

Minutes of Special Librarians Meeting, March 19, 2018

Present: Dejah Rubel, Sela Constan-Wahl, Heather Symon Bassett, Mari Kermit-Canfield, Melinda Isler, Kristy Motz, Fran Rosen, David Scott, Ann Breitenwischer, Leah Monger, Scott Garrison, Gary Maixner, Stacy Anderson

Absent: Paul Kammerdiner, Ali Konieczny

Call to Order (Isler)

The meeting was called to order at 1 pm by Melinda.

Dean's Updates (Garrison)

Scott indicated that he and Fran are coordinating collection strategy meetings with liaisons and that Sela and Dejah will be co-chairing a Pre-Alma migration group.

Organizational Structure-Librarian questions (All)

In what way does this proposed structure provide advantages over the current structure? How does it better demonstrate to the greater university community the value of the library? What are the anticipated drawbacks and problems implementing this type of structure?

Scott indicated that the current structure is not workable and that modifying the organizational structure reflects the practical matter of one remaining Assistant Dean and the need to parse work. He indicated feeling that an opportunity exists to clarify faculty roles and encourage faculty relationships by utilizing faculty Work Plans and Job Descriptions. He noted this year's enrollment decline, which the president is projecting to be a multi-year decline. He indicated being unsure of what the process will be over the next several years for filling vacant positions. He indicated an interest in breaking down work "silos" and encouraging Leah in her work with staff. Scott acknowledged that in adopting more tasks he would need to achieve a balance with delegation. He also noted the need for assessment measures in evaluating organizational structure, especially as associated with a long-term scenario. A question he posed to the librarians was what alternatives they might be envisioning. Leah indicated she is open to hearing alternative suggestions and reiterated that with one Assistant Dean, existing organization structure was not working.

As a possible alternative, would it be possible to achieve the same goals by moving to a faculty chair model? What would be the advantages over the current structure? What would be the anticipated drawbacks and problems in implementing this type of structure?

Melinda reported the alternative organizational structure proposed by several faculty of a faculty chair versus department head model. In this model, a faculty chair would assume more responsibilities, receive release time and could work under Leah as Assistant Dean. It is a model which faculty had not voted in favor of previously. Librarian discussion brought forth concerns such as not having enough faculty for that model, faculty tasks and liaison responsibilities not allowing for release time, an anticipated lack of interested persons for the chair role and the inability to envision what administrative tasks could be delegated.

What is the definition of functional supervision? How is it defined according to HR and also in the way in which is it is practiced within the library?

Scott indicated that his view of functional supervision was working directly with each faculty, utilizing Work Plans and job descriptions called for in the library faculty workload policy for reference and working within the tenure process. He indicated an interest in discussing what faculty needs were in terms of professional development and addressing any associated barriers to that end. Leah indicated that she feels CAS has always had more functional supervision than RIS. As it was agreed that this question stemmed from wording in Scott's February 22, 2018 Dean's Update email, Leah reminded the group that the intent of the email was to highlight organizational reporting lines versus any other connotation for terminology used.

For faculty librarians, would the dean be directly responsible for the supervision of all faculty and handle their supervision? Has this been reviewed with the union to make sure it is not in violation of the contract?

Scott indicated that he would be responsible for supervision and evaluations of all faculty. He indicated not having seen a section in the Ferris Faculty Association contract suggesting it would be a violation of the contract. [As follow up, Scott confirmed with Steve Stratton that this structure would not violate the FFA agreement.] Melinda offered that there may be an issue with respect to levels of appeal. [The Provost serves as the next level of appeal.]

Can you provide another example of a college/unit within Ferris which has this type of structure (faculty reporting directly to dean)?

Scott indicated that he was not aware of a college/unit within Ferris with this type of organizational structure. He noted that FLITE doesn't always compare to other departments regarding other issues such as workload etc. Ann noted that Retention and Student Success (RSS) may have a similar structure and Kristy indicated being unsure of the present scenario for RSS. [As follow up to this meeting item, Kristy spoke with an RSS faculty and indicated of RSS structure, "They still, technically, report to a Faculty Chair, but that position is empty. There is an Administrative Coordinator (appointed by administration) in place instead. It's currently in flux."]

Can you provide an example we can use as a model of another university library with faculty librarians that has this type of structure?

Scott indicated that from past discussion, he is aware that Minnesota State University, Mankato had a similar structure and that he would research others further. Leah noted Eastern Michigan University (EMU) had a similar structure and that input was sought from that University previous to dividing tasks for the new organizational structure.

With the flattened structure, what is the justification given our current budget issues for the head of the library being a dean level position instead of a director or department head?

Scott indicated that would be a Provost decision and likely, reflective of larger things occurring at the University structurewise. Leah questioned how considering moving from a dean level position to a director or department head would underscore the value of FLITE. Melinda voiced a concern of additional faculty supervision duties not leaving Scott with enough time for the same level of

University presence that he maintains currently on behalf of FLITE. Scott indicated that he would rely on tools such as Faculty Work Plans and job descriptions and noted one example of responding to the time consideration as the establishment of a fund to honor small-scale faculty requests that could be submitted to the Dean's Secretary versus himself. He also indicated that a topic of discussion at the next Dean's Council would be the Early Retirement Incentive Program and he would continue to advocate for the Operations position.

Has the position of associate dean been approved? What has increased in the level of responsibilities assigned to that position that makes it an associate dean?

Scott indicated that he does not anticipate an issue with the Associate Dean Position being approved as his impression is the Provost has not had an issue with the proposal and does not anticipate concerns from Human Resources as it involves a title change and change in responsibilities, and not a salary change. Leah noted that some colleges only have an Associate Dean and some have at least two Associate Deans. Scott indicated that his observation has been that for colleges with one Assistant Dean, that position is usually assigned an Associate Dean label.

Other discussion:

Scott posed a question to librarians regarding what they viewed as being necessary for effective functioning within the new organizational structure. Mari highlighted the importance of availability. Fran suggested that some event planning could be more nuanced with less involvement from administration. She also noted the importance of ongoing connections with librarians with respect to the Dean's new role as direct supervisor and a desire for more group meetings and collaborative decision-making practices. Ann discussed the importance of FLITE having a presence in the University Community in terms of events and outreach measures. She also reiterated the utility examining various components of the liaison program. It was noted that even though the Information Commons disruption concern was more of an operations item, Scott was involved because of the lines of reporting at the time and that addressing the issue involved outward communications with faculty and staff and students university-wide.

The meeting adjourned at 1:57 pm.

Submitted by: Heather Symon Bassett

Approved April 23, 2018