Proposed draft resolution for Senate from University Faculty Library Board

Whereas the library system at Cornell is essential to the academic mission of the University and thus a proper subject of interest to the Senate; and

Whereas, in the current financial crisis all units of the University are being asked to make substantial cuts to their budgets; and

Whereas, at a forum with the Provost and the University Librarian and subsequently many members of the faculty and staff have expressed their concern over the impact of such cuts on acquisitions of both print and electronic materials and on the continued existence or successful functioning of smaller libraries on campus; and

Whereas, the University Librarian and her staff are currently engaged in a wide-ranging review of library expenditures and policies as a result of the Provost’s response to the library’s Strategic Plan to implement budgetary cuts; and

Whereas, the Faculty Library Board is appointed by the Senate and directed by Senate legislation “to review and help formulate broad library policy” in conjunction with the University Librarian and to inform the Librarian “of the needs and concerns of the faculty and students”;

Be it therefore resolved that:

The Senate directs the Faculty Library Board to work with the University Librarian to ensure that faculty and students from units affected by proposed changes in acquisition policies or library facilities be fully consulted before any significant changes are implemented and to report regularly to the Senate on the development of plans for such changes so that the Senate might then take any further actions it deems appropriate.

Motion Regarding the Closing of Small Libraries

Background

On November 24 the Provost chaired an open discussion of the library task force report. It developed at that meeting that there was a disagreement between faculty members and library staff on the task force about the contents of the report. The task force report recommended reducing the budget of small libraries by approx. 11% and the central library by 3%. Thus it would appear that the budget cuts weigh more than three times on the small library staff than on central library staff. The Task Force Report also recommended placing all the library budgets in the hands of the central librarian.

On January 5th Charles Brittain, Chair of Classics, sent a letter to Provost Kent Fuchs, signed by 15 chairpersons of departments in the College of Arts and Sciences pointing out that our library’s materials budget had fallen from 9th to 20th place among the libraries on the continent and appealing for its restoration to that of the previous year and eventual restoration among the top ten libraries.

Additionally it is to be noted that library materials include both hard copy and digital materials, and that some of the latter may be useless without necessary support.

Motion in three parts (to be voted upon separately)
Whereas the Library system at Cornell is essential to the academic mission of the University and thus a proper subject of interest of the University Senate, and

the Library Task Force Report recommended the closing of some unspecified number of small libraries to achieve cost reduction goals, and

Whereas the faculty and students of the units served by the small libraries have not been consulted as to the advisability of their closing, and

Whereas there has been a long tradition of locating library materials and reference consultants near the academic workplaces of the various colleges and departments, and

it is the faculty and students of the units served by the small libraries of Cornell that are in the best position to assess the academic value of these libraries and the direction their development should take.

Therefore be it resolved that:

1. The Senate recommends to the University Administration that none of the small libraries (Ornithology, Veterinary, Entomology, ILR Catherwood, Africana, Johnson Management, Music, Fine Arts, Engineering, Hotel or Law) be closed without first consulting the wishes of faculty and students of the unit that the library serves, assessing the impact on the accreditation of the units concerned, should their library be closed, and at the same time determining that the necessary reduction in costs cannot be achieved by reducing the staff of units of the central libraries (e.g. Library Administration, Information technology, Research and Learning Services, etc.).

2. The Senate recommends to the University Administration that the materials budget of the library be restored so as to place Cornell in the ranks of the top ten libraries on the continent.

and

3. The Senate recommends to the University Administration that the budget supervision of the small libraries be located in the units (laboratory, department or college) that the library serves.