

Librarian and Faculty Collaboration Across Disciplines in a Student-Focused Environment

Mark Bieraugel, Business Librarian, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo

With the stress of ongoing budget cuts librarians are tempted to hunker down and focus exclusively on their clients, their college, department or assigned area. But collaboration across campus, within new areas, with different faculty, and different students, can be beneficial to both student and faculty learning.

Students often have research needs which cannot be answered by one faculty member or librarian. Cross disciplinary collaboration between multiple librarians and faculty is key to providing the best service to these students. In this case study a team of agribusiness students need help in preparing for a contest on food distribution. During the contest the students play the role of consultants, listen to a client's problem, research the industry and possible solutions, and then present a solution to the client. This contest requires research on commodities, government policies for food safety, food distribution, economics, management, marketing, and merchandising.

A team was formed of an agriculture librarian, business librarian, and an agribusiness faculty advisor in order to cover all the elements required for student success. Each person played a specific role in preparing the students for the competition. The business librarian taught a selection of databases and online resources, the agriculture librarian taught agriculture resources and created a LibGuide specific to the contest, and the faculty advisor gave real world examples about the competition and best practices for their presentations. Outcomes of this collaboration included the sharing of knowledge about the research process, building bonds between faculty and librarians, knowledge transfer between the librarians, and successfully preparing the team of students for their competition.