

Skills for Success: Tailoring Research Boot Camps to Graduate Student Needs

Auburn University Libraries

As they prepare for academic and professional careers, graduate students must acquire skills needed to conduct scholarly research, organize and work with information sources, and effectively communicate research findings. These are skills that are often not addressed by the curricular content of their graduate programs. To help bridge this gap, library faculty at Auburn University organized a one-day research boot camp. Student response to the weekend boot camp has been overwhelmingly positive, and boot camps are now held once each semester. Since February 2019, nearly 1,000 students have attended the boot camps.

Workshops (a sampling)

- Research skills
 - Database searching | Google Scholar search tips | Systematic reviews | Data management | Digital scholarship tools
- Citation software
 - EndNote | Zotero | Mendeley
- Writing, presenting, and publishing skills
 - Writing the literature review | APA writing | Poster design | Making professional presentations | Publishing research | Research impact & scholarly identity
- Software instruction, including statistical software
 - R | Python | Git/GitHub | NVivo | LaTeX | Excel

Logistics

- Boot Camp registration
 - AU uses LibCal-- email reminders, waitlisting, and reporting features
 - Overbook by about 25% for most sessions
- Facilities needs
 - Wayfinding signage
 - Lab/classroom software & tech support
- Mini-conference format
 - Luncheon lectures & panels (e.g., academic publishing, data visualization, IRB protocols, grant funding, [Three Minute Thesis](#) (3MT©) winners)
 - Snacks, library swag, etc.

Partners

- University Writing
- Center for Enhancement of Teaching & Learning
- Academic Support
- Quantitative Methods in Educational Research group
- Graduate School

Promotion

- Outreach to grad students' academic circle
 - Departmental graduate program officers—a Best Bet!
 - Graduate School
 - Graduate Student Council reps & Grad student advisory councils
 - Grad student professional & special interest organizations
- In-person outreach
 - Orientations & open houses
 - Colloquia
- Direct marketing
 - Library & Grad School social media
 - Grad student List-servs & newsletters
 - Signage & QR codes
 - Campus events calendar

Best practices

- Solicit grad student input about research needs
- Align workshop content with the research lifecycle
- Clearly communicate workshop format & learning outcomes
 - Hands-on practice? Discussion? Lightning session?
- Offer a mix of theory- and tool-based sessions
- Keep it fresh! Try out new offerings

Questions? Please contact us:

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