

Dean Postlethwaite Senate Evaluation Report (DRAFT).

What does the Dean do exceptionally well? Faculty indicate that Dean Postlethwaite has worked to develop strong connections between the Libraries and other units at UMKC and has significantly improved communication since Fall 2018. Emphasis has been placed on improving the climate for diversity and inclusion: this point was reinforced by multiple faculty during the feedback conversation. Improvements to library facilities and operations have been exceptional. Dean Postlethwaite does the major work of administration very well and is highly regarded by her direct reports in terms of accessibility, interpersonal skills, collaboration, fairness, respect, and resource management. Faculty unanimously support retention of the Dean, with 87% of the responses rating her overall performance as “good.”

Suggestions for Improvement: The evaluation suggests a need for a clearer long-term vision for the Libraries and continued efforts to improve communication with all Libraries faculty. There is also room to improve creativity and innovation and to develop more transparent decision-making processes. The survey and conversation suggest the Dean should continue to focus on developing a more positive inner culture of the library (both horizontally and vertically), especially in terms of development opportunities, openness to feedback, transparency, the communication of decision-making processes as they unfold, and engagement with faculty beyond direct reports. One area of concern is the difference between resource allocation to public service departments and other service departments. There is a sense that the Dean tends not to fully appreciate her own power, sometimes participating in meetings where faculty need space to process events without the presence of their supervisor. The Dean tends to be defensive when criticized: the faculty encourage the Dean to continue to be reflective and responsive.

Lessons learned: In our meetings to discuss the evaluation survey, Dean Postlethwaite acknowledged that, while communication has improved significantly since the survey was administered, there is an ongoing need to improve communication within the library and across the university. Dean Postlethwaite acknowledged that the libraries are still recovering from staff reductions and that personnel issues are often very complex, take time to resolve, and are necessarily confidential. There is a strong sense that the Library restructuring, the Strategic Plan, and the impact of the new student fees create the need for even more effective decision-making processes and communication. The Dean is encouraged to think more strategically about decision-making processes, improving transparency and communication both vertically and horizontally across the Libraries, including the Hospital Hill Libraries. Faculty suggest it would help to clarify which Library personnel are on which University and System committees so that they can bring specific issues to those with relevant influence. They also suggest the Dean should pay more attention to detail by, for example, doing a better job of acknowledging e-mails, involving faculty at every stage of decision-making that is likely to impact their work, and ensuring that discussions are designed to be transparent and accessible throughout. There is also a need for more proactive leadership, so that institutional decisions are more fully informed by the expertise and priorities of UMKC Library Faculty and are communicated more broadly (such as decisions regarding Open Access, OER, and Data management).