

**Librarian Faculty Status Proposal Addendum
6/15/2023**

(In response to questions HR, General Counsel, and OIRA submitted to Dr. Morgan after reading the original Librarian Faculty Status Proposal)

The following were questions/comments from the offices that reviewed the proposal. In **bold**, are librarian responses.

- There is a central question lingering, unanswered, on the overall need to move library staff to faculty status. This is primarily driven by the fact that MSU does not have a library degree at any level, and to our knowledge only a few library courses are even taught each year.

There are certainly librarians with faculty status at institutions offering library degrees or certificates. But these are in the minority, and it is not self-evident that these librarians gained faculty status via the creation of degree programs or certificates. The majority of institutions at which librarians are faculty simply adhere to the AAUP/ACRL principle that the functional identity of librarians makes them faculty.

This proposal is fundamentally about the recruitment and retention of librarians (which are distinct from library support staff) and MSU's disadvantage relative to its peer institutions in this regard. We propose to complete the journey that SACS prompted us to begin in 1991.

- Why does the proposal outline language for a whole new category of faculty called 'university librarian'? In a review of some other universities listed in the proposal, we could not find another category, and most schools simply used the title Asst. Professor of Library Science and the existing faculty policies.

We chose language we thought was simple and straightforward. We are flexible on the wording. The important thing is that the three ranks be equivalent to the three ranks for faculty.

- Under the proposal, why were some library staff pre-determined to be elevated to the rank of Associate Librarians, and full University Librarians when there has been no evaluation of why they should be at that level – other than years of service? By comparison, we would not move a visiting assistant professor to full professor, so why so on this proposal?

Every librarian earned their present rank according to the process laid out in UAR 116.05 that was created in 1991 to be comparable to an FEP. The current promotion review process has approvals moving up the chain all the way up to the Board of Regents. The board-approved promotions of librarians, which appear alongside of board-approved faculty promotions, are based upon achievements assessed by a

review process. Promotions are not awarded to librarians for years of service.

- If we converted staff to faculty, instead of using the newly proposed category of university librarian (faculty status), why not use Assistant Professor of Library Science as a title similar to other universities?

The librarians will be satisfied with whatever wording in the titles the university favors as long as librarians are unambiguously faculty.

- Comment: our MSU policies state that faculty are fixed term, especially untenured faculty. Question: if converted, would these new faculty be standing?

This is not really a concern of the librarians because we understand the definitions for these categories to be in flux and the current application of them to be inconsistent with indeterminate consequences. We will be guided by administrative units on this question and will be interested in how the definitions evolve over time.

- The proposal states that most librarians are 12-month personnel. However, the proposal itemizes proposed personnel to be changed to the faculty “floor” that is used for a 9-month floor? If the staff were to convert to faculty status, would they be 12-month faculty using the 9 month floor plus 3 additional months of salary on top of the 9-month floor?

The librarians want to align themselves in every practical way to faculty. For the purpose of the Faculty Salary Floor a librarian’s 12 months of labor is equivalent to the 9 months of labor for another member of the faculty. Nothing in addition to anything is expected or wanted. At other institutions that compensate librarians as faculty it is most common for them to have 12-month contracts and very uncommon for them to have 9-month contracts.

- Why was the library dean not a large portion of crafting this proposal? It is our understanding that the proposal somewhat bypassed the dean. This calls into question – a). if it were to be adopted, would the dean support it, and b). could the dean implement it?

The dean has been fully participating in the process and he supports the proposal. Several years ago the librarians voted to have their representatives on Faculty Senate advocate more vigorously for full faculty status. All librarians recognized that the dean’s proper role is to balance the interests of all employees and constituencies across the library and to balance staffing needs against the needs of the materials budget. Since this grassroots, democratically-initiated effort is explicitly to advocate for an improvement in the condition of librarians specifically, it would have been inappropriate for the librarians to have then handed primary responsibility for it to the dean – whose role obligates him to not necessarily agree with the consensus among the librarians about their priorities relative to the priorities of his other constituencies. Also, it should be noted that the Dean of Library Services is the only dean in Academic Affairs without faculty status. The librarians remember what

happened to Elsie Pritchard and wanted to advocate for the Dean to also have faculty status while insulating him from unknown and unpredictable pitfalls. The phrase, “somewhat bypassed” should be more properly understood as everyone involved recognizing their proper roles.

Implementation is largely a question of revising policies and procedures outside of Academic Affairs. The dean and the librarians will do everything they can to assist in implementation.

- **Should some staff be converted to faculty, how would it be marginally different than current staff status – particularly given that they do not teach in a program, and that they do not have more than 2-3 courses to cover?**

Within Academic Affairs librarians are already recognized as faculty so it would not be much different. There would be a huge difference outside of Academic Affairs. Administrative units cannot currently be relied upon to consistently recognize our current status, as Professional Librarians, and frequently make no distinctions between librarians and library support staff.

We would want expectations for teaching to be in line with other benchmark institutions that fully recognize librarians as faculty. Essentially, our benchmarks, and the vast majority of universities, equate the role of the librarian with teaching. This equivalency flows from the logic that the functional identity of librarians is instructional as articulated in the *Joint Statement on Faculty Status of College and University Librarians* of the American Association of University Professors and Association of College and Research Libraries:

“Where the role of college and university librarians, as described in the preceding paragraphs, requires them to function essentially as part of the faculty, this functional identity should be recognized by granting of faculty status. ...”

Appendix 2 of the proposal document gives some examples of how other universities in Kentucky document how they equate librarianship with teaching.

- **What is the ratio of ‘total librarian staff FTE to students’ that is generally acceptable by national standards in a university like ours?**

Quoting from the most recent SACSCOC report, “MSU falls below the mean for number of library staff per FTE student and number of librarians per FT students.” We have gained three librarians since then. We do not know what standards they are employing and would be curious to further explore this question.

- If we converted staff to faculty, and at the assistant professor level, would we do national searches for the assistant professor position? We typically convert VAP's to assistant professor, but not staff to assistant professor.

Since 1991 searches for librarians have typically been national searches. The second sentence seems to be another reason why librarians should be fully recognized as faculty. There is nothing in our proposal to exclude the possibility of hiring Visiting Assistant Librarians. If they exist in the future they would be exactly like currently VAPs in that that conversion could not occur without review.

- Why the need to reconstruct Pac-1 and 31? Would other groups come forward wanting preferred status similar to the library?

Without BOR approval of new language any handshake agreement would be nullified by turnover in administrative positions.

This is not a spontaneous desire of the librarians to seek "preferred status." The existence of Pac-31 in itself is evidence that the university is supposed to distinguished librarians from staff (as prompted by SACS three decades ago). Academic Affairs has done this. Administrative units have either not done this at all or have done it inconsistently. Librarians have been in a state of limbo for three decades. The remedy is to move from limbo to clarity across the entire institution.

- If all the proposals identified staff were converted to faculty, and at the assistant librarian status, would they then spend the usual 6 years a faculty member does trying to obtain the next rank of associate status? Would they be adjudicated by a library promotion committee, the university promotion committee, etc. and in normal fashion of faculty promotion?

Current librarian ranks are not based on time in the job. The standard interval if one chooses to pursue promotion is three years. Questions relating to tenure and promotion review are relevant to faculty status but not determinative of it. Librarians currently do not pursue tenure, so scrutiny by the tenure committee would not be applicable unless and until they would. Librarians are not currently represented on the University Promotion Committee, so for it to be a part of the approval chain the committee description would need to be updated to include librarians. As things stand the Library Promotion Review Committee makes a recommendation to the Dean who moves it forward to the Provost. Once librarians are unambiguously recognized as faculty across the entire institution as a matter of policy, then these things can be negotiated as a part of implementation.

- Why are librarians with current staff status serving in the faculty senate? Is this legal?

Context for this is given on first page of the proposal document. Only units outside of Academic Affairs label us as staff. Within Academic Affairs we are faculty. The

library is led by a dean. Deans lead academic units. Faculty within academic units belong in Faculty Senate.

- Why do library staff use a different annual evaluation document than all other staff? Is this a legal issue?

When President Morgan converted evaluations to paper, Human Resources at that time imposed the standard staff evaluation form on librarians. The librarians pointed out that this was inappropriate because of the existing evaluation process that is comparable to an FEP. The new document is simply a checklist in which the library dean affirms that the proper existing process is being followed. Human Resources insisted that such a document exist. Librarians think it should not exist.

- Major reviews of units on campus usually bring with it reviews of all functions? Would this be the time to review all functions of the library?

The SACSCOC review process in 2020 led to the hiring of additional librarian positions. The librarians would welcome a focus on the library for the SACSCOC five-year review. The librarians also would welcome any other manner of review that includes academic library deans from peer institutions recruited by MSU to serve as consultants.

- The proposal under consideration was converting staff to faculty, why was it proposed that all staff in the library get salary raises?

We have the funding in our current salary lines (pending whenever a particular person chooses to retire) to support compensating librarians as faculty.

We offered our opinion as to the best use of the remainder of what currently is allocated to the library. We understand that the library is not entitled to any set number of dollars. But we would be remiss in not in some way acknowledging the profound low morale of library support staff since the disappearance of what had been the highly successful Career Ladder and the dramatic decrease in the number of staff positions over the last decade. One presumes that had the Career Ladder not been abandoned most current library support staff would have advanced within it. This opinion is not central to the proposal. The document explains the reasoning behind and provides justifications for this opinion.

- For a school our size and number of student FTE, how many total library FTE should we have if using comparisons to other schools like us?

We know that SACSCOC was dissatisfied with staffing at the time of their visit. They could be queried for how they determined this.

- In the aggregate MSU has a 1:14 faculty to student ratio, almost approaching a 1:13 ratio. If 6-8 staff were converted to faculty this would further lower the ratio. Would we conversely reduce faculty by 6-8 in other areas to off-set this addition? A 1:14 or 1:13 ratio is too low. (Note: our peers are usually 1:15 – 1:20).

We would be happy to explore with you how your counterparts at peer institutions calculate this with their faculty librarians.

- IPEDs codes librarians as non-instructional soc codes. Would this alter our reporting any?

We would be happy to explore with you how your counterparts at peer institutions calculate this with their faculty librarians.

- How has the role/workload for librarians changed based on the switch from paper-based resources to digital resources/technologies and electronic modes of service delivery?

The role of the librarian is constant over time in that the functional identity of librarians grants them faculty status.

The workload of librarians over the last two decades has been more effected by budget cuts than by automation. But focusing on the effect of automation, since the appearance of the web in the late 1990s the role and nature of the work has changed dramatically. For example, is e-mail a labor-saving technology or a labor-creating technology? There is less repetitive, manual labor like maintaining a card catalog but much more complex labor like setting up and maintaining multiple online and manual systems which must interact and integrate with each other.

- Why salary not equivalent to VAP since untenured?

We are seeking to align our ranks to faculty. Nothing in our proposal prevents future decisions to hire Visiting Assistant Librarians.