

Senate Library Committee Recommendation Report

Fall 2024

During Spring 2024, the Faculty Senate Library Committee (SLC) conducted a comprehensive survey to gauge the perspectives of faculty members across diverse colleges regarding library services. With the aim of enhancing support for student learning, instructional activities, and scholarly pursuits, the survey posed two pivotal questions to faculty: first, to identify the top three library services upon which they rely, and second, to offer insights into the effectiveness and impact of these services. Faculty were also invited to propose any additions or changes to library services. Through the survey, we collected responses from 156 faculty members representing seven colleges: College of Science and Engineering (38), College of Business and Economics (32), College of the Environment (11), College of Fine and Performing Arts (13), College of Humanities and Social Sciences (37), Fairhaven College of Interdisciplinary Studies (8), and Woodring College of Education (17). This initiative provided invaluable insights into the evolving needs and preferences across various disciplines. The culmination of the survey, alongside contributions from the Western Library personnel and other pertinent stakeholders, has significantly informed the agenda of the SLC, empowering us to formulate pragmatic recommendations for enhancing library services and optimizing budget allocations.

Themes

After carefully reviewing all the survey responses, the SLC summarized and categorized the responses into two major themes: student, staff, and faculty support resources; and library collections.

Student, Staff, and Faculty Support Resources

The following four services and topics related to student, staff, and faculty supporting resources emerged consistently throughout the survey results from various colleges: Research & Writing Studio and Tutoring Center, Copyright, Faculty Retreat/Programming, and Artificial Intelligence (AI) Issues/Concerns.

Most responses regarding the Hacherl Research & Writing Studio and the Tutoring Center were positive, with faculty frequently recommending these two resources to students. Many respondents also highlighted students' writing challenges and the necessity of additional research and writing support. Suggestions included implementing a workshop series on effectively communicating research findings, expanding embedded research and writing tutor support for writing-intensive courses, providing remedial writing assistance, and enhancing research and writing tutors' technical writing skills to better support discipline-specific writing, such as in chemistry.

Regarding the Tutoring Center, while it was deemed valuable for large STEM courses, there were suggestions to improve communication between the Center and math instructors to better address the needs of students in GUR-related math courses.

Several respondents requested additional offerings related to engaging with copyright material and offering more guidance about copyright, reinstating summer faculty writing retreats, and providing faculty resources on navigating AI in student research and writing, as well as ethical practices for engaging with AI.

Collections

Out of the 156 respondents, 124 (79.5%) ranked library collections as one of the top three library services they rely on, indicating their importance across colleges and programs. Many respondents indicated that this was the primary or even only way they interacted with library services. Respondents noted the necessity of timely access to scholarly resources to support their research and instruction, including both print and electronic access to periodicals, books, and media. Many respondents noted the value of Summit and interlibrary loan to supplement Western Libraries collections. Others highlighted the value of course reserves, especially their satisfaction with the accessibility of e-reserves. Collections were described as “the core purpose of the library,” “critical,” and “central to research”.

Some feedback regarding resources and services indicated an opportunity for improved communication between the libraries and students and faculty. For example, ensuring faculty know how to access current subscriptions and are aware of course reserves and helping students navigate interlibrary loan.

Many respondents expressed dissatisfaction with Western’s collections, notably inadequate subscriptions to journals and databases in their disciplines. Respondents noted that delayed access to the most recent literature negatively impacts their scholarship and teaching. Some faculty expressed that the libraries should redirect resources from instruction services to collections.

Recommendations

Building on the comprehensive analysis of survey responses, the SLC has formulated targeted recommendations aimed at enriching library services and optimizing budget allocation strategies. First, recognizing the importance of transparency and collaboration in the budgeting process, the SLC recommends that the library conduct a presentation in AY 2024-2025, offering insights into its budgetary procedures to both the SLC and the broader university community. This initiative aims to promote informed discourse and constructive engagement, ultimately enhancing stakeholder understanding and buy-in.

Second, based on the themes identified from the survey, the library and university administration should work to increase and align budget allocations with the following priorities:

- Explore increased access to journals, databases, media, and ebooks for different disciplines
- Improve transparency and opportunities for stakeholder input around the subscription review process
- Increase writing and research support for faculty; this includes writing retreats for faculty
- Identify gaps in staffing, such as in supporting distinctive collections

- Continue ILL and Summit services
- Increase research and writing tutor-embedded offerings to better support students' writing challenges

In addition to the priorities identified above, there was also feedback around other university needs that fall outside the scope of the Libraries' services and collections. These priorities include providing access to AI detection software and digital tools such as iPads and digital pencils.

Last, recognizing the pivotal role of college representatives within the SLC, the committee suggests that these representatives collaborate closely with their respective colleges to bolster communication, foster partnerships, and spearhead outreach endeavors. By harnessing the collective expertise and networks of college representatives, the library can cultivate a more robust and inclusive approach to service delivery, thereby maximizing its impact across the university landscape.

Senate Library Committee Roster AY 2024-2025 (November 2024)

Voting Members		Non-Voting Members	
Vacant	Libraries	Madeline Kelly	Dean, Libraries
Kendra Dupuy	CHSS	John Farquhar	Director, ATUS
Tilman Glimm	CSE	Madeline Kelly	Director, Collections
Hilary Schwandt	Fairhaven	Shevell Thibou	Director, Teaching & Learning
Shuo Li	CBE	Elizabeth Joffrion	Director, Archives & Special Collections
Patrick Buckley	CENV		
Emmy Fincham	WCE	Recorder	
Eva Gil	CFPA	Becky Johnston	Faculty Senate Specialist
Vacant	Faculty Senate		
Emma Fredlund	ASWWU Senate		