



October 20, 2015

Dr. Barbara E. Brittingham
President of the Commission
New England Association of Schools and Colleges
Commission on Institutes of Higher Education
3 Burlington Woods Dr., Suite 100
Burlington, MA 01803-4514

Dear Dr. Brittingham,

Thank you for meeting with us on October 13, 2015 and providing the Association of College and Research Libraries/New England Chapter (ACRL/NEC) the opportunity to address the NEASC-CIHE draft revised 2015 Standards from a library perspective. We appreciate the Commission's work to make the Standards more concise, as well as its affirmation of the value that information literacy and information resources and services offer in support of student success and learning by integrating these elements into various sections of the draft Standards.

Published research in information literacy indicates a clear connection between information literacy, library services and resources, and student success and learning; our goal, as academic librarians, is to be an integral part of these outcomes. Please see the attached appendix for a brief listing of sources on this topic.

As discussed during our dialogue with you and Drs. O'Brien and Harbecke, with adequate information resources, library services and resources, and information literacy education, institutions' academic communities will have the tools necessary to support teaching and learning. This library support leads to improved student retention, increased graduation rates, and a population of information literate citizens—all performance indicators which are of importance to Commission members.

Our concern about the removal of a separate library standard in this draft focuses on the de-emphasis of library services and the role of librarians in student and institutional successes, as well as the lack of institutional understanding that we in this profession often encounter. This misconception was demonstrated at one of our institutions by a survey documenting faculty overestimation of their own information literacy skills, and illustrated by the Discussion Paper comment "Some institutions no longer have libraries – they have a Learning Commons or some other arrangement to offer learning resources to students," which oversimplifies the situation and severely neglects the information services component.

Per your request, listed below are suggested wording changes to further integrate information/library resources/services and information literacy into NEASC-CIHE's draft Standards. New language is **bolded**.

- *Standard 4.19, The Academic Program: The Major or Concentration*
(Line 40) "**Through the use of library or information services**, graduates demonstrate an in-depth understanding of an area of knowledge or practice, its principal information resources, and its interrelatedness with other areas."

- *Standard 6, Support for Teaching and Learning*
So that the importance of librarians' roles in the teaching and learning process is clarified, and to address the issue that some university and college libraries now fall under information technology, not academic affairs, replace "academic staff" with the following language, which can then be referred to throughout Standard 6.

Additional language:

(Line 1) "The institution supports teaching and learning through a well-qualified faculty and **professional staff, such as librarians, advisors, counselors, instructional designers (hereafter called "faculty and staff")**, who, in structures and processes appropriate to the institution, collectively ensure the quality of instruction and support for student learning. Scholarship, research, **information resources**, and creative activities receive support appropriate to the institution's mission."

- *Standard 7.22, Institutional Resources: Information, Physical, and Technological Resources*
So that Standard 7.22 adequately provides for assessment and evaluation of library and information resources and services, separate into two separate sections, Standard 7.22 and 7.23. The suggested text of 7.23 provides a more specific description of expectations and a sentence providing for assessment of the effectiveness of library and information resources and services. While the language is more specific, we believe that it retains the necessary flexibility to evaluate different types of institutions and to encourage continued innovation in meeting institutional needs.

Proposed language changes:

7.22 The institution uses information technology sufficient to ensure its efficient ability to plan, administer, and evaluate its program and services.

7.23 The institution provides access to library and information resources, services, facilities, and qualified staff sufficient to support its teaching and learning environments and its research and public service mission as appropriate. The institution demonstrates the effectiveness of these resources and services in supporting the academic mission.

Finally, while not noted in the Standard, continuing to include a librarian on both evaluation and self-study teams will ensure that information literacy needs continue to be assessed for effectiveness.

Again, thank you for meeting with us. We appreciate the opportunity to provide you and the Commission with input and suggested language that will strengthen the NEASC-CIHE Standards and allow academic librarians to continue their integral role in student success and learning.

Sincerely,

Dave Bretthauer, President
Association of College and Research Libraries, New England Chapter

APPENDIX

Hart Research Associates. 2015. *Falling Short? College Learning and Career Success*. Report, Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities. Accessed October 15, 2015. <https://www.aacu.org/sites/default/files/files/LEAP/2015employerstudentsurvey.pdf>.

68% percent of employers rate information literacy as very important (8-10 on a 10 point scale) for recent graduates entering the job market.

Head, Alison J. 2013. "Learning the Ropes: How Freshmen Conduct Course Research Once They Enter College." Project Information Literacy Research Report, 48. Accessed October 15, 2015. http://projectinfo.org/images/pdfs/pil_2013_freshmenstudy_fullreport.pdf.

"When it was hiring time, the employers in our sample said they sought similar information proficiencies from the college graduates they recruited. They placed a high premium on graduates' abilities for searching online, finding information with tools other than search engines, and identifying the best solution from all the information they had gathered.

Most college hires were prone to deliver the quickest answer they could find using a search engine, entering a few keywords, and scanning the first couple of pages of results, employers said, even though they needed newcomers to apply patience and persistence when solving information problems in the workplace.

A majority of employers said they were surprised that new hires rarely used any of the more traditional forms of research, such as picking up the phone or thumbing through an annual report for informational nuggets. Instead, they found many college hires—though not all—relied heavily on what they found online and many rarely looked beyond their screens.

At the same time, graduates in our focus groups said they leveraged essential information competencies from college to help them gain an edge and save time at work when solving workplace information problems. Many of them applied techniques for evaluating the quality of content, close reading of texts, and synthesizing large quantities of content, usually found online." (P.3)

King, Donald W. n.d. *Methods to Assess the Use, Value, Cost, and ROI of All Academic Library Services*. Institute of Museum and Library Services. Accessed October 15, 2015. http://libvalue.cci.utk.edu/sites/default/files/DWKing.MethodsToAssess.Use_Value_Cost_ROI_0.pdf.

Students average spending 145.9 hours annually using library services at a cost to them of \$5048. The library investment in providing these services is \$18,254,409 so the cost per student is \$751 (\$18,254,409 / 24,296 students).

Mezick, Elizabeth M. 2015. "Relationship of Library Assessment To Student Retention." *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 41 (1): 31-36.

Using institution specific data related to library assessment collected as part of an Association of Research Libraries (ARL) Systems and Procedures Exchange Center (SPEC) survey, as well as fall-to-fall retention rates obtained from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), this study employs statistical measures of association to analyze the relationship of various assessment practices and policies, including evaluation of student learning outcomes and accessibility of assessment data and analysis, to student persistence.

Samson, Sue. 2010. "Information Literacy Learning Outcomes And Student Success." *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 36 (3): 202-210.

Information literacy learning outcomes of randomly selected first-year and capstone students were analyzed using an assessment instrument based on the ACRL competency standards. Statistically significant differences between student populations in the selective and relative use of information inform the library instruction program and apply to research and teaching libraries

Schaffhauser, Dian. 2015. *Survey: Most Profs Find HS Grads Unready for College or Work*. July 27. Accessed 10 15, 2015. <https://campustechnology.com/articles/2015/07/27/survey-most-profs-find-hs-grads-unready-for-college-or-work.aspx>.

A set of surveys sponsored by Achieve (<http://www.achieve.org/>), a national not-for-profit focused on education reform and consisting of state governors and business leaders that led the push for such developments as the PARCC (<http://www.parcconline.org/>) consortium and the Next Generation Science Standards (<http://www.nextgenscience.org/>). In April and May the organization queried 767 college instructors, fairly evenly split between those who teach first-year students either in two-year schools or four-year schools, as well as 407 employers involved in hiring and other personnel decisions.

"On the employer side, 18 percent found grads extremely or very well prepared for work. On the other end 17 percent found students "not at all prepared."