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Preparing Future Faculty for Careers in Academic Librarianship: A Paradigm Shift for Collaboration in Higher Education

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Nationwide, the number of available faculty positions represents only a fraction of the master's and doctoral degrees granted each year. Fortunately, faculty positions are available in academic librarianship, which is experiencing a decline in qualified applicants. A pioneering collaboration between a graduate student professional development program and an academic library has created a fellowship program that allows master's and doctoral students to consider careers in academic librarianship through mentored fellowships. Initial results show that participants intend to pursue librarianship as an academic career in which to use and expand their advanced subject and/or language expertise.

The Graduate Teacher Program of the University of Colorado–Boulder is working in collaboration with CU-Boulder Libraries on a sustainable mentorship program that promotes academic librarianship as an academic career goal for master's and doctoral students. To date, the Provost's Fellowship has paired nine exceptional graduate students in different academic disciplines with tenure-track librarians as their faculty mentors over the course of a semester. The mentorship introduces these students to an alternate faculty career that values teaching, research, and service. This chapter highlights the design, goals, and successes of the program with the aim of encouraging

other institutions to provide their future faculty with mentorship experiences that draw attention to this academic career.

Literature Review

A confluence of information from many sources led to the development of the Provost's Fellowship. Each year, thousands of students in the United States begin their graduate education with the goal of obtaining a doctorate in a variety of academic disciplines. Golde and Dore's (2001) seminal research report, however, reveals a mismatch between graduate training and the actual careers available to them. Most (87.1%) survey respondents expressed interest in obtaining a faculty position despite the reality that the number of doctorates granted each year far exceeds the available tenure-track positions. In fact, no more than 50% of the doctoral students surveyed will find employment as full-time tenure-track faculty. This state of affairs forces many to seek employment in fields outside their area of expertise or accept lower paying nontenure-track positions as adjunct instructors.

The paucity of viable faculty positions may be a factor in current high levels of graduate attrition. Although there are no national estimates available, recent localized studies estimate graduate attrition in the sciences and humanities at 50%–65% in some programs, much higher than the 20%–40% reported in 1960 (National Research Council, 1996). Those who leave the academy with only a master's degree, a nonterminal degree in most fields, face even more limited employment options than those with a doctorate. While Golde and Dore (2001) state that the "obvious solution to this problem is both to reduce the number of doctoral recipients and to encourage them to consider careers outside of academia" (p. 11), they neglect to consider academic librarianship as a career option within academia for both master's and doctoral degree holders.

The participation of CU-Boulder's Graduate Teacher Program (GTP) in the Responsive PhD Initiative of the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation to explore new paradigms, new practices, and new people further informed the creation of the mentorship by encouraging us to think creatively about building a new paradigm that links current graduate students with future job opportunities in academic libraries. It has also made us aware of the need to establish a pipeline for librarians that represents the current demographics in the United States. Most importantly, we have created a new partnership among the Graduate School, graduate departments, and the academic library. Lastly, the GTP's participation in the national Preparing Future

Faculty (PFF) project and the development of the Colorado Preparing Future Faculty Network Forum, together with experience in developing, monitoring, and evaluating PFF Fellow mentorships with faculty on other campuses (Gaff, Pruitt-Logan, Sims, & Denecke, 2003), helped us move quickly to define the parameters of the library mentorship, the communications and reports necessary for success, and the requirements for both fellows and mentors.

This chapter suggests that many graduate students' desire for faculty positions in higher education can be met through careers in academic librarianship. In the words of one graduate student in religion,

During my graduate studies . . . I have come to realize that I do not want to pursue a teaching career, but still would like to remain within the academic world. A career in library studies would allow me to focus on research and deal with many different resources, all the while helping to make these accessible to others. I feel that this is what I should pursue, for it provides a synthesis of my subject area, as well as my love for books and other research materials.

Librarianship as Academic Career Goal

Academic librarianship is an attractive academic career option, yet it is often overlooked. The same interests that influence graduate students to pursue a faculty career are all present in academic librarianship: "love of teaching, enjoyment of research, and interest in doing service" (Golde & Dore, 2001, p. 9). Indeed, academic librarians often receive the same health and retirement benefits, faculty status, travel funds, and paid research leave as other faculty (Bradley, 2001). Academic libraries strongly value applicants with excellent research skills honed through advanced studies in a variety of academic disciplines. Nevertheless, recent articles (Hardesty, 2002; Hewitt, Moran, & Marsh, 2003) reveal that candidate pools regularly offer few qualified applicants at a time when demand for academic librarians is very high. Additionally, Kellsey (2003) writes that academic libraries continue to seek applicants who possess foreign language knowledge, whether in speaking or reading. Finally, nearly one-half of all recent job announcements for academic librarians are for entry-level positions (Stevens & Streatfield, 2003). The most advertised positions are in the areas of reference, cataloging, area studies, instruction, special collections, and electronic resources.

Profile of New Academic Librarians

The foundation of a successful academic librarian is a solid scholarly background and traits like a curious mind coupled with a desire to learn, adapt, and share knowledge (Tan, 2004). A survey of new librarians found that 70% of academic librarians who have been working less than five years are between 26 and 35 years old (Millet, 2005). The majority (42.9%) of new librarians work in a large research university that offers doctoral programs, 27.8% work in institutions that offer some graduate-level programs, 10.6% work in four-year colleges, and 8.5% work in community college libraries (Millet & Posas, 2005).

Unlike the profile of most academic departments, women dominate the profession of academic librarianship, even among its newest generation. Most librarians surveyed identified themselves as “technologically adept,” “creative,” and “intellectual” (Millet, 2005, p. 54). Additionally, most chose the profession due to their desire to research, interact with students, and work in an academic setting. Only 24.1% of new librarians possess a second master’s degree in addition to a master’s degree in library and information science, while only 1.9% of new librarians possess a doctorate (Millet & Posas, 2005). Despite exceptions, the possession of a master’s degree in library and information science (MLIS) is a requirement to be considered for a position as an academic librarian. According to the Association of College and Research Libraries ([ACRL], 2001), a division of the American Library Association, a MLIS from an accredited program is the “appropriate terminal professional degree for academic librarians.” A recent survey of Association of Research Libraries (ARL) member libraries revealed that two-thirds require a MLIS or equivalent library degree for all librarian positions (Blixrud, 2000). More than one-half of ARL member libraries grant faculty status to librarians (Blixrud, 2000). In fact, libraries that give faculty status to librarians overwhelmingly require them to possess a MLIS. ACRL (2002) and the American Association of University Professors (1990) agree that academic librarians should have faculty status. However, the definitions and realities of faculty status for librarians differ among institutions, and a small percentage of institutions that grant librarians faculty status do not offer tenure.

The Fellowship

In November 2002, CU-Boulder Libraries created a task force of academic librarians to assist in the national effort to recruit to the profession by promoting academic librarianship at the local level. Initial projects included an exhibit on academic librarianship, as well as hosting internships for current

MLIS students from other institutions. CU-Boulder does not offer a degree in library and information science. Ensuing communication between the GTP and task force members led to GTP seminars highlighting librarianship as an academic career, followed by the creation of the Provost's Fellowship.

The goal of the program is to encourage graduate students in master's or doctoral programs to explore the possibility of pursuing a career in academic librarianship by strengthening their understanding of the responsibilities of tenure-track library faculty and of faculty careers in academic libraries through a mentorship experience with an academic librarian.

Fellows are awarded "\$2,500 to support their work with a faculty mentor in the libraries and to provide them with the opportunity to expand their understanding and appreciation of library faculty careers in postsecondary institutions" (GTP, 2005). The GTP provides funding for the fellowship through a special account provided by the provost. Funding is sufficient to allow graduate students to spend the time necessary to complete the fellowship, and the number of hours per dollar equates to the funding for a teaching or research assistantship, although no tuition remission was provided. In turn, fellows receive the designation "Provost's Fellow in the Libraries."

Mentor and Fellow Requirements

Expectations and requirements for the mentorship are shared with both the library faculty mentor and the fellow through the application process. Mentors are required to sign a form that states they are aware of and approve the applicant's participation. Above all, librarian mentors' primary purpose is to share their knowledge and enthusiasm for the profession. Mentors engage their fellows in librarianship by providing them with the necessary theoretical background and practical application so they may gain professional-level experience during their fellowship. Where possible, mentors integrate the fellows' subject knowledge and/or language expertise into the experience so that they develop an awareness of how their skills can be applied in academic librarianship.

For the fellows, the mentorship includes working with a librarian on assigned experiences and tasks, a library site visit, participation in Preparing Future Faculty activities through the GTP, attendance at library meetings and functions, and the preparation of a Socratic portfolio. A Socratic portfolio illustrates and explains the instructional, service, and research aspects of academic librarianship and is developed in collaboration with the faculty mentor. The faculty mentor agrees to work with the fellow to develop a mentorship

plan and the Socratic portfolio and agrees to meet with the Provost's Fellow regularly throughout the mentorship. Librarians who mentor the fellows submit a written evaluation of the fellows' performance upon completion of the program.

Fellows also sign a form that clarifies expectations and participate in PFF activities including a CU-Boulder Libraries site visit, the annual Colorado PFF Forum, any mandatory meetings organized by the GTP or the libraries, and the completion of a 150-hour mentorship with an academic librarian. They provide the GTP's PFF coordinator with a current copy of their curriculum vita and transcript, which the coordinator shares with library faculty in order to set up a mentorship. Fellows must submit a plan to the PFF coordinator and set goals based on their initial meeting with their faculty mentor. At the end of the mentorship, fellows submit a detailed self-evaluative summary of their experience to the PFF coordinator and present on their library mentorship experience at the Colorado PFF Forum, a statewide conference on teaching during the spring semester. Finally, fellows submit their Socratic portfolio to the PFF coordinator, complete an online exit survey, and are asked to respond to future postgraduate assessments of the program as we attempt to track their career arcs.

Fellows are encouraged to complete the GTP's Professional Development Certificate for Preparing Future Faculty because the requirements parallel the requirements for the mentorship, except for an additional attendance requirement of 20 teaching and professional development workshops through the GTP and career services. Completion of the mentorship, the Socratic portfolio, and the faculty evaluation all count toward the Professional Development Certificate.

The Fellows

In the first two rounds of the fellowship, Provost's Fellows represented the following academic departments: art history, classics, comparative literature and humanities, English, Germanic and Slavic languages and literatures, history, and religion. Together, fellows have spoken and/or written language knowledge of French, German, Greek, Latin, Russian, Sanskrit, Spanish, and Swedish. Seventy-five percent of applicants were female, and 13% of all applicants were ethnic/racial minorities. Successful applicants were all master's students, 90% female, and did not represent an ethnic or racial minority.

During their tenure, the fellows become members of the faculty and attend faculty meetings, departmental meetings, and presentations. They also meet

with the CU-Boulder Libraries' Tenure Committee in order to understand research requirements and expectations for librarians at the university. Individually, the fellows' experiences vary as widely as their academic interests and the professional activities of their mentor. To date, fellows have assisted patrons with general and discipline-specific reference questions, planned and taught library research seminars in a variety of fields, selected materials for the collection and for off-site storage, created collection development policies, used their language knowledge to catalog materials, used their subject/language expertise to create online subject guides and bibliographies to assist researchers, and evaluated materials for preservation, among many other projects.

Program Evaluations

Multiple measures effectively provide thorough evaluations of the Provost's Fellowships in the Libraries. Specifically, they reflect the standard annual evaluation mechanisms of faculty based on their performance in teaching/librarianship, research, and service. Both fellows and mentors write evaluative summaries expressing their perspectives on the experience. Fellows also detail their viewpoints on teaching/librarianship, research, and service and describe their future career goals in their Socratic portfolios. Finally, fellows respond to a program evaluation form that allows them to comment on details and generalities of their work with mentors and the program.

FF Fellows' Evaluative Summaries

While some applicants noted in their applications that they wanted to explore librarianship because they did not want to teach in their disciplines, they learned to appreciate a different kind of instruction from their experience. One fellow commented, "This and other micro-teaching experiences throughout my fellowship redefined my notion of pedagogical practices and helped me understand that teaching exists in many forms." Fellows reported working on teaching-as-instruction areas during their mentorship such as one-on-one instruction while working at the reference desk and participation in library instruction seminars tailored to specific academic courses. Another fellow realized that specialized instructional skills are necessary to librarians.

Because a librarian's contact with students is mainly limited to library instruction classes and at the reference desk it is important that they work to evaluate the students' knowledge and information savvy by asking them questions and engaging them in a discussion.

Each fellow also expressed continued interest in research in their discipline despite some frustration with the way research was approached in their academic departments. They seemed to respond well to the individuality of research instruction available to them in the libraries. One noted, "showing interest in the student's work and talent is the first step in gaining their trust and a starting place for imparting research and information skills." They also gained a new understanding of how students and faculty in academic departments can benefit from research support in the libraries: "This project showed me how important it is for librarians to understand faculty and student needs and then use their own knowledge to make the information accessible." Another found the freedom to explore a personal interest that is often not supported by academic departments because of a lack of resources.

Working as an academic librarian offers me the opportunity to help solve the research questions I have posed by increasing the amount of material on feminist art and art history that students can access and helping students to take advantage of the numerous resources available to them through individualized or classroom-based research instruction.

One fellow realized that the type of research she was most interested in was possible in the framework of the library.

I knew from the beginning that I was not interested in teaching history and my search for other ways to channel my passion for the field led me to librarianship. I am excited about pursuing a degree in librarianship because it gives me the opportunity to work in an atmosphere of rules and constant demands for accuracy and perfection . . . while at the same time utilizing my skills as a researcher and historian.

Overwhelmingly, fellows reported that they were able to integrate their subject/language knowledge into their work in the libraries.

Academic service was not emphasized in most of the fellows' home departments, but this aspect of librarianship resonated with several of them. The service aspect of faculty work is often neglected in academic departments, yet "If graduate students actually integrate service into the articulation of their research and teaching interests, it can become a powerful vehicle for professional development" (Border, 2002, p. 741). One fellow's experience of the site visit to the library led her to note, "Many of the reasons [librarians] listed for loving their jobs are the criteria that I am looking for in my own career search as well." Others mentioned opportunities to work in a "service

profession,” where they can teach and interact with the public. According to one, “This combination of service and academics is exactly what I am looking for,” while another reported, “Librarianship is more than supplying people with information, but a way of helping people discover the world within themselves and explore the vast world in which we live. It is an interesting, challenging, and extremely rewarding career.”

Finally, one fellow articulated the summation of what a career in academic librarianship means to her.

Academic librarianship offers the things I love most about the university environment; working closely with professors and peers, teaching and helping students, conducting research and constant exposure to new ideas, topics and information about the world. However, unlike faculty positions in many fields within the humanities, librarianship seems to offer a great deal of flexibility in terms of location and variety in duties [and] fields of study.

Mentors' Evaluative Summaries

As Golde and Dore (2001) found in their study, many graduate students lack effective mentoring. Additionally, graduate education continues to be an exploratory period during which students continue to define their specific career tracks: “it is important for graduate students to seek out multiple mentors as they begin to form their viewpoints on teaching and learning” (Border, 2005–06, p. 1). Multiple mentors were assured through the Provost’s Fellowship in the Libraries. The application procedure required the applicant to meet with the director and the PFF coordinator to discuss the project, the requirements, and our goals for the mentorship experience. During the two required site visits at campuses in the Colorado PFF Forum, fellows met with librarians from the local college to talk about the expectations for teaching, research, and service on that particular campus. The next step in the mentoring of the fellows integrated a site visit in CU-Boulder Libraries in which potential faculty mentors met with and discussed their jobs with prospective fellows. Finally, an in-depth relationship with a faculty mentor was assured through one-on-one engagement throughout the semester. The fellows appreciated this mentoring experience. “Being purposely joined with a faculty mentor and working specifically towards a knowledge of librarians’ full responsibilities established more open parameters than my schedule of graduate courses and focus on literary research alone.”

As mentors reflected on the experience, they were self-aware of their lack of experience mentoring graduate students. “As [X’s] fellowship began, [we]

found that we were both feeling our way through uncertain territory, since she had obviously never been a fellow, and I had also never been a mentor." Despite these initial concerns, one effect of the mentorship experience for the librarians was a sense of accomplishment. "[Y] participated in virtually all aspects of art librarianship along side me. Of her many achievements I am most proud of the collection development policy that she created . . ." Mentors were able to comment specifically on what their fellows had accomplished, leading us to conclude that the relationships established between the faculty mentors and their fellows were strong and productive.

Over the course of her fellowship, [Z] was able to attend various meetings of the faculty, subject librarians, and reference department to gain insights into how an organization like this functions. . . . She was also able to attend the public presentations of several library candidates, since we happened to be conducting interviews while she was here.

Upon evaluation of the first round of Provost's Fellows, library faculty mentors agreed that the experience left their fellows far better prepared than most new MLIS students and that they would make excellent academic librarians. In a profession that is widely misunderstood even within academia, one mentor proudly proclaimed that her fellow "understood what we do and why we do it." Another stated that her fellow was "a true asset to me and to the . . . collection." More importantly, all mentors believed that the mentorship deeply benefited the fellows and, according to one, the "professional level experience" received "will be critical to getting interviews and attaining positions" in academic librarianship.

: Fellows' Socratic Portfolios

The Provost's Fellows create a Socratic portfolio, based on their discussions and collaborations with their library mentor, that describes their work, their aspirations for research, teaching, and service within the context of the library, and their assessment of their performance and their mentorship experience. The Socratic portfolio emphasizes the process, product, and preparation of graduate students for the next step in their academic careers and is more a reflective document than a collection of artifacts (Border, 2005–06). As beginning faculty either in their disciplines or in the library, having prepared the Socratic portfolio will help them become what Boice (2000) has described as "quick starters"—those incoming faculty who actually succeed and attain tenure. This experience is an essential step in graduate students' understanding of the evaluation procedures that faculty undergo each year on their campuses.

Fellows commented on the negative aspects of the fellowship experience and two responded negatively to the Socratic portfolio requirement itself. One expressed the opinion that “it was difficult to find relevance” in the portfolio and the other responded that fellows need more guidance in adapting the portfolio format “in light of our library fellowship experience.” Even though the fellows were provided with an article detailing how and why to develop a Socratic portfolio, two understood neither its purpose nor its form and were unable to adapt the “teaching portfolio” aspect to the academic library experience. These comments point to a need for better clarification and explanation of the purpose of the requirement and better guidance from both the library mentors and the PFF mentors who assisted the fellows. It also indicates the need for specific guidance on how to prepare a portfolio for applications to library school or for job searches in librarianship. Interestingly, none of the fellows included their initial paperwork for the fellowship in their portfolios, indicating their misapprehension of what is important in assembling evidence and proof of their academic work.

Program Evaluation

Fellows evaluate the Provost’s Fellowship initiative. The information gained from the program evaluation reinforces the positive information that can be gleaned from the fellows’ Socratic portfolios, their reports, and the mentors’ reports while pinpointing areas that need clarification and reconsideration in the program. All fellows from the first year evaluated the program. Only one was unable to attend the requisite site visits, but the others responded positively to the site visits on other campuses. They recognized that they gained a new perspective about different campus cultures and indicated that the site visits helped them to clarify the type of postsecondary institution they would choose to work in as librarians. All fellows rated their mentors very positively on helpfulness and knowledge gained. All reported high levels of satisfaction with their completed projects, and all presented their projects at the Colorado PFF Forum to an audience of faculty and graduate students from around the state.

In comparing their library experiences with their experiences in their home departments, the majority of the fellows responded that they gained new knowledge and skills but also realized they can use their disciplines in new ways. One commented, “my mentor was open and willing to discuss my development and personal interests. . . . Sadly, I never felt the same depth of commitment and support and honesty toward my professional growth from my department faculty.” This comment echoes the findings of a recent study on faculty work that suggests that faculty need “orientation programs and information about college

or university policies, services, and programs . . . regardless of appointment type" (Gappa, Austin, & Trice, 2005, p. 38). All reflected that their experience as a fellow in the libraries had an affirmative influence on their decisions to pursue careers as academic librarians.

Fellows' Career Plans

Of the nine fellows who participated in the first two rounds of the Provost's Fellowship in the Libraries, only two are not actively pursuing academic librarianship as a career at this time. Of those who are, one fellow is already enrolled in a MLIS program; three more have been accepted to a library program; and one has recently applied, while two more are planning on applying as they near completion of their current program. Of the two fellows who are not actively pursuing a career in academic librarianship, one is beginning a nonacademic career in which she is applying her advanced foreign language skills, and the other is working in a public library. Finally, all participants believe that the fellowship has increased their chance of success for acceptance into a MLIS program.

Conclusion

The success to date of the Provost's Fellowship in the Libraries has convinced both the GTP and CU-Boulder Libraries of the value of the program, its relevance to graduate students' careers, and its benefits to the library profession. Fellows directly benefit from their newfound perspective on their career interests and goals. They become more aware of how important it is to explore various academic career choices to find a track that best fits their needs. They realize that professional development of this nature is important to their careers and necessary to obtain job interviews and career positions. Most importantly, several of them have reconnected with the joy of learning that had brought them to the academy for graduate work in the first place.

My personal interest in the field has grown, and I have spoken with a number of CU-Boulder Libraries faculty about their perspectives and experiences as librarians. All the librarians I have spoken with have been so overwhelmingly positive and delighted with their jobs that I feel very motivated to pursue librarianship as a career.

The experience pointed out to some what had been missing in their academic disciplines, notably a sense of community and a lack of mentoring. "Whereas I felt isolated as an academic in my department, there was a larger,

more recognized sense of community and commitment to service locally and nationally in the library." The GTP and CU-Boulder Libraries intend to integrate a plan to encourage the matriculation of future librarians from diverse groups, clarify the importance of professional development through the Socratic portfolio process, and encourage all fellows to pursue the GTP's Professional Development Certificate to assure that they have a strong background in teaching as well as librarianship.

As a final point, it is our hope that the achievements of this fellowship program serve as inspiration for the development of similar programs at other institutions. The minimal elements of such a program include financial support for the graduate student participants and interested academic librarians to serve as mentors. Nevertheless, collaboration between an academic library and a graduate student teaching and professional development program sets this experience apart. Specifically, the expertise and experience of a graduate student teaching and professional development program provides a framework for graduate students' professional development and greatly enhances the mentorship experience. The ultimate outcome of such collaboration provides future colleagues in the academy who can work together for the betterment of both academic departments and academic libraries.

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