

**Faculty Status of Librarians at Furman:  
A History and Proposal**

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## Summary

In 2003 the Faculty Status Committee asked the Director of Libraries to update Policy 155.5, "Equivalent Rank of Professional Librarians." In response to this request and certain ambiguities that had emerged regarding the faculty status of librarians, the Director formed the Librarian Faculty Status Working Group to research various aspects of the situation and formulate a recommendation to clarify that status. The group researched the history of the status of librarians at Furman and conducted a survey on the status of librarians at 26 peer and cross applicant institutions. It was established that there was a long-standing history of faculty status for librarians at Furman, and that they had substantial connections to the academic program. It was also found that librarians at 62% of the institutions surveyed have some form of faculty status with varying details. These findings were reviewed and discussed with the entire library faculty to develop a policy proposal.

It is proposed that librarians at Furman continue their status as members of the faculty with equivalent rank but without tenure. For the purposes of determining appropriate benefits, library faculty members should be equated to other faculty members without tenure (e.g., pre-tenure assistant professors).

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## I Introduction

In 2003 the Faculty Status Committee asked the Director of Libraries for a clarification regarding the faculty status of librarians in conjunction with a review of Policy 155.5, "Equivalent Rank of Professional Librarians" (see Appendix 1.) The Director requested and received permission to delay action on this request until the end of the library building project in fall 2004. In spring 2005 the Director of Libraries formed the Librarian Faculty Status Working Group. This group undertook an extensive review of the status of librarians, including the history of the status of librarians at Furman and surveys regarding the status of librarians at other institutions and the perceptions and preferences regarding faculty status among librarians at Furman. This document outlines the findings of these investigations and the clarification of the faculty status of librarians at Furman proposed thereon.

## II History of Librarians' Faculty Status at Furman

The first professionally degreed librarian and faculty member arrived at Furman in 1922. Miss Eva Wrigley served as Librarian, Assistant Librarian, Accounting Librarian and member of the faculty from 1922 until 1945. Among her many accolades was the dedication of the 1925 *Bonhomie* for her "ready sympathy and loving service" and descriptions such as, "she was the cement that held everything together." (*Greenville News* April 11, 1959). As the University continued to expand so did the number and role of library faculty. In 1956 and 1957, Dr. Robert Tucker, Librarian, served as Secretary to the Furman faculty and ten years later, he served as Chairman (1967-1968). At the close of that decade, there were six librarians with faculty status and tenure.

On February 24, 1976, the Task Force on Tenure submitted a report to President Gordon Blackwell. Guideline 4e stated, "In any case, tenure will not be granted unless the faculty member has served for seven years or more as a full-time faculty member (or librarian) at accredited four-year colleges and universities." The Furman University Institutional Self-Study of the same year states that the "professional library staff" has faculty status.

A few years later, in 1981, the Furman University SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) Analysis was revised. File 3.223 covered many aspects of library services and personnel, and this section recommended sabbatical leaves for librarians. In that same year, Dr. Glen Clayton received a sabbatical leave. Dr. Clayton had been awarded tenure in 1978 and was the last librarian to receive a sabbatical leave.

In the fall of 1982, the Furman Administration announced that professional librarians would no longer receive the same academic-year holidays as teaching faculty. On January 1, 1983, sixteen days were added to the librarians' schedule without any financial compensation. Librarians had not worked these days since 1922. In his April 27, 1983 memo to Rachel Martin, Librarian, John Crabtree, Vice President for Academic Affairs, repeats his interpretation of the employment contract between the University and professional librarians,

The period of the contract is twelve months, the renewal date being September 1 of the subsequent year. Each librarian has one-month of vacation [22 days] with full pay. Throughout the regular academic year there are a number of student holidays during which the University is open and fully operative. These are not official staff or faculty holidays, and the librarians should be on duty on these days.

In April of the following year, John Crabtree requested the Faculty Status Committee review the status of librarians. In his April 25, 1984 memo to Vice President Crabtree, Ed Jones, Chairman of the Faculty Status Committee, explained that "in view of some apparent ambivalence in the Faculty Handbook ... librarians are eligible for tenure but ... their situation differs significantly from that of full-time teaching faculty." The Committee recommended that the status of librarians be carefully studied and redefined in the course of the next self-study, but unfortunately, this recommendation was not acted upon.

In 1985, the tenure question was next referred to the Policies and Procedures Committee. According to the minutes of the February 27, 1985 Policies and Procedures Committee meeting, the Committee decided unanimously that the Faculty Handbook does "not provide for the tenuring of professional librarians." In addition to the Handbook, the Committee cites Article II, Section 1 of the

Constitution and File 158.4, C, 1. The distinction hinged on the requirement for "six years of full-time teaching experience." The Committee added that the "professional library staff continues to have, of course, membership in the faculty and equivalent faculty rank." The Committee recommended that the option for tenure be removed with the next librarian hired.

Since one of the professional milestones for teaching faculty is the award of tenure, there are numerous policies, procedures, and benefits attached to this event. Once tenure was removed as a component of faculty status for librarians, procedures for promotion and award of benefits became ambiguous. Librarians' promotional dossiers were no longer reviewed by the Faculty Status Committee and as a result, seven years elapsed before any librarians were promoted in rank (1992). Without tenure, librarians were no longer entitled to sabbatical benefits, larger University contributions to retirement were delayed, and service on certain University committees was not permitted (e.g. Faculty Status Committee).

Librarians, however, did hold membership on many other committees and in 1987, were required to advise students. In the last five years, other contributions of library faculty have paralleled teaching faculty (See SD-4 University Service by Library Faculty, 2000-2006). Librarians have served formally as mentors, supervisors, and instructors for Furman Advantage students, departmental interns, minority students, student athletes and numerous academic classes as well. They also have shared guest lectures, provided workshops, and participated in team teaching projects. Library faculty authored and administered grants for teaching initiatives on campus and in collaboration with peer institutions. They have cooperated with teaching faculty and administration to bring speakers, programs, and exhibits to campus and have garnered CLP status for these events.

They have served on more than twenty-five committees, three task forces, and contributed to search committees for positions outside of Furman University Libraries. Several are members and officers of University organizations such as Phi Beta Kappa and one has a Faculty Fellow appointment from the Associated Colleges of the South ("ACS"). In addition, many library faculty contribute to scholarly, professional, and academic organizations beyond Furman University. (See SD-5 Professional Activity by Library Faculty)

### III Librarians and the Academic Program at Furman

At Furman, as at all of our peer institutions and indeed most liberal arts colleges and universities, librarians are deeply integrated into the educational processes of students and faculty alike. The library faculty at Furman has played a particularly critical role in the university's transition to the digital age in terms of access, delivery, management, and preservation of core academic research resources. By constantly keeping abreast of, evaluating, purchasing and teaching about new general and discipline-specific bibliographic databases, librarians facilitate an increased range and efficiency of research across the curriculum. Concurrent with and fueled by the proliferation of digital research, librarians continue to compose expanded and enhanced models for course-integrated research instruction, thereby furthering the University's strategic information fluency goal of ensuring both a faculty and a student body who are comfortable, aware and productive in today's information society.

In the 1990s, librarians partnered with Computer Services and later with Computer Science faculty to apply for grants from Bell South and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, in order to provide instruction for classroom faculty in the use of information technology. Both grants were funded, and led to seven years of seminars and summer workshops for faculty on electronic pedagogy and research resources. The success of these led librarians to continue the endeavor, even after the grant funding ended, offering New Faculty Library Orientation sessions each fall and collaborating with the CCLC to create workshops for faculty each summer, including "Collaborative Teaching with Technology," "Quick Bytes," and "Putting Stuff Online." A testament to the importance and effectiveness of these workshops lies in the fact that faculty attendance continues to be strong even without the lure of a stipend for their time.

These workshops, while bringing faculty up to speed in the use of information technology, have also increased their awareness of the complications of performing research in this information age. The collaborations between library faculty and other faculty colleagues forged in the workshops have continued into their classrooms in the form of integration of information fluency instruction into

their courses. As the number of course-integrated instruction sessions increased (currently over 140 per year), it became clear that an additional librarian was needed to coordinate the program, and in 1999 an instructional services/reference librarian position was created. This librarian was among the faculty selected by the Faculty Chair to serve on the Curriculum Review Committee beginning in 2004, and this committee recommended, and received faculty approval for, an information fluency component based on collaboration between classroom faculty and librarians in all of the required writing first year seminars in the new GER.

In addition to the technology instruction for faculty, the Furman-Wofford Mellon Foundation grant of the 1990s specifically identified the two school's library resources as a main focus. To facilitate the efficient use of funds, the schools entered into a resource sharing agreement. The periodical holdings of both schools were compared and where there was unnecessary duplication titles were identified for cancellation. This made available funding for additional resources to enhance student and faculty research efforts.

Librarians cultivate common goals with individual faculty and academic departments to maintain a high standard of collection development and acquisition of resources across the curriculum. Some examples of these efforts include an enhanced collection development model, the creation of an electronic resources librarian position, a critically enhanced media library, and an approval plan for faculty review of potential titles, reaching all but a few disciplines. As resources are selected and purchased, librarians set up and provide access to new items through the library's web site and online catalog. Electronic resources are licensed and authenticated for use across the entire campus, with provisions for off-campus access by authorized users.

Librarians help classroom faculty meet curricular objectives and support the academic program at Furman in many other ways as well. In university service, librarians cover the spectrum of academic areas of influence including service on faculty committees such as the Curriculum Committee, Admissions Committee, the Individualized Curriculum Program Oversight Committee, the Women & Gender Studies Oversight Committee, the Academic Computing Committee, and the Implementation Task Force's First Year Seminars Subcommittee. Beyond

this programmed university service, a variety of academic departments include library faculty in the evaluation process for the hiring of job candidates. In the broader domain librarians enjoy an established history of engaging a wide array of visiting scholars to participate in campus-wide programs, many hosted or co-hosted by the library, and many of which grant students Cultural Life Program credit.

Maintaining what is recognized as the intellectual center of the university, library faculty members participate fully in the academic progress of students on a day-to-day basis. Many serve as academic advisors for first and second year students, forging relationships that later lead students to ask them to submit letters of recommendation for scholarships and to graduate program admission. Librarians have also been integral to the Furman Advantage and other undergraduate research programs, working with students in both supervisory and research support roles for their summer projects. These relationships have increased student awareness of the critical roles played in academia by library faculty, and have led some of Furman's best and brightest graduates to choose to continue on to graduate school in library and information science and an ultimate career in librarianship.

#### IV Status of Librarians at Other Institutions

In Spring 2005 the Library Faculty Status Working Group conducted a survey of Furman's peer and cross-applicant institutions regarding the status of librarians at those institutions. The survey was sent to library directors. Responses were received from 16 of Furman's designated peer institutions, 9 cross-applicant institutions (Southeastern universities with which Furman competes for students), and 1 institution which declined to identify itself. The survey questions and results are included in the Supporting Documents SD1 – SD3.

The first question asked was "Do librarians have faculty status at your institution?" 50% of the institutions responded yes and another 12% indicated that librarians had some aspects of faculty status but not all (e.g., tenure), for a total of 62%. 27% responded no. 12% responded that some librarians did (such as directors or department heads) but others did not.



The next set of questions asked about librarian eligibility for various faculty benefits. 88% of the institutions responded that librarians are eligible for the same human resources benefits as other faculty, such as maternity leave, survivor death benefits, insurance, and retirement. The other benefits for which librarians at the majority of institutions are eligible include faculty development opportunities/activities (62%) and faculty development funding (54%). Although librarians at most institutions have some kind of faculty status, only 31% are eligible for tenure. In regard to release time for research, 38% of institutions reported yes and another 23% responded with a qualified yes (i.e., certain stipulations may apply). Institutions were divided exactly 50%/50% regarding librarian eligibility for sabbaticals.

Librarians at the majority of institutions (77%) work 12 month contracts. Most (58%) carry some kind of rank, with a variety of terminologies used. At the majority (58%) librarians do not participate in academic advising.

The final questions regarded the criteria for promotion and tenure, which were rated on a scale from 1 (Not Important) to 4 (Very Important). By far the most significant criterion was "Primary Work Responsibilities" with a score of 3.95. The next tier of responses included "Service to the Institution" (2.95) and "Library Instruction" (2.94). Following these were clusters of responses representing different aspects of professional activity such as service to professional organizations (2.68-2.95), presenting at conferences (2.32-2.79), and publishing (1.94-2.63). In a separate question only 15% of respondents indicated that librarians were required to publish at their institutions, but a majority indicated that publication was at least "Somewhat important" towards consideration for promotion or tenure.

Based on these responses, it is possible to create a composite of the status of librarians at these institutions:

- Librarians have some form of faculty status (62%)
- Librarians have 12 month contracts (77%)
- Librarians do not have tenure (69%)

- Librarians have the same human resources benefits as other faculty, such as maternity leave, survivor death benefits, insurance, and retirement (88%)
- Librarians are eligible for the same professional development opportunities as other faculty (62%)
- Librarians are eligible for the same professional development funding as other faculty (54%)
- Librarians are eligible for some form of research release time, which may or may not include sabbaticals (61%)
- Librarians have some kind of rank, either identical or parallel to that of other faculty (58%)
- Librarians are evaluated on the basis of their primary work responsibilities, with additional consideration given to institutional service, library instruction, service to professional organizations, presentations, and publications.

## V Proposal

It is proposed that the current status of librarians, defined as voting members of the faculty holding parallel rank without tenure, be continued, and that areas of ambiguity regarding the faculty status of librarians be clarified. In this context, it is proposed that the benefits and responsibilities accorded to librarians be equated to those of contractual members of the teaching and research faculty without tenure; e.g., faculty with the rank of Assistant Professor who have not yet been granted tenure. This guiding principle would be applied to both professional development opportunities and to human resources benefits.

Librarians and archivists are committed to providing access to information representing all points of view, resisting the abridgment of free expression and free access to information, and protecting the privacy of others. The American Library Association's "Library Bill of Rights" and ALA's "Freedom to Read Statement" says that materials with a range of perspectives and expressions should be collected by librarians regardless of their controversial nature. In order to protect the intellectual freedom of others, librarians and archivists must be assured the right to intellectual freedom themselves. This proposal includes the

recommendation that librarians and archivists receive the same protection that is accorded teaching and research faculty. (Policy 100)

All human resources benefits that apply to non-tenured faculty would automatically apply to librarians under the same terms. This would specifically include annual contracts and equivalent maternity/paternity leave, retirement, and survivor death benefits. This would remove the ambiguity of applicability of benefits which has appeared in recent years.

The issue of tenure for librarians has been thoughtfully considered by the library faculty; the decision was made not to seek it for a number of reasons. First, library faculty are on 12-month contracts. Tenure-track faculty have nine-month contracts. Meeting the criteria for tenure without research leave would put library faculty at a disadvantage. On the other hand, having nine month contracts for librarians would mean significant cost to the university in terms of having to hire more librarians. Second, the survey of peer and cross-applicant institutions indicated that while librarians at most of these institutions had faculty status, only 31% are eligible for tenure. Third, while tenure would enable the library faculty to have parity with tenured faculty colleagues within the present system, library faculty are able to participate actively in governance issues and to effectively communicate and collaborate with faculty colleagues to further the mission of the library, the university and the education of students.

## VI Conclusion

Maintaining the faculty status of librarians serves to promote the continued involvement of librarians in the academic program at many levels. It promotes communication and collaboration of librarians with their colleagues in the academic departments. This is a firmly established tradition at Furman which benefits students, faculty, and librarians alike. We anticipate it will become even more important with the implementation of the new curriculum.

Equating the status of librarians to that of pre-tenure faculty provides a simple, common sense rubric to define the benefits and responsibilities of library faculty in a way that is equitable, fair, and consistent.

This proposal is consistent with the status of librarians as previously defined in committee reports and policy documents from 1984 and 1985 when this topic was last addressed.

While our peer and cross-applicant institutions offer diverse models, this proposal is consistent with the survey findings that at the majority of institutions librarians have some kind of faculty status, do not have tenure, are eligible for the same human resources benefits as other faculty, and have the option of some kind of research release time.

Finally, we believe this is a system which would be highly beneficial for recruiting talented library faculty. Faculty status is generally seen as desirable by academic librarians, and especially by the kind of proactive academic librarians that Furman wants to attract.