

# CARLI Counts Report

## Institution Name

Joliet Junior College

## Institution Characteristics

- Community College
- Public
- Fall 2019 FTE: 8,022
- Library Staff FTE: 12
  - Librarian FTE: 6
  - Clerical/Support Staff FTE: 6

## CARLI Counts Participant Name + Job Title

Aimee Walker, Librarian, Associate Professor

## Project Name/Title

The Reference Interaction and Student Success

## Single Sentence Abstract

The Joliet Junior College Library is investigating the impact of Reference Services on student academic success by logging student interactions at the Reference Desk to compare the success rate of students who sought reference assistance for a particular course to the overall student success rates of that course.

## Motivation(s) for Project

At the initiation of our project, Joliet Junior College was in the midst of wrapping up its previous strategic planning cycle and preparing to enter a new strategic planning cycle. Under the old strategic plan, there was a focus on promoting success and completion. As we move into the new strategic planning cycle, two of the strategic goals are focused on academic excellence and student success and support. In the further discussion of these goals, student persistence and completion of program requirements through guided pathways are referred to as measures of success. With continuing emphasis on student success through multiple strategic planning cycles, we felt it important to look for ways to show how the Library is playing a role in supporting students in both academic success and completion.

The 2017 Assessment in Action project (Malenfant and Brown) found compelling evidence for five areas that were identified through the project in which there was a meaningful connection between the library and student learning and success. Two of those five areas align closely with the question presented in our project.

**Library use is related to student success.** This area primarily focuses on the finding that students who engage with the library, as analyzed through a variety of data points, are more likely to achieve academic success as measured through GPA, course grades, and persistence.

**Library research consultations boost student learning.** The focus of this area is on the connection that was established through several AiA projects between use of reference services and improved measurements of student success through GPA, course assignments, and overall student confidence.

It is our hope that we are able to continue to support and strengthen these two claims that were established in the AiA initiative through our own assessments.

## Partners and Stakeholders

We are relying on two institutional partners to complete this project: Academic Intervention and Institutional Research and Effectiveness.

Academic Intervention has supplied us with access to their student success tracking software, which has allowed us to log questions while tying them to specific students, the courses they are taking, and run reports.

Institutional Research and Effectiveness will be a partner we will work with as we move into the analysis phase of our project, as they will be able to provide us anonymized data regarding success rates for groups of students and courses.

## Inquiry Question

Does access to Reference Services and research assistance from a Librarian increase student completion and academic success in individual courses?

## Study Participants/Population

Undergraduate students

The participants in the study include any student is seeking reference assistance from a Librarian at the Reference Desk.

## Method(s) of Data Collection and Analysis

Our data is being collected by logging reference interactions with students who come to the Library for reference assistance during the 2019/2020 academic year. Reference assistance is defined as any interaction that requires the use of a Library database or catalog to answer. In order to reduce workload for the Librarian at the desk, the student is asked to write their name, student ID number, and the course for which they are doing research onto a small slip of paper that is placed into folder and then entered at a later time in bulk. Each interaction is logged as a note on the student's record in our institution's GradesFirst instance that includes the course prefix and number.

Once we begin the analysis phase of the project we will extract a report containing all of the student names and courses for which they sought reference assistance. This report will be passed to our Institutional Research and Effectiveness department to provide us with student success rates for the students that sought reference assistance and the overall student success rate of the course. Courses

with fewer than five students who sought reference assistance will be excluded to ensure anonymity and more accurately reflect the relationship between the variables.

## Findings

As we have not yet completed our data collection, we do not have any findings to report related to the question we are asking in our project. However, our raw data from our first semester of collection has presented us with additional findings that will guide us in a direction for future assessments and outreach opportunities. Our raw data shows that a vast majority of our reference questions are from students in two specific courses, these are the same two courses for which a majority of our class-based information literacy instruction occurs.

## Use of Findings

Once our data collection and analysis is complete, we intend to include our findings in the campus-wide conversations that are forming around the topic of assessment. We also intend to use our findings internally to guide outreach efforts and future assessment.

## Next Steps and Other Results

As this project is our first attempt at an assessment of our reference services, we plan to reflect on the process following the completion of the analysis to determine how we might continue to improve our data collection and build upon our initial findings.

Based on the raw data from our first semester of data collection, and the finding that a majority of our reference questions are coming from students in courses that we see in the Library for instruction, we are going to look at ways to reach additional sections of these courses that have the same assignment requiring library research but may not be coming in for formal instruction.

After participating in CARLI Counts, we feel far more confident in our abilities to develop assessments and continue to build upon the assessment we developed for this project to gather more meaningful data. Our participation has allowed us to see assessment being implemented at a variety of institutions as we watched the projects of the other cohort participants being designed from the ground up. This not only provides us with models for developing future assessments, but also provides us with a network of individuals to reach out to as we continue to assess our services.

## Additional Reflections

Some of our biggest challenges have come with collecting our data. As mentioned several times throughout this report, while reviewing our raw data it was determined that the majority of our questions came from students enrolled in classes that may have received information literacy instruction prior to reaching out to the Library for reference assistance. The challenge in this in this finding, in terms of our data analysis, is that many of the students may have an additional library-service-related variable contributing to their academic outcomes.

We have also found it difficult to collect name and course information from students contacting us via electronic methods such as email, chat, and text. While we may be able to collect name information via email, we are often unable to collect information about the course. Quite often, we are unable to get

either name or course information if the question comes in via chat or text as those services allow for more anonymity. So in this initial assessment, we are only looking at in-person reference interactions.

We are also facing some challenges with the GradesFirst software we are using to log the reference interactions. Since not all courses and/or sections are entered into the software, we had to use the note functionality to enter the course information associated with each student's reference questions and were unable to determine or note the section information. Course and section information must be entered at the institutional level into the software and since the software is primarily used by our Tutoring and Learning Center, only courses and sections for which there are tutors available are programmed into the system. This will make it more difficult for us to compare success rates at the section level or account for sections of courses that may have received library instruction as we analyze the data.

## Timeline

- Spring 2019 – Begin participation in CARLI Counts project and develop plan for project.
- Fall 2019 Semester – Begin collection of data
- Summer/Fall 2020 – Analyze data collected from academic year

## Bibliography/Works Cited

- Association of College and Research Libraries. (2010). Value of Academic Libraries: A Comprehensive Research Review and Report. Researched by Megan Oakleaf. Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2010.
- Krieb, D. (2018). Assessing the Impact of Reference Assistance and Library Instruction on Retention and Grades Using Student Tracking Technology. Evidence Based Library and Information Practice, 13(2), 2-12. <https://doi.org/10.18438/eblip29402>.
- Malenfant, K. J., & Brown, K. (2017, November). Creating sustainable assessment through collaboration: A national program reveals effective practices. (Occasional Paper No. 31) Urbana, IL: University of Illinois and Indiana University, National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA).