

University Libraries Weekly Town Hall
April 15, 2020

Attendees: 85 University Libraries staff members attended through Zoom

Deb Ward – Interim Vice Provost of University Libraries – referenced the morning email she sent out to everyone which contained most of what we know at this time. We have salary savings from not filled position, monies not spent from E&E, travel and supplies and we can take from collections to keep from doing harm to staff. She said she started the meeting with this information since that was probably what was on everyone's mind. She appreciates everything everyone is doing under difficult circumstances. There are a few staff that are starting to work from home this week so she knows there will be adjustments that go with that. She has been in many meetings and said it is good to stay in communications with everyone. It is the most important thing we can do right now.

Deb and Corrie talked this week about the budget. One conclusion they reached was to stop the purchase of books until at least the end of June. In the current situation there is no way to order, receive, catalog or manage them and we must be mindful of how we spend our money. We need to allocate approximately \$100K to staffing where we will need the funds.

For the most part, the libraries have been able to retain staff but it is not 100%. For example, we were not able to keep the night security guard and the guard who sits at the door. For staff who we aren't able to retain, we do our best to refer them and get them help. Our goal is not to have any of our staff suffer.

Right now, it looks like the cut will be 12.5%. We have been in similar hard times before and have weathered them. Deb and Ann have had past conversations about what was the leanest operation we could have and still serve our academic community. Our plan is to cut staff only if we have to. Deb cannot make any promises except to give people the most up to date information. Our philosophy is to look at what we do and see how we can accomplish it so everyone has a job. It might be that we shift employees from one task to another. We value our student employees; we train them; we develop relationships with them, but as we move into fall and look at what we face, it might be that we do not hire students in order to maintain work for our regular staff. It is too soon to tell but we need to be aware of the changes that might be ahead. Deb has talked with the directors of the other three libraries in the system. One thing they are faced with is that they will not have the money to renew the Elsevier package for their campus portion. We will have to look at changes in collections.

Deb asked if any of the LMT had comments.

Jeannette Pierce – Associate University Librarian for Research, Access and Instructional Services – thanked everyone who is helping staff prepare to work remotely and said more of our staff is now working from home.

Ernest Shaw – Library Technology Services Manager - had information to pass along. At a recent IT meeting, plans were discussed about moving away from Box. Box is a separate contract and is quite expensive. He asked us, moving forward, to think about using programs other than Box, such as One Drive or other programs in the Office 365 suite. No one needs to do anything during the migration but he wanted to let us know it is official: we will be moving away from box in the future. He will send out information on how to get to One Drive.

No one else had any comments and Deb turned the meeting over to HR.

Brenda Slade said that staff who have been eligible to use COVID administrative leave for 4/5 to 4/12 can request up to two weeks of FFCRA Paid Sick Leave as “quarantine” due to the stay at home order that expires on 4/24. Those that do not have assignments must submit a FFCRA form to notify HR that they want to use the leave. Hours can be used as long as there is a shelter in place order and do not have to be taken all at once. Once the stay at home order ends, staff will need to use their PTO. Staff that cannot work from home because of childcare need to talk to Brenda. There is also a formula that will be applied to determine how many hours of FFCRA Paid Sick Leave can be used by each person. Brenda stressed that if you have not turned in a request to use FFCRA, you are not eligible automatically. Send an email to mulibraryhr@missouri.edu that says: “I would like to request the FFCRA Paid Sick Leave hours available to me from 4/13/20 to 4/24/20. I know that as long as a shelter in place order is in effect, I will be able to draw from those available hours.” The FFCRA paid sick leave hours will be based on the last six months of employment.

Q: What about work study students? How can they get the rest of their awards? Can do telework? If so, will that only last until their award is used up?

A: Brenda said after this current payroll, they will look at remaining rewards and make a lump sum payment, thus fulfilling our obligation.

Kathy Peters said that if anyone has student workers working from home and want them to continue to work the remainder of the school year, let your supervisor know so we can get it to LMT for review.

Q: If you don't WFH your total 40 hours, is there a FFCRA code we enter or will MU Library HR enter the codes for the FFCRA time in our timesheets?

A: For those who turned in a form requesting FFCRA leave, it will eventually make its way through the UM system and the system will populate your bucket and you will receive an approval email with the codes which you can then enter in your timesheet. If we have to, we can do a revised code entry. We will be doing a line by line evaluation of every timesheet that claims FFCRA.

Q: So we only put our time worked for now and add FFCRA time later after we get an email from System? Will supervisors have to enter the codes for the student employees?

A: The supervisor can enter the code for student employees. You can wait until we get them approved or you can use COVID admin leave code to help the Library HR later. Brenda created a spreadsheet with everyone's name who might need FFCRA and is now matching forms to names so that she knows who has requested FFCRA.

Q: Will this process be done in time for our next bi-weekly paycheck on the 29th?

A: Brenda said they are trying their best and hopefully by the end of the day they will have a good idea of who will be using FFCRA. The worst-case scenario is that someone submits the form late and we have to go in and make corrections.

Q: This is only for people not able to work?

A: The federal mandate allows a person to use the FFCRA hours through December 30 if the person cannot do their job because they are under a shelter in place order. There are several situations when FFCRA would apply, so do not apply for it now if you are working now. It is different for people who can't work due to child care or other issues and Brenda will work with them on a case by case basis.

Q: Can we check with you to see if our students have sent the form in?

A: Brenda needs at least 24 hours to go through the forms. Supervisors will be notified at the same time each direct report is notified.

End of HR section, meeting opened up to other comments/questions

Q: Will there be a Libraries wide announcement to the students?

A: Since it will be on a case by case basis whether we continue assignment through the end of the year, we need to address each student individually. We need our students and don't want to lose them but we have to make sure our full-time employees have assignments. We need to set some priorities before making final decisions and we encourage supervisors to be fully engaged with students. If you want to continue their appointment, let your division head know. LMT will be discussing this on Friday morning and looking at cost savings for the rest of year. We think many student assignments will not be continued. Deb said that we don't have data yet to make final decisions but we must consider possibilities now and start the conversation.

Q: Has there been any talk about when the university will open again? Or if the shelter in place order is going to be extended?

A: President Choi has talked about the possibility of June 1; President Trump is hoping people can get back to work in May. We do not know what the governor will do about extending the stay at home order. All we can do is to watch for announcements from the governor and university officials.

Q: Is there likely to be a need to furlough anyone in summer, or are staffing considerations mainly either students or Fall?

A: Deb said everything is uncertain right now. Leadership is taking voluntary reductions in pay and there are rumors about various furloughs. The university does not have a definite statement on this yet. We need to look at the budget numbers when we get them and see what we've been able to do to create some give and then make decision based on that info. The preference is not to furlough anyone. We need our current staffing level in order to meet the needs of our community. That is also why we are eyeing not hiring students in fall—so we can maintain our regular staff.

Q: Do we all know about the federal economic impact payment?

A: Deb said the university is looking at whatever federal stimulus is available.

Q: Am I understanding that all student workers will be terminated unless we tell you we want to keep them (as in when the U opens again)?

A. We are not changing the status of any employee's appointment right now. We might have to allocate the funding elsewhere. Kathy will assume student workers will not continue this year nor during the summer unless otherwise notified.

Q: Can you send instructions about how we can keep student workers?

A. Send Kathy the name, number of hours, and work from home assignment description. She needs this information by this Friday.

Q: Are you going to let us know which students we can keep by the end of this week? If we can't keep them next week then they can use the 2 weeks of FFCRA?

We will let you know as soon as decision have been made. All employees are eligible to apply for FFCRA if they have no assignment.

Q: these student workers we're talking about--are we discussing this semester, or this summer, or beyond? If we have students who aren't currently working from home because we thought they couldn't, can we find projects?

Q: My students weren't able to work from home and I ended their schedules on the 12th should I have continued them on our budget or should they move to FRRRCRA for funds?

Deb said as far as getting students paid, we are talking to the end of the semester. After that it becomes an issue of planning to determine who, if any, we retain. Brenda said the more info you can send her, the better, as she is currently revising the budget for this year. A planning group will be looking at the FY21 budget on Friday. Deb realizes that people would like to have conversation with those going away in the summer about returning to work for us in the fall, but we need time to look at what we have and what we will be asked to give up. At one point, President Choi mentioned we might have to budget quarterly. Be patient and take things as it comes; plan for the worst and hope for the best.

As far as graduate assistants who are working from home, as long as they meet the standards to fulfill their academic portion, they will continue to be paid for rest of year. We do not yet have info if appointments will continue in the summer and fall.

Several staff thanked Deb for being transparent with everything. Staff also appreciated her daily emails, saying it was the first thing they look for each day. Deb appreciated everyone's comments and said some days are more challenging than others and such appreciation gives her a boost.

Kathy said the HR team knows it is hard to digest everything; it has taken them several days to get a basic understanding of the FFCRA guidelines. Bottom line: if you can't work because there is no work, fill out a FFCRA form. If you get sick with Covid 19, or caring for someone who is sick, or can't work because of childcare due to Covid 19, let HR know. There are many different scenarios; some overlap, some work one at a time. If anything changes with your status please communicate that with us.