

# Campus-based Deficit Thinking in Libraries

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# Hello!

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**What is  
“deficit  
thinking”?**

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*Deficit thinking ignores systemic influences that shape disparities in social and educational outcomes... in doing so, fail[s] to place accountability with oppressive structures, policies, and practices within educational settings...instead placing the blame on the individual.*

(Davis, 2019)

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# 1.

# Deficit thinking and online learning

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Let's start with discussing demographics, deficit thinking across higher ed, and throwing COVID-19 into the mix.

# ■ Online Learning Populations

- Historically, tend to be viewed as “non-traditional” students due to varying age range
- At PWI’s like UVA, this is also a more diverse student population in terms of race, ethnicity, and socio-economic background than in-person enrollment

# ■ Have you ever heard anyone say:

- “Online students aren’t as engaged as in-person students”
- “Online degrees/programs are inferior to those on campus...”
- “Online students weren’t smart enough to be admitted to an in-person program”
- “Professors who teach online courses don’t interact or care about their students”
- “Online students fail and/or drop out of programs more frequently because they...”

# ■ The COVID-19 Backdrop

- Widespread anger from parents, students, society at large aimed at universities switching courses online
- Misunderstanding of what online learning is. The COVID-19 pivot was what we call “emergency remote teaching” (Hodges et al., 2020)
- Dual-mode universities preaching in-person teaching as the “gold standard” modality for the “true college experience”



# ■ The Perfect Storm

- Changes were made due to COVID-19 pivot to support online learners, now being rolled back, only focused on the “traditional student...”
- Majority white, higher socio-economic standing, PWI, wealthy institutional perspective driving this rhetoric

**2.**

**So what's the deal  
with libraries?**

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# Libraries at dual-mode universities uphold this campus hegemony.

## The problem with the library as “campus center”

Is the library really at the center  
of the online learning  
experience?

We tend to say that we are...  
we're wrong.

## Physical Architecture vs. Digital Architecture

How many clicks does it take to  
find your distance learners  
support page?

Are services clearly defined?

Is campus-specific  
(exclusionary) language used?

## ■ Dual-mode libraries:

- Fail to differentiate online learning services for hybrid learners vs. distance education learners. NOT ALL ONLINE LEARNERS ARE FROM THE SAME POPULATION.
- Fail to view distance education students as a library-wide responsibility/priority.
- Fail to provide consistent services/programming available outside of “traditional student” time-frames and contexts.
- Fail to truly embrace a library experience without walls.
- Fail to adjust to modern times and view the “online experience” as a “traditional college experience”.

**That's a lot of  
red flags!**



# ■ Next Steps

1. Assessing ASERL websites
2. Surveying librarians at 4 year institutions (private, public)
3. New standards for best practices

# References

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# THANKS!

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Any questions?





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