ALL-SIS Student Services Town Hall Summary

The ALL-SIS Student Services Committee held a Town Hall via Zoom on April 28, 2022 with five breakout rooms, where librarians from various academic law libraries discussed the following topic questions. A summary of the discussion in all of the breakout rooms is provided.

Topic 1: How are you navigating the pandemic/post-pandemic world? What are you keeping/not keeping as we return to in-person services?

Virtual/Chat Reference/Instruction: Many librarians reported that they started offering virtual reference service (Zoom, chat, email or combination thereof) during the pandemic and plan to continue it. However, some libraries indicate that they have been eliminating virtual offerings as students return in-person – chat reference, for example, was reported as a service dropped by at least two libraries. At this point in time, libraries are generally grappling with finding the right balance between in-person reference hours and virtual reference hours. Some libraries indicated they are using students to staff reference and that they may be more approachable. Many participants reported that students are desiring more in-person contact but a challenge is the different risk assessments made by students and librarians. One group moved their certificate program to live Zooms which has been successful, because they can accommodate more students than can be accommodated in-person. Zoom office hours are also continuing to be used by many librarians, as well as virtual staff meetings.

Circulation/Reserves/Student Workers: Libraries are reporting discontinuing curbside printing service/other circulation services. New tools for communication with student workers have been helpful and may be continued, such as Google Spaces group chat, MS Teams chat, etc. Student workers have learned new skills used to keep busy during the pandemic such as creating social media content. Many libraries are active in enhancing course reserves, such as by creating LibGuides that easily link to both print items and e-books. Many libraries also created LibGuides with instructions for remote access of electronic resources and are keeping those up. Libraries are also continuing to try to acquire textbooks electronically whenever possible. One library reported they are scanning the first two weeks of class readings to cover the add-drop period for classes and the service has been very popular with students. Libraries increased scanning/document delivery service in general during the pandemic, and that trend has continued.

Food/Masks: Overwhelmingly, libraries are continuing to provide food that is individually packaged/grab-and-go as opposed to communal food for events. As masking policies continue to change, some libraries report continuing conflicts with students over masking and enforcement.

Topic 2: What are some student outreach ideas you've tried for new student orientation, or as fun activities/stress busters? Are you creating online/physical displays?

Orientation: Many libraries reported that they had converted a lot of orientation training materials to video/digital/LibGuides during the pandemic and will likely continue to have a strong digital presence going forward. Libraries are just now thinking about ideas for this fall, as last year's orientation was still mostly virtual or difficult to plan for with certainty. One library had a "Library Orientation Week" in October 2021, which was successful. There were lightning talks at two different periods during the day and students were given raffle tickets for attending. There were various prizes given out, but plants from a local farmer's market were a big hit. Extending orientation activities later in the semester was a topic discussed in another group as well, since many new students are overwhelmed by the amount of information at the beginning of the semester. One group discussed that the pandemic provided an opportunity to transition away from traditional orientation packets. Libraries reported that traditional tours have been scaled back, if still held in person.

Fun Activities/Stress Busters: These have been especially popular as even small activities seem to be very comforting and well-received by students. Examples provided include:

- Pop-up event where student spin a wheel for prizes, including additional printing credits, grab bags of prizes from the dollar store, or vendor swag
- Jigsaw puzzles
- Coloring sheets and supplies
- End-of-semester celebration with snacks, used to get out word about student survey
- A relaxation event series where students can do a crafting activity or play a game
  - Creating Zen gardens and playing Mario Kart were very popular
  - The series was promoted via SBA, social media and student workers and was
  - Events were located near the entrance to the library
- Having a "coffee bar" at the Circulation Desk during finals along with free snacks
- Swag giveaways, especially at the beginning of the year
- Trend toward less "party" type events with food/beer/wine and instead handing out treat bags
- Study buddy program coordinated by library
- Motivational messages on digital displays and giving out motivational stickers at exam time; one library gave out "hurdle turtles" to bar studiers
- Giving out water bottle stickers and laptop stickers
- Therapy dogs
- Anything that increases morale and laughter; any excuse for a fun activity is welcome, e.g. 110th Birthday of Oreos

- Providing online wellness resources such as Texas A&M's "Student Play" guide: https://law.tamu.libguides.com/c.php?g=1158437&p=8499701

Online/Physical Displays: One library had student workers create an online "display" that had downloadable PDFs on how to create a study plan and other study tips, that was very popular. Many libraries reported partnering with student affinity groups on physical displays. Libraries contact the student organization leader via email proposing the subject of the display. The library finds books and other resources on the subject, which the student group helps supplement. Both the library and the student group can then use their social media channels to promote the display. These partnerships have enhanced the libraries' relationships with student groups. These type of partnerships have also been helpful in enhancing library diversity, equity and inclusion efforts.

3. What actions are you taking with regard to diversity, equity and inclusion in student services?

As mentioned above, many libraries are conducting outreach to student affinity groups by partnering on displays, and in other ways. One library reported specifically reaching out to the affinity groups when hiring student workers for the library. Once hired, they have those students help create LibGuides/research guides. Libraries report creating LibGuides and physical displays for the Law Library of Congress diversity months. One library created a course on Native American Law research (Indian and tribal law). Another idea was a book club / reading group that would discuss topically-relevant books.It is helpful for the library to be in contact with student groups or other personnel in the Law School that are involved with DEI initiatives. One library held a staff "circle" conversation on anti-racism.

Some groups discussed accessibility issues. For instance, a library with a lot of military personnel made adjustments to accommodate visible and invisible disabilities. The library modified their puzzle station and changed the position of chairs to make their space accessible to students with disabilities. Digital accessibility of materials for students with visual impairments was also mentioned.

4. What technology tools are you using to reach students, such as video, blogs, chat, and social media?

Libraries reported creating more video content for outreach, tutorials and instruction, but that it is often posted on internal systems as opposed to via social media. Many libraries continue with blogs, such as Harvard: https://etseq.law.harvard.edu/. While not a technology-based outreach tool, they report that their publication posted in the bathrooms remains popular!

In the social media sphere, one library (Tulane) reported that Instagram is the best way to reach their students. One of their content ideas is a Wacky Wednesday where they post poll/trivia questions related to cases, judges, etc. They have student workers help come up with the questions. Many libraries report that having student workers help generate social media content has been very successful.

Twitter and Facebook are both still utilized by many libraries. One group had a discussion about the challenges of social media, including managing multiple platforms, finding enough time to create content with limited staffing, coming up with enough content ideas, and struggling to engage users. Having an established schedule for posts is helpful, as is thinking about the library's mission when posting to social media – for example, promoting library events and services vs. retweeting. One group discussed that their social media hits and stats went down during the pandemic and they have not yet seen engagement bounce back to pre-pandemic levels. Having faculty engagement on Twitter and having them retweet content can be helpful.

5. How are you getting feedback/assessment from students, such as via surveys, committees, etc.?

Many libraries reported their feedback/assessment efforts being particularly challenging during COVID. Many libraries have student advisory committees, but one library reported that theirs dropped off during the pandemic. One library recently started a focus group with hopes of creating a permanent committee. This library asked leaders of student affinity groups to participate in the focus group, since they wanted to include diversity, equity, and inclusion as a discussion topic. One library reported utilizing their advisory council, comprised of student workers as well as recent graduates, when planning a new building project.

Direct student feedback from student workers, 1L research class students, etc. is also gained by many libraries. Libraries report that their law student workers are a good connection between the library staff and the student body to get feedback. Also, training student workers to get contact information so that librarians can follow up on issues or complaints is helpful.

Formal surveys are used by some libraries and offering a prize drawing increases participation. Informal polls are also great, such as "What are three small things that would make the library better?" One library had good luck with a portable whiteboard that posed questions for feedback, such as "What can the library do for you?"

One group discussed that student needs/wants is an important focus in the post-pandemic world. Also, timing of feedback efforts is important – one library reported that in April, students didn't have a lot of bandwidth to participate.