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Making the Most of an Adjunct Placement

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Making the Most of an Adjunct Placement



Leah Morin,
Austin Phillips,
Jon Jeffryes

ABSTRACT

This poster discusses approaches to ensure that adjunct placements leverage the temporary placement to the benefit of both adjunct librarians and institutions. Librarians can leverage short-term employment to develop skills and gain experience in new library environments. Libraries maintain services while seeking long-term solutions and progress on key projects leveraging skill areas supporting adjunct librarians' professional development. Clear career goals, intentional supervision, and guidance on translating experience to future job applications can ground an adjunct appointment in mutually-beneficial principles.

CONTEXT

While conducting a national search for multiple open liaison positions, GVSU Libraries needed to hire coverage for two professional programs liaison areas to cover instruction and reference.

WHERE THEY STARTED...

Leah graduated with her MLIS in spring of 2018 and was working part-time at Michigan State University Libraries (MSUL) when she applied for the Grand Valley University Libraries (GVSUL) adjunct position in fall of 2019. The GVSUL adjunct position was part-time and one semester long, which allowed Leah to keep her job at MSUL. Thanks to flexible scheduling at both libraries, Leah was able to commute to Grand Rapids three days a week and work two to three days a week in East Lansing.

Austin graduated with his MLIS degree from Wayne State University in the Spring of 2018 while working at Grand Valley State University's Regional Math and Science Center and Kent District Library as a part-time paraprofessional when he applied to Grand Valley State University Libraries' Adjunct Professional Liaison role in August 2019. Once accepted into his role for Grand Valley State University Libraries (GVSUL) Austin left his role at Kent District Library to experience the world of teaching in academic libraries working in the evenings as Leah's other half.

GAINING PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE



Teach - Collectively, Leah & Austin provided library instruction to Business, Marketing, English, Psychology, Hospitality, Legal Studies, Criminal Justice, Education, English and Liberal Studies classes, for a total of 33 instruction sessions.



Liaise - Leah & Austin fulfilled professor requests for instruction, instructional materials and videos. They worked individually with students and student groups, learning how to field student questions, further explain research concepts, and assist in all stages of the research process.



Collaborate - Leah & Austin completed a number of projects including creating and managing Libguides, compiling statistical data for instruction sessions, and working with fellow faculty members on various projects. They attended library meetings and joined librarian work groups.



Network - Leah & Austin had the opportunity to meet one-on-one with the Dean of Libraries to discuss personal future goals, the overall mission and future of the library. They also worked with a number of faculty within their liaison areas as well as other library faculty, building strong, meaningful relationships.

WHERE THEY ARE NOW...

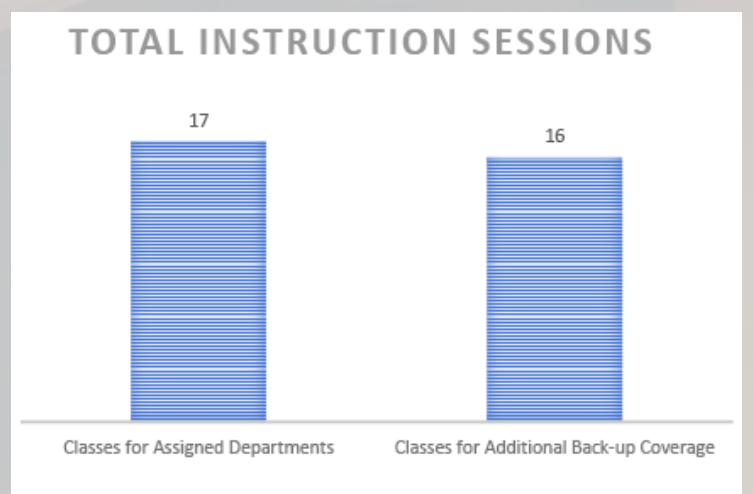
Leah and Austin are happy to report they have made advantageous career moves thanks to their adjunct appointments at GVSUL. Austin has a full-time tenure-track position at Aquinas College as the Web Services and Discovery Librarian and liaison to the Art, Communication, English, Music, Theatre, and World Languages departments, where he has been since July 2020. In February 2020, Leah was promoted to full-time at MSU Libraries, where she is a member of the Teaching & Learning department, primarily working with first-year writing students. She is hopeful to make this a permanent, continuing position one day. Both Austin and Leah credit their experience gained at GVSUL as absolutely vital to procuring these positions.

FOSTERING SUCCESS

- Narrow core duties to allow for focused skill development during the short-term appointment.
- Meet with adjunct faculty and discuss strengths and development goals to find meaningful project work.
- Provide optional peer review of classroom teaching.
- Provide a regular, but flexible schedule to allow for other work responsibilities.

BENEFITS

- New ideas and perspectives to instruction program
- Able to extend back-up coverage across subject areas
- Move forward projects



LIMITATIONS

Experienced by Leah and Austin -

With a one-semester only appointment, onboarding was necessarily condensed. Both Austin and Leah held library instruction sessions within their first few days at GVSUL.

Experienced by Others -

- Lack of Diversity for Libraries: (Alaniz, D.)
- Employment Effects on Mental Health: (Lee, Y.)
- Training and Connectedness: (Ford, E.)
- Commuting and Scheduling: (Ford, E.)
- Lack of Professional Development Opportunities: (Ford, E.)



READINGS

Alaniz, D. (2019). Reflections on temporary appointments and innovation/diversity culture in libraries and archives. National Forum on Labor Practices for Grant-Funded Digital Positions. <https://laborforum.diglib.org/2019/08/14/reflections-on-temporary-appointments-and-innovation-diversity-culture-in-libraries-and-archives/>

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