ECU MLS Advisory Board Meeting  
October 26, 2013  
Noon-3:00pm  
2409 Joyner Library

Present:  Eleanor Cook (for Jan Lewis), Kevin Vickers, Mary Tobin, John Harer, Susan Simpson, Gail Munde, David Trudeau, Vivian Mott, Joanna Gerakios

Absent:  Keen Gravely, Amy Mitchell, Marian McLawhorn

Welcome and Introductions

Harer welcomed Advisory Board members and thanked them for the feedback, advice and support they have given to the MLS program at ECU, and for giving up their Saturday to attend this meeting.

Members introduced themselves around the table.  Vivian Mott is Interim Chair, Department of Information and Library Science (ILS) and Chair of the Board of Trustees of Sheppard Memorial Library. Joanna Gerakios is Instructional Technology and Media Specialist for Pitt County Schools and President of the NC School Library Media Association (NCSLMA). Eleanor Cook is Assistant Director for Discovery and Technology Services, ECU Academic Library Services. Mary Tobin is a current program student and President of the ECU ALA Student Chapter. John Harer is Associate Chair of ILS and MLS Program Coordinator. David Trudeau is the Director, Learning Resource Center, Vance-Granville Community College and Chairs the ALA Intellectual Freedom Roundtable and the North Carolina Library Association (NCLA) Intellectual Freedom Committee. Susan Simpson is Librarian, Carteret County Public Library and Interim Director, Craven-Pamlico-Carteret Regional Library System. Kevin Vickers is Media Coordinator, Sun Valley Elementary School, and a former ECU ALA Student Chapter President. Gail Munde is Associate Professor, ILS.

Harer noted that Rita Van Duinen has left the Board and her position as Lead Instructor, Library and Information Technology Program at Central Carolina Community College to assume a position at the Council on Library and Information Resources in Washington, DC.

ALA Accreditation Update

Harer updated the Board on progress toward ALA accreditation, noting that ECU had submitted the required draft Program Presentation in June 2013 in advanced of the site visit scheduled for October 2013. Members of the Evaluation Review Panel read and commented on the document and in a July telephone conversation, the Panel Chair conveyed the group’s request that ECU delay the site visit for one year. This would allow a full academic year for complete implementation of the merger and administrative restructuring of the MLS program and programs within the former Business and Information Technologies Education Department and describe the MLS program’s updated status with regard to the merger. The new site visit dates will be October 26, 27 and 28, 2014. This would give the program time to revise the Program Presentation accordingly. Panel comments also included suggestions for restructuring the
**Program Presentation**, but comments did not seem to indicate critical issues with program quality.

Munde offered her perception that the Panel might want assurance the program was secure and that the merger did not indicate waning support for the program or damage program capability, and that this was a beneficial consideration. Harer noted that the *ALA COA Standards for Accreditation* included requirements for program autonomy in curriculum and personnel matters and that it would take full implementation of the merger in order to provide evidence that a sufficient degree of autonomy had been established.

Simpson asked if the program was vulnerable, given the difficult economic conditions within the state, ECU and the College of Education. Mott responded that many programs were vulnerable within the University, and the intention of the merger was to strengthen both Departments through synergy. She noted that the *Standards* in regard to these matters were to be interpreted “within the general guidelines of the institution,” and that programs were to be “integral yet distinctive.” The MLS program does and will continue to operate within ECU guidelines.

Simpson and other asked what the Board could do to help. Mott responded that one useful strategy would be to help raise the profile of the program by reporting student, alumni and Board achievements and accomplishments to the College of Education. Munde noted that many of these are reported on the program’s Facebook page, but do not get picked up by the College. Mott suggested that the ILS graduate student might be able to harvest and convey them to Jessica Nottingham in the Dean’s office for inclusion in the Accolades section of the College website. Munde agreed to arrange this.

This discussion prompted Mary Tobin to share that she had been awarded a NC Bright Ideas grant for $1,000 and had been informed only last week about this.

**Fall Admissions and Enrollment Update**

Harer distributed reports of admitted and completed graduate student fall application trends (2007-2013) and fall graduate enrollment headcount trends (2007-2013) and asked the Board to review. All metrics indicate that 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 were peak years, then fell in successive years. Fall 2013 data indicate a total MLS program student headcount of 177, completed applications for 57 incoming students, 56 of whom were admitted. Simpson noted that admissions were down 40% from fall 2012 to fall 2013 (from 94 to 56) and wondered why 2012 was so successful while 2013 was not. She wondered “what we did right” in 2012 and if this could be identified, we might be able to replicate it. She suggested surveying incoming students from fall 2012 to learn why they decided to enter the program.

Munde suggested that there might have been an increase in the number of school library media coordinator retirements in 2012 and this would have created vacancies to be filled by MLS students with provisional licensure. These students are often selected for employment by school principals prior to degree completion, and in some cases, prior to degree start, and that an increase in vacancies may have fueled applications accordingly. Munde noted that this idea is total speculation.

**Faculty Update**
Harer briefly noted faculty news. Dr. Jami Jones co-edited the recently-published book, *The Creative Imperative: School Librarians and Teachers Cultivating Curiosity Together* (ABC-CLIO, 2013). Dr. Kaye Dotson is being considered for tenure and promotion to Associate Professor this academic year. Drs. Lou Sua and Jami Jones made a presentation on Project Enable at the recent meeting of the NCSLMA. Dr. John B. Harer made two presentations at the same meeting, one on LGBT literature, and has a book under contract. Dr. Al Jones’ article, Cleveland's multicultural librarian: Eleanor (Edwards) Ledbetter, 1870-1954 was published in *The Library Quarterly*, 83(3), July, 2013. In collaboration with a medical sciences library faculty member, Dr. Elaine Yontz is preparing a grant proposal on how school libraries can assist school programs in combating obesity.

Harer noted that the MLS program participated as an exhibitor at both the recent NCSLMA and the NCLA meetings. Dr. Sua and program students and alumni (Janis Duncan, Mary Tobin, Carson LeMaster, and Tim Norville) assisted with booth staffing at NCSLMA. Dr. Marson assisted Dr. Harer staffing the NCLA booth.

**Budget Update**

Harer noted that ECU expects budget reductions to continue throughout UNC system institutions and the reduction is expected to be 3-4%. Mott noted that although this sounds small, the reduction is compounded by the effect of earlier years’ reductions. Harer noted that budgets for the two former departments have been merged, and that operating expenses will be coded by program. Mott indicated that this was relatively easy to do, and should provide information necessary for reports included in the *Program Presentation* and made annually to the Association for Library and Information Science Education.

**Elimination of Master’s Level Pay for NC Teachers**

Harer noted that the legislative decision to end the practice of increased pay for NC teachers with master’s degrees did not affect NC school library media coordinators. An MLS or MLIS degree is the entry-level requirement for these positions, rather than an advanced degree that enhances a baccalaureate degree required for teacher licensure. Gerakios noted that the role of school library media coordinator is still sometimes confused in the minds of other school personnel and legislators with the older and separate classification of audio-visual specialist and with the role of IT coordinators.

Mott noted that DPI had negotiated a later date (from April to May, 2014) at which the legislative mandate would take effect. This allows some upcoming master’s graduates to be eligible, but not ECU’s graduates, whose degrees will be awarded on May 8, 2014 after the eligibility deadline. She believes there is a good chance the mandate will be rescinded; that the evidence claimed in support of the rationale (no significant difference in student performance when teachers have master’s degrees) cannot be substantiated.

In response to a question by Simpson regarding the significance of enrollment to funding, Mott explained that student headcount and student credit hour production were very important.
Student credit hour production, which is the product of students taught by course credit hours earned, e.g., 20 students enrolled in a three-hour course would generate 60 student credit hours across a program, determines the number of faculty positions allocated to a program. The UNC system follows a tiered model which calculates values for doctoral programs, master’s programs and undergraduate programs.\(^1\)

Only student credit hours produced in fall and spring semesters count toward the allocation of faculty positions. Student credit hours produced in the summer term do not count. Munde noted the disadvantage of the formula to all graduate programs in the College of Education, as so many graduate students teach during the academic year and rely upon summer term enrollments to build up course credits toward their advanced degrees. Although the MLS program has a relatively higher student headcount, it has a relatively lower student credit hour yield. Harer explained that many program students take one or two courses in fall and spring, and two or three courses in the summer term. Some students take longer to get through the program because they do not have the financial means to enroll in two or three courses at a time.

Mott suggested that scholarship support from College and the MLS programs helps a great deal, and that there would be benefit in finding a way to support students who could only afford one course per semester/term to take a second course so that they might get through the program more quickly. Munde also noted that the program had lost very good students half-way through the program, and it would be beneficial if these students could be recaptured through financial support before the six-year limit on program completion runs out. These students have half a degree and run the risk of wasting their efforts.

**IMLS Grant Proposal**

Apropos of the above topic, Harer announced that he had submitted an application for an IMLS Laura Bush 21st Century grant only last month. The proposal was revised from last year’s unsuccessful attempt, and would provide 30 full scholarships. The name of the proposed program is NC-EDDS, or the North Carolina Economically Disadvantaged and Diversity Scholarships. Funding would support recruitment and preparation of candidates from economically disadvantaged and historically under-represented backgrounds for careers in their own community schools. Awards will be announced in April, 2014.

**Summer Student Forum**

Notes from the 2013 Student Forum were included in Board materials, and there were four questions of interest: Should there be a requirement for a personal interview as part of the MLS admissions process? What effective recruiting strategies would you suggest for the MLS program? How can we strengthen our ALA Student Chapter? What technical and/or computing programs, skills, abilities or knowledge do you wish you would develop (or wish you had developed during your time in the program?)

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\(^1\) Mott later provided the exact values. To generate a 1.0 FTE faculty position, a total of 110 doctoral student credit hours, or a total of 303 master’s student credit hours, or a total of 535 undergraduate student credit hours is required.
Board members were supportive of personal interview as a technique to enhance admissions, particularly as a method to elicit information from students who had undergraduate GPAs below their potential or who did not score well on standardized admissions tests. They believed that the whole person should be evaluated; that there were too many vagaries in test design to be meaningful predictors of academic or professional success.

Regarding technology education, Mott noted that the department now had a Curriculum Integration Task Force that was examining possibilities for co-teaching or developing new technology courses program students, and that the technology question is an essential curriculum issue that must be resolved.

Regarding student associations, Tobin reported that she had attended ALA Annual as the student-to-staff representative of ECU and took advantage of everything the conference had to offer and had worked at the ALA Store as her job assignment. She further reported that on September 24, the ALA Student Chapter had sponsored a webinar with Barbara Stripling, current President of the American Library Association on the “future of the profession.” The webinar was very well attended by about 50 students, faculty and alumni. The Student Chapter is currently planning the annual holiday book drive, which collects and distributes new and gently-used books to worthy organizations in students’ home communities.

The Board appreciated these efforts, as well as encouraged active involvement of students as members in NCSLMA and NCLA. Cook noted that NCLA was pleased to see more school library media specialists attend NCLA this year, and Trudeau agreed that the organizations were beginning to find common ground. In response Munde noted that changes had been made to LIBS 6010 Foundations of Library and Information Studies, the first course in the program sequence, to incorporate a unit on professional associations and assured the Board that students would be encouraged to take advantage of the low fees offered to students (total cost $40 for both memberships).

**Future Restructuring within the Department of Information and Library Science**

Harer noted that discussion is underway to explore the inclusion of two other College of Education programs within ILS—Adult Education and Counselor Education, both of which offer masters degrees and offer potential for interdisciplinary projects. Harer suggested that there were previously identified synergies between library science and adult education, e.g., the joint MLS/Community College Instruction Certificate agreement, but the possibilities for collaboration with Counselor Education were not fully understood at this time. Mary Tobin noted that school librarians do and should collaborate with school counselors, and that bibliotherapy might be one shared interest.

The board reviewed and commented on existing recruiting collateral (a one-sheet handout, and a two-sided handout on cardstock). They commented that the photographs did not illustrate library students or librarians in work or educational settings, and did not illustrate the variety of the student body, or the character of online study. The best way to communicate this visually would be through a montage or collage of pictures rather than single photographs.
The meeting adjourned at 3:15.