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Interim President Kristi Mindrup
Western Illinois University
1 University Circle
Macomb, IL 61455 USA

Dear Interim President Mindrup and Board of Trustees Members:

Members of the Library and Instruction Services Faculty at the Gwendolyn Brooks Library at Chicago State University (CSU) are writing to convey our profound concern and strong opposition to the recent decision on the part of the Western Illinois University Administration to eliminate all nine faculty librarian positions at the University. Eliminating professional librarians from an academic library ignores the essential role they play in supporting student learning and success, faculty research, and the educational mission of the institution overall. As stated in the Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois (CARLI) statement regarding layoffs at WIU,¹ “Librarians (and libraries) are not an excisable luxury that is somehow detached from an institution’s educational excellence but are instead critical components of campuses and the academic experience. Their work is inextricably interwoven with student success and well-being for the duration of the student’s academic career, and they are important colleagues who contribute to the essential work of faculty.”

Having experienced the trauma of mass layoffs and other administrative efforts to address budgetary issues at Chicago State University, we suggest that extreme administrative measures like eliminating all professional librarian positions —while that may seem to address budgetary issues— diminishes the quality of academic support students can expect, undermines faculty research productivity, irreparably damages the institution's image externally as well as internally, and undercuts efforts to increase enrollment. We are cognizant of the fiscal challenges that many institutions of higher learning are being confronted with. However, impairing core functions of the university as an academic institution should not be the means by which those very real challenges

¹ <https://www.carli.illinois.edu/membership/Importance-of-Librarians>

are dealt with. If not reversed, the impacts of the decision to eliminate professional librarian positions will be wide-ranging and enduring. The Library Faculty at the Gwendolyn Brooks Library at Chicago State University therefore fully endorse the Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois (CARLI) statement,² affirm the value of librarians and libraries for student success, and strongly urge the WIU Administration and Board of Trustees to restore the faculty librarian positions.

Sincerely,

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Charlene Snelling, MLIS
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Loren Mindell, MLIS
Access Services Librarian

Joanna Kolendo, MA, MLIS
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² <https://www.carli.illinois.edu/membership/Importance-of-Librarians>