Editorial

Student completion strategies and academic libraries

Attention to accountability and monitoring and measuring institutional quality and performance in higher education are hardly new phenomena. However, today we are seeing an increasing societal expectation/requirement that colleges and universities, whether public or private, must become more responsive to national economic needs and new demands for increased performance. Student progress, student persistence, student success, student retention and student completion are part of the performance lexicon.

In response to directives from the US Department of Education, many of the regional higher education accreditation bodies have undertaken a project to review student achievement data at each of their institutions with the goal of increasing completion rates. Institutions are being asked to verify their student completion rate data and to identify a group of peers from within their region. They are also being asked to identify current or future strategies or initiatives to improve or maintain student completion rates at their institution.

A multitude of factors affect student matriculation and completion rates, including well-documented academic library contributions to student success. When it comes to designing, assessing and implementing student support services and resources, academic libraries have an established track record of success. Our readers would probably have no trouble providing examples of what they and their colleagues are doing to work toward the success of all students. It's time to shift gears slightly and consider our investment in terms of student completion. Library strategies or initiatives to improve or maintain student completion rates are a key component of our institutions' commitment to student completion.

Current library strategies or services to ensure transfer student success, and ultimately their student completion, are featured in this issue; a companion to our previous issue (Vol 45 Issue 2), this issue is profiled in Tammy Ivins' guest editorial. While they do not focus on transfer students, two other manuscripts in the issue take a deeper dive into the user experience. Troy Swanson and his colleagues discuss implementing a library usability study and Ellen Rubenstein and her colleagues revisit librarians' one-box teaching practices and philosophies. As our readers know, the importance of the user experience to student success has been recognized. We conclude this editorial with a nod to Margaret Burnette's manuscript "Tacit knowledge sharing among library colleagues". The author suggests that a "better understanding of the circumstances and character of knowledge sharing can help foster an environment where knowledge sharing and transfer happen more readily". She also suggests that "Both of these efforts help to address a growing imperative to retain tacit knowledge from experienced librarians who retire or relocate, and the broader KM challenge of an aging workforce". We couldn't agree more!

Sarah Barbara Watstein
University of North Carolina Wilmington, Wilmington, North Carolina, USA, and
Eleanor Mitchell
Dickinson College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, USA