

Minutes of the University Senate Library Services Committee Meeting on 2/10//2011

Members Present: (in alphabetical order) Hongshik Ahn, Jay Bock, Bushra Butt, Floris Cash, Bill Godfrey, Fiona Grady, Lindsey Levitan, Bob Shrock (Chairperson)

Members Absent: Julitta Jo, Steve Koch (teaches at this time in spring, 2011), Judy Lochhead, Jason Torre (on travel), Lin-Shu Wang

Invited Library Faculty: Aimee de Chambeau and Kristen Nyitray

The committee members first approved the minutes from the 12/09/2010 meeting.

At the 12/09/2010 meeting of our committee, we had devoted most of the time to a detailed discussion of the letter that Aimee de Chambeau had sent to us, in her capacity as Co-Chairperson, with Kristen Nyitray, of the Library Faculty Committee. Bushra Butt and Fiona Grady had confirmed the serious problems alluded to in the letter. In our December meeting, we had agreed to invite Aimee de Chambeau and Kristen Nyitray to address our committee concerning the problems raised in the letter, and they kindly agreed to do this. Thus, the main agenda item for our Feb. 2011 meeting was to hear Aimee and Kristen elaborate on the letter and for us to discuss these problems with them.

We again reprint the letter from the Faculty Committee of the Library for reference below:

Letter: The bylaws that define the charge of the Libraries' Faculty Appointment and Promotion Committee state that the committee will, as one of its responsibilities, "Review and evaluate qualifications and credentials of candidates for new faculty appointments and make recommendations to the Director of Libraries." The library faculty, therefore, strongly objects to the decision made by the acting dean and director to exclude the Appointment and Promotion Committee from taking part in recent searches to fill library faculty positions. The faculty feels the committee should have participated in these searches in accordance with the letter and spirit of the committee's charge. We are concerned that the committee was prevented from rightfully exercising its advisory role. If extenuating circumstances justified the committee's exclusion, these were not communicated prior to the decision, only after the fact.

Therefore, be it resolved that:

We the University Libraries Faculty reaffirm the essential and established role of the libraries' Appointment and Promotion Committee in all faculty recruitment and promotion processes as outlined in our bylaws. We further assert that our Appointment and Promotion Committee's charge as an advisory body within the library governance structure should be recognized and respected.

(here ends the letter)

Aimee and Kristen, speaking as Co-Chairpersons of the Library Faculty Committee, emphasized to our committee that there is widespread discontent among the faculty and staff of the library concerning the way that the library reorganization is being done. They said that there is very poor communication from the Director, Andrew White, to the faculty and staff, which is leading to severe damage to the morale of faculty and staff members. They gave a number of explicit examples involving specific people to support their assertions. Bushra Butt and Fiona Grady agreed with these statements by Aimee de Chambeau and Kristen Nyitray and added further information supporting these assertions.

On the evening of Feb. 8, 2011, Jason Torre had sent an email to the Chairperson, Bob Shrock, stating that he could not attend the meeting because he was away on travel to Albany, but also stressing the very serious problems in the library. Bob Shrock read Jason Torre's email to the committee. To quote from his email,

«I (Jason Torre) just want to stress how dire the current state of affairs are within the Library. While the entire campus is feeling the brunt of the current financial crisis, the Library is also feeling a deep sense of loss and low morale as Fiona and Bushra previously shared. And it is not getting any better. If anything, I would say that we are in some sense worse off than before we had started the process (of reorganization of the library under the new director, Andrew White). I hope the committee will take this issue seriously and press to have the campus administration truly look into the matter. I, for one, believe that we need to begin a search for an outside Dean of Libraries and halt the current reorganization, and only focus on the financial aspects of the collection development policies. The initial charge is too big for an interim administration and damage is being done that will take a long time to repair, if ever.»

(This ends the quote from the email from Jason Torre.) After Bob Shrock finished reading this, there was some immediate discussion about the question of whether Andrew White has been confirmed as the Director, and is no longer just the Interim Director. A number of committee members stated that it was their understanding that there was no ongoing search for a permanent Director, and that Andrew White had effectively been made permanent Director. But we have not received an official announcement of this from the administration.

The committee continued with an intensive discussion of the problems of the library for the rest of our meeting. We agreed that we should emphasize these serious complaints to the Director, Andrew White. Several of the members, including Bob Shrock, noted that, after initial complaints circulated in the late fall, Andrew White had invited members of our committee to meet with him in December informally in the Old Student Union on a Friday evening, and we had done so. We had raised a number of issues with him at that time, and he had responded that after the extended interviews that had been conducted during the spring of 2010 with library personnel, he had necessarily taken decisive action to deal with the serious problems that had been pointed out by the external review committee. It was agreed that it would be appropriate for us to invite Andrew White to our next meeting, on March 10, 2011 to respond to the letter from the Library Faculty Committee.

The meeting also discussed three related issues, namely (a) the regrettable financial situation in which the library cannot purchase books other than those used as course reserve texts, (b) the question of how our committee interfaces with the faculty advisory committee chaired by Prof. Peter Manning and (c) the extent to which the health science and west campus libraries are being unified.

As one definite action, these minutes will not just be recorded in the senate archives as usual, but also sent to Prof. Fred Walter, the President of the University Senate.

These notes were taken by the committee Chairperson, Prof. Shrock.

In view of the fact that Prof. Steve Koch is a member of our committee, it is appropriate to record here our deepest condolences to him on the tragic and very untimely death of his wife, Prof. Michelle Millar of the chemistry department, that occurred a few days after our meeting, on Feb. 13, 2011.