

To the Administrators of Western Illinois University,

It has come to the attention of the faculty of Milner Library, Illinois State University (ISU), that the administrators of Western Illinois University (WIU) have used faulty information from Milner Library as the basis of an argument for firing faculty librarians at Malpass Library. The administrators of WIU have not only grossly misrepresented the number of faculty librarians and workers with an MLIS at Milner Library, but have chosen to ignore what our degrees and work as faculty contribute to the success of the students and faculty of ISU and the community.

The first claim can be dismissed as ignorance; however, that these administrators have chosen to use that faulty information as the basis of an argument for firing faculty librarians at Malpass Library elevates their actions to not just a professional insult, but a threat to the success of the current and future students and faculty at large of WIU.

Milner Library currently employs eighteen tenure-line faculty who have an MLIS or equivalent degree and annual requirements of librarianship, scholarship, and service. There are also five non-tenure track librarians, three administrative/professionals with faculty status, and one administrative/professional who have their MLIS and routinely engage in high levels of librarianship, scholarship, and service. Further, there are eleven civil service staff who have an MLIS working in the library. That is 38 out of 77 (49%) library workers with an MLIS and 26 (34%) with faculty status. This dispenses with the notion that there are only three faculty librarians at ISU.


We will now address the claim by WIU administrators that faculty librarians are not necessary to run an academic library. In order to prepare students and faculty for success, they require actively developed and maintained collections, access and discoverability, and librarians who foster research and creative productivity by sharing their expertise through collaboration, consultation, and instruction. While on-the-job training and experience bring valuable skills to any role in the library, the MLIS trains librarians in these activities and faculty status (with obligations of librarianship, research, and service) requires continued growth that will ensure WIU student and faculty needs are being met.

The MLIS and faculty status is a means to an end, not an end in and of itself. The MLIS is necessary to build the foundation for active collection development of vital resources for research and learning, ensuring discoverability and accessibility of those resources, and assisting in research and other projects that form a vital part of a university education. Faculty status requires ongoing growth and development in those areas, and is more necessary than ever given the rapidly changing information landscape. To attempt to run an academic library without librarians who have an MLIS and faculty status is to put WIU faculty and students at a grave disadvantage when competing with members of other universities.

While we cannot ensure that this information will be heeded, we provide it out of a sense of professional obligation and in the hope that the administrators of WIU will retain faculty

librarians at Malpass Library. To do otherwise is to severely disadvantage WIU faculty and students. Should you wish to discuss the matter further, we would be happy to do so.

Thank you,



Chad Kahl  
Milner Library Tenure-Line Faculty Caucus Convener

*Endorsed by the following members of the Tenure-Line Faculty Caucus:*

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April Anderson-Zorn  
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*Endorsed by the following Milner Library Civil Service Staff Members whose job descriptions require an MLIS*

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