Standard VII
Library and Other Information Resources

Description

The library faculty and staff of Western Connecticut State University are committed to providing high quality academic library services and to ensuring access to collections in a variety of formats. Information resources are designed to meet the curricular, intellectual, and professional needs of students and faculty and are intended to enhance the learning outcomes and teaching environment of the university. (For text of full Mission statement, see Appendix: Standard VII: 1.)

Similarly, technology services provided through Information Technology & Innovation (IT, formerly University Computing) are essential to fulfilling the university's mission (see Appendix: Standard VII: 2). Media Services also fulfills the University's Mission by providing the Western community with professional video production services, media-related equipment and media viewing rooms (see Appendix: Standard VII: 3).

WCSU's libraries are staffed by professionally qualified librarians and support staff. Library personnel include the Library Director, the Associate Library Director, eleven professional librarians, a technical service technician, and support staff that includes university assistants, clerks and custodians. Western's fulltime professional librarians are faculty members with all faculty rights and responsibilities. Librarians are active in the university's governance.

The mission of IT is to provide an information technology environment that delivers a seamless learning atmosphere for students and faculty while also meeting administrative needs. The University will be a leader in using technology to enhance teaching and learning to meet the educational needs of a diversified student body, faculty and administration. IT supports the University mission of empowering students, assuring effective teaching, strengthening partnerships with people and institutions while supporting continuous improvement and intellectual integrity."

Resources and Access

The Haas-Midtown Campus Library, Young Westside Campus Library and other information resource providers at Western offer vital services that support the university's commitment to providing a strong liberal arts foundation, a strong background in information technologies, and the development of strong skills in communication, problem solving and critical thinking in a personalized learning environment.

Western has two library locations. The Ruth A. Haas Library is located on the Midtown campus and the Robert A. Young Library is located on the Westside campus. The library's collection

includes 213,314 print volumes, 970 electronic books and 3,516 periodical titles (see Appendix: Standard VII: 4).

The Robert S. Young Library is located on the Westside campus in the Westside Classroom Building and is currently dedicated to the business collection, but it provides most of the same services as the Haas Library for students from other disciplines (e.g., circulation desk and reference help, terminals for searching the library collections, library assistance, and student study areas) (see Appendix: Standard VII: 5).

The Media Services Department has two media centers. One is located on the Midtown Campus with two viewing rooms and a production studio and the other on the Westside Campus. Services are also available to faculty who teach on Western's Waterbury Campus (Naugatuck Valley Community College's Founder's Hall).

Individual departments and faculty members select over half of the titles purchased by the library. The selections are approved for expenditure from department allocations by chairpersons or their designees; occasionally, approval by the appropriate School dean is required. The remainder of the book budget is used to provide materials for interdisciplinary use, reference materials, and continuations. Students may also recommend items for purchase (see Appendix VII: 6).

Total library expenditures per student FTE increased between FY 2010 and FY 2012 (see Appendix VII: 7). The library's materials budget for the past three years has been unstable (see Appendix VII: 8). Funding from gifts and endowments help support the collection. While total print volumes decreased from FY 2010-2010 (from 222,860 to 213,314), electronic books increased almost tenfold (from 10 to 970), full text electronic journals also increased dramatically from 0 to 119, and total media materials increased by 28.7%. Print and microform serials subscriptions decreased by 5.3%. Although electronic book and journal holdings have increased substantially, the print collection continues to expand and new formats, such as online video streaming, have been introduced.

Students utilize both traditional and contemporary modes of obtaining information; most reference questions are still asked in-person (91.5%; 15,785 of 17,247), however, the number of virtual (online) questions increased by 143.7% (from 600 to 1,462). Total circulation per FTE student increased by 14.3% (from 4.2 to 4.8) (see Appendix: Standard VII: 9).

The library has instituted new programs and services to support broad educational and specific curricular needs. For example, a digital repository system enables faculty, staff and students to place their work online. Through the repository system works are accessible by public search

(the author maintains copyright). Beyond the benefits to the individuals having their work posted, it increases the visibility of the university (see Appendix: Standard VII: 10).

The Haas Library provides an excellent venue for offering cultural enrichment opportunities to the public, as well as to the campus community. Since opening in its current form in Fall 2000, the Haas Library has hosted many events. Recent events which were open to the public included: hosting book discussions for Danbury's One Book, One Community program (2008-2011, included maintaining the website for the program); Women's History Month exhibit (2009-2013); an exhibit of Latin American artist, German Perez (2011); a Lincoln Centennial exhibit in coordination with lectures and other events in the History Department (2009). During the 2011-12 academic year, the Haas Library was the site of a display of Tibetan Medical Banners and a book exhibit on Buddhist thought and teachings. Both were connected to the visit of the Dalai Lama in October, 2012.

The library works with others to deliver instruction, one successful collaborative informational project is the Center for Excellence and Learning and Teaching (CELT), whose purpose is to provide the Western community with a nexus for the collection and dissemination of information and scholarship in order to facilitate the delivery of high quality education to our students. Teaching faculty and staff have both formal and informal opportunities to increase their knowledge of best practices, current research on teaching, learning, and student assessment, and strategies for enhancing the educational experiences of students (see Appendix: Standard VII: 11).

Funding from Information Technology & Innovation that directly supports students is made available through a Technology Fee. It has remained stable each year during fiscal years 2010-2013 at $1.2 million. These funds are principally used to purchase, support and maintain technology and software in classrooms and labs and to pay for student lab assistants who staff the computer centers.

The university provides the necessary equipment and facilities to deliver hybrid synchronous and asynchronous online courses. Three video conferencing rooms are available on campus: two traditional rooms at Midtown and a new one at Westside. The Westside facility utilizes next-generation Vidyo HD video conferencing technology that works seamlessly with most existing video conferencing systems as well as with most desktop and laptop computers equipped with a webcam and a broadband Internet connection. The Vidyo infrastructure at Western can support up to 55 concurrent users with HD quality and can be expanded easily for future growth. Over 100 faculty, staff and students are enrolled and using the system, including students in the Honors and the EdD in the Nursing Education programs.

Computers with Internet access are available in several computer labs on campus for students who may need to use campus facilities for distance learning purposes. All courses that require laboratories and clinical site visits that cannot be completed via technology–based distance learning are handled with special arrangements made by the faculty in consultation with the Dean and Information Technology & Innovation.

Starting in July 2012, Information Technology & Innovation began working with students in the Ed.D. program for Nursing Education and the EdD program for Instructional Leadership. They were provided with Android tablets to use as a tool for mobile, off-campus learning and to experiment and become familiar with them as a teaching and learning tool for educators.

Information Technology & Innovation is training faculty to move from Blackboard Vista to the newly adopted ConnCSU-wide learning management system, Blackboard Learn. The transition should be completed by June 2013. Blackboard is used widely at Western. (In FY 2012, 783 classes on the main campus, 21 courses offered off campus and 146 online courses have used Blackboard Vista/Learn. In FY13, those numbers increased slightly.

The Instructional Technology Center (ITC) is a collaborative effort between Academic Affairs and Information Technology & Innovation. The ITC went operational in October 2009 (see Appendix: Standard VII: 12).

The Media Services Department complements library and computing services provision of technology through the delivery of media production services and equipment. Central to its role is the support of the technology end of the Media Production degree. Several new and significant technological upgrades have been recently completed or are in progress.

In September 2011 an online equipment reservation system was implemented. In the year following, the department checked out/in almost 2800 pieces of equipment. It provided media support for over 350 events (equipment includes LCD projectors, flat panel displays, DVD players, overhead projectors, voice recorders, cameras, tripods, portable screens, laptop computers, portable sound systems, microphones, microphone stands, and a document camera).

During the 2011-2012 year Media Services worked with the Communication & Media Arts Department to install equipment for a new, shared studio space (following joint research in the selection of equipment) which is crucial for the Student Learning Outcomes of the Media Production degree. The staff does maintenance and repair for all approved media equipment at the University manages the Communication & Media Arts Department's editing lab.

The Media Services staff has planned, purchased and is in the process of installing a new, campus-wide digital signage. This multi-year initiative that involves the placing computer screens throughout the campus to provide information to faculty, staff and students (e.g.,

upcoming events, weather, emergency announcements, etc.). Media Services is also working with the library staff, the Media & Library Services Policy Committee (MLSPC), and computing to aid in the coordination of creating streaming resources from the library's collection.

The Media Services' staff is actively involved in the production of videos for the university for instruction, coverage of events, and the promotion of the university (e.g., October 2012 videos produced for and of the Dalai Lama's visit – available on YouTube; a video on the new School of Visual & Performing Arts, preproduction & production of a pilot series of videos that demonstrate proper Microbiology Laboratory Technique and Safety 2011-2012; videotaped the Connecticut Supreme Court Civil and Criminal Appeals held on Western's Westside campus in October, 2011). The department owns high quality digital editing and camera equipment used in production (see Appendix: Standard VII: 13).

Appraisal

The library staff strive to anticipate and respond to a rapidly evolving environment in which forms of media are changing and expanding, costs of library materials are escalating, and the university's range of courses and course delivery methods are broadening (e.g., online undergraduate programs and graduate programs).

The library's materials budget declined for the past two years. Concerns over funding cuts from the state continue. Book budgets are the hardest hit in the material's budget because of standing subscription commitments (e.g., journal subscriptions and databases).

Despite a shrinking technology budget due to reduced state support and no increase in tuition in recent years, the Library and Information Technology & Innovation have maintained more than an adequate technological environment. Rethinking approaches to various costs such as student and department printing has freed up funds to cover other essential services and equipment.

Aging department hardware and the lack of a consistent cycle to refresh faculty hardware have become issues. This is especially problematic as faculty attempt to enhance their courses' technological learning environments. Information Technology & Innovation has recently set a goal of a four-year refresh cycle for computers (25% per year).

Media Services has been adequately funded and remains current with state-of-the-art equipment for departmental and University-community use. Nevertheless, the fact that budget levels are likely to remain the same or even decrease presents a challenge to Media Services to keep pace with growing demand for its materials and facilities.

Despite these challenges, responses from faculty and staff in the spring 2012 survey reveal a positive perception of the Library's allocation of resources and its technology services (see Appendix: Standard VII: 14). Faculty and staff satisfaction with technology services is also relatively high, indicating that Western uses it vision, mission, and strategic plan to provide a

basis for information technologies and priority setting (see Appendix: Standard VII: 15). Data indicate that students are growing more adept at navigating through electronic information and are using it to support their academic projects and research.

Staffing issues, in particular, remain a significant challenge. The BOR has placed a freeze on filling vacant positions. As a result, Media Services and Information Technology & Innovation have unmet staffing needs which directly affect ability to support University mission. The Media Services is down one administrative position that may not be filled in the near future. As a result a reduction in services began in January 2013. Media Services now closes at 5 pm instead of 9 pm and is no longer available to all evening classes. This cutback has a significant adverse effect on students in the Media Production program who take classes in the evening and who need access to equipment in the evening. Services for weekend events are also limited to high profile events.

IT has its own staffing issues. The IT Help Desk and User Services staff receive and respond to a large number of support calls—an average of 877 per month for 2012 – and close an average of 860 calls per month (a 98% closure rate). Due to current understaffing and significant spikes in calls at the beginning of the semester, average response time has lengthened.

There have been some significant changes in how faculty and students are using the library. Although over 90% of the reference questions are in-person, the number of online questions dramatically increased between FY2010 and FY 2012. There was a decrease in the number of courses supported by traditional reserves but a corresponding increase in the number of courses supported by electronic reserves. These changes can be viewed positively: they indicate greater accessibility for students to librarians in all types of courses and quicker turnaround for access to reserves that can be posted directly by faculty (see Appendix: Standard VII: 16).

The demand for formal library instruction decreased, both in number of sessions (from 157 to 100) and total attendance (from 3,948 to 2,696) from FY 2010-2012. This decrease is an area of potential concern as bibliographic instruction is at the center of library's outreach to increase library skills and information literacy. The decrease in demand for formal session instruction seems to be offset by some degree by the amount usage of library guides that are available on the library's website for faculty and students. The library guides are frequently accessed (see Appendix: Standard VII: 17).

Projection

The library staff has significant changes in the planning or pilot stages which, when implemented, will increase services, student awareness of available resources and enhancement of library skills and information literacy. While electronic resources costs often exceeding print costs, adding more electronic books to the collection is viewed as important to meeting student needs in online, hybrid and traditionally taught courses (see Appendix: Standard VII: 18).

Planning is underway to create "Learning Commons" at both campus libraries. These will increase student support systems. The Ancell School of Business expects to open its Learning Commons in summer 2013. The ultimate goal of the Commons program is to increase graduation rates (see Appendix: Standard VII: 19).

At the Haas Library, the library faculty recently convened an ad hoc committee to comprehensively address library space, collections and services. Changes are expected to take place in multiple steps over the next few years and they are dependent on funding. One currently planned change to increase student awareness of available library services, will be the moving of the reference desk to a more prominent position near the entrance of the building so it will be in the sightline of students entering the formal library space (in 2013). Students entering the library or the CyberCafé, a large computing center on the library's main floor will have to walk past the staffed library reference desk inviting them through this placement to ask questions and seek help. One librarian described this as an opportunity to literally "reach out" to our students. Although in the early planning stage, the library staff is considering reducing the area of the reference section stacks at the back of the main floor of the library to create space for new study workspaces for group work (see Appendix: Standard VII: 20).

In an effort to ensure broad awareness of library services to all departments and faculty, during the Spring 2013 semester, the M&LSPC has recommended and will work with library staff to develop a more active relationship with representatives of individual departments (see Appendix: Standard VII: 21).

Technology changes quickly and Information Technology & Innovation is constantly exploring innovative ways to keep up with these changes in order to continue to build an effective and up-to-date information technology environment for the Western Connecticut State University community. In February 2013, University Computing changed its name to Information Technology & Innovation (IT&I) to reflect a focus on using innovation to drive better service to students, faculty and staff.

Additionally, the Center for Excellence and Learning and Teaching (CELT) will soon move and be housed in the library.