

Prairie View A&M University
Program, Service, and Management Review
of the
J. B. Coleman Library

September 27 - 29, 2004

The purpose of the Program, Service and Management Review of the J.B. Coleman Library is to ascertain the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the unit in achieving its mission, goals, and objectives. This review is expected to examine operations and management. Only a cursory attention will be devoted to assessing adequacy of print and electronic holdings.

The broad areas of the review are as follow:

MISSION

Is the mission clear?

Do the managers and persons supervised know and accept the mission?

ORGANIZATION

Are the functions compartmentalized in a manner that advances the mission without overlap, conflict, or confusion?

PERSONNEL --GENERAL

Are there sufficient individuals to conduct the work in a normal fashion (e.g. avoid over burdening any professionals or support personnel on a regular basis)?

Do the position descriptions match the actual duties being performed?

Are personnel able to work harmoniously with little conflict or without conflict that negatively impacts the work environment? (If not, what are the dynamics that produce lack of harmony or unity?)

Is every employee evaluated annually and provided an audience with his or her supervisor to discuss strengths and weaknesses?

Are members of the professional staff sought as leaders among their peers? (If so, why?)

PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

Who should receive development and who receives such development?

Is travel to seminars, workshops, etc made available to all personnel who could benefit from such opportunities?

What is the nature of the orientation and mentoring that new staff receives?

PUBLIC RELATIONS--SERVICES

Compared to libraries that PVAMU considers its peers, how positive are the first impressions? (e.g. attire, attitude, behavior, professionalism)

When asked "How is the Library at PVAMU?" how would the typical non-library employee likely respond?

When asked "How is the Library at PVAMU?" how would the typical student respond?

How hospitable and receptive is the library to its patrons including those who present negative attitudes or indiscretion?

Are interlibrary loan and other services provided at an impressive level based upon promptness of response and accuracy of order?

TECHNOLOGY

Is the level of technology available to the staff adequate, above that required or below that desirable?

Is the level of learning technology available to students adequate, above that expected, or below that expected?

MANAGEMENT

Are staff persons in each area able to participate in decision making especially decisions on whom to employ, how to allocate funds for each year, and what changes are needed to improve services annually?

Is there a strategic plan? If so, who participated in developing it?
Has its contents (even draft) been disseminated to all staff?

MANAGEMENT CONTINUED

Are staff members able to discuss issues with supervisors and be confident that their discussion will remain confidential?

Is there a high level of accountability wherein persons are held responsible for doing their jobs and must face consequences if the jobs are not performed as outlined?

Are there opportunities for persons to be groomed for leadership?

Is there a high level of trust evident among the members of the administrative staff within the library?

What does the library staff perceive to be the attitude of the University's executive leadership team toward the library?

BUDGET

Are the financial resources at, above, or far below those needed to meet the needs of a library such as the J.B. Coleman Library?

Are the library access fees being charged to students at, above, or below those being charged at other institutions that PVAMU considers its peer institutions?

If the resources are inadequate, which areas, in priority order, should be addressed to increase the library's effectiveness?

RISK REDUCTION

Are there internal audits routinely or on a cycle to decrease the likelihood of unreported petty cash, loss of library materials, damage to property, abuse of the facility, etc.?

Are rules, policies, and procedures designed to limit inappropriate or unproductive action reviewed periodically?

Are institutional resources used to assist professional and support staff with job related conflicts or personal concerns that might be presented to a supervisor?

Program, Service, and Management Review

of the

John B. Coleman Library

Prairie View A&M University

Fall 2004

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In the fall of 2004, a review team was invited by the administration of Prairie View A&M University to examine “the overall efficiency and effectiveness” of the John B. Coleman Library “in achieving its mission, goals, and objectives.” The team was charged with focusing its attention on the library’s “operations and management,” with only “ cursory attention...devoted to assessing adequacy of print and electronic holdings.” The team visited the library on September 28 and 29, 2004. It toured the library building, attended a presentation by the library director dealing with the library’s collections, finances, and plans, and conducted interviews with the library’s personnel. This report is the result of that visit.

I. Context, Collections, and Facilities

The John B. Coleman Library of Prairie View A&M University serves a growing community of more than 8000 students and over 400 faculty members. The university offers baccalaureate programs in 46 disciplines. Master’s degrees are awarded in 18 disciplines, with a number of concentrations available within disciplines. Four doctoral programs are offered.

To support these programs, the library maintains a collection approaching 400,000 print and electronic monographs and bound periodical volumes, over 9,000 print and electronic periodical subscriptions, over 600,000 microform items, and numerous other resources. The library’s collections and services are based in a spacious, multi-floored, pleasantly designed building. The entry foyer and lobby of the building are

dignified and inviting. Also noteworthy are a fine lecture hall on the ground floor and a small, well-designed museum on the top floor. Stacks and study tables and carrels are arranged conventionally throughout the building. Many tables have been nicely refurbished with black painted tops and glass overlays.

While the stacks and study areas convey an overall impression of functionality, there is starkness in some areas that might be relieved by greater variety in furnishings and the introduction of more works of art. It should also be noted that some of the upholstered lounge furniture in these areas is showing considerable wear.

II. Mission

The mission of the library, as promulgated through the library's Web site and other publications, is a customary statement of the purpose and intent of an academic library. It forthrightly identifies the library as "the central foundation of the entire educational program," and mandates support for learning and research, collaborative collection development, and bibliographic instruction. It also posits the library as an agent of cultural and intellectual enrichment. Consistency with the university's mission is reflected in the library's mission.

The library's employees appear to comprehend its mission. In interviews, employees from throughout the library made earnest and credible professions of dedication to serving students and building a relevant collection. There was evidence of varied interpretations of the library's service imperative, but differing opinions about policies and procedures are common among academic library employees. Optimally,

these differences lead to productive dialogue and the formulation of policies that are sounder for having stood the test of discussion.

III. Organization and Personnel

At first glance, the library's administrative structure seems based on a typical hierarchy of management and division of functions, with one Associate Director managing the "public services" of reference and circulation, which deal directly with the public, and another Associate Director managing the "technical services" of cataloging and acquisitions. However, closer examination reveals significant departures from this pattern, with several functions that are more closely related to public services reporting in the predominantly technical services line. One would expect, for instance, that the functions of electronic services and service at the university's remote campuses would be grouped with public services. Librarians responsible for discrete collections, such as special collections and government documents, might also have more in common, functionally, with their colleagues in reference than those in technical services. The review team recognizes that personnel often, necessarily and appropriately, have duties spanning public and technical services. We nonetheless suggest that the library director review the library's organizational structure to ensure that it is clear and logical and fosters communication and collaboration among personnel who share similar duties and professional concerns.

The library has made notable and commendable progress recently in expanding its collections and services. Substantially increased purchasing of library materials in recent years has served the purpose of helping to establish and maintain the viability of a

number of academic programs. It has also, however, increased the workload of library personnel, particularly in areas such as stack maintenance and technical services. The reference and circulation functions have been similarly affected by the recent decision to keep the library open until 2:00 a.m. several nights per week. These circumstances raise the question of whether the impacted functional areas are sufficiently staffed. As the table below indicates, the ratio of students to library personnel at Prairie View was rather high in the fall of 2002, compared with referent institutions in Texas.¹ If recent increases in enrollment have outpaced increases in staff size, the ratio has become even larger since these data were collected.

INSTITUTION	FTE STUDENTS PER FTE LIBRARY EMPLOYEE
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN	79.21
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY – COMMERCE	86.01
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY	102.90
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT BROWNSVILLE	113.73
LAMAR UNIVERSITY	115.47
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY – CORPUS CHRISTI	119.50
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS – PAN AMERICAN	132.14
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO	140.07
WEST TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY	157.97
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON	159.63
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT DALLAS	162.28
MIDWESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY	169.43
ANGELO STATE UNIVERSITY	181.24
TEXAS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY	182.55
SAM HOUSTON STATE UNIVERSITY	207.14
PRAIRIE VIEW A&M UNIVERSITY	213.17
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT SAN ANTONIO	243.48

Data derived from *2003 Texas Academic Library Statistics*, Texas State Library and Archives Commission

¹ The group of referent institutions used for comparisons in this report is composed mostly of universities that are relatively close to Prairie View A&M University in number of either undergraduate or graduate students, and number of faculty. The University of Texas at Austin and Texas A&M University are included because of legislative designation of those institutions, along with Prairie View, as “institutions of the first class.” The University of Texas at Arlington is also included. It was expedient for the review team to consult statistics compiled by the Texas State Library (TSL) for this report, but the team recognizes that 1890 Land Grant institutions in other states are also in Prairie View’s cohort. The *2003 Texas Academic Library Statistics*, the most recent compilation posted by TSL, consists of data reported for the fall semester of the 2002-03 academic year.

It should be further noted that several positions in the library were unfilled at the time of the review team's visit, and that two positions were devoted to the ancillary function of safety and security and one to development. The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) has published standards indicating that student enrollment, collection size, and annual change in the size of the collection are key components in determining the number of librarians required. Other factors related to staff size include services and programs, degrees offered, auxiliary programs, and the size of the faculty and staff. The team proposes that careful consideration be given to staffing levels in the library, with particular attention to depth of coverage in areas affected by increased purchasing and hours.

Considerations of administrative structure and staffing adequacy provide a context in which the issue of staff harmony may be addressed. Through its interviews, the review team sensed a high level of interpersonal conflict among library personnel. The team recognizes that a degree of disharmony and discontent will be found among the staff of any academic library, and that tension frequently exists between functional units. Disharmony and conflict at the John B. Coleman Library, however, seem inordinately intense. The review team detected indications that service quality is being affected by the resultant emotional pressure, low morale, and lack of mutual trust throughout the staff.

Through only a brief visit and fleeting interviews, it is difficult for the review team to discern all the dynamics that are producing disharmony among personnel. However, based on information gained from its interviews, the team suggests the following:

- Every level of management within the library should take action to foster communication and constructive interaction between employees.
- Weekly or bi-weekly meetings should be held within departments and among the heads of different departments.
- Regular monthly written reports should be required from the off-campus sites in northwest Houston and from the Downtown site.
- Efforts should be made to mitigate the effects of circumstances that pose barriers to communication and collaboration, such as widely separated work shifts, frequent absences, and remote workplaces.
- When new librarians are hired, search committees that are broadly representative of the library staff should be involved, and the search process should be used to initiate a sense of comity between new and incumbent employees. ACRL publishes *Guidelines for the Screening and Appointment of Academic Librarians using a Search Committee.* A review of these guidelines would be helpful to the search committees as they formulate their search policies.

IV. Public Relations, Management, and Personnel Development

In addressing issues of morale and staff conflict, the library's management should draw upon numerous strengths in its program noted by the review team. The rapid growth of collections should provide library employees with the satisfaction of knowing they are supporting academic study and research at an ever-higher level. Indeed, in its interviews with faculty and students the team heard no complaints about either resources or the

quality of service from the library. Students acknowledged the importance of the library by expressing a desire for even longer hours for the library building, mainly to provide access to computers and an alternative to student housing as a venue for study. Students' endorsement of increases in the library fee indicates they believe the library is using their money well.

A number of library personnel evidenced an impressively high level of dedication to the university and the library in their interviews. The library benefits from a harmonious blend of the wisdom of experience and the enthusiasm of newcomers within some functional units. While time did not permit a thorough analysis of professional development practices in the library, anecdotal evidence from the interviews indicated that continuing education is readily supported for—and appreciated by—employees who take the initiative to seek it.

Unfortunately, the library's considerable strengths appear to have been significantly undercut by strife among personnel and its attendant negative effect on morale. Interviews revealed that the library's upper management team is viewed by a significant number of staff as ineffective in dealing with personnel issues that lie at the heart of the disharmony. Consequently, management must make a concerted effort to regain the trust and confidence of the library's personnel. Based on information gained from its interviews, the team offers the following suggestions:

- Library administration and all levels of management should pay particular attention to projecting a sense of dignity and discretion in their personal demeanor on the job.

- Library administration and management at all levels should begin immediately to set an example in treating all library employees with respect, both verbally and non-verbally.
- Library administration has the primary responsibility for handling personnel issues. Delegation of authority and/or repeated restructuring of the organization should not be used to avoid dealing with personnel issues.
- Library administration must be consistent and equitable in holding all employees accountable for poor job performance and insubordination.
- Library administration should make it clear that participatory decision-making will prevail with regard to service policies and collection development.

V. Budget

Data currently available from the Texas State Library indicate that in the fall of 2002, Prairie View was near the middle of this report’s referent group in library expenditures per student. A more recent compilation of data might place the university higher in the list.

INSTITUTION	LIBRARY EXPENDITURE PER FTE STUDENT
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN	\$807.27
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY	\$636.09
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON	\$455.52
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY - CORPUS CHRISTI	\$443.42
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY - COMMERCE	\$405.08
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO	\$403.33
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT DALLAS	\$403.26
LAMAR UNIVERSITY	\$340.08
ANGELO STATE UNIVERSITY	\$332.98

PRAIRIE VIEW A&M UNIVERSITY	\$322.39
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS - PAN AMERICAN	\$310.83
SAM HOUSTON STATE UNIVERSITY	\$275.57
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT SAN ANTONIO	\$269.30
WEST TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY	\$258.87
TEXAS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY	\$196.40
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT BROWNSVILLE	\$182.46
MIDWESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY	\$166.04

Data derived from 2003 Texas Academic Library Statistics, Texas State Library and Archives Commission

A major source of funding for the library is a student-paid fee for library services.

These fees usually take the form of simple, per-credit-hour fees, as at Prairie View. At some institutions, they are capped. In a few cases, a flat, per-student fee is assessed.

Proportions of library budgets covered by the fees vary.

The Texas Council of State University Librarians annually produces a table of data regarding library fees. A portion of the most recent compilation, limited to this report's group of referent institutions, is presented below. Because of the variety of fee structures, institutions are listed in the table in alphabetical order, rather than by amount of fee. The table indicates that while Prairie View's fee is higher than those of most of the institutions listed, it is not as high as those of the state's two other "institutions of the first class."

INSTITUTION	FEE STRUCTURE
ANGELO STATE UNIVERSITY	FY04 - \$1/credit hr. FY05 - \$2/credit hr.
LAMAR UNIVERSITY	FY04 \$4/ credit hr., \$40 cap FY05 \$8/ credit hr.
MIDWESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY	FY04 \$2 / credit hr FY05 \$3/ credit hr
PRAIRIE VIEW A&M UNIVERSITY	FY04 - \$5/ credit hr FY05 - \$10/credit hr
SAM HOUSTON STATE UNIVERSITY	\$30/student Fall, Spring; \$15 per Summer session
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY	\$6/ credit hr., plus \$15.80/ credit hr "Excellence Fee" phased in over 4 years, beginning FY03. Fee

	revenues will supplant E&G support for libraries.
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY - COMMERCE	FY04 \$3/credit hr.
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY - CORPUS CHRISTI	\$4/credit hr.
TEXAS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY	\$30/ semester
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON	FY04 \$12credit hr. \$175.5 cap FY05 \$15credit hr. \$172.5 cap
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN	\$12.29/ credit hr.
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT BROWNSVILLE	FY03 - \$1/ credit hr. FY04 - \$2/ credit hr.
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT DALLAS	\$10/ credit hr.
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO	FY04 \$3 credit hr. undergrad \$4 credit hr. graduate FY05 \$4 credit hr. undergrad \$5 credit hr. graduate
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS - PAN AMERICAN	FY04 \$1.50/ credit hr. FY05 \$2.25/ credit hr.
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT SAN ANTONIO	FY04 - \$8/ credit hr. FY05 - \$10/ credit hr. Library also collects share of Computer Fee
WEST TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY	\$3/ credit hr.

Data derived from Library Fee and Revenue Survey, Texas Council of State University Librarians, October 2004

The review team is impressed by the importance Prairie View's students seem to place on library services through their acceptance of a substantial increase in the library fee this year. The team wishes to state, however, that it views library services as an essential and basic component of a university's academic infrastructure. The team urges Prairie View's administration to consider proceeds from the fee as supplemental funding that will allow the library to excel, rather than basic funding that will simply allow the library to exist.

VI. Summary and Conclusions

Information presented to the review team indicates that the John B. Coleman Library is in the midst of a period of significant expansion of its collection and services. If Prairie View is aiming for parity in library support on a per-student basis with the other

“institutions of the first class” in Texas, it is moving in the right direction, but it must be prepared to consider still further increases in library funding and staffing.

For a number of reasons, tension appears to be high among library personnel. A relatively low staffing level during a period of rapid growth and change may be contributing to the stress, but other factors are also evident. The review team urges the library’s upper management to seek to fill vacant positions, take steps to improve communication among employees, restructure reporting lines to conform more closely to functions, and, most importantly, secure its role as a provider of wise, fair, and reliable leadership.

The John B. Coleman Library has strengths with which to meet its challenges. With a supportive student body and university administration, a number of experienced and dedicated employees, enthusiastic and committed new staff members, and an attractive and spacious facility, the library is poised to assume an ever more prominent role in the support of scholarship and research at Prairie View A&M University. To fulfill that potential, an atmosphere of constructive collegiality must be established. That outcome will be achieved only if it is actively sought by the library’s personnel, and skillfully cultivated by its team of senior managers.