Request for Proposals: Action-Oriented Research Agenda on Library Contributions to Student Learning and Success

1. Overview
1.1 Purpose of the RFP
The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), seeks proposals for the design, development, and delivery of a new ACRL "Action-Oriented Research Agenda on Library Contributions to Student Learning and Success." With oversight from the ACRL Value of Academic Libraries Committee and input from appropriate ACRL staff, the selected researcher(s) will investigate and write a research agenda that provides an update on progress since the publication of *Value of Academic Libraries: A Comprehensive Research Review and Report*[1] and examines important questions where more research is needed in areas critical to the higher education sector. The focus of the research agenda will be on institutional priorities for improved student learning and success (i.e., retention, persistence, degree completion).

This action-oriented research agenda will be informed by scholarly literature as well as advances in practice, such as those documented by participants in the *Assessment in Action: Academic Libraries and Student Success* (AiA) program.[2] The goals of the research agenda include: a) directly communicate the ways in which libraries align with and have impact on institutional effectiveness, and b) engage in language around student learning and success that resonates with higher education stakeholders.

Applicants must submit an electronic copy of their proposals (PDF preferred) by **June 2, 2016, at 4:30 p.m. (CDT).** Applicants will be notified of their status no later than July 19, 2016. Work will begin in late July 2016 with a final document of publishable quality, 60-100 pages in length, due by May 1, 2017. It is anticipated that the total amount of time devoted to this project will be no more than the equivalent of a 1/4 to 1/2 time release position for the 10 month period.

1.2 About ACRL
ACRL is the higher education association for librarians. Representing more than 11,000 academic and research librarians and interested individuals, ACRL (a division of the American Library Association) develops programs, products, and services to help academic and research

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[1] Association of College and Research Libraries. V*alue of Academic Libraries: A Comprehensive Research Review and Report*. Researched by Megan Oakleaf. Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2010. Published online at http://www.acrl.ala.org/value/?page_id=21

[2] *Assessment in Action: Academic Libraries and Student Success* is a three-year project sponsored by ACRL in partnership with the Association of Institutional Research and the Association of Public Land-grant Universities, and with funding from the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services. When the project concludes in June 2016, over 200 higher education institutions will have participated in assessing library contributions to student learning and success. See more at http://www.ala.org/acrl/AiA

librarians learn, innovate and lead within the academic community. Founded in 1940, ACRL is committed to advancing learning and transforming scholarship.

1.3 History of the ACRL Value of Academic Libraries

ACRL has long endeavored to help academic libraries improve performance and enable librarians to become more effective educational partners within their institutions. In 2009, the ACRL Board of Directors began a deeper commitment to help librarians better demonstrate the value they bring to their colleges and universities. ACRL's strategic plan, the *Plan for Excellence*, was adopted in April 2011[3] which included a goal area focused on value of academic libraries. A standing committee, the Value of Academic Libraries (VAL), was created in May 2011. The VAL committee is charged to oversee and coordinate ACRL's Value of Academic Libraries Initiative as described in the strategic plan; work with the ACRL Board and other ACRL units in creating a comprehensive effort including coalition building, professional development, publications, research, advocacy, and consultation services and to monitor and assess the effectiveness of the Value Initiative.

Among its many activities, the VAL Committee oversees the work of the *Assessment in Action* program, maintains an online bibliography of significant research,[4] and hosts a blog on value of libraries work across ACRL.[5]

2. The Project
2.1 Objectives and Scope

With oversight from the ACRL Value of Academic Libraries Committee and input from appropriate ACRL staff, the selected researcher(s) will investigate and write a research agenda that provides an update on progress since the publication of *Value of Academic Libraries: A Comprehensive Research Review and Report*[6] and examines important questions where more research is needed in areas critical to the higher education sector. The focus of the research agenda will be on institutional priorities for improved student learning and success (i.e., retention, persistence, degree completion).

This action-oriented research agenda will be informed by scholarly literature as well as advances in practice, such as those documented by participants in the *Assessment in Action: Academic Libraries and Student Success* (AiA) program.[7] The goal of the research agenda include: a) directly communicate the ways in which libraries align with and have impact on institutional

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[3] Find the ACRL *Plan for Excellence,* updated in spring 2016, online at http://www.ala.org/acrl/aboutacrl/strategicplan/stratplan

[4] Find this online resource, named the Valueography, at http://acrl.ala.org/valueography

[5] See blog at http://www.acrl.ala.org/value

[6] Association of College and Research Libraries. V*alue of Academic Libraries: A Comprehensive Research Review and Report*. Researched by Megan Oakleaf. Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2010. Published online at http://www.acrl.ala.org/value/?page_id=21

[7] *Assessment in Action: Academic Libraries and Student Success* is a three-year project sponsored by ACRL in partnership with the Association of Institutional Research and the Association of Public Land-grant Universities, and with funding from the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services. When the project concludes in 2016, over 200 higher education institutions will have participated in assessing library contributions to student learning and success. See more at http://www.ala.org/acrl/AiA

effectiveness, and b) uses language around student learning and success that resonates with higher education stakeholders.

While it is important to note that the academic library makes great contributions to the productivity of students, faculty, and researchers by providing access to collections that facilitate the creation of new knowledge, this report is intended to focus primarily on the contributions of the library to student learning and success. As the research is conducted, studies that associate library support with faculty productivity should be listed briefly in a separate section of the report. The report will contain these broad sections:

Introduction: Begin with a high level look at the trends in higher education that concern academic librarians in the broader context of academia and identify current academic library responses to the trends.

Actions to take: Highlight programs and services in academic libraries that have evidence of effectiveness and of promise for improving student learning and success (i.e., retention, persistence, degree completion). These will be informed by significant research or multiple project findings and, acknowledging that context matters, some programs and services will be immediately actionable. Clearly identify transferrable knowledge that can be modified and implemented widely in order for academic libraries to better align with and have impact on student attainment and institutional effectiveness. In addition to a general synthesis of the literature, the researcher could spotlight some examples (5-10) in depth that show particular promise and could serve as a bridge to the next section of the agenda.

Inquiry questions that remain: The bulk of the report will highlight future-focused key outstanding research questions that are essential for academic libraries to explore. For each question, provide a discussion including sample options for investigation and possible research designs with affordances and limitations. The discussion of each question should be approximately two to three pages in length and intended to aid newer practitioner-scholars in more easily and fruitfully investigating these questions.

Key research questions should address challenges that the higher education sector is facing, including but not limited to studies of defined populations (e.g., economically disadvantaged students, adult learners, or students who are the first in their families to attend college) in a manner that promotes equity mindedness and inclusive excellence. We imagine that this section will include 10-15 key questions but the selected researcher could make the case that there are fewer or more based on the literature.

Ancillary and supporting materials: In addition to the main body of the report, the successful applicant will develop materials that will aid and encourage discussion and use of the report including:
- At least two live online open forums. The forums will be recorded and made available on the ACRL web site.
- Visualization components that highlight and clarify major themes in the report (provided by researcher or subcontracted by such according to the terms of the agreement). These could be similar to or inspired by: Global Burden of Disease (GBD Compare) data

> visualization by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation
> http://www.healthdata.org/data-visualization/gbd-compare, scientific evidence for
> popular health supplements http://www.informationisbeautiful.net/visualizations/snake-oil-supplements/, or others such as those within http://bigdata-madesimple.com/best-ted-videos-on-data-visualization (the best TED videos on data visualization).

- A bibliography of sources used to inform the research agenda.

2.2 The Audience

The primary audience for this report will be ACRL's membership, which includes library faculty and staff in all types of academic libraries and those interested in libraries. In particular, the report should resonate with library leaders whose responsibility it is to communicate how libraries contribute to institutional goals around student learning and success.

Findings of this report should be applicable to all kinds of academic libraries, draw upon the scholarly and practice-based literature – both formal and informal (such as AiA project reports or Library Assessment Conference papers), and incorporate methodologies and practices with evidence of effectiveness and of promise across all types of libraries.

3. Project Deliverables

A final document of publishable quality, 60-100 pages in length, will be submitted by May 1, 2017. It will be made available by ACRL as a free PDF download with hard copy available for purchase on a cost-recovery basis.

3.1 Specific Deliverables

The following section describes the anticipated project. For details about the project proposal specifications see Section 4. The researcher(s) awarded this work will be responsible for adhering to the timeline described below and submitting the report and ancillary materials as described in 2.1 Objectives and Scope.

In addition to these components of the report itself, when submitting the revised draft of the report (due January 10, 2017), the researcher(s) should submit a brief memo to the VAL committee and the Board with advice on how to encourage practitioners and scholars to work collaboratively to investigate the key outstanding research questions (e.g., offering an ACRL clearinghouse for prospective researchers to identify partners for a multi-campus investigation, offering small stipends to cover costs associated with conducting research).

The researcher(s) will communicate regularly with the ACRL Value of Academic Libraries Committee, which will be sharing updates with the ACRL Board. The researcher(s) will work with the VAL committee and ACRL staff to seek feedback on drafts through venues such as an online open forum, a presentation at the Library Assessment Conference in October 2016, an update session at the ALA Midwinter Meeting in January 2017, and presentation at the ACRL 2017 conference in March. For more on conference locations and specific points of communication, see 3.3 timeline.

3.2 Background Resources

In addition to the usual scholarly and practice-based literature sources, we expect the report will be informed by these ACRL resources:

- *Environmental Scan 2015* and *2014 Top Ten Trends* by the ACRL Research Planning and Review Committee, available at http://www.ala.org/acrl/issues/whitepapers.
- Two reports synthesizing AiA projects, see http://www.acrl.ala.org/value/?page_id=980#reports.
- Searchable database of AiA projects, see https://apply.ala.org/aia/public.
- Comprehensive AiA bibliography, see http://www.acrl.ala.org/value/?page_id=980.
- Research highlighted in the VAL Committee "Valueography," available at http://acrl.ala.org/valueography/.
- Summary of in-depth conversations conducted in Fall-Winter 2015 with colleagues at twelve higher education associations. See reports to ACRL Board, labeled as ACRL MW16 Board Update Doc G & H (pages 41-49) in compilation available at http://connect.ala.org/node/248936.
- Two unpublished gap analyses done by the VAL Committee in 2014-15. See interim report, available at http://www.acrl.ala.org/value/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/VAL-Cmte-Gap-Analysis-ALA-Midwinter-2015.pdf and final report, available at http://www.acrl.ala.org/value/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/VAL-Cmte-Gap-Analysis-FINAL-ALA-Annual-2015.pdf.
- An unpublished higher education trends analysis done by the VAL Committee in March 2016, available at http://www.acrl.ala.org/value/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/VAL-Cmte-Trends-Analysis-2016.pdf.

3.3 Timeline

ACTION	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	DEADLINE
RFP released and promoted	Task Force (ACRL VAL Cmte and staff)	April 28, 2016
Proposals due	Prospective researchers	June 2, 2016
Researcher(s) selected and applicants notified	Task Force	July 19, 2016
Project begins	Researcher(s)	July 19, 2016
FYI update submitted to ACRL office (for review during ACRL Board Strategic Planning & Orientation Session, Baltimore, MD, September 14-16, 2016)	Researcher(s)	August 29, 2016
Presentation at Library Assessment Conference	VAL Cmte Chair Jaime Hammond (& researcher(s), tentatively)	October 31-November 2, 2016
First draft due to task force	Researcher(s)	November 7, 2016
ACRL Online Open Forum (to share progress update with broader community, solicit feedback)	Researcher(s) & VAL Cmte Chair Jaime Hammond	Mid November, 2016
Feedback to researcher(s)	Task Force	December 1, 2016
Revised draft and advice memo due to	Researcher(s)	January 10, 2017

task force/ACRL Board		
Presentation and discussion at ALA Midwinter Meeting (Atlanta, GA: January 20-24, 2017) as part of VAL update session	VAL Cmte Chair Jaime Hammond (& researcher(s), tentatively)	January 22, 2017
Feedback on revised draft to researcher(s)	Task Force	February 8, 2017
Possible session at ACRL conference (Baltimore, MD, March 22-25, 2017)	VAL Cmte Chair Jaime Hammond (& researcher(s), tentatively)	March 22-24, 2017
Final report due	Researcher(s)	May 1, 2017
Public release of final report	Task force	May 23, 2017
ACRL Online Open Forum	Researcher(s) & VAL Cmte Chair Jaime Hammond	Mid June, 2017
Presentation and discussion of report at ALA Annual Conference (Chicago, IL, June 22-27, 2017) as part of VAL update session	VAL Cmte Chair Jaime Hammond (& researcher(s), tentatively)	June 25, 2017

4. Proposal Specifications
4.1 General Instructions
The successful applicant (or team of applicants) will demonstrate strong research and writing skills. Preference will be given to applicant(s) with demonstrated experience communicating about impact on student learning and success outcomes.

The response must comply with the content requirements detailed in this section. The applicant(s) must submit a complete response that provides proof of experience and qualifications to complete the required activities and the estimated costs to do so. If the applicant is a doctoral student, he/she should send a letter of recommendation from a faculty member who agrees to supervise work on this project.

4.2 Proposal
4.2.1 Letter of Application
   a. Describe the particular qualifications, knowledge, and experience you bring to this project.
   b. Indicate ability and willingness to adhere to the timeline described in the section 3.3 above.
   c. Indicate availability to present at possible forums/conferences. See timeline in section 3.3.
   d. Provide a brief description of your (and, if applicable, your company's) experience doing research in the field of academic libraries and higher education and your familiarity with the research done in the field of student learning outcomes.
   e. The letter of application must be signed by one or more individuals qualified to perform the work described. Individuals signing the letter must indicate position title. A contact person for further information must be identified.

4.2.2 Proposal Narrative

The proposal should include a 1,000 to 1,500 word narrative describing your plan to analyze the background material provided above and other significant literature. Address how you would synthesize major ideas and themes to identify programs and services with evidence of effectiveness and of promise that are immediately actionable and develop the future-focused key inquiry questions. Explain your approach to providing sample options for responding to the outstanding inquiry questions including possible research designs with affordance and limitations.

Include a description of the areas in the report you feel would be well represented by a visualization component, as well as the methods you would employ to create those visualizations.

4.2.3 Personnel

Identify all personnel to be included in the project by name, title, and the estimated amount of time devoted to each project task. It is anticipated that the total amount of time devoted to this project will be no more than the equivalent of a 1/4 to 1/2 time release position for the 10 month period. The response must include curricula vitae or résumés of all project staff.

4.2.4 Project Plan and Schedule

Submit a coherent and detailed work plan that adheres to the timeline as described above in 3.3.

4.2.5 Budget

The budget for the proposal must contain itemized detail (including the estimated amount of time devoted to each project task) to show how cost is determined.

4.2.6 References

Provide complete contact information (name, address, email contact, and telephone number) for three references familiar with your qualifications and experience relevant to the purpose of this work. References must be provided for each individual if submitting as a team.

5. Submission Deadline

An electronic copy of the proposal (PDF preferred) is due by **June 2, 2016, at 4:30 p.m. (CDT).** All costs for the applicant's response preparation are the responsibility of the applicant and may not be charged to the budget for the project.

6. Selection Process and Criteria

The contractor will be selected from the proposals submitted to this RFP. A team of appropriate ACRL staff, member leaders, and the ACRL Executive Director will review the responses. The ACRL Executive Director will make the selection based on the following criteria.

6.1 Completeness of proposal
Proposals must address all elements requested in this RFP. See Appendix A: RFP Checklist.

6.2 Proposal narrative
Evidence that the individual(s) submitting understands the scope and intention of the project and that individual(s) will work within the project guidelines as described under Sections 2 and 3 above. Evidence of a well-reasoned approach to designing the research agenda and the data visualization.

6.3 Project personnel
Evidence that the individual (or team) submitting has the experience, expertise, research ability, and credentials to complete this project. Subcontracting any or all of this work to individuals not included in the proposal will not be permitted without prior written permission.

6.4 Project plan and schedule
Evidence that the individual (or team) submitting has a coherent, detailed, and robust work plan that adheres to the timeline in 3.3.

6.5 Project budget
A clearly described and itemized budget as described in 4.2.5.

6.6 References
References from three individuals familiar with your and each individual on your team's qualifications and experience relevant to the purpose of this work.

7. Contract for Services and Payment Schedule
ACRL will prepare a letter of agreement with the contractor(s) that includes the specific responsibilities and timetable for the project. The Association will also clarify a schedule for payment that will be negotiated between the contractor(s) and ACRL. Subcontracting any or all of this work to individuals not included in the proposal will not be permitted without prior written permission.

8. Ownership of Materials
This project will be conducted as work for hire. The research agenda report and all materials developed to support it, under the terms of the project agreement, become the property of ACRL. ACRL reserves the non-exclusive rights to copy such material and to publish, disseminate, and otherwise use the materials developed under the terms of the agreement in print or electronically.

The contractor agrees that as a work for hire ACRL will have all rights to publish the work first and make use of the findings in many venues and products. The contractor will not have exclusive speaking, marketing, or consulting rights for the products, concepts, or techniques developed for this project. While ACRL holds the first right of publication, we are happy to work with the selected researcher(s) to publish subsequently in other venues, and after the report has

been widely disseminated the researcher may incorporate findings from the research into his/her presentations and writings as long as clear attribution is given to ACRL.

9. Submission

Please submit a PDF (preferred) or MS Word version of your response to the RFP **by 4:30 p.m. CDT, June 2, 2016, to:**

      Sophie Skinner
      Program Coordinator
      ACRL/ALA
      50 E. Huron St.
      Chicago, IL 60611
      sskinner@ala.org
      312-280-2512

A confirmation of receipt will be sent upon receipt of submission; if you do not receive this please call to ensure the proposal is not caught in a spam filter.

All proposals are confidential.

10. Notification

Applicants will be notified of their status no later than July 19, 2016.

For questions contact:

      Kara Malenfant
      Sr. Strategist for Special Initiatives
      ACRL/ALA
      50 E. Huron St.
      Chicago, IL 60611
      kmalenfant@ala.org
      312-280-2510

Appendix A
RFP Checklist

_____ Letter of application
   a) Describe the particular qualifications, knowledge, and experience you bring to this project.
   b) Indicate ability and willingness to adhere to the timeline described in the section 3.3.
   c) Indicate availability to present at possible forums. (See details in section 3.3.)
   d) Provide a brief description of your (and, if applicable, your company's) experience doing research in the field of academic libraries and higher education and knowledge of research in the area of student learning outcomes.
   e) The letter of application must be signed by one or more individuals qualified to perform the work described. Individuals signing the letter must indicate position title. A contact person for further information must be identified.

_____ Proposal narrative
   a) 1,000 to 1,500 words.
   b) Describe plan to analyze background materials and significant literature.
   c) Address synthesis of major ideas and themes to identify programs and services with evidence of effectiveness and of promise that are immediately actionable and develop future-focused key inquiry questions.
   d) Explain approach to providing sample options for responding to outstanding inquiry questions.
   e) Describe potential challenges and how these would be addressed.
   f) Describe areas to be represented by a visualization component, as well as the methods to create visualization(s).
   g) Identify all personnel to be included.

_____ Coherent and detailed work plan that adheres to the timeline.

_____ Budget with itemized detail.

_____ Curriculum Vitae (and additional CVs or résumés for subcontractors or members of the submitting team, if applicable).

_____ References (and additional references for each member of the submitting team if applicable).