

Facilitating Research Collaboration through Existing and New Academic Faculty–Librarian Relationships

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INTRODUCTION

With funding from and in collaboration with the National Institutes of Health's Office of Research on Women's Health and the National Library of Medicine, the University of Florida Health Science Center Library (HSCL) has embarked on a project with two goals related to sex and gender differences research:

- to facilitate the growth of basic research in this area and
- to help develop a diverse clinical workforce able to recognize these differences and to apply this knowledge in clinical care.

The NLM/ORWH funding mechanism required collaboration with other campus entities – "The project must include a partnership with a university/college departments and their library ... Emphasis is placed on developing a lasting collaboration between the offeror and the university/college partner".

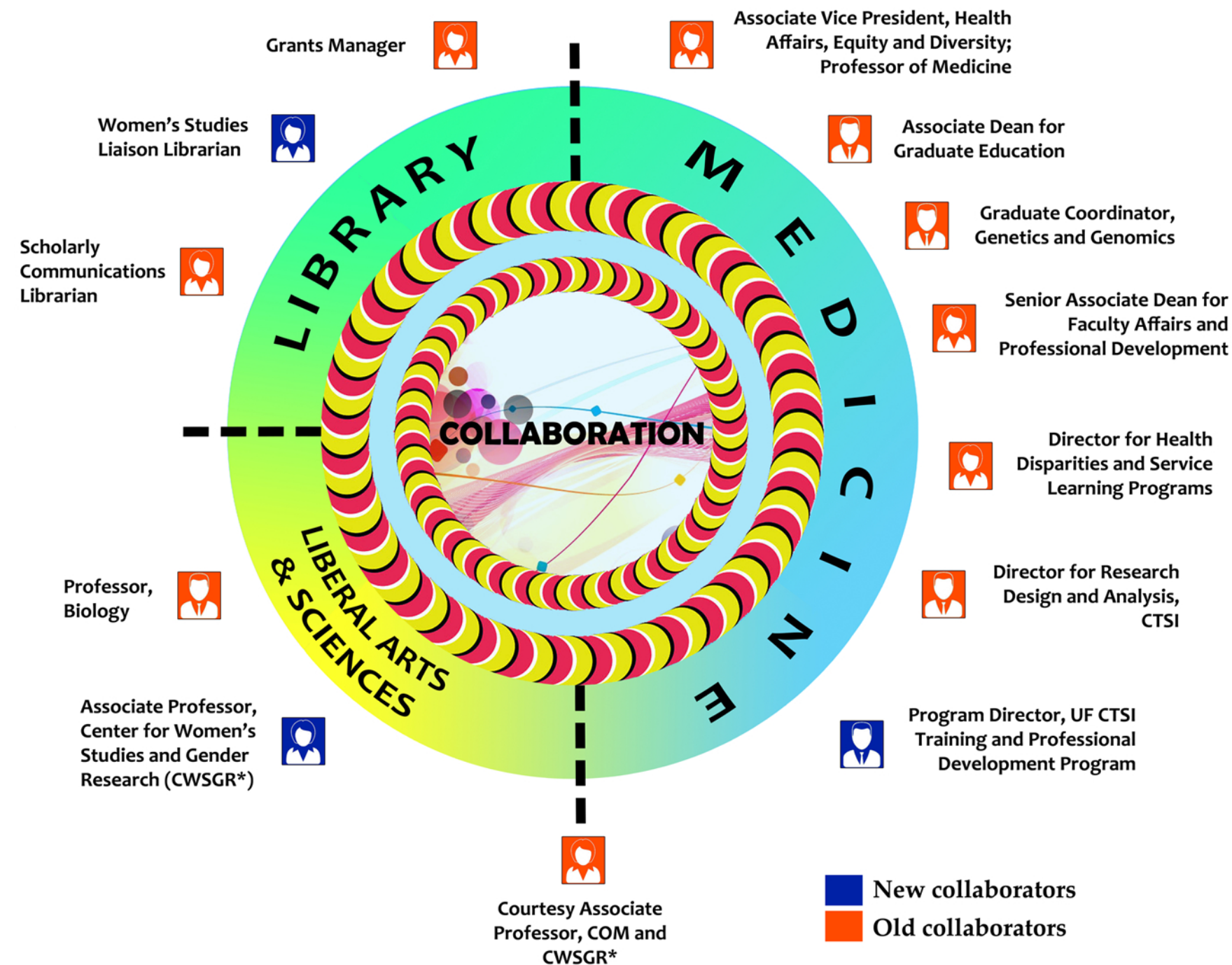
Using existing liaison librarian relationships the project team pulled together a number of partners in a short period of time, and using strategies developed through the liaison program, made new connections as well.

LIAISON - ACADEMIC FACULTY PARTNERSHIPS



Since 1998, the HSCL has had a robust liaison librarian program, concentrating on developing close professional relationships with clients, understanding subject- and "environment"-related information needs, and responding to those needs in a customized fashion⁴. Librarians on the women's health grant leveraged existing relationships to create new collaborative activities, including:

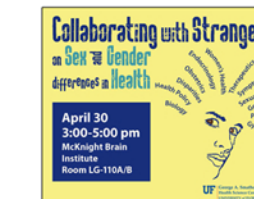
- Instruction in the CTSI's "Introduction to Clinical/Translational Research" course engaged the CTSI/COM professional development leaders
 - A long ago reference question and subsequent teaching of medical students resulted in project integration into the medical school curriculum, through "Breaking Bad News"
 - Collaboration with former AHEC contact evolved into project-related classroom instruction for undergraduate Health Disparities minors and Rural and Urban Underserved Medicine students
 - Longtime course-integrated instruction in undergraduate Genetics allowed sex and gender differences research to be included in the class term project
- New relationships were developed with the campus Center for Women's Studies and Gender Research, the new director of the Genetics and Genomics Graduate program, and the main campus library's Liaison Librarian to Women's Studies.



COLLABORATING WITH STRANGERS – CoLABs

To foster cross-disciplinary collaboration, the team is hosting two "Collaborating with Strangers" ("CoLAB") workshops. This trademarked method of engaging researchers and students brings together interested parties in an informal, interactive session that encourages creativity and synergy. Developed by Bess de Farber, over 1,500 individuals representing 600 organizations have participated in CoLABs over the last 10 years, making it a time-tested method in alignment with project goals.

- CoLABs can be a convening method for facilitating "speed meetings" among researchers.
- In a typical 2-hr session, researchers are able to meet with at least 12 other participants.
- The April 30 CoLAB for the project attracted 18 participants from across the main and health science campuses.
- Matches were made in a number of areas, including the public health aspects of sex and gender differences and bioinformatics support for a neuroscientist studying such differences.
- A second CoLAB will be held in September.



CONCLUSIONS

Leveraging existing connections throughout the Health Science Center and the librarians' respected role as experts in health information, the HSCL has developed a comprehensive outreach program to facilitate the growth of basic research and clinical/translational research in the area of sex and gender differences and women's health.

- Liaison librarians with strong professional relationships with clients are well-positioned to engage and partner with these clients in outreach and other projects.
- Once a diverse team of established clients and their liaison librarians has been established, attracting new client collaborators can be accomplished through strategy and word of mouth.
- Librarians can host events such as CoLABs to facilitate collaboration and synergy among individuals from diverse campus units.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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