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Recommended Citation

Loyola Marymount University, "Happenings@Hannon, December 2018" (2018). *Happenings @ Hannon*. 70.

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HAPPENINGS@HANNON

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December 2018 (Volume 9.4)

THANK YOU, ABBIE!

From the William H. Hannon Library



Dr. Abbie Robinson-Armstrong and Inclusive Excellence in the Library

This month, we are devoting Happenings @ Hannon toward recognizing the work and influence of Dr. Abbie Robinson-Armstrong. The following article is written by Kristine Brancolini, Dean of the Library.

As many of our readers may know, Dr. Abbie Robinson-Armstrong, Vice President for Intercultural Affairs, will be retiring from Loyola Marymount University at the end of the academic year. I want to thank Abbie for her unwavering support of our intercultural initiatives over the years and recognize her lasting influence at the William H. Hannon Library. Many librarians have participated in Abbie's leadership programs and have been the recipients of her office's Inclusive Excellence grants. However, here I want to highlight Abbie's impact on the diversity of our staff, especially the librarians.

I arrived at LMU in the summer of 2006 and I soon became a member of Abbie's Intercultural Advisory Committee. There I discovered that a few of the colleges and schools at LMU had completed the Diversity Scorecard, but the library had yet to participate. I wanted to know more. I made an appointment to meet with Abbie about using the Diversity Scorecard in the library and she assigned a research associate to work with us. The Diversity Scorecard sounded like a good way to assess the diversity of the library's staff overall and by segment and to create an action plan to address any significant discrepancies.

The scorecard is an assessment tool designed to measure the diversity of the faculty and staff in relation to the student population of the institution. The goal is for our faculty and staff to reflect the ethnic and gender diversity of the student population.

I wanted to focus the scorecard on the diversity of the library staff. My initial questions were: How well does the diversity of the library staff reflect the diversity among the student population? Is there a difference with regard to diversity between librarians and para-professional staff in the library? What is the gender balance, especially among librarians?

The Office of Intercultural Affairs conducted the Diversity Scorecard in the fall of 2007 and we issued our report, which included an action plan, in February 2008. As we suspected, our para-professional staff reflected the ethnic diversity of the campus student population, but our librarians did not. As in most libraries, women were well-represented at all levels. Abbie worked with me to write an action plan to increase the ethnic diversity among our librarians.

We made some changes immediately, but others required long-range planning and flexibility. Abbie pointed out that the first step was to attract more diverse applicant pools. We adopted the more inclusive language that her office created for faculty recruitment ads and we began advertising on sites and distribution lists for librarians of color. In addition to the campus climate surveys conducted by Abbie's office, the library conducted two ClimateQUAL (Organizational Climate and Diversity Assessment) surveys, a standardized survey for academic libraries designed to improve the retention of people of color who work in our libraries.

One barrier in recruiting librarians of color is that people of color are not well represented in graduate programs in library and information science (LIS), reducing the available pool of applicants. We decided to focus on recruiting our student employees into the career of librarianship. We began offering career-oriented workshops in the library, showcasing the diversity of librarians and their jobs in libraries.

Working with other AJCU libraries, we applied for federal grant funding to create a pipeline of librarians of color, helping student employees enter the profession through scholarships and employment opportunities. We applied twice and when the project was not funded, we created a pilot program at LMU with library and additional university funding. We also instituted a two-year librarian-in-residence program focused on librarians of color who have recently graduated from library and information science master's programs. All of these initiatives were inspired and supported by Abbie.

Our efforts have led to the recruitment of many new librarians of color at LMU. Our third cohort of Librarians-in-Residence completed their residencies this past October. One of those residents was a student employee at LMU and was part of our "create a pipeline" project. Another participant in the pipeline project, also a former library student assistant, will graduate from library school in December. Three other support staff who are LMU alumni are also in LIS master's programs.

In 2008 our library employed 2 librarians of color out of 17. By 2018, that number had increased to 9 out of 26 librarians, including our two librarians-in-residence. In 2018, one of our librarians participated in the Minnesota Institute for Early Career Librarians, a selective summer leadership workshop designed for college and university librarians who are from traditionally underrepresented groups. In July 2018, four of our librarians of color held the first People of Color in Library and Information Science (POC in LIS) Summit at LMU, welcoming 78 library and information workers from over 40 institutions. Our librarians have become leaders in creating an inclusive profession and workplace for people of color. We have a long way to go toward achieving our goal of having the diversity of our library staff match that of our student population, but we are making progress and we will not be satisfied until we reach that goal.

Dr. Abbie Robinson-Armstrong has been an endless source of knowledge and inspiration to me. Beginning with the Diversity Scorecard, she gave us the tools assess our situation and make desired changes. We have built on that experience, working to improve the recruitment and retention of people of color in our library. Abbie has left a lasting legacy at Loyola Marymount University and in the William H. Hannon Library.

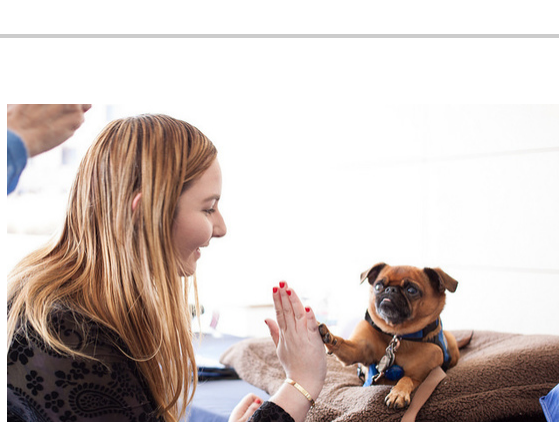
Kristine Brancolini

Dean of the Library

Feel Good Finals

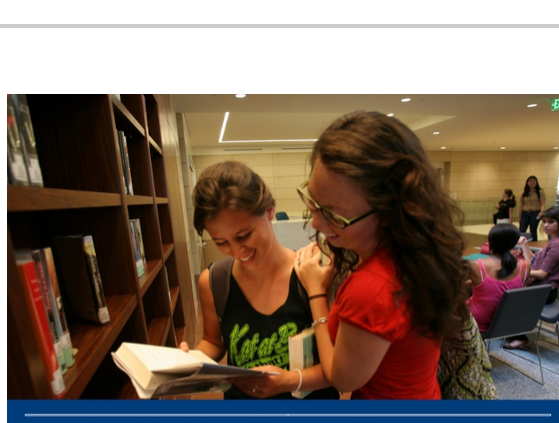
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Dear LMU students: Don't forget that the library is here to support you during finals. In addition to stress-relieving activities like our crafts tables, traveling snack cart, and free milk & cookies, we are partnering with LMU Fitweel to bring therapy dogs, kittens, and (back by popular demand) goats to the library. Stop in to learn more!



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