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Team Research

TWO LIBRARIANS FORGE A UNIQUE PARTNERSHIP WITH K-STATE'S ATHLETIC TRAINING PROGRAM

BY SARAH MCGREER HOYT

Cindy Logan and Melia Erin Fritch are friends, office mates and librarians. They're also devoted professors. They don't just help students complete assignments; they help them become researchers equipped to excel in their chosen professions.

Their areas of expertise differ: Logan works with students and faculty in public health fields, while Fritch is a social sciences librarian who specializes in curriculum development and instructional assessment. But over the last six years, the duo has combined forces to create a unique partnership with K-State's athletic training program.

It started in spring 2013 when Logan visited an upper-level class to prepare them for a research assignment.

"Early on I realized that they lacked some foundational skills," Logan said.

"We forget that just because students grew up with the internet, they don't automatically know how to find or evaluate sources. Honestly, it's harder now than it's ever been."

Academic librarians teach research skills in classrooms across campus to address that challenge. In fact, K-State's librarians often collaborate with other faculty members and become co-teachers or research partners.

Fritch cultivated the seeds for such a relationship in summer 2013 at a higher education workshop. For her final project, she collaborated with K-State's Shawna Jordan, former athletic training education program director and current assistant dean of students in the College of Human Ecology.

"As educational program standards changed to include evidence-based medicine, I felt it was important to bring in experts who could assist with building the students' knowledge of research," Jordan said. "Involving the librarians was a natural fit: Their expertise enhances our content areas, and they introduce students to important resources in support of the research-based assignments within the curriculum."



Above: Athletic training program students Tia Breckenridge, Ray Adams and Talyn Kleweno.
Left: Librarians Melia Fritch and Cindy Logan take research instruction from the library to the training room.

Fritch and Jordan mapped out a framework: Librarians would meet with students early on to teach research basics. Then, they would reconnect with the students at key points during the five following semesters to introduce increasingly challenging research experiences.

“Shawna and I asked ourselves, ‘How can the librarians maximize their impact at strategic points during the students’ careers so that they

are prepared to enter the athletic training field?’” Fritch said. “It’s a very dynamic profession—best practices are evolving continuously. Students need to be confident that they’re selecting the right treatment in any given scenario, and in order to do that, they have to have exceptional research skills.”

Creating great researchers has far-reaching effects for the health of the athletic training program, too.

“Our graduates have to pass an athletic training certification examination,” Jordan said. “Not only that, but in order for K-State’s athletic training program to receive national accreditation, we have to demonstrate that our students have a strong working knowledge of evidence-based medicine.”

Those requirements make the partnership with the librarians a natural fit.

“Sometimes it’s hard to get professors to devote class time to teaching research skills,” Fritch said. “With the athletic training program we can say, ‘You have several standards that you have to meet for accreditation, and if you work with us, we can help you satisfy most of them.’”

Of course, while Fritch initiated the new partnership, Logan is the health sciences librarian, so she has refined and executed the masterplan.



“THESE AREN’T JUST MEANINGLESS RESEARCH ASSIGNMENTS. CINDY HELPS US MASTER A KEY TOOL THAT ATHLETIC TRAINERS USE IN THEIR PROFESSIONAL LIVES.”

— TAYLOR SMITH, SENIOR

“We worked with our instructional design librarian, Joelle Pitts, to build online assignments and quizzes that arm students with the basics,” Logan said. “By the time they’re done, they know how to cite articles using APA style; they know how to identify and avoid plagiarism; and they know how to paraphrase a research resource appropriately.”

In three different courses taught in subsequent semesters, Logan introduces more advanced research knowledge, explaining what it means to engage in evidence-based practice and how to complete a systematic review.

“In many ways, Cindy’s a co-facilitator now,” Fritch said. “It works, but not without a lot of effort and time on her part.”

“Leave it to Melia to create more work for me,” Logan joked. “Really, though, the athletic training instructors, Jenn MacFadyen and Morgan Rakestraw, are a big part of the reason we’ve been so successful. They’re supportive of the partnership and as passionate about teaching as we are.”

To learn more, we asked several athletic training majors about their experiences working with Logan.

The students’ career goals and athletic experiences vary. Some want to be athletic trainers at the high school or college level; others want to attend a physical therapy graduate program. They’ve participated in everything from cheerleading to soccer, but they’ve all recovered from an injury.

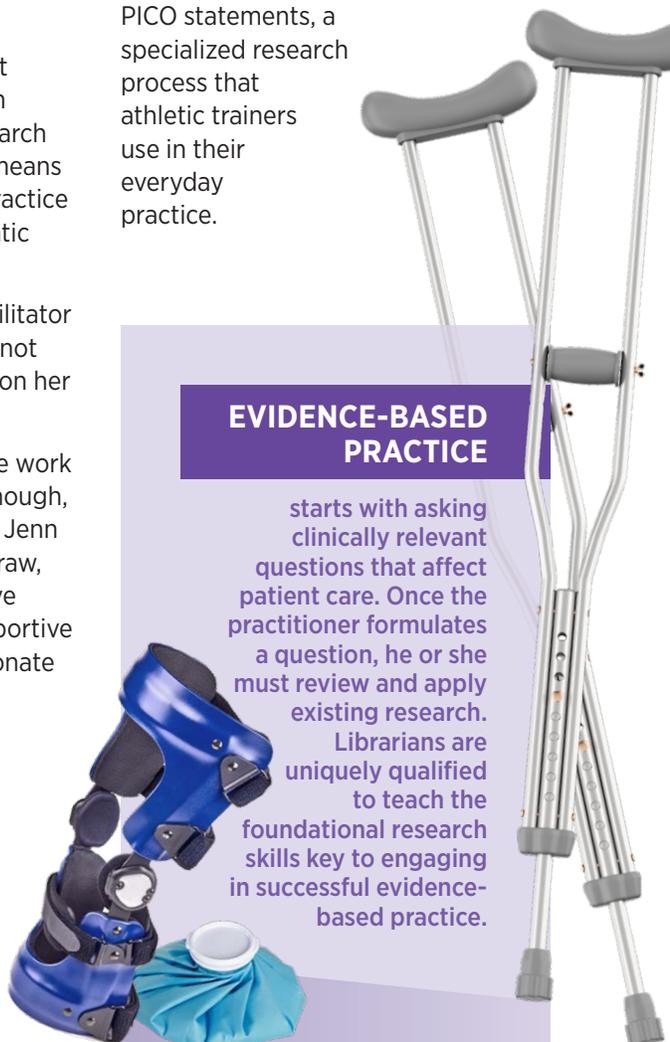
And they all understand that conducting research will be part of treating their own athletes’ injuries effectively.

“When we were working on our research assignment, I think I emailed Cindy every other day,” junior Tia Breckenridge, Arkansas City, Kan., said. “She helps with finding sources but also explains what to look for when we’re reading the material and the best way to integrate the information.”

Students also talked about Logan’s instrumental guidance in creating PICO statements, a specialized research process that athletic trainers use in their everyday practice.

EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE

starts with asking clinically relevant questions that affect patient care. Once the practitioner formulates a question, he or she must review and apply existing research. Librarians are uniquely qualified to teach the foundational research skills key to engaging in successful evidence-based practice.



During one of her clinical rotations, senior Taylor Smith, Manhattan, worked 30 hours a week with the men's basketball team. "I saw my supervisors incorporating these exact same research processes as they assessed the players' injuries," Smith said. "These aren't just meaningless research assignments. Cindy helps us master a key tool that athletic trainers use in their professional lives."

MacFadyen agreed that the librarians are an invaluable part of her team.

"I can't put into words how much

Cindy and Melia's dedication means to our program," she said. "I can speak to the technical side of

"WHEN THE KEY CONCEPTS AND SKILLS THAT THE PROFESSORS WANT TO TEACH LINE UP PRECISELY WITH THE LIBRARY PROFESSION'S STATED TEACHING GOALS, THEN IT'S UNDENIABLE THAT WE HAVE A LOT TO OFFER IN THE CLASSROOM."

— MELIA ERIN FRITCH



putting together well-researched and well-executed assignments and projects."

Of course, not all university classes lend themselves to such an intensive partnership. But Fritch and Logan's collaboration with athletic training shows that the return on investment can be significant. In fact, they have started to use this model in other programs, including Communication Sciences and Disorders.

"When the key concepts and skills that the professors want to teach line up precisely with the library profession's stated teaching goals, then it's undeniable that we have a lot to offer in the classroom," Fritch said.

athletic training, while Cindy speaks to best practices for finding, using and formatting reliable, accurate information. As a result, students are

Cindy Logan meets with athletic training students like Taylor Smith and Liz Hildreth multiple times throughout their academic careers to help them tackle increasingly challenging research assignments.

