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Douglas and Judith Krupp Library Special Collections

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Feedback Forwards: how we found new ways to ask our students what they want from the library

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FEEDBACK FORWARDS: HOW WE FOUND NEW WAYS TO ASK OUR STUDENTS WHAT THEY WANT FROM THE LIBRARY

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Douglas and Judith KRUPP LIBRARY
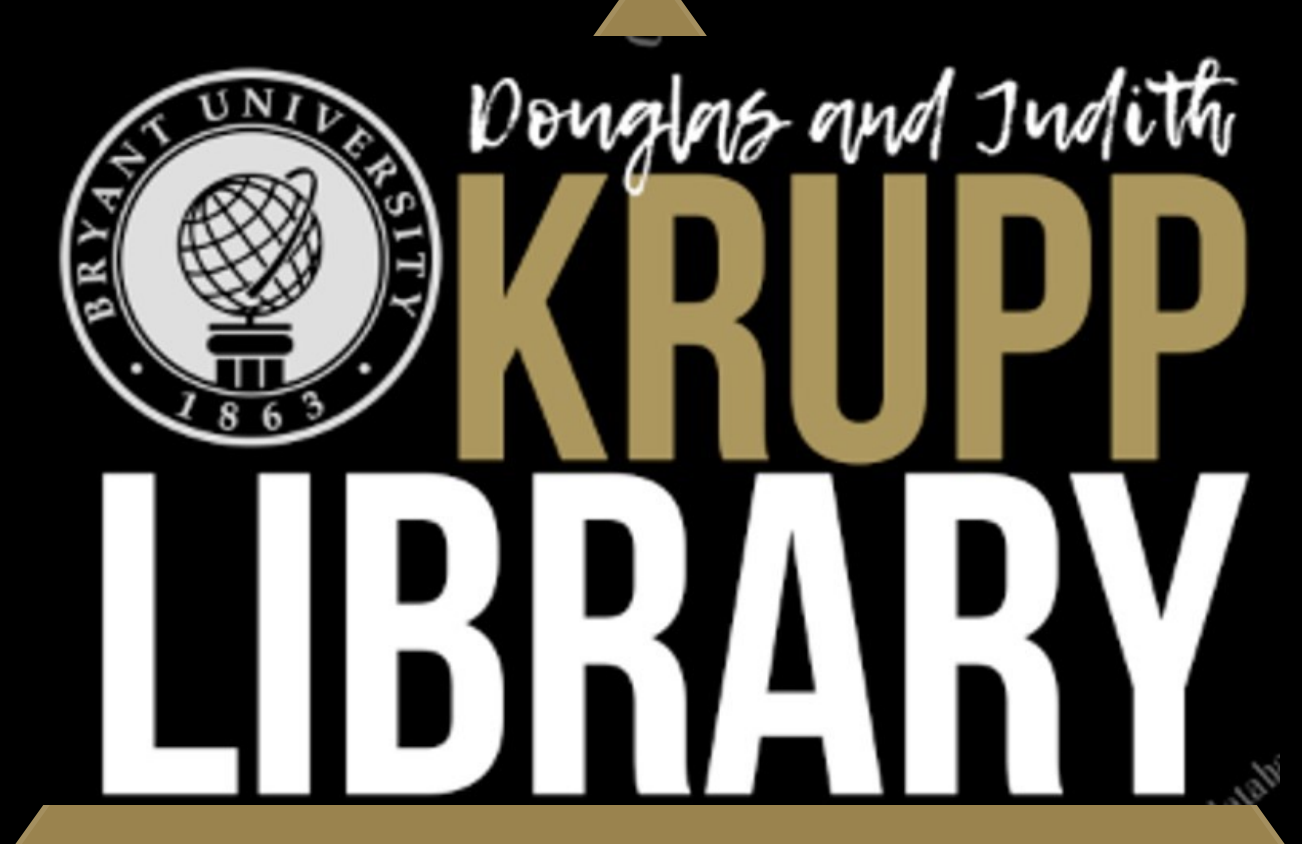
ABSTRACT

A team of Bryant University Librarians are participating in the EXCITE transformation for Libraries program through the Connecticut State Library. We conducted a series of structured group and one-on-one conversations with students, faculty, and staff in order to learn about how they think and feel about teamwork, the library, and collaboration at the library. We found that students in particular were far more responsive to community sessions than in taking surveys.

INTRODUCTION

The goal of the EXCITE Community Connection Project is to activate our library using space, program, services, and/or resources to make it the place where community members are excited to come together to connect, share, or collaborate in an enjoyable and meaningful way.

We needed to collect data and understand what our students want. How do they see collaboration? How would they picture it at the library? In order for us to come up with ideas we needed to ask them what they want to see.

METHODS

- We conducted focused series of conversations with Bryant University students, faculty, and staff.

- We worked with faculty to recruit student participants, and held 4 sessions with a total of 50 students.

- We used a standardized script asking for students thoughts and feelings about specific terms and concepts.

> I SAY "COLLABORATION" YOU THINK . . .
> I SAY "COLLABORATION" YOU FEEL . . .
> I SAY "COLLABORATION AT THE LIBRARY" YOU THINK . . .
> I SAY "COLLABORATION AT THE LIBRARY" YOU FEEL . . .

- Starting with a broad topic enabled us to narrow it down to a focus area.

- Students developed their own solutions– we learned by observing their interactions and got more information than we would have expected.

- We then met with community partners, again using a structured conversations model.

- Next we used empathy mapping to identify our community's functional and emotional drivers.

RESULTS

- Group sessions worked best with one facilitator, one or two scribes, and an additional observer. People talk fast and you want to make sure that you can record everything– you never know what might be a valuable gem!

- Students want to feel they're being heard and that we will take action based on their feedback.

> The rapid pace of engagement allowed for quick, honest communication.

- Significant difference between how we view our space and services versus how our students view our space and services.

CONCLUSIONS

Don't make assumptions

- Recruit beyond your library super-users and reach out to a varied group of people.

- Enter the process with an open mind. You are not there to defend or answer questions- you are there to listen and collect information! Abandon preconceived notions and be open to feedback, ideas and opinions you are hearing.
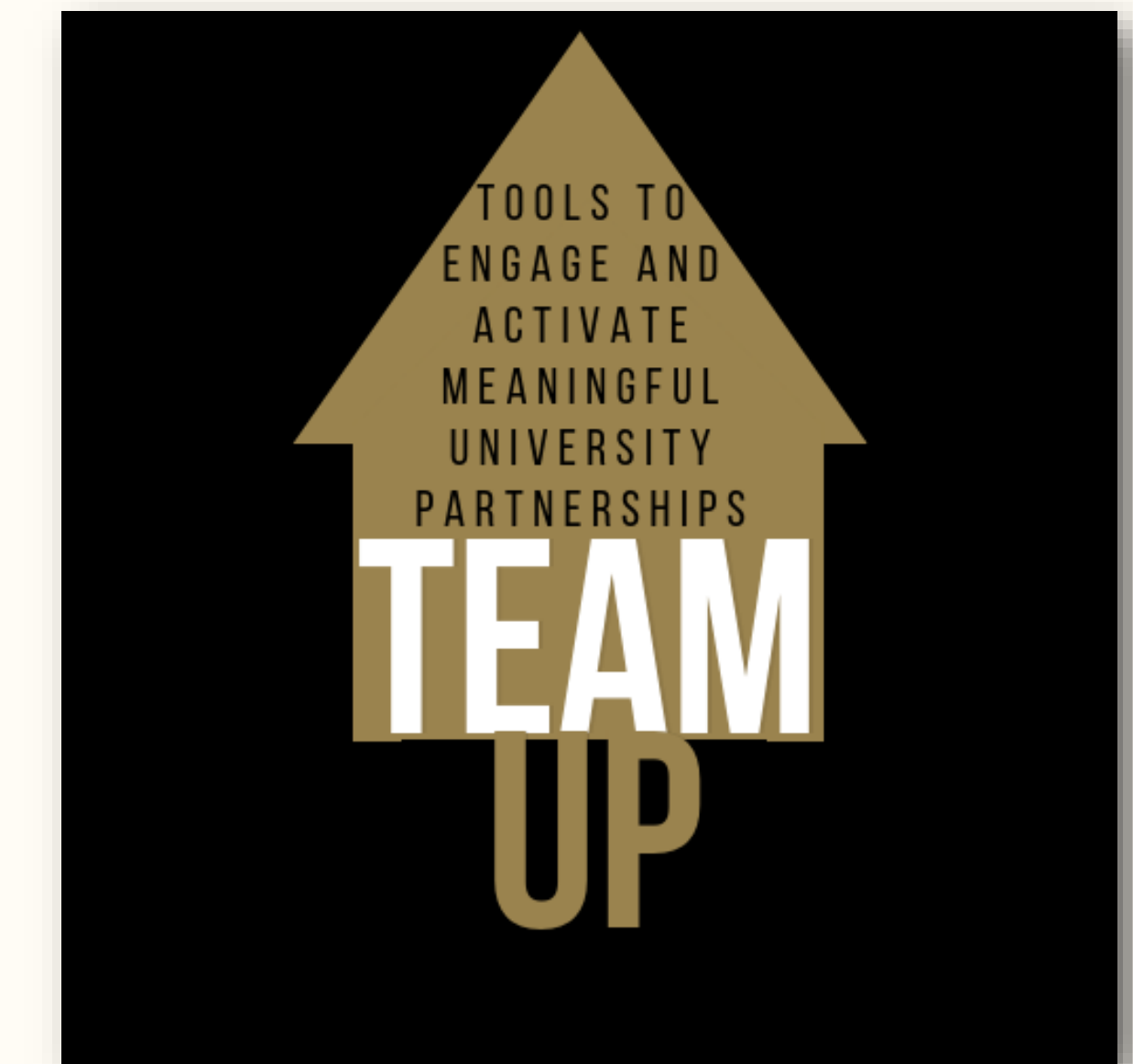
Get organized

- Remember to get organized ahead of time. Make sure the space and materials are ready.

- Write up your script for the session and formulate your timing. That way, you can focus on what you're hearing and end on time.

Provide an incentive

- Students are more likely to volunteer to participate if they were offered an incentive—many were given extra credit and we had a drawing for a small gift card in each group.
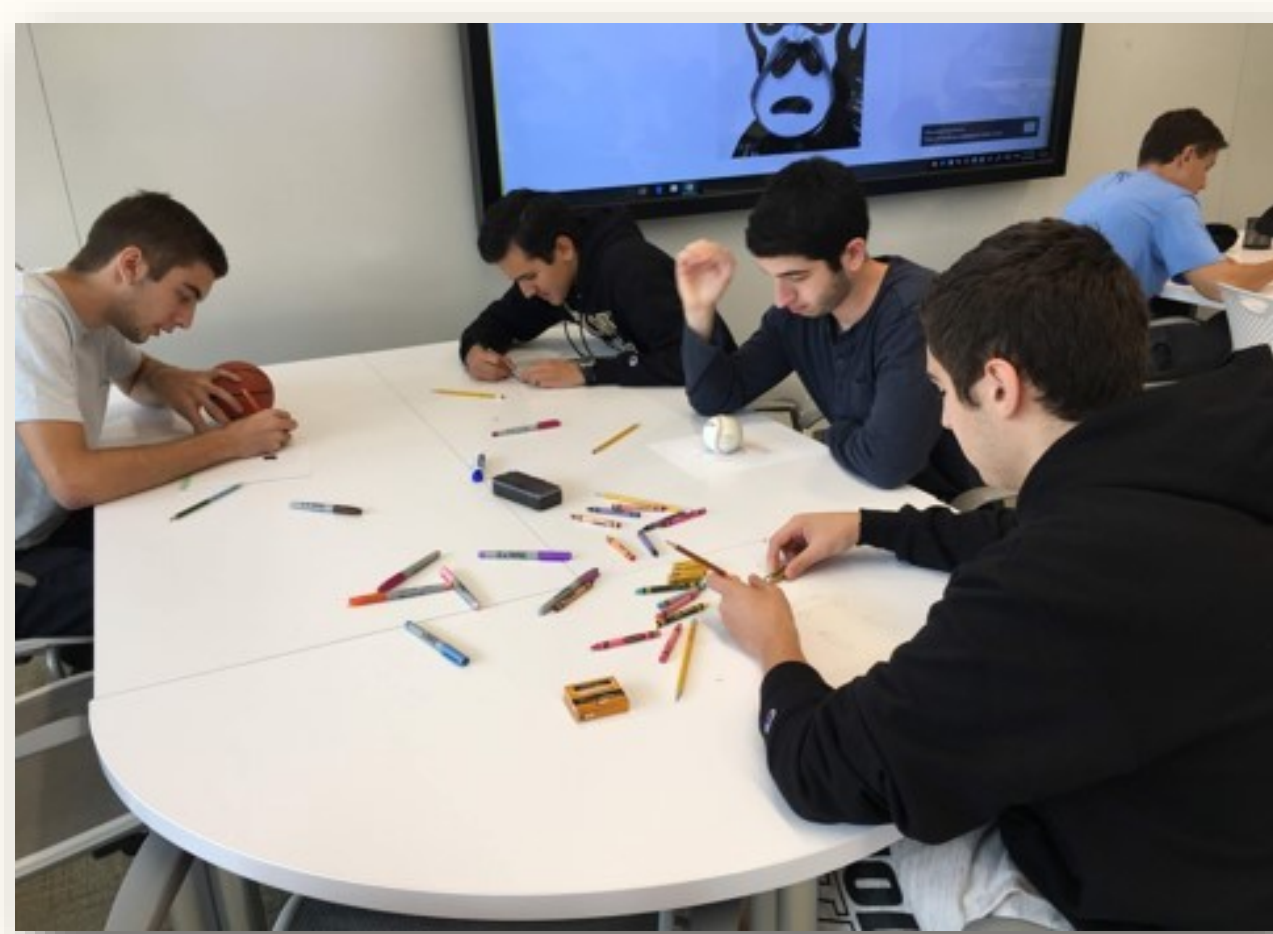
TEAM UP

- We learned much through these conversations and groups and used the information we gathered to create **TEAM UP: Tools to Engage and Activate Meaningful University Partnerships.**

- The library will be hosting activities (puzzle challenges, not lectures, not power points, limited time commitments) for students assigned to work together on a class project.

- We will be working with faculty and staff from departments throughout the university to act as content advisors and group facilitators.

- We will be working with faculty throughout the university to see if they will be willing participants to have their classes attend TEAM UP sessions, and/or to have identified faculty offer extra credit for students who participate in TEAM UP sessions.

- We are building new partnerships with faculty and staff who have not been involved with the library in the past.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

INSTITUTE of Museum and Library SERVICES

FURTHER INFORMATION

Interested in learning more about our research?
Email our team at teamupbryant@gmail.com