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Library Program Review

University Libraries

2019

Response to External Reviewer

Lisa Rose-Wiles
Seton Hall University

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Dear Dr. Wall,

Thank you for preparing such a comprehensive and thoughtful report.

We particularly appreciate your clear recognition of faculty and staff competence "dedicated and talented in all areas" and the urgent need for at least one additional access services staff position. We also appreciate your emphasis on both supporting new digital and technology driven services (specifically two new positions for a data services faculty librarian and a digital humanities faculty librarian) and the need to support our essential core services ("always and publicly acknowledging that new services could not be possible without a strong foundation of existing services, and that health of the library ecosystem was interdependent"). Thank you in particular for your perceptive observations and suggestions regarding the need for more inclusive decision-making and less over-management. We have only a few additional comments and points for clarification.

1. It is not always clear whether you are referring to staff, faculty or administrators. For example, under "culture and communication", do your comments refer exclusively to staff or include both staff and faculty? Is the "*managers group*" that you refer to the (faculty) department heads or do you mean the three assistant deans? Likewise your observation that "… the Dean can further facilitate this process [of collaborative leadership] by intentionally having the *senior leadership* comment on and engage in issues and concerns outside of their areas of jurisdiction". Does "senior leadership" mean or include faculty, especially tenured [senior] faculty? (We sincerely hope that is your intent, but as worded it could be taken to mean just the dean and assistant deans).

The intention of the "senior leadership" observations are twofold. On the one hand I believe they (the Dean and his Associate Deans) should take a more collaborative approach in their own meetings, taking an interest in and shared responsibility for issues and concerns in all areas, not just the chain of operations and people that report through them. For example, if a vacancy occurs in cataloging, the senior team would be encouraged to look at the needs of the entire library before committing the refilling the position in cataloging. Similarly this requires a dual role; one of advocacy for the department with the vacancy, but at that "senior" level to hope is that a broader perspective outside of the specific "area of jurisdiction".

The second observation involves the "managers group" which I understand is now meeting and attempting to take a similar approach to what I hope for the senior leadership team, that is, representing to local departmental operations but looking to the larger strategic needs. I got the impression that this was beginning and had some traction. So it may be a moot point, however, if you all agree with that approach it requires consistency, leadership and trust.

Finally, "culture and communication" are both intertwined with the above observations. By clearly involving the managers in the strategic conversations, they in turn do the same with their departments (faculty and staff). In this way, the participative nature of strategic conversation becomes normative, embedded and builds out trust. You have really good people there and a committed Dean. Working a little differently creates a pathway from good to great.

2. You refer to a "two-tiered system" of faculty and staff (p.2), but what we have is a three-tiered system: administration, faculty and staff. (This is indeed a challenge for all of us, but can be addressed with a shift in management style, as you so tactfully suggest).

See above, I think I equivocated in the initial report on staff, faculty and management. But the respective opportunities are addressed in my responses to the first set of clarifying points (I think), but feel free to get back with me on that.

3. Related to 1 and 2, first full paragraph on p. 2: your suggestion that "The Dean may want to consider an inclusive process that builds on the good will engendered by his one on one meetings, to develop a theme by which the staff can share in its formation" is much appreciated. However, we feel very strongly that faculty should also share in an "inclusive process". This is the key concern expressed in our report to the effect that we (all) need to foster shared governance p 41-42, points 11 and 12).

Here's another example of my perhaps not fully appreciating the faculty librarian model. By all means I would support strategic conversations between the "senior management" and the library faculty. These should not take the place of the "managers meetings" but as supplemental to better facilitate transparency in decision making, and perhaps more importantly, in communication and asking the right questions.

3. We wonder if you would consider giving explicit recognition of our library faculty's liaison work, which encompasses not only the traditional instruction, reference, collection development etc., but also intensive outreach (including outreach regarding new technology initiatives), involvement in faculty and student research (research appointments are a rapidly growing and labor-intensive part of our work), embedded librarianship, co-publishing with teaching faculty, etc. This is not only a vital part of our services but strengthens our relationships and visibility ("strategic alliances") across campus. The lack of emphasis on this is probably our mistake in both the report and our conversations and we can address it in our response, but maybe you would be willing to write a few sentences about this important area – where we also need additional support.

I will state without reservation that the Report I received was thorough, realistic, thoughtful and fair, and clearly a lot of work went into it's creation. The Library Faculty Committee should be commended to their collaborative efforts and the final product. Not only does the Report identify and address key issues, it provides evidence for some key metrics around staffing and budgets, and provides a balanced wholistic picture. In essence, the effort and care of the Report evince the unambiguous commitment to service excellence, positive energy and optimism for the future work and relevance of the Libraries within the Seton Hall University academic ecosystem. Well done!

Thanks again for your hard work on this

Lisa Rose-Wiles, Chair, Library Faculty Committee