

Williston State College
Learning Commons
Program Review Update
2012-2013

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MISSION STATEMENT OF WILLISTON STATE COLLEGE

(I've completely forgotten what we changed it to...)

MISSION STATEMENT OF WILLISTON STATE COLLEGE LEARNING COMMONS

The mission of the Williston State College Learning Commons is to provide access to the materials, services, and facilities necessary to meet the current and future informational needs of the Williston State College students, faculty, and staff.

THE ROLE OF MANAGER FOR THE LEARNING COMMONS

1. Coordinates electronic access to library resources through the statewide automated system, Online Dakota Information Network (ODIN). This includes the catalog, most of the online journal databases, and interlibrary loan.
2. Organizes the collection for quick and easy accessibility.
3. Provides training for students, faculty, and staff through one-on-one meetings, group sessions, and the creation of LibGuides.
4. Continually updates and expands the collection to reflect the comprehensive, community-centered curriculum of the college.

VISION OF THE WILLISTON STATE COLLEGE LEARNING COMMONS

The resources and services of the Williston State College Learning Commons seamlessly align with the educational programs of the students, faculty, and staff of Williston State College.

THE COMMITMENT OF WILLISTON STATE COLLEGE LEARNING COMMONS TO THE MISSION OF THE COLLEGE

The focus of the Learning Commons is not only information access but also education. The Learning Commons staff will strive to impart information literacy skills to facilitate love-long learning, thus making a difference in the lives of the students.

This year, we have tried to improve the technology aspect of information literacy. With the help of Distance Education, we have provided a technology counter. This gives students the opportunity to use different types of technology and learn how they can improve their educational experience.

GOALS OF WILLISTON STATE COLLEGE LEARNING COMMONS

1. Accommodate users, collections, and library staff in a facility that is conducive to study and work.

2. Develop, provide, and maintain a functional facility, effective staffing, and adequate equipment to support teaching and learning.
3. Provide a place that allows open inquiry into controversial topics by providing impartial access to information on both sides of the question.
4. Preserve materials that are accessible and available for use during appropriate hours.
5. Acquire and make accessible information resources which are needed to support the instructional programs of the college or to provide direction to additional sources of information.
6. Support and participate in local, regional, and national programs that make available on a collective basis library resources and services to those engaged in learning, teaching, and research.
7. Acquire and make available the resources for general information in subject areas not included in the curriculum of the college.
8. Encourage intellectual development, competence in general and professional knowledge, creative and critical thinking, open-mindedness, and the ability to carry on independent learning.
9. Maintain availability of access to the Williston State College Learning Commons catalog and other resources on and off campus with Information Technology collaboration.
10. Support distance learning users by providing remote electronic access to the library resources, collections, and interlibrary loan service.
11. Encourage use of technology in learning.
12. Take advantage of teachable moments in the classroom, Learning Commons proper, and elsewhere.

THE COLLECTION OF THE WILLISTON STATE COLLEGE LEARNING COMMONS

Objectives:

1. Provide materials and services in accordance with additions and changes in the curriculum.
2. Work with faculty in developing and evaluating library curricula in support of specific courses.
3. Maintain currency and relevancy of the collection through continual and judicious weeding.
4. Collect and preserve important materials related to regional history.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will be able to find or request materials to meet their information needs.
2. Students will be able to choose appropriate resources that best meet a particular information need.
3. Students will express satisfaction in being able to fulfill their information needs.

Extensive weeding occurred in the time before I started working on August 1, 2012. At that time, the collection had been reduced to 6 stacks. By utilizing some of the shelves made during the

renovation, I was able to get rid of one shelving unit. Weeding will be an ongoing process as the Learning Commons works to provide more digital material. There has been some resistance regarding the lack of books in the library. Because of this, it is important that weeding be an open process. Students and personnel will be given an opportunity to appeal all collection withdrawals before they are completely removed.

The Learning Commons is currently subscribed to 42 databases available both on and off campus that provide full or partial full text. These databases facilitate research by providing access to articles, newspapers, and reference sources crucial to doing generalized and subject specific research. The Learning Commons also provides streaming videos through Films on Demand. There are an additional 11 resources listed on the website that do not provide access to full text but allow you to view the article information including the abstract. To accommodate both on-site and remote users, the online subscription databases have unlimited access.

Presently the collection holds:

Books: 12,520
EBooks: 6,530
Audiovisual Material: 462
Electronic References: 53
Serial Titles: 7

The previous report expressed a need for a locked cabinet for the small archival collection. That did not happen in the renovation, but there were some beautiful glass cabinets installed. These cabinets are not easily reached without a stool, so anything placed in them is relatively secure. It was decided that it was better to have the archival collection visible and easier to access. Therefore, most of the books were placed in the glass cabinets. It would be preferable if these materials could be locked up because some of them are rare. Fitting locks on the cabinets in the back would probably be the best way to do this. Some remain in the librarian's office and are available upon request.

It came to the attention of the Learning Commons that the Williston State College Foundation has a large collection of Williston State College history material. In the coming years, it would be nice to coordinate with them to make those materials more accessible.

While it is recognized that faculty members have research needs, the Learning Commons cannot meet them all on its own due to space and budgetary constraints. Other library services, such as interlibrary loan and database subscriptions, aid faculty research.

As we move forward, weeding will continue, though our main goal will be to increase our digital holdings.

SERVICES OF THE WILLISTON STATE COLLEGE LIBRARY

Objectives:

1. Provide Williston State College students and personnel with instruction in and assistance with research skills.
2. Encourage students to effectively use the resources of the Learning Commons during their time at Williston State College.
3. Augment the informational needs of all users through mutual sharing of resources and services with other libraries.
4. Provide hours of access to the Learning Commons that are reasonable and convenient.

INSTRUCTION

Information literacy (the ability to seek, evaluate, and present information) is necessary for student success. The Learning Commons does provide some exposure and training to students in information literacy through individual and faculty-requested instruction, leading the student through the research process using print and online resources. Online video tutorials for using our databases help students who are in need of instruction or refreshers. The Learning Commons also recently subscribed to LibGuides, a library tool which can be used for instruction. LibGuides' potential uses are not limited to providing instruction regarding Learning Commons resources. It is hoped that in the future it could be used to educate students on other matters. Through helping the students acquire information literacy skills the Learning Commons facilitates student success and encourages lifelong learning.

Objectives:

1. Provide information and instruction to users through formal and informal opportunities.
2. Collaborate with classroom faculty as well as staff.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will be able to find books appropriate to their information needs.
2. Students will be able to find article(s) within an appropriate database to meet their information needs.
3. Students will be able to request materials they need through interlibrary loan.

ACCESS TO RESOURCES

The Learning Commons is currently only open for 44.5 hours per week. However, students and personnel have access to online resources 24/7 through the Learning Commons website. By being part of ODIN, the Learning Commons gives users access to collections of other libraries statewide and nationally. Online, patron initiated interlibrary loan request service is available.

This year borrowing and lending has been available for interlibrary loan. Most borrowing requests have come from faculty, and we have lent more books than we have borrowed. In addition to face-to-face, library reference and information service is available via telephone and email. I have not been monitoring reference statistics since I started here but plan to restart that practice in the Spring Semester.

The ability of patrons to find or request information depends on computer accessibility, availability and internet connection. The Learning Commons has 6 standing computer stations supplemented by 10 laptops which are available for checkout. The internet connection is fairly steady but tends to slow down when there is heavy traffic in the Learning Commons. The remodel increased the number of outlets in the room, but not all of them are placed in an area easily useable by students. That is something to consider in future renovation of the space.

Learning Commons transactions in the fiscal year 2011:

1. Interlibrary loan documents provided to other libraries: 0*
2. Interlibrary loan documents received from other libraries: 185
3. General circulation transactions including reserve materials: 300

*The lending portion of interlibrary loan was unavailable for that fiscal year.

TECHNOLOGY

The Learning Commons, in conjunction with Distance Education and Information Technology Departments, has utilized part of the renovated space to provide a technology counter. This counter consists of newer technology pieces. They are available for use within the Learning Commons.

Objectives:

1. Give students and personnel an opportunity to experience new technology.
2. Encourage new uses of technology, particularly regarding education.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Students and personnel will be comfortable in a technology rich environment.
2. New technology will be viewed as a learning asset instead of a threat.

The technology counter was used sporadically throughout the Fall 2012 semester. People were more interested if someone was able to show them how the technology worked. Unfortunately, staff is not always available to answer questions or help with use. It is hoped that it will see more use in the coming semester.

Other new technology additions to the library include the television station complete with DVD, VCR, apple TV, and wireless headphones. This allows students to use the television without disturbing other people in the Learning Commons.

There are now 17 sets of headphones available for student use. 8 of these are corded (3 large, over ear sets; 5 smaller, running style sets). The remaining 9 are wireless. There is not much demand for headphones as of yet, so there has not been much experimentation with student use of the wireless sets. Staff experimentation has been limited to computer use. More work with the wireless headphones is necessary before they can be effectively used.

WEBSITE

The Learning Commons website is the gateway through which patrons gain access to information. Unfortunately, the website has been difficult to navigate for some time. To that end, Learning Commons, Distance Education, and Information Technology departments have been working together to make it more user-friendly. It is currently in the planning stages, but it is hoped that changes and updates will be finished as soon as possible, at least by the end of the semester. Concrete ideas discussed include copying the links of the various subpages on the library webpage onto the home page as well as in the side navigation bar, reorganizing the licensed resources by subject, renaming the ODIN button to “books” or “catalog,” give LibGuides its own button to make it more noticeable, and get rid of the Staff Favorites subpage. All parties involved are looking into what other libraries are doing with their websites to see what works and what does not. Suggestions are welcome.

FACILITY

Objectives:

1. Provide spaces for students conducive to research and study.
2. Meet requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.
3. Create a learning environment that is information and digitally rich.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Students, personnel, and the Williston Community will utilize the Learning Commons.
2. Students will find the library environment and facilities satisfactory in meeting their needs.

The Learning Commons renovation was completed at the start of the 2012-2013 school year. We now have:

1. A semi-private meeting area, complete with couches, club chairs, and a fireplace.
2. A new circulation desk and standing computer bank complete with storage cupboards in matching wood with granite countertops.
3. A technology counter made out of the same granite.
4. Wooden shelves that match the new permanent furniture.
5. Cupboard storage with matching wood and countertop.

In addition to cozy study areas, the Learning Commons provides tables throughout with rolling office chairs. There are 28 chairs at the tables and another two unused behind the circulation desk. Remaining couches and chairs seat at least another 15 people. The tables are easily moveable and reconfigured to fit the situation. The space is generally more open, brighter, and more pleasant.

Plastic plants were added during the Fall 2012 semester. This added warmth to the room. So far, no negative comments have been received. The renovation has been well received in general.

The Learning Commons is largely handicap accessible. The main problems are that all computer banks are designed for standing patrons and the stacks are tall enough to leave much of the

material out of reach. The first problem can be accommodated with the available laptops. Staff is willing to help retrieve items to resolve the second issue. The Learning Commons is equipped with automatic doors.

One of the offices was converted into a small IVN meeting room. It is used for small classes and meetings. It is hoped that in the future it will not be needed as frequently for classes, making it more available for meetings both for Williston State College personnel and outside entities.

Distance Education is also housed in the Learning Commons. They occupy two of the four offices. The third member of that department is at the circulation desk full time. This makes it possible for the librarian to get office work done without leaving the desk unattended. Having Distance Education present in the library has also led the Learning Commons to be the hub of the Help Desk line. This is primarily fielded by the Distance Education staff.

FINANCING

Funding for the Learning Commons should continue to increase, particularly as we increase our digital holdings. Database subscriptions are costly, and eBooks are much more costly than their print counterparts. Networking and cooperation between libraries, while expanding our database subscriptions, is essential, especially as we decrease our print collection.

The Learning Commons fills a real need on campus, and funding is necessary to maintain a high level of service. It is important that we have enough funds to keep our collection (be it print or electronic) current.

Expenditures of the Learning Commons for fiscal year 2011*:

Books, serial backfiles, and other materials: 31,645.57

Serial subscriptions: 26,283.08

Electronic serials: 23,555.22

Bibliographic utilities, networks, and consortia: 5,071

All other operating expenditures: 1,209.06

Total expenditures (excluding salaries and wages): 37,925.63

*This information is taken from compiling receipts kept by the previous librarian. If the numbers are in any way incorrect, I apologize.

TITLE III

The Title III grant that Williston State College received, effective October 2012, has allowed for many good things at the college. Because of this grant, the Learning Commons was able to purchase a nice printer/copier/scanner. Since getting that printer, the Learning Commons has become a printing hub in the college for students, particularly those in the Nursing Program. This printing service was offered free of charge during the Fall 2012 semester. In order to make the printing more sustainable, the Learning Commons will begin charging for printing sometime during the Spring 2013 semester.

Learning Commons staff will be looking for additional grant opportunities in the future to help supplement the cost of an increasing digital presence.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

FORTHCOMING CHANGES in the Williston State College Learning Commons:

1. Increased digital holdings.
2. Further weeding of the collection.
3. Using a card swipe charging system for printing.
4. Fitting locks on the glass cabinets on the back, making the archival materials visible and secure.
5. Coordinate with the Foundation regarding the Williston State College history material that they hold.
6. Network with other organizations in Williston, such as the Public Library to better serve patron needs.

OPPORTUNITIES for the Learning Commons:

1. Transition from print to electronic resources.
2. Finding new ways to provide instruction.
3. Outreach and marketing of library services and collections.
4. Increasing presence of new technology in the Learning Commons.
5. Finding new ways to utilize the new space.
6. Increased connection between the Learning Commons and other departments.
7. Learning about new technology and its potential uses in the classroom.

THREATS for the Learning Commons:

1. Staying current with rapidly changing technology.
2. Changing perception of the role of the library by users.
3. Impact of budget on acquisitions and staffing.
4. Resistance toward the gradual movement away from print.
5. Lack of use of resources due to misinformation, miscommunication, and/or lack of understanding.

WEAKNESSES of the Learning Commons:

1. Need for better marketing of Learning Commons to users.
2. Insufficient number of staff to provide evening and weekend hours as requested by students.
3. Scarcity of applicants interested in student employment.
4. Inability to communicate effectively with students due to inaccurate contact information.
5. Learning Commons website is difficult to use.
6. Lack of staff training manual.
7. Not all staff knows how to run everything on the technology counter. This makes it difficult to properly showcase items.

STRENGTHS of the Learning Commons:

1. Well-qualified, dedicated staff.
2. Speedy processing of new and interlibrary loan materials.
3. The remodeling of the Learning Commons has made it a pleasant place to be.
4. The Learning Commons is committed to taking the initiative in providing patrons with assistance.
5. All online resources are available on the website.
6. ODIN membership has greatly increased the number of resources available to patrons.
7. Library instruction is available one-on-one or in groups upon request.
8. An increased technological presence, particularly of new technology.
9. Close partnership with Distance Education and Information Technology Departments.
10. Cross-training of Distance Education staff in Learning Commons processes.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Expanding access to more electronic databases.
2. Making the Learning Commons website more user-friendly.
3. Better marketing and education on how to maximize use of the Learning Commons.
4. Find an effective way to encourage students to use their university email account because this is the best way for the Learning Commons to communicate information.
5. Communicate what is happening with the collection, particularly as weeding continues.
6. Encourage communication between users and the librarian.
7. Make a training manual for future staff.
8. Start looking for grant opportunities specifically for libraries in regards to technology and collection development.
9. Look into programming opportunities to draw more students into the Learning Commons.
10. More cross-training opportunities between the Learning Commons, Distance Education, and Information Technology. This would allow us to help each other out, particularly when short staffed due to illness or vacation.
11. Network with the local library to mutually support each other's needs.
12. Monitor

The Learning Commons will measure effectiveness by means of faculty and student surveys and through usage statistics. Surveys will be used to indicate patron satisfaction and patron needs. Usage statistics will primarily effect database subscriptions. By monitoring frequency of use, it will be possible to know which databases are absolutely necessary to have in the collection. By unsubscribing from unused resources, the funds could be freed to purchase more needed things. Usage statistics can also be useful in maintaining the print collection. It shows what items are used often and which items have not been used in a long time. This is useful when it comes to weeding.

The Learning Commons needs to have a budget capable of meeting the demands of inflation and purchasing items in collaboration with other departments in order to fulfill the information needs of the faculty, staff, students, and Williston community.