-campus graduate students seems similar to the ME-PD situation in many respects:

1. Both groups are easy to identify and distinguish from other groups

2. Both groups are motivated to use quality information resources

3. Both groups have existing channels of communication

4. Both groups have had information needs that were not being completely met

An integrated approach was taken to meet the needs of ME-PD LC members.

1. The library met with ME-PD teachers and administrators to understand the program and determine needs.

2. Librarians went out to ME-PD learning communities and provided classroom-based instruction sessions.

3. Support materials were created specifically for LC members. These included user guides, search templates, presentation slides, pathfinders, and more.

4. Policies and procedures were created or modified based on the needs of this group (but often also made available to all distance learners). Examples are: delivery of materials via mail and implementation of 1-800 reference service.

5. The library created a web presence specifically for LC members. This provided a central point for all specifically-developed and otherwise-related resources for LC members.

6. A mechanism for communicating important library information was established using email and a ME-PD courseware site managed by ME-PD administrators.

7. A presentation about library resources for ME-PD members was made to all ME-PD facilitators and administrators.

8. A continuing dialog exists among librarians and ME-PD facilitators and administrators.

Questions:

1. Can we adapt the process above and use it with on-campus graduate students?

2. Is it possible that the library has adequate resources but graduate students are not aware of them?

3. Can this problem be solved by organizing library materials in ways more relevant to graduate students and by making them more aware of library resources?

4. Do LibQual+ results and the meeting with the Graduate Council give us enough information or do we need more?

Mirroring the ME-PD Learning Community process

The following are steps we could take if we try to mirror the activities taken with the ME-PD Learning Community program:

1. Determine graduate student needs and library deficiencies.

2. Pull together all existing resources relevant to graduate students.

3. Determine if these resources meet needs. If not, consider how to add or modify resources.

4. Create web site and written materials for graduate students.

5. Look for ways to reach graduate students when they first enroll. Perhaps create a brochure or have introductory email to be received by all new graduate students.

6. Determine how best to communicate with continuing graduate students and how to communicate regularly.

7. Look for ways to reach graduate students with library instruction.

8. Evaluate success and refine as necessary.