

Library Involvement in a First Year Experience Course

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Abstract

As part of its Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), Virginia Tech has been implementing First-Year Experience (FYE) programs for all majors. These programs are designed to orient incoming freshmen to the university and give them a skill set which will help them obtain their degrees successfully. Major components of this skill set are inquiry learning skills, which are defined as “the ability to explore issues or topics through the ethical and responsible collection, analysis, and use of information as evidence that results in informed conclusions/judgments.” The Virginia Tech University Libraries have partnered with the Office of First Year Experiences to provide instruction to students to help them develop these skills. Two science librarians work with the College of Science’s FYE program “Zip-line to Success,” which seeks to meet the unique needs of the approximately 160 transfer students who enroll each year in one of the eight departments that make up the college. Overall, the program is designed to help them navigate academic planning, develop teamwork skills, and become more engaged with university life. The librarians offer multiple information literacy sessions to accommodate these students. The hands-on sessions focus on helping students better understand information resources in STEM disciplines and learn how to search for and evaluate scientific literature. As a result of the program, College of Science transfer students are better prepared to meet the challenges they will face when gathering information and conducting research as part of their degree programs.



The Library Component

The library endeavors to support all the goals of the QEP, but pays particular attention to developing inquiry learning skills.

To accomplish this goal, students are shown a variety of general databases (Summon, Academic Search Complete, and Web of Science) since their topics of interest vary widely. They are given hands-on practice with each database and asked to complete an in-class exercise.

Students are also shown how to access company information in Lexis-Nexis Academic to aid them in a class project relating to future career options.

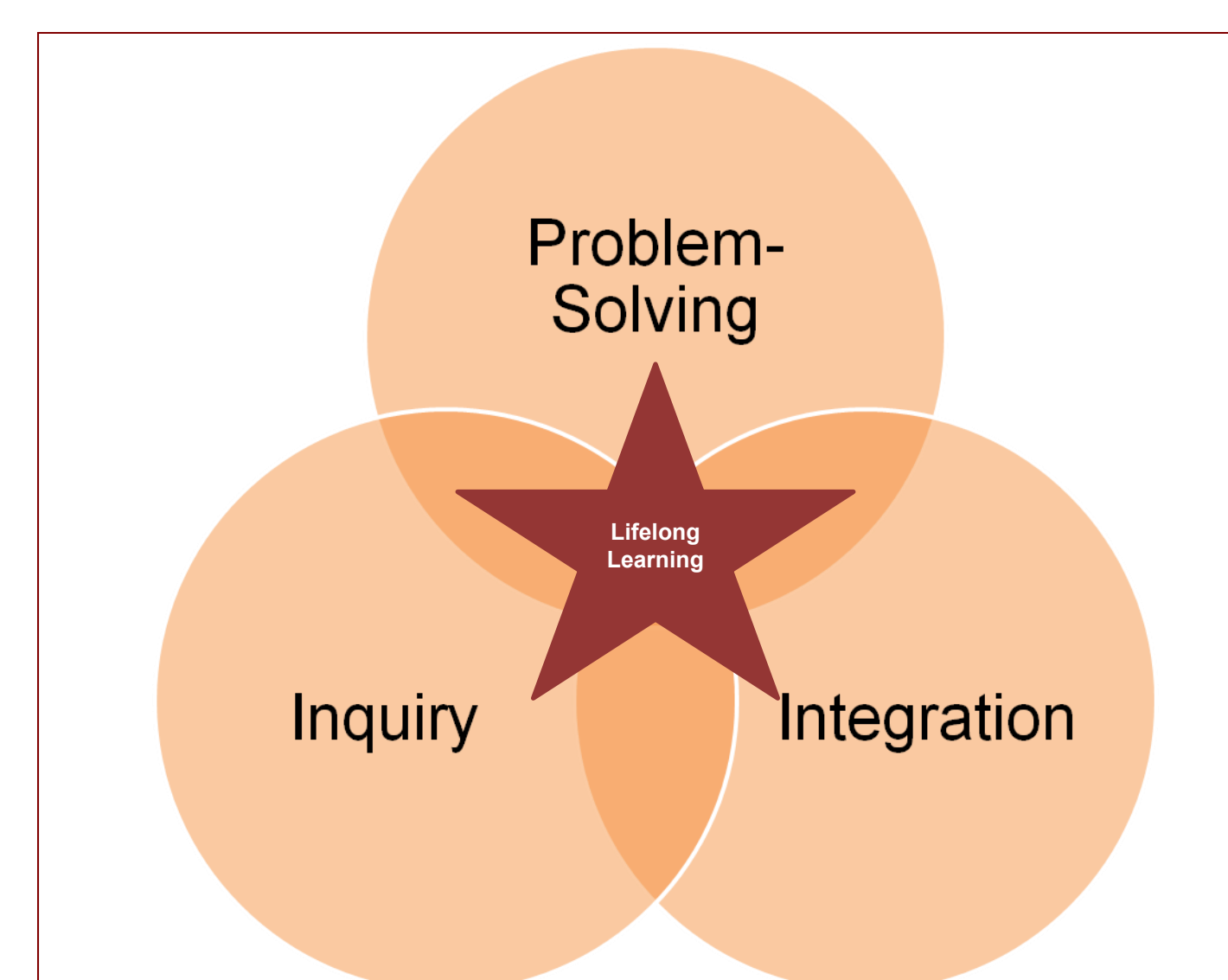
Students are given a tour of the building which features the physical locations of essential services they may need as Virginia Tech students. Descriptions are also given of the services that do not require a trip to the library, such as our online chat service, Ask A Librarian.

QEP Definitions

Problem Solving - the ability to define a problem, identify problem-solving strategies, and propose solutions/hypotheses;

Inquiry – the ability to select a topic of inquiry, access and evaluate existing knowledge, research, and/or views, and use information effectively, ethically, and legally to accomplish a specific purpose; and

Integration of learning - the ability and disposition to make connections between ideas and experiences, apply them across disciplines and to new learning situations within and beyond campus, and reflect upon and assess themselves as learners.



The Class

Meets in a SCALE-UP (Student-Centered Active Learning Environment for Undergraduate Programs) classroom, which is specially designed to encourage student interactions.

The room has multiple projector screens, whiteboards on 3 of the four walls and circular tables that seat 9 students with three laptops at each table. Students work in groups of three.

The class begins with announcements and assignments from the instructor, but the majority of class time is spent working on answering questions and solving problems together as a group.

Most transfer students to Virginia Tech come from community colleges and have completed their Curriculum for Liberal Education core requirements at their previous school.

Because of this, they have only their major requirements left and take a higher load of science and math classes per semester than students enrolling in majors as freshmen.

“Zip-line to Success” is intended to introduce these students to Virginia Tech and assist them with academic planning to better handle their course loads.



From: <http://www.science.vt.edu/>

In-Class Exercise

To be completed working together in your groups.

Names _____

Topic of interest _____

For your topic of interest, locate two articles that are relevant using some of the databases shown in class. One article should be from a popular source, the other should be from a scholarly journal. Provide a full citation for each as shown in the example below. Indicate whether the article is available online or in print.

Article title - The Threats from Oil Spills: Now, Then, and in the Future.

Author(s) - Jernelöv, Arne.

Source: AMBIO - A Journal of the Human Environment, Aug2010, Vol. 39 Issue 6, p353-366

Full text Available: Yes, online from BioOne

Database(s) searched:

Article One

Article title:

Author(s):

Source:

Full text Available:

Article Two

Article title:

Author(s):

Source:

Full text Available:

Compare and contrast the two articles you have identified. Some factors you may want to consider in your evaluation include authority (who is doing the writing and what are their credentials), accuracy, objectivity, coverage, and currency. Suggested length of 3-4 paragraphs.