

Standard Seven: Library and Other Informational Resources

Description

Facilities and Services

The initial planning for the Urban College of Boston did not assume the development of a full-scale, comprehensive library, and the College does not plan to have its own full service library at this point in its life cycle. Consistent with its mission and purposes and as a small, growing college with non-traditional learners, the College focuses resources on individualized academic support services and offers ample informational resources through Boston's wealth of library facilities, which reach out into the neighborhoods where Urban College students live and work, and through the Learning Resource Center.¹ Databases and electronically available resources are routinely provided through one-on-one assistance in the Learning Resource Center. Furthermore, targeted core collections directly related to the UCB curriculum and standard works representative of the liberal arts and sciences are held in the LRC space.

Resource Sharing and Outreach

Shortly after Urban College received its charter, the College developed formal agreements with neighboring Northeastern University, Suffolk University, Bentley College, and later with Emerson College and Lesley University, to provide full library services to UCB students, including the use of proprietary search engines. These agreements have changed over the years and now include privileges to the library services of Emerson College, located next door. (See Exhibit 7.01: *Library Privileges Agreement with Emerson College*.)

Equally important for UCB's urban students, the College makes full use of the comprehensive Boston Public Library system. Students are provided on-site training at Boston's main library at nearby Copley Place; they are instructed in how to use a library, its resources and learn to become knowledgeable users of their neighborhood branches.

In addition to widespread student use of the Boston Public Library system, Urban College has a formal connection with this valuable resource as a member of the Boston Regional Library System at the Boston Public Library main branch at 700 Boylston Street and the College is listed as a member of the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners. Nancy Daniel, Division Head, General Studies and Human Services Administration and Head of the Learning Resource Center (LRC), is the official liaison for the College; she receives newsletters and notices, which she posts in the LRC, regularly attends workshops and lectures and receives all notices regarding events at the BPL, which are disseminated to UCB students. (See Exhibit 7.02: *Library Documents*.) Through these connections, Urban College is listed on the Statewide Library Directory website.

¹ For this reason, supporting documents including a library budget, collection development plan, library annual report, consultant report, and faculty library committee report are not available.

Academic Support

The Learning Resource Center (LRC)

As described in previous chapters, the centrally-located Learning Resource Center is the center of student activity at Urban College. As a college for adult learners, students gather after work in the LRC; they meet with friends, organize their assignments and meet with tutors and instructors. The Learning Resource Center exudes an atmosphere conducive to the collaborative endeavors of study and learning.

The Learning Resource Center is headed by Nancy Daniel, a full-time faculty member and Division Head for General Studies and for Human Services. Ms. Daniel leads a staff of three part-time tutors:

- Olivia Dybing, hired in 1999;
- Dorothy Chavez, hired in 2003 and fluent in Spanish; and
- Thomas Weber, hired in 2005 and fluent in Spanish.

Tutors keep files for each student, recording the work and the tasks accomplished for each session. (See Exhibit 7.05: *Learning Resource Center Student Forms*.) These records are used for tutoring continuity and analysis of students' needs.

To assure integrity, the Urban College of Boston has established and applies clear policies and procedures and monitors the use of technology systems and resources. These policies are published in the *College Catalog* and in the student, faculty and staff handbooks. (See Exhibit 11.02: *Policy on Academic Honesty*.) Monitoring the use of UCB's technological resources is easily done in the small environment of the LRC. In the age of Internet research, monitoring and enforcing copyright infringement and plagiarism is more difficult.

The Urban College demonstrates that students:

- Use information resources as an integral part of education;
- Acquire a levels of proficiency commensurate with degree level;
- Have resources and support available; and
- Gain increasingly sophisticated skills in evaluating quality of resources throughout the program.

Urban College uses information technology sufficient to ensure its efficient ability to plan, administer and evaluate its programs and services. Urban College uses information technology to plan and evaluate programs and services. (See Exhibit 7.03: *IT Presentation Strategic Planning Retreat*.)

Appraisal

Ideally, the Urban College of Boston would like to have its own library to better support its students. However, it was never the intention of this small college to house a comprehensive full-service library. Becoming savvy users of the Boston Public Library system serves UCB students, many of whom work fulltime in their neighborhoods and have young children, as well. Also, the College continues to partner with Emerson College and look for additional opportunities to partner with other college library systems.

In the *Community Survey*, developing a comprehensive, full-scale library was not deemed as any more demanding of resources than other needs. Yet, it is always important to expand learning resources through electronic technology as well as core holdings to support the College's programs.

Urban College relies on the resources of the Boston City library system and neighboring college libraries to augment services provided in the Learning Resource Center.

Academic Support

In the *Community Survey*, 86 percent of the total sample felt that UCB demonstrates great strength in academic support services. Eighty-three percent of the total sample in the *Community Survey* reported that the *LRC meets the needs of all students in providing academic support*. The LRC is a safe, comfortable place to study, find reliable, compassionate, expert tutoring and make and meet with friends; it is a treasured resource for the entire Urban College community.

Institutional Effectiveness

Urban College systematically evaluates the use of information resources in the Learning Resource Center through the use of daily logs that monitor student use. Students sign in when they enter the LRC and include their names, the course for which they are using the services of the LRC and the time they spend in the facility. (See Exhibit 7.04: *Learning Resource Center Logs*.) This information is used to determine the effectiveness of the services in that the data are correlated with student academic success in terms of GPA maintenance and improvement. These data show that there is a high correlation between regular attendance in the LRC and improvement in GPA. Significantly, in their final portfolios, numerous students mention the LRC as a major contributing factor in student retention.

Initially, students visiting the Learning Resource Center were referred by their instructors, but it is no longer true that the only students who visit the LRC are those experiencing difficulties in their classes. In recent years, both students referred by instructors and students doing well in their courses come to the LRC on a regular basis. Table 1, page 63, shows the number of students who visited the LRC, the number of visits and the number of those students who GPA improved. One

of the important things to note is that in 2001, the majority of students who visited the LRC did so at the request of their instructor. Today, students continue to be referred by instructors, but many students seek the services on their own as well as visit the LRC to study and complete homework assignments. The College views this change in LRC usage as a positive development: students are improving their academic study habits and the LRC is not viewed as a place for struggling students only.

Table 1: Trends in Learning Resource Center Use and Improvement in Student GPA, 2001 and 2004.

	Number of Students	Number of Visits	Number Improved	Percent Improved
2001	165	1,546	248	49.8
2004	706	2,429	389	56.1

When asked about the reality of Urban College’s library and technological facilities and services in the *Community Survey*, 77 percent of the total sample felt that: *Through the Learning Resource Center, the Urban College of Boston provides sufficient information resources, services and technology to support its academic mission.* Seventy-one (71) percent responded that: *Access to the Boston Public Library system and neighboring college’s full service libraries adequately meets the needs of UCB students.* The Urban College community is fully aware that library and informational services can be improved; only 63 percent listed this standard as one in which UCB demonstrates great strength, the second lowest result in the *Community Survey* after Physical and Technological Resources. The *Audit* predicted these results in pointing out concerns about library resources.

Nevertheless, the strength of informational resources in the LRC and the use of neighboring college libraries and the Boston Public Library system are currently sufficient, appropriate and consistent with the mission and purposes of the College, given UCB’s current resources, but this is an area that needs systematic monitoring to ensure that student academic needs are consistently met.

Projection

- The Urban College of Boston is aware of the continuing urgent need to make technological and personal informational resources available to all its students and is seeking the most efficient ways to provide these resources. The College plans to name a Library Study Committee to address informational resources concerns. Areas of inquiry will include:
 - Improve core holdings that support the UCB curriculum;
 - Continue evaluation of information resources on learning outcomes;
 - Staff and faculty training to administer library and information services;

- Student use of information resources as integral part of education;
 - Student levels of proficiency and increased sophistication of evaluation of resources commensurate to degree; and
 - The degree to which the institution uses information technology to plan, administer and evaluate programs and services.
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- Urban College continues to improve the services and assessment capabilities of the Learning Resource Center, one of the College's most clearly defined strengths.
 - The College is mindful of the need to maintain library privilege agreements with neighboring institutions.
 - The College will develop more effective instruments to assess the effectiveness of student use of neighboring college library agreements and of the Boston Public Library system.