

MizzouForward Student Success Enhancement Grant

University Libraries Wellbeing Book Collection Proposal

The University Libraries is requesting \$7,500 from the MizzouForward Student Success Enhancement Grant to establish a Wellbeing Book Collection.

The Wellbeing Book Collection will consist of approximately 300 new, physical books to be purchased and located in a highly visible location on the first floor of Ellis Library colonnade, close to library service desks, exhibits and the Bookmark Cafe.

The collection will contain books from the following subject categories:

- General Wellbeing: sleep, yoga, movement, meditation
- College Basics: cooking, time management, laundry, dorm life
- Student Success: study tips, note-taking, first-year support, first generation student topics
- New Adulthood: budgeting, personal finance, relationships, communication
- Mental Health: stress relief, anxiety and depression, happiness, neurodivergence support
- Skill Development: leadership, public speaking, self-help
- Leisure Reading: popular fiction and non-fiction titles
- Hobbies: gardening, crochet, manga drawing, gaming

Establishing the Wellbeing Collection would help fill the needs of student support in the areas of stress relief and mental health, increase student success resources for first generation students, facilitate self-directed learning, and provide popular book titles not currently available in the main MU Libraries collections. The books will have wide reader appeal and can be utilized by students, staff and faculty. (See attached Excel Spreadsheet for a sampling of titles to be included).

Several opportunities for collaboration, both within MU Libraries and with outside stakeholders, will become available including working with the marketing, promotion and outreach team for MU Libraries to promote the collection. The library could also employ the new collection to collaborate with campus partners such as Student Health & Well-Being to outreach on topics such as mental health and stress management or Student Success to hold a book club for first-generation college students.

Estimate of Direct Impact

This collection has the potential to directly impact some of the most at-risk student groups on campus: first-generation students, non-traditional students, first-year students and students with disabilities. Creating a collection catered to support student interests and needs would allow the library to play a larger role in supporting campus retention goals and positively impact student wellbeing.

The University of Missouri's current student body reflects that in August 2023, more than 5,150 new freshmen started attending and "25% of new Mizzou students (first-time college and transfer)" are first generation students (Orland 2023; First Generation at Mizzou 2024). The University of Missouri TRiO SSS Program, which serves students with academic need who are first generation students, come from low-income backgrounds, or who have documented disabilities, reports serving 670 eligible undergraduate participants each year (the largest TRiO SSS program in the nation) (TRiO Student Support Services 2024). This collection would reflect the make-up of the student body population and could create a welcoming and inclusive way for the library to assist in bridging the gap between high school and

college, promote belonging in the library and the University and support student success through skill development.

Student mental health is already a growing area of concern which the University of Missouri has worked to create many areas of student support and direct services. Ashley Brickley, the Director of the Disability Center, shared in a presentation in the MU Libraries that of the over 2,300 associated with the Disability Center, almost 700 students identify as experiencing a mental health issue. Due to stigmatism surrounding mental health issues, we can assume that there are many more students on campus as well who could use supports in this area. Providing easy to access resources is a way that the MU Libraries can help students, but also promote other resources on campus. Many academic libraries have established wellness and well-being collections to help support this need including Penn State University Libraries, UC Santa Barbara and the University of Sussex.

Since this collection will be in a high traffic location, many students will pass by it on their way to popular areas of Ellis Library. The surrounding lounge seating assists in making this an ideal location, easily accessible for students to browse and quickly choose books to read or peruse. The accessibility of this collection's location will allow an increased number of students to utilize resources and benefit from the materials included. Students who primarily use the campuses' specialized libraries will have access to the collection via a courier service so they easily can pick up books at their desired location.

Outcome Measures and Assessment

The main measure of quantitative assessment for monitoring usage of the collection would be capturing circulation statistics for the books: how many times they are checked out across the titles in the collection. The library could employ several approaches for qualitative assessment of the collection such as informal surveys on social media and library newsletters, requesting suggestions of titles for future purchase and general student feedback.

Potential Negative Impact of Not Making the Investment

Unfortunately, due to reduced funding for library resources, librarians must make challenging decisions regarding purchasing collections for the libraries. Popular reading titles such as the ones suggested for this collection have not and cannot be funded currently. Gen Z students are reading more, utilizing libraries for access to reading materials and prefer physical books (Duffy 2023). Library users have addressed their desires to see more non-academic titles in the libraries in the 2023 Library User Satisfaction Survey:

Question: Please provide any comments you have about book collections:

- *I would like to see more current fiction/non-fiction books. The Boone County library often has long waitlists for newer books, and it would be nice to have another option to check them out through MU.*
- *Personally, I'd like to see more fiction, just because I write a lot of papers about fiction, and it'd be convenient. . .*

Question: What is the top thing you would like to see the libraries improve?

- *If there were more "fun" books instead of just academic ones.*
- *Wider selection of non-scholastic books and catering to casual readers.*

- *Expanded offerings in contemporary fiction.*

While students can access books through an ordering system, Mobius, these titles are not available in the physical collections at the University Libraries. This is a barrier to access, due to some students being unaware of the option to order books and the time gap that it takes to request and receive physical copies of books from participating libraries. Students cannot browse and choose from physical books; they must already have a book title in mind to order through the system. Students can register for a local public library card and check out books there, but this is also a barrier, as it is not accessible for all students to travel to the off-campus library regularly.

Budget

With the budget of \$7,500, the library could purchase approximately 300 books. The allocation is to be divided among the eight subject categories. Shelves for the collection are already in the desired library location.

Timeline

At the time funding is provided, library staff will identify books to be purchased and place orders. Once received by the library, books undergo standard processing including establishing a new collection location, cataloging, physical processing and placement on the main floor of Ellis Library. Library staff will market the new collection to students and campus partners through communications via social media, library newsletter posts and tabling events at the student center. The process of establishing the collection would take approximately 12 weeks (about 3 months), from start to finish.

Sustainability

The preference will be to purchase hardcover versions of the books for this collection as they will be more durable for normal wear and tear of frequently used books.

Cost-Share

The MU Libraries will provide library staff with time to identify books, place purchase orders, process books and market the new collection. Lost or missing books from the collection will be replaced using regular library collection funds.

References

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