



# Supporting First-Gens in the Library Classroom

A Case Study in Improved Connections

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Penfield Library  
SUNY Oswego

# What I'm Going to Talk About

The first-gen  
student  
demographic

The unique  
needs of  
first-gens

Strategies I use to  
promote first-gen  
student success

# Goals for this Session



## DEVELOP

Increased understanding of first-gen student population



## LEARN

Specific strategies to empower first-gens in your classroom



## EXPAND

Pedagogical toolbox as librarian instructors

# First Some Context...

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Who I am

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Where I am

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Why this is important to me

# SUNY Oswego



## *A comprehensive college on the shores of Lake Ontario*

- 6,600+ undergrad students and 1,000+ grad students
- 110+ undergraduate majors and minors
- 40+ graduate programs
- 30% of students self-identify as from culturally diverse background
- 89% of students receive financial aid

## Penfield Library

- 10 full-time librarians
- 12 professional staff and clerks
- 30+ student workers

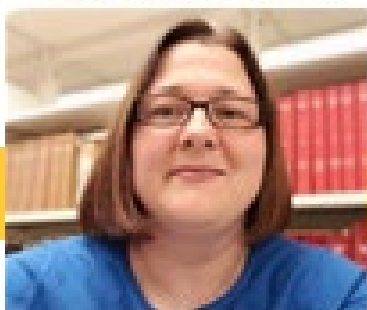
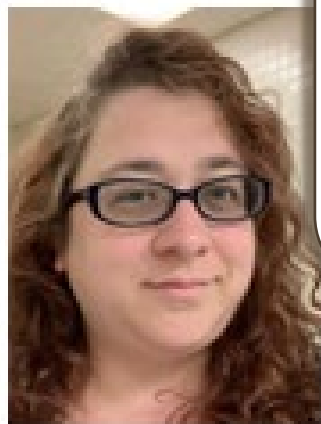
# WELCOME TO PENFIELD LIBRARY!

## Ask Us!

### About...

- Finding textbooks and other course readings
- Reserving quiet study and group spaces
  - Evaluating sources
  - Using databases
- Citing sources with confidence
  - Employment
- College history & more

[askalibrarian@oswego.edu](mailto:askalibrarian@oswego.edu)





- I was an Art History/Anthropology double major for my undergrad degree
- I love a good road trip and have been to all of the lower 48 United States
- I have an 18-year-old cat named Razz
- I like to paint and hike in my free time



# Deborah Bauder

## RESEARCH, INSTRUCTION & OUTREACH LIBRARIAN

College of Liberal Arts & Sciences  
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**Ask Us!** **PENFIELD LIBRARY**

# Why First-Gen Student Success is Important to Me

*Two amazing high school dropouts (GED holders)*



*Don*



*Diane ("Dinny")*

***Opportunity  
deficits***

***Other  
strengths  
and  
knowledge  
assets***



# Who are First-Gens?

## Varying definitions

“First-generation college students are students who enrolled in postsecondary education and whose parents do not have any postsecondary education experience.”

*U.S. Department of Education*

“First-generation college student is defined as an undergraduate whose parents do not have a bachelor’s or higher degree.”

*Center for First-Generation Student Success*

## Nationally

- 33% of higher-ed students today are the first in their family to attend college

*U.S. Department of Education*

## SUNY Oswego

- 29% of Oswego students identify as a first-generation student

*"...first-generation students cannot benefit from their parents' college-going experience—a valuable source of cultural capital that helps students navigate college (e.g., understanding the significance of the syllabus, what "office hours" means, or how to cite sources in written assignments)."*

*U.S. Department of Education*



## What are their challenges?

- Lack of exposure to college policies, procedures, expectations, and jargon prior to arrival
- Struggles with confidence and sense of belonging on campus
- Higher levels of stress and anxiety
- Impostor syndrome
- Increased difficulty speaking up / asking questions in class

# My Goal = Eliminate Barriers to Success

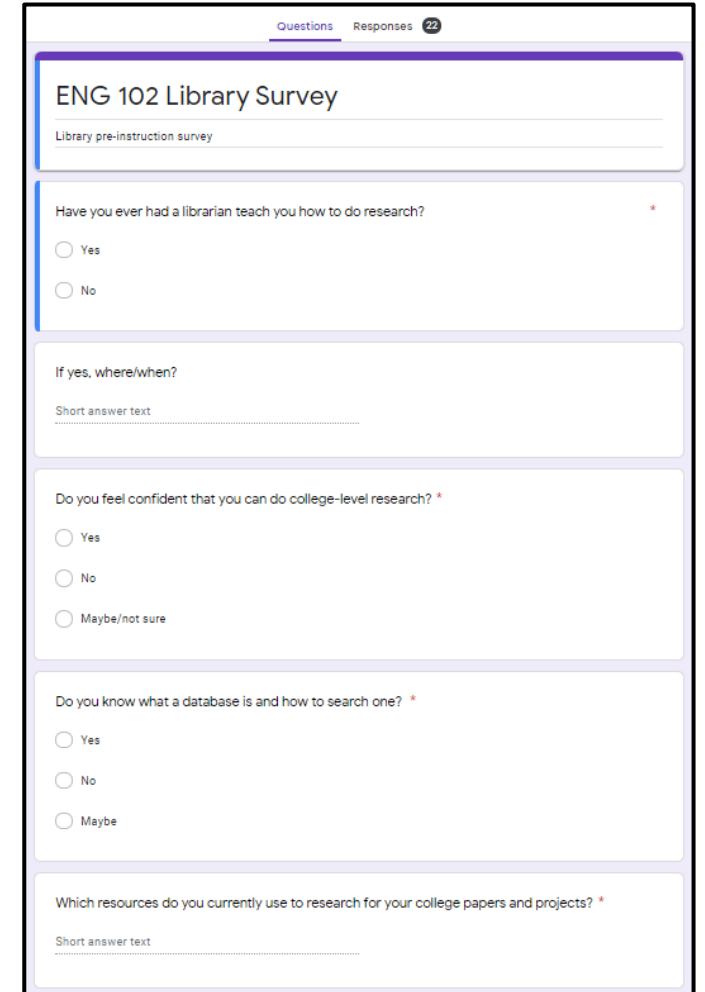
**Develop** tools and strategies for my library instruction sessions to help first-gen students in the library classroom.

**Conduct** more equitable and inclusive instruction sessions.

# Anonymous Pre-Instruction Survey

A simple survey gauging students' current skill levels, confidence, and overall mindsets surrounding college-level research.

- **Built** an online survey students can answer anonymously
- **Kept** it short (4 or 5 questions max)
- **Asked** simple questions that touch upon confidence, preparation
- **Worked** with profs to develop questions relevant to specific class
- **Distributed** survey prior to library instruction
- **Shared** results with students in class

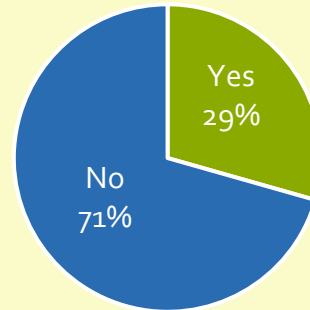
A screenshot of a Google Form titled "ENG 102 Library Survey" with the subtitle "Library pre-instruction survey". The form is displayed in a mobile-like view with a purple header. It contains five questions: 1. "Have you ever had a librarian teach you how to do research?" with radio button options "Yes" and "No". 2. "If yes, where/when?" with a "Short answer text" input field. 3. "Do you feel confident that you can do college-level research?" with radio button options "Yes", "No", and "Maybe/not sure". 4. "Do you know what a database is and how to search one?" with radio button options "Yes", "No", and "Maybe". 5. "Which resources do you currently use to research for your college papers and projects?" with a "Short answer text" input field. At the top right, there are tabs for "Questions" and "Responses" with a count of 22.

*Google form or other simple survey tool*

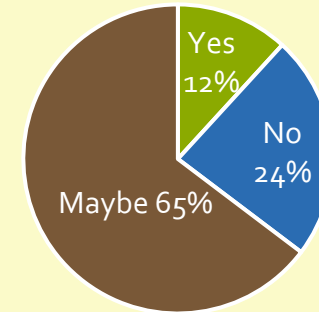
# Anonymous Pre-Instruction Survey (cont.)

English 102  
Student Responses  
Fall 2021

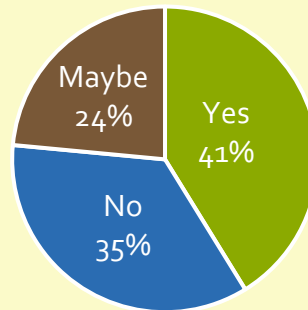
*Have you ever had a librarian teach you how to do research?*



*Do you feel confident that you can do college-level research?*



*Do you know what a database is and how to search one?*



*What resources do you currently use for your college papers and projects?*

- Google
- Google Scholar
- Wikipedia
- Websites
- Search engines
- Library website
- Archive.org
- The internet
- Britannica
- The library databases

# Anonymous Pre-Instruction Survey (cont.)

*Used what I learned from the survey to improve my instruction*

## Pre-instruction preparation

- **Learned** about my students' library education and research skills background
- **Gained** a better understanding of their collective mindset
- **Formulated** instruction highlights as needed
- **Met** my students 'where they're at'

## Ice-breaker to connect with students

- **Shared** survey results at beginning of class
- **Built** their confidence and sense of community
- **Reduced** feelings of isolation
- **Encouraged** class participation
- **Reduced** their anxiety and stress

## Post-instruction assessment

- **Compared** with end-of-class surveys
  - How are students feeling/thinking after instruction session?
  - Do I need to do more to help build confidence levels and inspire connection with material?
- **Improved** my instruction for next time



# What else could I do?

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To help first-gens (and others) in my classroom

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To improve confidence levels

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To make classroom more equitable and inclusive

# Clearly Articulated Goals

- **Highlight** important / main elements I'm going to cover
- **Prepare** students by giving an overall framework for their attention
- **Cue** students to specific areas/important elements
- **Tell why** what I'm sharing is important
  - **Tie in** with larger college and career goals



# Outlines for Note Taking

- **Highlight** important / main elements of the instruction session
- **Cue** students to specific areas to pay attention to
- **Serve** as a framework for note taking
- **Help** students process information in their own words
- **Provide** a useful reference doc after class
- **Help** with information retention
- **Assist** students to develop note taking skills (help with 'opportunity deficit' in this area)

Library Instruction Session: ENG 102 Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Librarian's name:	
Librarian's contact info:	
Places to get research help:	
Penfield Library website:	

Subject Guides:

Research Starters:

Finding articles:

- Searching databases
- Selecting keywords
- Using filters
- Using 'and' 'or' 'not'
- Finding peer reviewed articles

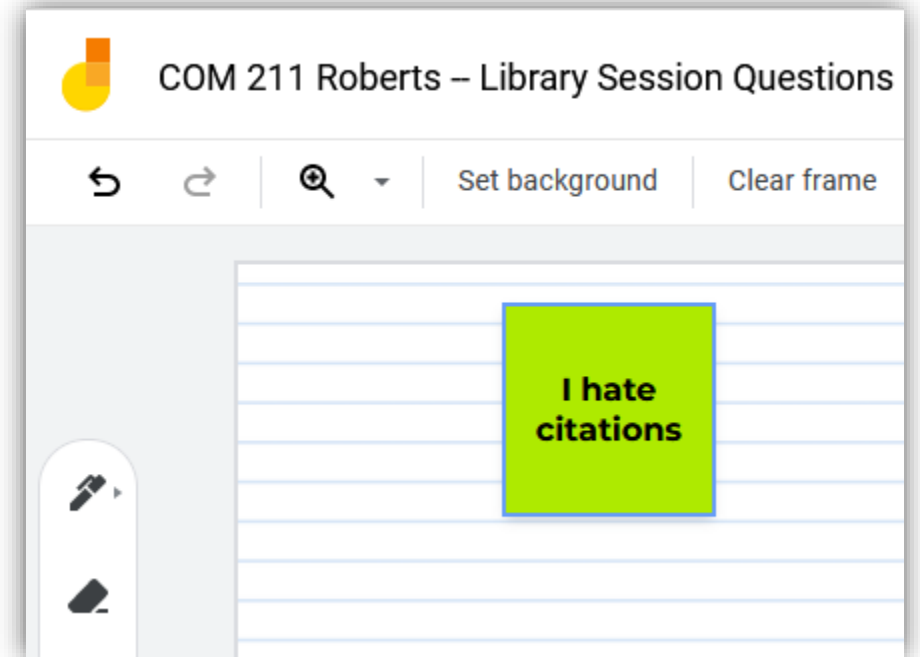
Library Instruction Session: ENG 102 Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Finding books: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Searching library catalog</li></ul>	
Citing sources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Citation style for this class</li><li>• Available citation guides</li><li>• Places to get help</li></ul>	
Interlibrary Loan:	
Questions, Ideas, Other Thoughts	

Simple Word doc with table outline for note-taking

# Anonymous Question Posting Boards

- **Address** anonymous questions during class in real time
- **Address** questions afterwards in post-instruction 'reach out' email
- **Help** less confident students to ask questions and participate in class
- **Reduce** feelings of isolation

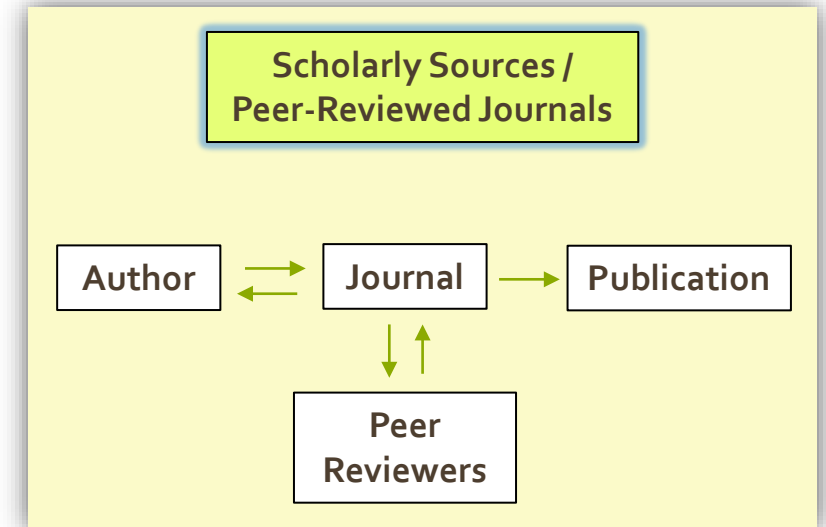


*Student posting on a class Jamboard*

# Concept Maps & Flowcharts

*Visuals can make ideas more accessible*

- **Serve** as an alternate means to convey information
- **Break up** instruction sessions and introduce a bit of movement, activity
- **Cue** students to importance of topic
- **Provide** different means of access/understanding
- **Can be** used quickly for a variety of different concepts
  - Keyword selection
  - Research process as a whole
  - Scholarly/peer-reviewed sources



*Quick visuals don't take long, and they enhance learning!*

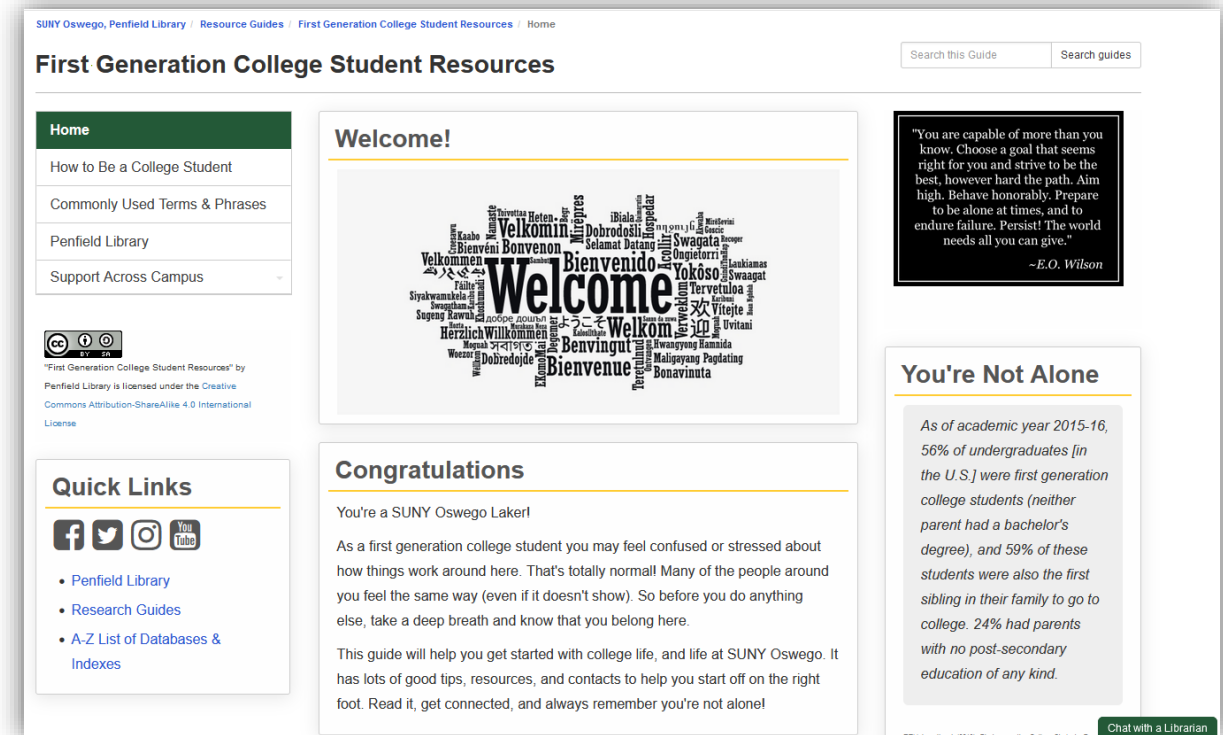
# Normalize Help & Resources

**Provide** information and location for:

- Librarians
- Research Help Desk
- Writing Center
- Tutoring Center
- Peer Reference Assistants
- Research Party Events

**Show:**

- First-Gen Resources Guide
- Other helpful LibGuides
- Ask A Librarian contact info



First-Gen Student Resources Guide  
[https://libraryguides.oswego.edu/FirstGen\\_ResourceGuide](https://libraryguides.oswego.edu/FirstGen_ResourceGuide)



# Normalize Help & Resources (cont.)

SUNY Oswego, Penfield Library / Resource Guides / First Generation College Student Resources / Commonly Used Terms & Phrases

Search this Guide

## First Generation College Student Resources

Home

How to Be a College Student

**Commonly Used Terms & Phrases**

Penfield Library

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- [Penfield Library](#)
- [Research Guides](#)
- [A-Z List of Databases & Indexes](#)

### New Student Glossary of Terms

Academic advisor / Advisor	Friendly, trained, faculty and staff who can help you register for courses, explore career options, and stay on track for graduation. Incoming students are assigned an academic advisor and can also seek help at the campus Advising Center.
Academic year	The period of time that students attend classes, spanning from the first day of fall semester to the last day of spring semester.
Academic probation	New or continuing students who do not have a successful semester. A <b>successful semester</b> means that you have earned a 2.0 GPA or above and that you have received passing grades for at least 12-credits for the semester. (Also see: <a href="#">success plan</a> )
Add/drop	A period of time when students can make changes to their semester schedules by dropping and adding courses.
Appeal	A formal process students can participate in if they feel like they've been evaluated unfairly.
Audit (see: Degree Audit)	
Award letter	A document that outlines the amount of financial aid you will receive (loans, grants, <b>work-study</b> etc.)
Bachelor's degree	A degree that is awarded to a student by a college, usually after four years of full-time study.
Blackboard	An online learning tool used to access important course information, submit assignments, and more.
Bursar (see: Student accounts)	
Campus Technology Services (CTS)	A campus office that provides computing support to students and faculty.

First Generation College Student Resources

Search this Guide

Search guides

Home

How to Be a College Student

Commonly Used Terms & Phrases

Penfield Library

**Support Across Campus**

SUNY Oswego's 1st Gen Coalition

**Quick Links**

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### Financial Support

**SUNY Oswego Office of Financial Aid**  
Email: [financial.aid@oswego.edu](mailto:financial.aid@oswego.edu)  
Phone: 315-312-2248

**Student Employment**  
Federal Work Study Contact: Jessica Slack

**SHOP (Student Pantry)**  
Phone: 315-312-2446  
Email: [shop@oswego.edu](mailto:shop@oswego.edu)  
Location: 3 Penfield Library (basement)

### Academic Support

**Academic Advising**  
Email: [advisement@oswego.edu](mailto:advisement@oswego.edu)  
Location: 101 Hewitt Union


**Office of Learning Services (Writing Center / Tutoring Center)**  
Phone: 315-312-3762  
Email: [steven.smith@oswego.edu](mailto:steven.smith@oswego.edu)  
Location: 1st Floor, Penfield Library

**Penfield Library**  
Phone: 315-312-4267  
Email: [askalibrarian@oswego.edu](mailto:askalibrarian@oswego.edu)  
**Subject Liaisons:** [Penfield's librarian subject liaisons](#)

**Educational Opportunity Program (EOP)**  
Phone: 315-312-3094  
Email: [eop@oswego.edu](mailto:eop@oswego.edu)  
Location: 1st Floor, Penfield Library

### Personal Support

**Counseling Services**  
Phone: 315-312-4416



# Partnerships with Non-Library Teaching Faculty

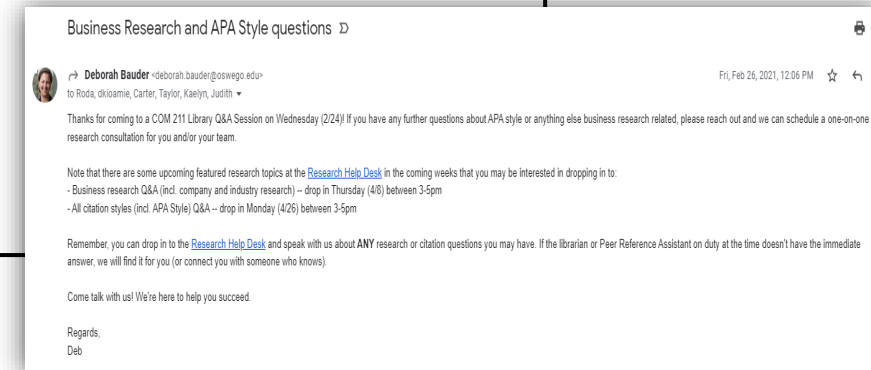
## Provide

- **Relevance** and **context** to your instruction session
- **Recognition** of shared goals
- **Opportunity** for classroom faculty to see survey results
- **Opportunities** for idea sharing
  - Worked with English prof to come up with survey questions for his class
  - Working with Writing Fellows to help develop instruction videos over summer



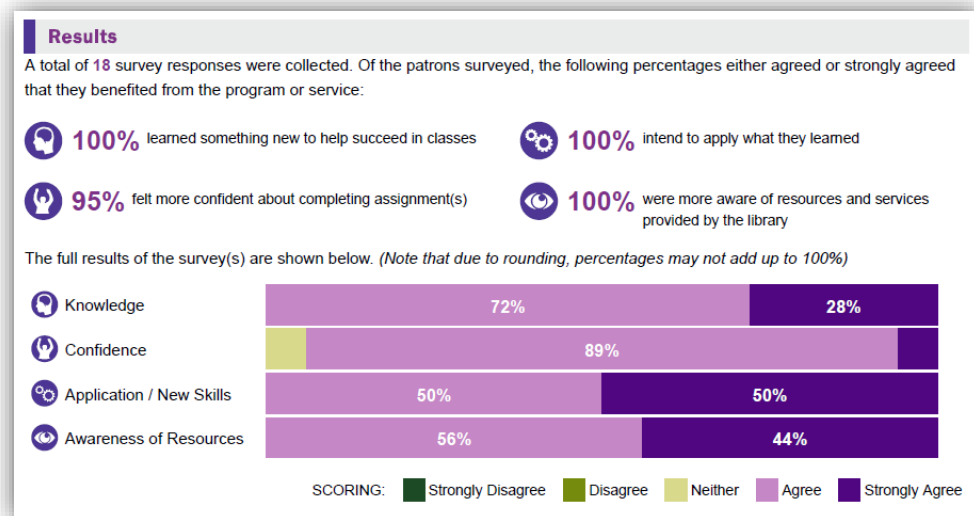
# Next Day 'Reach Out'

- **Provide** contact info and other resources for help as links or attachments (e.g. citation handouts, notes outline, etc.)
- **Answer** any last questions posted on anonymous board
- **Answer** any questions or comments from post-instruction assessment
- **Reconnect** with students and professor
- **Reinforce** availability of help and resources

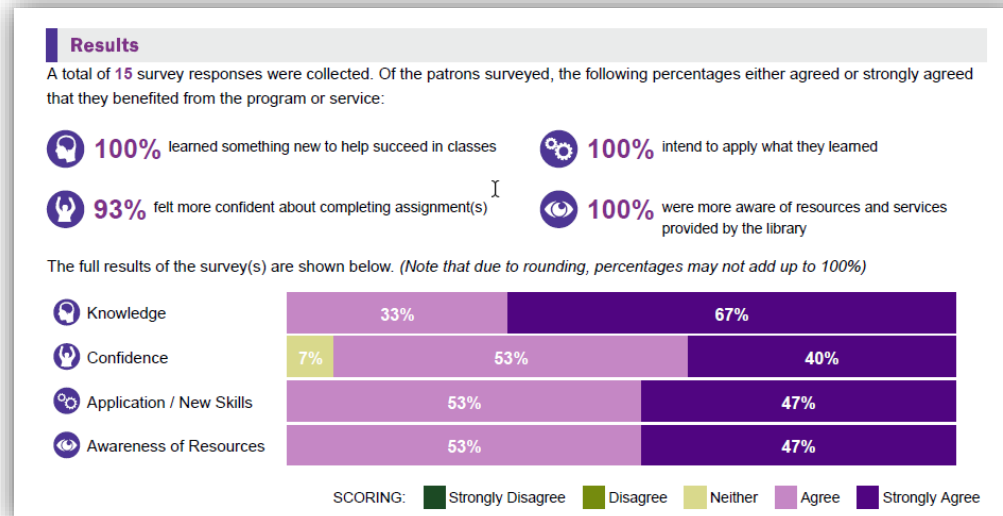


# Post-Instruction Assessment

Compare to anonymous pre-instruction surveys



Project Outcome survey results



## What did you like most about this session?

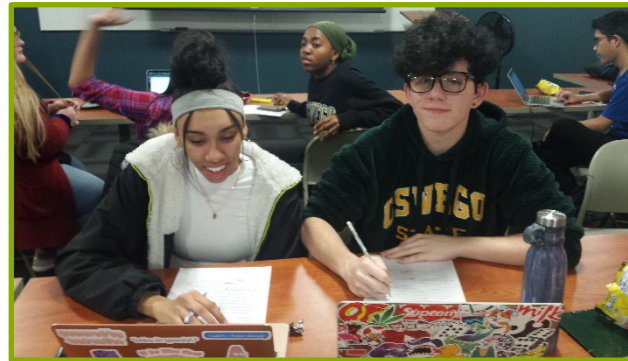
- "I found out the numerous tools I can use in order to be successful in my courses."
- "It will help me with my future research papers. I'm also aware of all the sources Penfield has to offer."
- "I feel more confident in my researching."
- "I didn't know the databases were so easy to use."

**Confidence levels higher!**

# A Couple of Other Things: Extending the Classroom

## Research Parties

- Drop-in space for students to meet with librarians, writing tutors, and each other in a relaxed, fun atmosphere
- Social and collaborative (pizza and chocolate bribes)
- Multiple librarians and student tutors circulate the room, answering questions and assisting students with various research needs



- **Promote** student use and understanding of library's resources
- **Foster** student familiarity and engagement with librarians and other sources of help
- **Reduce** stress and anxiety associated with doing research
- **Encourage** atmosphere of scholarly collaboration and community
- **Encourage** student interest and receptivity in seeking out research help

# A Couple of Other Things (con't.)

## Peer Reference Assistants (PRAs)

- Student Peer Reference Assistants work evening and weekend hours at library's Research Help Desk
- PRAs answer directional and library policy questions, reserve spaces, make referrals, and answer basic research questions
- Refer more complex questions to librarians

- **Encourage** student interest and receptivity in seeking out research help at the Library
- **Reduce** intimidation factor for less confident students
- **Provide** an opportunity for academic and professional development for student workers



*First-Gen student and  
Peer Reference Assistant,  
Awa D.*







# Thank you!

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