

APSCUF NEWS ITEM

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LHUP Professors Sign Open Letter to University President Keith Miller

Strenuously objecting to plans that would decrease the size of Lock Haven University's Stevenson Library by 60,000 books and sacrifice quiet study areas, over 120 LHU faculty members have signed an open letter to LHU President Keith Miller.

The letter notes the administration originally called for the elimination of 120,000 books (almost half of the library's circulating collection), but the 60,000 figure was the result of a compromise offered by LHU's library faculty.

"The professionals who lead and staff the library were not the driving force behind the original proposal. It is evident to us that those making the original proposal gave no weight to its effects on the academic mission of the University," the open letter states.

The document also acknowledges that a certain amount of culling of books is routinely accomplished at the institution, and that LHU has an "appropriate system" for culling books. The culling "is accomplished by professional librarians in consultation with scholars in the disciplines."

It is worth noting that as late as 2005-06, the LHU library discarded over 14,000 books (the number of volumes for the three previous years are 6,000, 9,700 and 6,500 respectively). However, the pro-



posed number of 60,000 represents 20% of the entire collection.

The document states, "It would be impossible to sustain a truly deliberative process to weed out books on this scale in such a short time. This can only do permanent damage to the library collection. This approach suggests a willingness to destroy something of lasting value . . . for what?"

"Despite the proliferation of electronic databases, books remain central to our learning. The importance of the book cannot be overstated. This is why LHU faculty across the liberal arts and sciences, requires students to read books. Books are the tools of our trade. What kind of message are we sending to students, alumni,

trustees, prospective students and their parents, and other potential funders about the value we place on higher education if we discard tens of thousands of books? It cannot be justified on any grounds."

The document continues by noting that books are the heart of education in the liberal arts. "Books are as central to our students' learning in some disciplines as laboratory equipment is in others," it states.

"Books written 100 years ago can provide as valuable a perspective on our history and our world as books written today. Our faculty can share stories of students who have discovered the treasures that our library holds. The library has been central place for our students
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LHUP Professors Sign Open Letter to University President Keith Miller (continued)

to develop as scholars, and their achievements bring recognition and praise to the university.”

The letter concedes that there are some important gaps in library holdings, and adds that budgetary reductions have limited the purchases the library staff desired

to make. The document lauds the efforts of the library staff for what it has been able to accomplish with such limited resources, and indicates LHU should be considering plans to upgrade the library rather than downgrade it.

The open letter concludes by strongly urging LHU President Miller to rescind the decision to reduce the library’s book holdings and to consider alternative proposals for the reallocation of space on campus that would protect the library and its assets.

