



December 27, 2010

Professor James Fredal
Chair, Sciences Subcommittee
Arts and Sciences Curriculum Committee

Dear Professor Fredal:

This letter affirms departmental support for the new course proposal from Daniel Dotson that is currently under consideration by the Sciences Subcommittee, ASC 314.01, Online Research in the Sciences. The goals of this course are practical but important ones, to develop or expand research skills, which are foundational and will support students in their acquisition and evaluation of information needed to engage as critical thinkers in meeting the research requirements for other courses. Although some faculty believe that the majority of their students already possess adequate research skills, in fact considerable evidence exists to support the opposite conclusion. For example, a recent two year national study, *Project Information Literacy* [http://projectinfolit.org/pdfs/PIL_Fall2010_Survey_FullReport1.pdf], surveyed more than 8,000 college students in a variety of educational settings, including Ohio State, and reported that:

Getting started in the course-related research process stymied a large majority of students in the sample (84%) more than any other step in their research process. Other significant challenges occurred toward the beginning of the research process, too, including defining a topic (66%), narrowing it down (62%), and sorting through search results to find relevant materials (61%). (p.26)

Students in this study reported that they are often overwhelmed by the sheer volume of information available to them and find it difficult to make good selections of sources. While instructors play an important role in helping students to manage research projects for their courses, often more exposure over time is needed for students to gain confidence and perform effectively.

The credit courses developed by Libraries faculty and offered through Arts & Sciences teach useful strategies and provide sustained course-level instruction, practice, and feedback that prepares students to meet these challenges. The Libraries have offered ASC 120 (Internet Tools & Research Techniques) and ASC 121 (Advanced Online Research) for ten years. These online courses are always fully enrolled, with waitlists. We look to ASC 314.01 to expand this instruction to science research topics and help students understand and use these complex information sources effectively and we fully expect that this new course will also be met with enthusiasm by its intended audience.

Sincerely,

Carol P. Diedrichs

Carol P. Diedrichs
Professor and Director of University Libraries