To CARLI Members

As I told you during last week's CODSULI meeting, I will clarify the situation of the faculty librarians at Western Illinois University (WIU). In August of this year, nine faculty or research librarians received layoff notices. Their employment with Western will end at the end of the academic year.

These layoffs were made necessary by WIU's financial situation and budget deficit. The Provost's Office decided to prioritize the maintenance of collections and periodicals, as well as faculty instruction in the regular academic classroom, and this led to a decision to reduce the staff in the library. Please know that this decision does not in any way relate to performance or any kind of evaluation.

With the Provost's Office, we are now analyzing the new structure and the kind of librarianship knowledge and skills necessary to maintain the level of excellent service we have at the WIU Libraries. The Provost and the President assured me that in the next six months, we will have the necessary personnel with the librarianship knowledge and skills for the academic year 2025-26.

We are seeing possibilities to fill that need. One possibility is to hire librarians as staff (without faculty status) to help deliver the student-centered aspects of our services. With the support of the staff without librarianship training, these staff members will continue our excellent work at WIU Libraries.

The second possibility, which will take at least two or three years because it will require negotiation with our union, is to establish a new kind of faculty librarian classification in our contract. That librarian will need to teach courses (half-time), and the rest of the academic work will be at the WIU Libraries. These librarians will be joint appointments with other WIU departments and programs.

We are trying to do our best in these challenging circumstances. We are helping some of our faculty librarians retire, and others are already taking other academic positions on campus. Given these new possibilities, we want some of the librarians to stay with us at WIU.