

THE FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE COOKBOOK

edited by Raymond Pun and Meggan Houlihan



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Other books in this series:

The Library Instruction Cookbook by Ryan L. Sittler and Douglas Cook

The Embedded Librarian's Cookbook edited by Kaijsa Calkins and Cassandra Kvenild

The Discovery Tool Cookbook: Recipes for Successful Lesson Plans edited by Nancy Fawley and Nikki Krysak

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May I Take Your Order?

Student Library Advisory Group

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NUTRITION INFORMATION

A student library advisory group serves as a conduit for information, requests, and feedback between the wider student body and the library. The members of the advisory group gain insight into the workings of the library and can offer suggestions for and evaluations of library services. They provide an easy-to-access group for qualitative feedback.

For example, we recently conducted a LibQual survey. Once we had the survey results, we presented the results to library staff and the advisory group. In turn, the advisory group made suggestions and commented on our ideas for changes to implement based on the survey. They also theorized with us as to what might have prompted some of the more confusing comments.

COOKING TIME

3 one-hour meetings per semester (once per month minus the last month)

DIETARY GUIDELINES

- A student library advisory group can help any library that is interested in learning more about its students formalize the feedback process to improve the student experience.

- In addition to providing the library with a valuable assessment tool, the student advisory group can also help with library outreach.

MAIN COOKING TECHNIQUE

Focus group

MAIN INGREDIENTS

- 1–2 motivated librarians
- 4–10 students

PREPARATION

1–3 hours preparation and follow-up time per meeting, depending on suggestions received

MAIN COOKING METHOD

1. Identify a group of students who are motivated to provide feedback about the library. We work with student government and have found that most volunteers are first-year students. However, others may find it useful to reach out to other student groups, such as a student book club. Library student employees are another possibility. A blended or parallel approach may also be appropriate, whereby meetings are held with multiple groups independently based on their affiliation or availability.

2. Select meeting times. We request course schedules for the student members and suggest times accordingly via a Doodle poll. We particularly aim for lunch meetings, so we can provide food as additional incentive/thank you.
3. Set an agenda. The first meeting is usually a get-to-know-you affair. Set the parameters for the group—this is an advisory group, not a dictatorship. Subsequent meetings can address more detailed issues. Select one to two questions/issues per meeting to allow for plenty of discussion time and so that students can bring their own issues.
4. Meet. During the meeting, focus on listening to what the students have to say. Take notes, if they do not.
5. Review the notes with student advisory group members and share with your library team.
6. Identify action items and work toward accomplishing those in tandem with the advisory group when appropriate and possible.
7. Close the loop! Update the advisory group with any actions you have taken/changes you have made based on their feedback. If you choose not to implement suggestions, explain why. Don't be defensive or rest on reasons like "we've always done it this way."

8. Shout it from the rooftops. Promote the changes/initiatives directly to the student body and reference the origins in the advisory group. This reinforces the importance of the group, can recruit future members, and lead to more suggestions to/from the group.

strong advocate for the creation of a leisure reading collection. Now that we have created the collection, we continue to accept suggestions from all students, but particularly from the advisory group.

ALLERGY WARNINGS

Ensure that students understand that you may not be able to implement all their ideas, but are open to hearing them. This is an advisory group, not a policy-making board.

CHEF'S NOTE

- Success can be dependent on selection of student members of the group.
- The suggestions we've received from our student advisory group vary widely from prohibiting food in the silent study room to restocking markers in the group study rooms. The student advisory group can also be a source for structured user experience testing, since the group is already formed. The group can also help recruit other students for user experience testing and/or other focus groups.
- The student advisory group also helps us with promoting our posts on social media. Facebook is by far the most popular platform on our campus, and they routinely "like" our posts. We also ask them to share select posts on a private, students-only page.
- Our student advisory group was a