Professional Competencies

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Future Forward

Information Professionals 2050: Educational Possibilities and Pathways

Edited by Gary Marchionini and Barbara B. Moran
What are Competencies?

- Skills
- Knowledge
- Abilities

The “Standard of the Best Performer”
Competency Development at the University of Alberta (2007-12)

Standards & Competencies

- Core Competencies
- Customer Service Standards & Competencies
- Public Service Standards & Competencies
- Research Competencies
- Supervisor Standards & Competencies
- Technology Competencies
Sample Competency for Customer Service

**Standard:** Staff member presents him/herself in a professional manner

**Competencies:** Approachability/Interest

**Performance Statements** (observable actions):

- On time for meetings, help desk shifts, and other scheduled activities
- Polite and positive
- Acknowledges clients who are waiting for a response and provides estimates for when a response or resolution can be expected.
- Responds to client queries in a timely manner according to set standards
- Can be relied upon to complete tasks without prompting
- Listens to others and is open minded about suggestions from others.
Piloting a Competency Model for Librarians at the University of Arizona

- Background/Context
- Competency Development (drawn from Faculty Bylaws)
- Job Descriptions
- Interview Questions
- Hiring Matrix Development
### Hiring Matrix [excerpt]

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Applicant Name</th>
<th>Evidence of the ability to carry out responsibilities and assignments collaboratively as well as work independently in a team-based environment</th>
<th>Evidence of the ability to handle multiple responsibilities in a changing environment</th>
<th>Evidence of proactive and creative problem solving capabilities</th>
<th>Evidence of excellent interpersonal and written communication skills</th>
<th>Evidence of a strong, enthusiastic, customer service-oriented philosophy</th>
<th>Demonstrated knowledge of and experience with instructional design, teaching/pedagogy, emerging learning technologies, and information literacy standards for higher education</th>
<th>Experience consulting and working with faculty/instructors, especially on course, tutorial, or assignment design, or in developing educational programs</th>
<th>Evidence of a high degree of computer/digital fluency (especially related to the use of instructional software, especially Adobe Captivate, Flash, PHP, etc.) and a commitment to staying abreast of emerging technologies</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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Piloting a Competency Model for Librarians at the University of Arizona
Sample Librarian Competency for Proactive/Creative Problem-Solving

**Description/Rationale:** Promotes new ideas, develops new insights, and uses resourceful means to improve or enhance performance. Demonstrates an open and active interest in, and comfort with, investigating and implementing new approaches that improve customer services or further organizational goals.

**Behavioral Evidence/Indicators:**
- Shows initiative (and success) in pinpointing problems and identifying solutions
- Displays creative problem solving that is structured through a systematic and logical approach
- Is proactive and takes risks, anticipating rather than solely reacting to changes in the environment or customer need
- Welcomes change and new situations as learning opportunities
- Demonstrates support for innovation and for organizational changes needed to improve the organization or help achieve organizational goals
Sample Librarian Competency for Proactive/Creative Problem-Solving

Mastery Level Behavioral Evidence/Indicators:

• Ensures proposed solutions focus on the requirements necessary for organizational success
• Endures in seeing ideas with value through to fruition, despite obstacles or red tape
• Fosters a work environment that encourages adaptability and embraces change
• Develops, plans, and follows through on change initiatives, accepting the ambiguity that accompanies them
• Inspires innovation in others
Why Use Competencies?

- Power Local Change
- Improve Climate/Communication
- Underpin processes of recruitment, training, and performance management
Why Use Competencies?

- Fill Strategic Gaps
- Succession Planning
- Empower Employees
How Can I Use Competencies?

**Hiring Faculty or Staff**
- Provides Shared Vocabulary & Expectations
- Improves Candidate Pools
- Improves “Fit” with Institution
- Improves & Facilitates Selection Team Decision-Making
- *Requires different “evidence” or indicators are developed, depending on available information*
How Can I Use Competencies?

Performance Management

- Shared Vocabulary
- Aspirational
- Revelatory
- Coaching & Performance Plans
How Can I Use Competencies?

Performance Management

“Participate in the public service model by staffing the library’s service desk for two shifts per week & fulfilling duties in accordance with the UAL Standards and Competencies for Public Service”
Tips for Implementation
(in a Union, or similar, Environment)

Ensure:

• Collaboration amongst stakeholders
• Clear standards of performance for employees
• Clear expectations for supervisors
• Consistency of treatment
• Clear and comprehensible documentation
Tips for Implementation
(with Library Faculty)

- Understand that the nature of faculty work (non-iterative) may result in evidence or indicators being less concrete or easily evaluated
- Start with hiring or with strategic or succession planning (gaps)
- Focus on professional development/growth, rather than on deficiencies
What are the expected benefits of recruiting PhDs as ‘other’ professionals?

• Discuss

• The competency perspective
Competencies & PhDs?

- Qualifications vs. Competencies
- Specialists vs. Generalists
- Other Professional vs. Library Professional
Questions?

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