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Librarians as Partner Teachers: Rewards and Challenges

Jen Hasse and Ellie Knickman, Cabrini University

The Opportunity

In 2015 Cabrini University added an information literacy component to its freshman seminar, Engagements with the Common Good (ECG). Librarians teach 25% of the course. Class content mirrors the progress of the course topic, which varies by professor. This requires that the librarian go beyond the traditional supportive role of providing students with skills necessary to complete course assignments, and make significant contributions to the teaching and learning of course topics and themes.

Engagements with the Common Good (ECG)

- ECG is “a three-year, three-course sequence [that] raises awareness of social problems, explores root causes, involves students hands-on in social justice issues, and connects the theory and practice of social justice to each student’s major.” It is part of the Justice Matters core curriculum at Cabrini.
- Courses cover a wide range of topics including (not limited to) immigration, food security, international independence movements, popular American culture, international law, civil rights history, the foster care system, etc.
- Students must receive a grade of C or better to pass ECG 100.

Pilot Classes of New ECG 100

- Prior to the pilot (2012), ECG 100 was a three-credit course. Information Literacy instruction was part of IST 125, a required three-credit digital literacy course focusing on Microsoft Office tools.
- The pilot sections of students had a four-credit ECG 100 course that included IL instruction, and a two-credit digital literacy course, renamed IST 100.
- 3 sections of the pilot course were run in fall 2012. 3 more were run in fall 2013.
- Assessment used administration of pre- and post-tests (below) and analysis of writing artifacts (at right). In pilot IST 100, the average score increased by 26 points in the pilot sections (26 students increased scores). In the IST 125 classes, the average score increased by only 4 points (22 students *decreased* scores). This pre-post test indicates that the pilot group enrolled in the 2-credit IST 100 had a higher percentage of students who improved their scores over the semester.

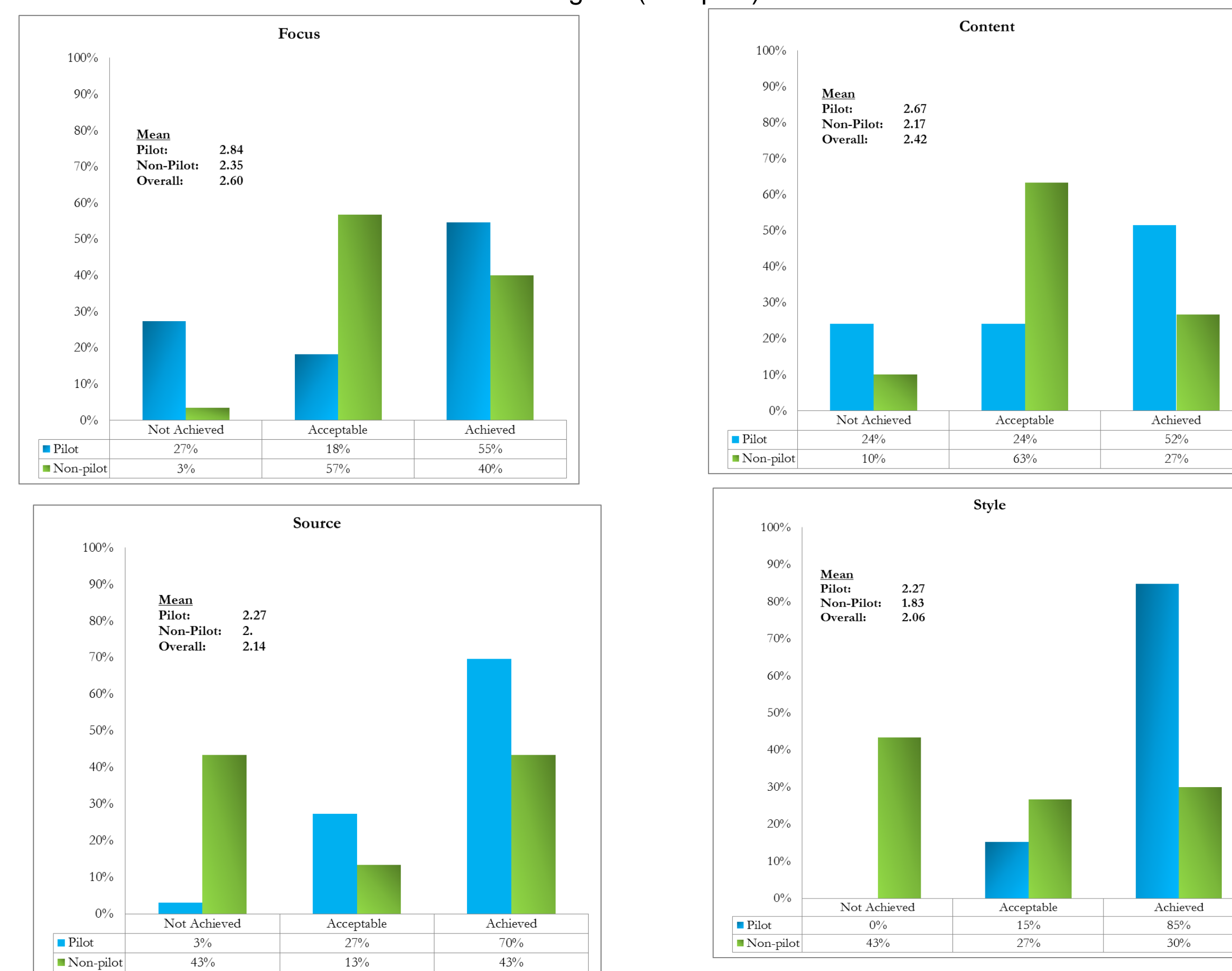
	# Students for Pre-Test	Pre-Test Average Score	# Students for Post-Test	Post Test Average Score	# Students w/ No change	# Students w/ Negative Change	# Students w/ Positive Change
IST-100	43	147	39	173	2	9	26
IST-125	95	161	91	165	13	22	35
Grand Total	138	157	130	167	17	31	61

New ECG 100 Rollout

- The assessment data collected from the 2012 and 2013 courses supported the 4-credit ECG and 2-credit IST 100 model as a better way to deliver information literacy instruction than as a part of IST 125. The report authors concluded that the data demonstrated that “having an embedded librarian in an ECG 100 course assists with students in transferring the 21st century skill of IL to their writing.”
- Full program rollout was recommended and achieved in fall 2015
- Currently the program is concluding its third full year.
- Four-credit course, one credit of which is devoted to information literacy.
- Librarians in each section are responsible for 20% of the student’s final grade

Pilot Paper Assessment

These charts record the assessment results of 64 ECG 100 final papers from fall 2013. 32 were from the pilot 4-credit ECG 100 course and 32 were from the regular (non-pilot) 3-credit ECG 100.



The program today

- Currently 3 -4 librarians teach 13-18 weekly sections in addition to their other duties.
- IL program increases the library’s visibility on campus and has given us a role in curriculum conversations. A librarian now sits on the Coordinator’s Committee.
- Classes have helped librarians build relationships with students, faculty, and staff.
- IL classes are taught in classroom labs across campus and ECG instructors attend IL sessions, making scheduling rooms and class times a challenge.
- IL course assignments are designed to scaffold the final or “signature” assignment. Typical IL assignments include: source evaluation, source annotations or annotated bibliographies, paraphrasing, and citation exercises. Most IL sections have a culminating presentation or poster assignment.

Factors affecting the course

By design, ECG100 is an INTEGRATED course requiring **partnership** between the IL instructor (librarian) and the ECG instructor. “Buy-in” on the part of ECG instructors is crucial and ultimately can impact information literacy learning outcomes. Buy-in on the part of the instructor takes different forms including:

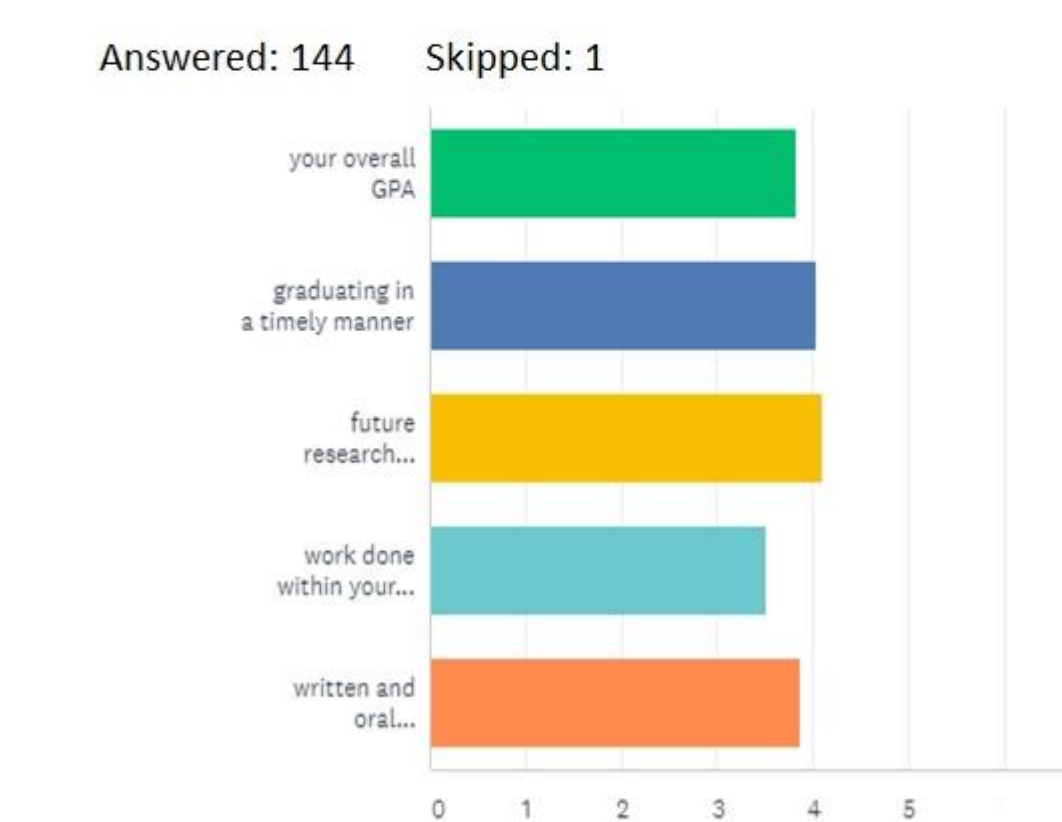
- **Willingness to “share”** their syllabus and CMS gradebook
- **Open lines of communication** covering schedule and course changes, class discussions and course readings, and concerns (primarily regarding students)
- **Attendance and engaged participation** in the librarian-taught portion of the course, and in particular, reinforcing the connection between ECG coursework and IL topics.
- **Appropriate Assignment Design.** IL learning outcomes are negatively impacted if the instructor’s final assignment does not require students to use scholarly sources or if scholarly sources are required but are not appropriate for the assignment.

Current Assessment

- **Course Survey**
- Students are asked to complete an **IL specific course survey** at the end of each semester. This survey is designed to gauge student’s perceptions of the effectiveness of the course.
- Survey results consistently show that a strong majority of students view the course as having a positive impact on their **research skills** and ability to complete **college writing assignments**. A strong majority of student respondents correlate IL instruction to **college success**.

End of Semester Student Survey

To what extent do you believe this class will have a positive impact on... (On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest)



Signature Assignment Evaluation

This year a formal assessment of the ECG and the IL component is currently underway as part of a three year curriculum assessment cycle. Artifacts from each ECG class were collected and a sample were evaluated in the fall using our IL proficiency rubric. This process will repeat itself in the spring semester. Fall results showed that working with scholarly sources remains a challenge for a majority of students upon completion of the course.

	Information Literacy Proficiency Rubric			
	Excellent 4	Good 3	Satisfactory 2	Poor 1
Focus	Very clear focus that is precise, appropriately narrow, and well-articulated.	Sustained, proficient focus.	Focus is clear although extraneous information may be present.	An imprecise, unclear focus, or absence of focus.
Attribution	Shows a sophisticated level of understanding of when and how to give attribution. -Documents sources consistently. -Uses in-text citation correctly.	Attribution indicates understanding of the rationale for and various mechanisms of citation. -Documents sources throughout with occasional errors or inconsistencies. - Uses in-text citation and notes with occasional errors or inconsistencies.	Errors in attribution interfere with the argument or point to fundamental misunderstandings. -Frequently documents sources incorrectly or leaves out some citations. - Frequent errors and inconsistencies with in-text citation and notes.	Use of evidence and citation is poor, making it difficult to evaluate the argument or sources. -Displays fundamental and consistent errors in source documentation. - Does not include or contains significant inconsistencies with in-text citation and notes.
Sources	Source materials demonstrate expertise and independent thought. -Uses a variety of appropriate and authoritative sources. -Demonstrates critical exploration and knowledge of evidence, theories, and sources used.	Source materials are adequate and appropriate but lack variety or depth. -Sources are used to support claims but may not be the most authoritative sources. -Demonstrates a preliminary critical exploration and knowledge of evidence, theories and sources selected.	Source materials used are inadequate. -Exhibits weak awareness of other sources that could strengthen claim or argument. -Relies on too few or largely inappropriate sources. -Sources were selected as a matter of convenience.	Source materials are absent or do not contribute to claims or arguments. -When included, sources are too few or badly inappropriate. -Does not explore outside sources or present evidence when called for.

The Future

- Finding articles, citing/attribution, and “scholarly conversation” with peer-reviewed journal articles remain challenging for many students upon completion of the course.
- Cabrini is currently undertaking a comprehensive examination of the core curriculum with particular attention being paid to writing instruction. It’s possible that the one credit of information literacy currently tied to ecg100 could be moved to an English100 course or to ECG200 depending on if/how these areas of the curriculum are reworked.
- Development of an online ECG100 and an integrated online IL course is on the horizon.