

MEMO

To: Sarah Michalak, Carol Jenkins, Anne Klinefelter
From: LAUNC-CH Professional Welfare Committee – Heather Gendron (Chair), Diana McDuffee, Eileen McGrath, Suchi Mohanty, and Christine Stachowicz
CC: Jill Sexton, LAUNC-CH President
LAUNC-CH Executive Board
Subject: Professional Development Support Survey
Date: June 14, 2011

The Professional Welfare Committee of LAUNC-CH would like to thank you for assisting us in surveying EPA librarians about professional development support at UNC Chapel Hill. We appreciate the opportunity to present you with our findings. We hope that this information will strengthen support for professional development. The Professional Welfare Committee believes that investing wisely in professional development benefits our libraries and increases the visibility of library accomplishments. As UNC library employees enter their third year without salary increases, professional development funding is a relatively inexpensive way to provide support for librarians.

The committee surveyed approximately 150 EPA librarians representing all three UNC libraries (University Library, Health Sciences, and Law). We were pleased to receive responses from eighty-five individuals – a nearly 60% response rate. The response rates for the University Library and Health Sciences Library were similar and participation from the Law Library was slightly lower. Participation in the survey by rank closely followed the actual numbers of EPAs in these ranks.

Reported Professional Activity

The results of our survey revealed that UNC-CH librarians are active professionally and that national participation and leadership activity is high. Responses indicated that during the past three years, 78% of our librarians were “active” in national professional library organizations and the same proportion served on committees within professional library organizations. Leadership positions within professional library organizations are held by many EPAs in the University Libraries, with almost half (46%) having served as chairs of committees, sections, divisions, etc. and 40% having recently served as a board member. Another 36% reported that they have been an officer in a professional library organization within the last three years.

Conference participation emerged as the primary professional development activity of UNC librarians in support of the professional development requirements of their positions (98% attended conferences and 61% presented at conferences). Among our respondents, 61% reported that they participated in research and publishing and 43% reported that they taught professional workshops and/or university courses within the last three years. Almost 75% said that, in a typical year, they attend two or more professionally-related conferences. Conference participation is considered important for gaining promotion, particularly with respect to serving on committees (93%), presenting (92%), and simply attending (90%). The survey revealed multiple perceived benefits of conference attendance. In order of importance, respondents affirmed that they regularly attend conferences to:

- network with colleagues;
- learn about what other libraries are doing;
- update their professional skills and knowledge;
- present and share research; and

- enhance their leadership skills.

Support for Professional Development

Responses were mixed regarding the adequacy of support for professional development activities. On a positive note, a high percentage reported that their *overall* expectations for support of professional development were either met or were exceeded. However, a significant number (nearly 40%) reported that the University Libraries *did not* meet their overall expectations.

The survey included an open-ended question about support for professional development. In this section, respondents requested more clarity about professional expectations overall and as they relate to the ranking and promotion process, salary increases, and support for travel. Half of the early-career librarians who responded had comments about expectations. Another recurring comment was whether or not professional development was, as one respondent put it, “really a priority” at UNC.

In the open comments section, many respondents voiced strong concern about the expenses they incur individually for professional development. The overwhelming majority of respondents (94%) indicated that they did not have adequate funding to attend all of the conferences in which they would like to participate. Over 60% of respondents said that they have typically paid more than \$300 out of pocket annually for professional development (not including membership dues), while 20% have paid over \$1,000.

Other themes developed around research and publication, including supervisor support and finding time to devote to these activities. Overall, a quarter of the participants indicated that their regular job duties (26%) or the unpredictability of their work (22%) prevented them from setting aside time for research projects. A similar percentage (25%) of early career librarians (those with five or fewer years of experience) reported that regular job duties prevented them from working on research projects, while a greater percentage of early career librarians (44%) said that their work was unpredictable, thus preventing them from working on research projects. The results from librarians with 6-10 years of experience were consistent with the overall results. Three respondents reported that their supervisor discouraged research project activities.

Recommendations

- *Develop a mentoring program directed at early career librarians, focusing on the Appointment and Promotion process and time management with respect to professional activity (e.g. the idea that certain professional development activities are considered work and, as such, work time should be set aside to conduct these activities as much as is reasonable)*
- *Do more to orient supervisors and newly appointed EPAs to the importance of professional activity for the Appointment and Promotion process*
- *Revise funding guidelines for travel to include greater support for professional development. Since the majority of respondents reported that conference participation was important to gaining promotion, funding levels could be (if they aren't already) determined by levels of participation*
- *Provide more opportunities for library staff to share what they learned from their professional development activities (e.g. monthly brown bag sessions, a blog, etc.)*