

SenEx Committee on Libraries
Summary of Open Meeting with KU Libraries Faculty and Staff
December 1, 2014

An open meeting with KU Libraries employees was held on Tuesday, November 4, 2014, from 9:00 until 11:00 am. Approximately 25 individuals participated over the course of the meeting. In addition, one individual provided feedback via email. In total, feedback was received from just over 16% of the approximately 150 FTE employed at KU Libraries.

Numerous topics were discussed. Four common themes emerged, each of which is described in greater detail below:

1. Dean Haricombe's resignation
 2. Budget concerns
 3. Deprofessionalization of librarians
 4. The KU Libraries reorganization
-
1. Dean Haricombe's resignation was the most urgent issue identified. KU Libraries employees have received very little information about the search for her replacement. The top two concerns identified are title and reporting line. The general consensus is that the title should remain Dean of Libraries, though some suggested the title of Dean and Vice Provost. The position should report directly to the Provost. It was noted that there are numerous vacancies across the nation and that KU will need to be competitive to hire an outstanding replacement. Some suggested that a search firm might be of value in identifying the initial pool of applicants.
 2. The KU Libraries have received no budget increases since 2010. Because costs are increasing, this amounts to a significant budget decrease, resulting in cutting journal subscriptions, reducing staff, and reducing reference desk service hours. Several commented that they are concerned there will be budget cuts following the election. Any additional cuts will require significant reduction in the services provided to KU students and faculty.
 3. As noted in previous years' reports, tenure-track status for librarian positions remains a concern. Discussion focused on the fact that, especially at a research university, tenure rank is vital for librarians to best serve faculty and students. Several staff view a new option for some library faculty hires (the unclassified academic staff category) as a deprofessionalization of librarians and commented that this trend is not in the University's best interest.
 4. Last year, the KU Libraries reorganization was the most discussed topic. This year, the topic was discussed only in response to questions asked by the Chair of the Libraries Committee. The general consensus is that the reorganization is moving forward with few concerns. The only major concern identified is the forthcoming Service Center implementation, which is a result of Changing for Excellence, not the Libraries' reorganization. One issue related to the Service Center implementation is coverage and assignment of the "other duties" of staff who move to the center. Concern was also expressed about whether or not the current high level of quality work will be able to be maintained by the Service Center.

The only other concern identified was the fact that nearly half of those in attendance were administrators, which may have limited the discussion of any concerns. It was suggested that, in the future, separate meetings be scheduled for the dean's cabinet and non-cabinet employees.