

Self-Study 2021

A Strategic Planning Initiative of the University of Wyoming (UW) Libraries

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Introduction:

The Greek philosopher Socrates once wrote that to know thyself is the beginning of wisdom. Likewise, *Self-Study 2021* is a long overdue and much needed analysis of what we are as an academic library, and how much UW Libraries have accomplished inside and outside of the University of Wyoming itself.

More importantly, *Self-Study 2021* is:

- An exploration of the nature of the challenges UW Libraries currently faces
- An anticipation of what may develop on the horizon
- A vision of future opportunities aligned with strategic planning of UW Academic Affairs and University of Wyoming stakeholders

Functionally, *Self-Study 2021* is an extensive “SWOT” (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis—the only difference being the re-positioning of the “Threats” and “Opportunities” categories to end each analysis on a positive note. Work on the self-study began in September 2021, and was carried out by three Self-Study Leadership teams within UW Libraries—each of them involving at least one Assistant Dean, one staff member, and two faculty. These three teams respectively analyzed:

1. UW Libraries’ Services and Spaces
2. UW Libraries’ Organization Management and Business Operations
3. UW Libraries’ Partnerships and External Relationships

Data from the three teams were collected from September through December, and aggregated in early 2022. Those data collectively inform this overall report, and complement the separate *ClimateQUAL* survey conducted by the Associate Dean in late 2021.

Section I: UW Libraries Services and Spaces

Overview:

As the technology of information, learning, research, and knowledge evolves and advances, so does every service UW Libraries provides—inside and outside of traditional library facilities. Our facilities themselves not only house our growing collections, but host dynamic learning spaces for the campus as well as the state. Chief among these facilities is the William Robertson Coe Library, our flagship facility that covers six levels and more than 250,000 square feet. Coe Library was extensively renovated and expanded in 2009. Other campus facilities of UW Libraries include the Brinkerhoff Earth Sciences Information Center in the Geology Building, the Learning Resource Center in the Education Building, and the Library Annex Storage Facility in the basement of the Science Complex.

A. Library Services

Strengths

- The University Libraries faculty and staff take pride in our services. We are responsive to and respectful of our users and each other.
- The University community values our services and communicates about their needs. The Libraries are consistently highly rated on the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and similar surveys.
- Our collections are a well-regarded service to the University and the state. We have benefited from strong collection budgets in the past, although the collection budget has diminished over the past decade.
- The Libraries collaborate with a number of partners for providing services. These partners include our library building partners, the University, the state, K-12 schools, public patrons, and everyone who stops by physically or virtually.
- Our library instruction program is well-utilized and respected by teaching faculty.
- We employ bright, engaged people who want to grow into new jobs if given the training and the opportunity.

Weaknesses

- The Libraries will need additional staff and resources to support the Provost's initiatives for achieving R1 status and related research-based library services.
- The current high workload means finding time for training personnel to provide new services is a challenge.
- Lack of awareness of our services is a problem, despite marketing efforts. Our services are valued by those who use them, but not enough people realize what we offer. Unfortunately, however, we cannot scale up due to chronic understaffing. This cycle leads to frustration for all.
- The libraries would like to expand our current service offerings and add new services, but we lack adequate personnel to maintain current services and grow new services.
- Under-classification of library staff prevents us from hiring personnel with needed skill sets due to uncompetitive salaries. In addition, legacy staff classifications, based on archaic perceptions of library work, do not recognize the immense shift in library staff functions over the last thirty years.

Library Services (continued)

Threats

- Understaffing in all units is a major obstacle to providing or expanding current services.
- Underpayment of staff campus-wide results in high turnover. This churn creates a constant training cycle, diverting time and resources from moving forward.
- Current staff is burnt out and overextended.
- An inflexible and archaic HR system poses a considerable threat to the Libraries and our ability to hire.
- The unwillingness of our patrons and ourselves to sunset old services in order to provide new ones is problematic. Collectively, we want to think we can do it all.
- Scheduling and supporting heavily-used library meeting rooms is time-intensive for the Deans' office staff, particularly as in-person meetings ramp up post-pandemic.
- The combined desk and triaged reference service have different perceptions as to their effectiveness, particularly among Help Desk personnel and the Research and Instruction Department. Collaborating on solutions across departments should be a priority.
- A significant problem in providing just-in-time collections and reserves to meet the teaching mission of the university is a lack of advanced planning by faculty members. The Libraries are committed to acquiring materials that support teaching, but we do need adequate time to do so.
- Budget cuts negatively affect the Libraries' ability to meet user needs, and this trend will worsen with further cuts.

Opportunities:

- People are the Libraries' greatest asset and greatest need. Hiring more personnel plus investing in training, growth, compensation, work areas, and skills of our current people are our top service issues and our most significant areas for growth.
- The Libraries envisions new and improved services if we could hire and retain people, remain open longer, and expand into new service areas.
- Accessibility and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) are areas we are engaged in that have huge upside potential for more and focused services
- We all see collaboration as a way to move the libraries forward. We work well together, and amazing things happen when we have the time. However, we could do more great things if we had adequate staffing.

B. Library Spaces

Strengths

- Coe Library is a popular and heavily used facility – gate count data (pre-COVID) show increased usage and visits.
- An active furniture replacement and refreshment based on user feedback have kept Coe Library current with trends in user needs. At the branch libraries, users welcomed recent efforts at refreshing spaces, but more attention is needed.
- Employees have ergonomic furniture. We are grateful for the right-sized chairs and adjustable desks.
- The Student Learning Commons on Coe Level One is an example of how we can innovate and envision new library spaces when we have time, space, and funding.

Weaknesses

- The University owns and controls all library space, and we could lose space with minimal consultation.
- All libraries are at capacity for shelving, and the lack of a storage facility is a growth issue for both collections and services. Inadequate space for current collections and services is a problem.
- Lighting is problematic in all facilities, and staff has little control over lighting in work areas.
- Branch facilities work spaces are often less desirable and updated than Coe Library, both for staff and patrons.
- Office spaces for many departments no longer contribute to working effectively, as the design was for a different time. Reorganizations, shifting of staff lines to new units, and time have rendered the original design obsolete.
- Noise pollution is an ongoing issue for staff who work with the public.
- Accessibility within our facilities can always be improved, particularly in the branch libraries.
- Study rooms are popular and oversubscribed, but we lack space to expand offerings.
- Staff spaces which lack privacy can create stress and hinder focus, especially for staff stationed in public view. In addition, when the public can see us, training or attending an online meeting leads to the perception by patrons that we are ignoring them.

Threats

- External control of library spaces is the most significant threat to the Libraries' ability to evolve our spaces and services. The popularity of Coe Library is a strength as well as a threat.
- Safety is an issue in Coe Library due to the facility's sheer size of 252,500 square feet across six levels.
- Environmental systems in all library facilities need upgrades. For example, the University did not clean the HVAC ducts after construction in 2010 since it was deemed too expensive. As a result, the ducts have never been cleaned, which is not healthy for the collection or the people.
- Carpet squares that do not adhere to the floor are an ongoing safety issue.
- Lack of collection and service space is already critical, and we fear that altering these spaces will adversely affect our collections and operations.

Library Spaces (continued)

Opportunities

- A storage facility and local control of library spaces would allow us to take advantage of opportunities that we can currently conceive but not implement.
- A redesign of spaces for current and future uses, especially for new services and units, would allow us to expand our offerings. For example, Digital Collections, the Digital Scholarship Center, Studio Coe, and other units were shoehorned into inadequate spaces simply because that is where there was room.
- Our Research Discovery & Management (RDM) division still occupies building space that was logistically intended for nearly four times the amount of staff (when processing print materials was a labor-intensive library activity).
- A building redesign for a 21st-century library would be an exciting opportunity to rethink how and where we provide services and house staff. This effort, combined with an off-campus storage facility, would allow us to serve our users and staff better.

Section II: UW Libraries Organization Management and Business Operations

Overview:

UW Libraries collects a sizable amount of data from its many services and operations. Our data is subsequently reported out via the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) survey, the Integrated Post-Secondary Data System (IPEDS), and requests related to program and college accreditation. We maintain a 10-year data report that is updated annually by our Director of Business Operations. Some of the data we track for these purposes includes circulation, Interlibrary Loan (ILL) activity, gate counts, interactions with patrons, number of and attendance at instruction sessions and workshops, number of collection items by type, number of electronic items accessed, number of items added to our collection. While the feedback we received from faculty and staff was not always consistent in terms of fundamental understanding—including perceptions of having a voice in decision making—the consensus is that the Libraries' financial management as a whole is solid.

A. Data- and Intelligence-driven Decision Making

Strengths:

- Quantity and quality of operational data, historically going back 30+ years
- Because we need to report some data externally, we have been good at collecting and keeping certain types of data
- Some areas do use their collected data to make decisions, for example, around hours, staffing, services, collection decisions

Weaknesses:

- While we sometimes use data to make decisions, we also make decisions without consulting data.
- We are not always good at sharing data, particularly across divisions and departments. Historically, some data is not shared openly.
- We lack a common platform/location for data collection and storage. Data is scattered across different storage media, platforms, and in un-shared folders. There is no consolidated global view of data.
- Some interviewees indicated that while they collect data, they do not necessarily understand why they are collecting it
- Our tools for collecting and sharing data are not optimal.
- Data regarding our library website usage is not robust and could be expanded, however, with our current staffing it is difficult to enhance this area of data collection.

Threats:

- Software/system problems can make it difficult to collect and share data, particularly with proprietary systems.
- We cannot control how any of our data is used/interpreted outside of UW Libraries.

Data- and Intelligence-driven Decision Making (continued)

Threats (continued):

- Employment turnover can hamper data collection, and there could also be missing or incomplete data when it is too time consuming/difficult to collect. Also, for data that we rely on student employees to keep, we can expect some inconsistencies.
- In some areas, we are lacking personnel to truly get a complete set of data about the libraries. Data collection takes time, which takes proper staffing.
- In some cases, the decisions about what data to collect have not kept up with the changing library profession/environment.

Opportunities:

- There is an opportunity for UW Libraries to do an exhaustive, inter-divisional examination of what data is currently being collected, how it is being used and shared, and determining if it is the correct data for decision-making. This could be a cross-divisional working group tasked with understanding how and why we collect data, what we do with it, and how we share/display it.
- There is an opportunity to create a position around UW Libraries institutional assessment that could possibly be combined with an Integrated Library System (ILS) or website administrator.
- The new ILS will likely provide better ways of collecting, storing, and displaying data.
- There might be tools available that would help us keep data in one place and also assist with displaying/sharing it.
- UW Libraries can institute better communication around sharing data and the implications of data.
- UW Libraries could improve its dashboard.
- If we do some work around data collection and sharing, it could lead to better ways to tell our story.

B. Budget/Accounting/Financial Management

Strengths:

- Many respondents praised UW Libraries' Director, Business Operations for her ability to keep our large, complicated budget on track, ability to communicate with stakeholders, approach to managing the Part-Time Non-Benefitted (PTNB) budget, and understanding of the needs of UW Libraries.
- Supervisors of student workers appreciated getting their budgets by hours rather than dollars; this made planning, hiring, and scheduling easier.
- UW Libraries has a good reputation on campus in our management of budgets and ability to meet needs of students, faculty, and staff.
- We have healthy endowments, though there can be restraints on how those are used that can be challenging.
- There is great value in our partnerships and memberships, detailed in Part III of self-study.

Budget/Accounting/Financial Management (continued)

Strengths (continued):

- We have effective financial management within UW Libraries and use funds judiciously.
 - The Libraries Administrative team monitors the use of funds on an ongoing basis
 - Priorities for spending are tied to strategic initiatives as much as possible (beyond routine operational expenses)
 - Open positions are evaluated and reconfigured to support the changing needs of the Libraries to support stakeholders
 - Library collections and resource acquisition are tied to changing needs

Weaknesses:

- Transparency is perceived to be a problem. While some respondents to interview questions felt knowledgeable about our financial processes and how to navigate requests, some indicated that they felt UW Libraries lacked transparency and communication around budget and financial topics. This could be best described as a general need for more transparency and better information-sharing.
 - This was likely exacerbated by the pandemic, as communication generally suffered while faculty and staff were working remotely (see Communication section for details), UW Libraries generally was in a state of flux while responding to pandemic needs, and we have had some turnover in staffing.
 - System deficiencies are also a problem that contributes to transparency.
 - Some employees feel frustrated that they do not have a voice in decision-making.
- Employees who are currently or who have served on committees/working groups indicated that they are unclear about the guidelines regarding their budgets and what constitutes a reasonable funding request.
- Current funding model does not allow the organization to address staffing issues.
 - Reliance on student employees/work study to supplement the budget is difficult, especially for units which need to provide services and support on the first day of classes. This is a weakness caused by multiple threats, including difficulty in hiring students, difficulty in retention, lower enrollment/lack of students in campus, COVID difficulties, etc.
 - While many mentioned in the Personnel and Organizational Effectiveness categories that there is a need to audit positions and create opportunities for pay increases and advancement, the reality is that it is difficult to identify funding for this type of initiative. This is also a threat, because there are elements about our budget that are out of our control.

Budget/Accounting/Financial Management (continued)

Threats:

- There are many parts of financial planning that are out of our control.
- University budget issues and reductions directly impact the Libraries budgets.
- Changing priorities with new administrations affect strategic planning.
- University mandates sometimes lack sustainable funding.
- Increasing costs of subscriptions, services, and software erode our buying power.
- The inflexibility of some University policies hinders our ability to spend and allocate funds.
- Centralized decision-making by University administration and occasional lack of transparency across campus departments reduces our ability to financially plan and respond.
- Inadequate funding hampers our ability to address staffing needs.

Opportunities:

- The top opportunity in this category is related to the Communication section of this part of the self-study. There is an opportunity to examine how we disseminate information related to budget and financial planning. This could take the form of inviting department heads to some meetings, having more frequent town halls devoted to financials, or finding a standardized, frequently updated way to communicate this information more broadly, and involve more people into a collaborative, transparent decision-making process. Respondents disclosed concerns around not knowing how positions are allocated/filled/changed, not understanding how priorities are determined, and uncertainty toward current budget allocations in some areas.
- Libraries Administration could offer more training or open documentation explaining how budgeting works, why it can be inflexible, and how it fits into the greater picture of University/endowment financials.
- Additional funding can be generated through grants and fundraising.
- We can always re-examine and re-prioritize spending, particularly with regards to the collections budget, supporting UW initiatives, and aligning the budget to fit within our stated priorities.

Section III: UW Libraries Organizational Structure, Personnel, and Internal Communication

Overview:

UW Libraries current organizational structure revolves around three divisions along with the Library Administration. The forms of these three divisions and the Library Administration is driven by various library functions, as laid out below:

- Education and Research Services (ERS), which covers:
 - Instruction
 - Research assistance
 - Digital collections
 - Digital scholarship center
 - Special Collections
- Resource and Discovery Management (RDM), which covers:
 - Cataloging
 - Electronic resource management
 - Discovery management
 - Acquisitions
 - Processing and preservation
- User Services (US), which covers:
 - Circulation
 - Interlibrary Loan
 - Library Annex
 - Branches, including Geology and LRC (cooperative agreement with ACSD)
 - Studio Coe/Creation spaces
 - Mailroom
- Library Administration, which covers:
 - Dean and Associate Dean offices
 - Director of Budget Operations
 - Institutional Marketing
 - HR Related functions

Strengths:

- Our faculty and staff are dedicated and talented and foster a climate of compassion. We have great people in leadership and non-leadership positions who work together for the interests of UW Libraries and our users.
- Remote-work options have enhanced hiring as well as retention.
- Flexibility in some positions is a positive. Select positions have opportunities to cross-train, which is helpful in keeping jobs interesting while responding to changes in library work.
- Our newly formed Diversity Council is supporting DEI initiatives at both the Libraries and University level.
- Generally, both faculty and staff are aware of our organizational structure.

• **Organization Structure, Personnel, and Internal Communication (continued)**

Strengths (continued):

- Decision making is more efficient than it was before our most recent reorganization. The new division structure with three Assistant Deans (versus twelve Department Heads) is more nimble and requires fewer administrative meetings. However, communication about administrative decisions is not always as clear to every employee, and some feel like they have less opportunity for input.
- Approval chains have been streamlined through HCM.
- Our relationships with other campus entities, departments and colleges are generally strong.
- Some divisions noted improvements in efficiency and communication after our last reorganization, which removed some barriers and issues under the previous structure.
- Internally, UW Libraries is developing stronger inter-division relationships.

Weaknesses:

- While the move from twelve administrators (Department Heads) to three administrators (Assistant Deans) created efficiencies, it also reduced interpersonal access to administrators, largely because the Assistant Deans now have a higher administration load and are subsequently less available.
- Occasionally, confusion exists about granular versions of organizational charts and which tasks/responsibilities are formally assigned to which individuals. This occurs particularly during times of turnover and vacant positions.
- Some employees felt like they did not always know the proper chain for questions/approvals/communication. There is also concern that select employees have more access to administrators than others.
- An unintended consequence of organizational divisions determined by library function is the perception or reality of organizational silos within the greater library organization. Decisions are sometimes made within one silo without consideration for how it affects the other silos.
- While remote work has provided welcome flexibility, we haven't perfected every communication process and tool to thoroughly keep every employee connected.
- The pandemic reduced opportunities for in-person collaboration, including town halls, meetings, informal interactions, etc. This has made inter-divisional work more challenging and occasionally drawn out activities requiring formal approval.
- Efficiencies from HCM are often negated by the system's inflexibility.
- Turnover, resignations, retirements, and poor retention have made some library functions difficult to sustain.
- We have had issues with inconsistent onboarding processes, uneven training, career advancement limitations, and inconsistencies in management styles and abilities.
- Our ability to hire for the changing demands of a modern academic library is a perpetual challenge.
- Staff job descriptions are antiquated.

Organization Structure, Personnel, and Internal Communication (continued)

Weaknesses (continued):

- We lack position classifications with proper pay for some types of positions, including those relating to technology.
- Staff positions have very low pay, particularly given the increase in housing costs in the area.
- Lack of compensation and lack of advancement opportunities leads to poor retention.
- Central position management process is limited and not progressive.
- We have a reliance on student employees to keep many aspects of the Libraries functional. This is a weakness for a variety of reasons:
 - Student workers are a transient and high-turnover workforce by nature.
 - We often lose students due to better opportunities off-campus.
 - Complex work takes time to conduct proper training, and the short-term nature of students, coupled with the fact that many are not working year-round, can make it difficult to use students for some essential tasks.
 - The pandemic has reduced public-facing positions traditionally held by students.
 - Students who receive certain types of scholarships do not fill out a FAFSA and do not know that they could also qualify for work study. This decreases the pool of qualified student workers.
 - There is a perception that students will be less reliable than full-time employees.
- Many staff have spoken of burnout, which has only been exacerbated by the pandemic.

Threats:

- Budgets, staffing decisions, and organizational decisions made outside of UW Libraries can impact duties and responsibilities within the Libraries.
 - New administrations can drastically change how we need to allocate our resources, including personnel.
 - Legislative decisions directly affect our budget and priorities.
 - IT centralization has made it difficult to have the IT support and dedication we need to accomplish strategies involving databases, hardware, and software.
 - Classification of positions can limit flexibility in matching positions to necessary work.
- Decision-making can be too centralized and lead to communication breakdowns and workflow difficulties, particularly with a reliance for information to be indirect, flowing downward through various levels.
- Our organizational structure is highly dependent on student employees. This means that in addition to turnover/short term employment, any decrease in on-campus enrollment or other student hiring issues can mean difficulties in maintaining basic services.
- Staff positions typically lack career ladders for advancement and growth, making it difficult for existing staff to advance their careers with increasing responsibilities/pay. This is both a personnel issue and an organizational threat, due to the limiting of organizational possibilities and lack of opportunities for long-term employees.

Organization Structure, Personnel, and Internal Communication (continued)

Threats (continued):

- Turnover/retention has been an issue impacting every division. Hiring, onboarding, and training are time-consuming and create more work on already overworked employees.
- Vacant positions mean that work is shuffled to remaining employees, creating additional stress on the organization.
- Slow approval processes from Human Resources have hindered searches and in some cases lost potential candidates.
- While each employee who leaves UW Libraries has their own unique reasons, collectively those reasons have included one or more of the following:
 - Salaries not supporting the rising costs of living in Laramie
 - Limited advancement opportunities
 - Dissatisfaction with living in Laramie
 - Political climate of Laramie and Wyoming in general
- There are institutional barriers to reorganization if or when we deem it necessary. Lack of correctly classified positions to support evolving needs of academic libraries, particularly around technology-related responsibilities. IT centralization has contributed to this problem, as we cannot have certain types of tech positions within the Libraries umbrella.
- We currently do not have positions with pay grades to support our strategic plans involving technology.
- Library schools might not be providing the correct education and skills for certain types of positions.
- Lack of training for supervisors and our organizational structure sometimes enable inappropriate or ineffective work behaviors.

Opportunities:

- Because work distribution and delegation seems uneven, and because the needs of the academic library are constantly evolving, there is an opportunity to examine how work is distributed within each division, and if the quantity of positions in each division is adequate. This includes looking at job descriptions, the amount of work, and the changing nature of the work. Changing strategic priorities might mean that there is room for improvement.
- Develop consistent onboarding for all employees.
- Develop our own training manual for those who supervise, as well as targeted professional development opportunities. This needs to be standardized between divisions.
- Continue to pursue partnerships on campus that can yield collaboration and funding opportunities.
- A move to a new integrated library system will give us the opportunity to optimize our workflows, examine our staffing and duties, and refine communication.
- UW Libraries can continue to improve and evolve our services, collections, staffing, and strategic plan to work toward acceptance into ARL and the University's plan to become an R1 institution.

Section IV: UW Libraries Marketing and External Communication

Overview:

UW Libraries employs a Marketing & Communications Specialist from UW Institutional Marketing to handle press releases, website maintenance, social media accounts, service and event promotion, and other duties related to marketing and library promotion. When available, interns are also utilized for these marketing efforts.

Strengths:

- Our Marketing & Communications Specialist is frequently praised for developing good marketing strategies and for being approachable and efficient.
- Having an in-house Marketing & Communications specialist is an improvement over the prior system of distributing that work throughout the Libraries. The current arrangement has resulted in a unified branding and approaches that reach more people on as well as off campus.
- As an employee of Institutional Marketing, our Marketing & Communications Specialist can tap into other ideas, support, and resources provided by that organization.
- A formal branding guide created by the Marketing & Communications Specialist ensures consistent graphics and messaging.
- UW Libraries provides endowment funding for student marketing interns, which helps with production and gives valuable experiences in marketing for UW undergraduates.
- Our Marketing & Communications Specialist has built relationships inside and outside of UW Libraries, creating partnerships that strengthen getting our messages out.
- We have a good social media presence utilize creative marketing strategies for emerging channels of communication.
- The UW Libraries Deans Office has established workflows for handling certain types of external communication, with predictable ways of filtering those needs to their office.

Weaknesses:

- UW Libraries lacks adequate web programming and website management staffing to make fast and nimble progress on enhancing the web site and related services, including accessibility standards.
- Some individual employees of UW Libraries have felt that tighter control and adherence to the branding guide is too restrictive.

Threats:

- The way society, particularly its younger members, interact with social media continues to evolve and shift. Platforms themselves have changed, privacy concerns have changed, and the ways people consume media have changed. Our current social networking strategy does not always reach people as effectively as it used to. Due to the small staff size, it is difficult to adjust to those changes.

Marketing and External Communication (continued)

Threats (continued):

- Migrating to a new Course Management System (CMS) platform again will be difficult and time consuming, and changes in University priorities have changed how we share information. With our current staffing levels, the process of migrating will be time-consuming and difficult.
- Institutional Marketing standards can feel stifling, particularly in comparison to departments on campus who choose to work around them. This is the trade-off for having an Institutional Marketing representative at UW Libraries. While it gives us much needed assistance to coordinate efforts, it leaves little wiggle room for variance.

Opportunities:

- Improvements can always be made to our web site and remote services, including accessibility standards.
- The website migration to new systems will identify additional improvements we can concurrently implement.
- A working group can generate ideas on optimal social media strategies for reaching younger students.
- Our Marketing & Communications Specialist believes we can continue to improve our relationships with internal UW departments and other stakeholders throughout the state.
- We can re-examine how our faculty/staff directory appears on our website and make it more useful to both internal employees and external users.

Section V: UW Libraries Planning

Overview:

Planning at UW Libraries generally falls into three categories:

- Strategic
- Emergency
- Operational

UW Libraries engages in planning at many different levels, within every division, and for a wide range of purposes. Examples include strategic planning, budget planning, disaster planning, emergency planning, and also targeted planning undertaken by working groups. Examples of targeted planning involve space planning, planning related to software and technology, a discovery leadership team, safety, risk management, personnel, and many other topics. Working groups are convened for a specified purpose and timeframe, and make recommendations to UW Libraries administration.

Strengths:

- Planning in general is a strength of UW Libraries
- Expertise and knowledge throughout the Libraries allows us to convene functional groups with representatives from each division, which can be effective for problem solving.
- UW Libraries' Diversity Council has been positive for enhancing knowledge and experience in DEI initiatives.

Weaknesses:

- With 25% of our positions vacant, it's difficult to have enough faculty and staff available to serve on planning committees, and even more challenging to execute those plans.
- While we are sometimes successful in cross-collaboration between units of a division, collaboration between divisions themselves is limited.
- Emergency training is not as robust as some would like, not just for active shooter situations, but a wider range of emergencies.
- With much training moving online to *LinkedInLearning*, the quality of in-person training may diminish.
- UW Libraries lacks training in accessibility issues, particularly involving patrons with disabilities and especially legal aspects of disability support.
- The pandemic interrupted a lot of activities, including town halls, collective strategic planning, inter-departmental meetings, and other ways that fostered planning activities.
- The need for more and updated manuals, policies, procedures persists across the organization.

Threats:

- We are unable to control when other units and divisions change how they train and convey information.
- Changes in upper university administration typically require a reboot of strategic planning. This is time consuming and interrupts other areas for innovation.

Planning (continued)

Threats (continued):

- Space considerations make some types of planning difficult, and there are constraints for growth of learning spaces and collection spaces.
- UWPD is not as visible in library buildings as they have been in previous years.

Opportunities:

- We have an opportunity to create standardized onboarding that lasts through more than the first days/weeks of an employee's time. This could be progressive and detailed, and include topics like mentoring for staff and macro- and micro- views of strategic planning, emergency response, cross-divisional training, etc.
- We can increase the frequency of "town halls" as well as formal interactions with library administration.
- We can create a committee to address safety/emergency type planning and communication, and provide up-to-date, easy to use manuals.
- We can re-imagine our Personnel committee to encompass both faculty and staff and provide foundational knowledge of work life at UW.
- We can assess, centralize, and align our data gathering to see if what we are collecting is helpful and useful in strategic and other planning.

Section VI: Partnerships and External Relationships

Overview:

There is an old saying that “a book shut tight is but a stack of pages.” In a similar regard, an academic library cannot openly and effectively function without partnerships. No matter how strong library collections and library facilities might be, these partnerships are really the outward-facing components that truly carry out the work of academic libraries in the 21st century.

UW Libraries has a number of formal and informal partnerships at virtually every level of operation, from on-campus partners within the Coe Library building to state, regional, national, and even global partnerships around the world.

This section provides an overview of UW Libraries partnerships at every respective level, and particularly the Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats and Opportunities.

A. Level 1A: UW College Partnerships

Strengths:

As an entity of Academic Affairs, UW Libraries is by nature a partner to every academic college and program across the University. However, these partnerships do not passively exist. A robust budget for library collections and resources supports the research activities of every student, staff, and faculty member, regardless of their discipline or whether they operate on or off campus. Digitization initiatives and data management services likewise serve users across disciplines. Other services, such as library instruction and research support, are also an indispensable to partnerships between UW librarians and UW students, from First Year Seminars (FYS) to graduate level courses. Our partnership with the Honors College includes an endowed librarian position for teaching Honors Colloquium courses, as well as the Libraries co-sponsorship of Honors College programming. One-on-one consultation sessions, either in person or remote, provide an additional human connection between researchers and librarians. Lastly, UW Libraries actively collaborates with the American Heritage Center (AHC) and the College of Law Library on reference support, programming and coding for library catalogs, and lending services.

Weaknesses:

The drastic reduction or loss of library faculty lines due to retirement or resignation for other university libraries has forced UW Libraries to do more with less. As a result, College liaison activities since 2014 have increasingly needed to be consolidated across remaining librarians, with some activities scaled back or discontinued. Externally, the turnover of senior administrators and faculty in UW Colleges has also disrupted strong relationships and networks integral to Libraries/College partnerships. These weaknesses have been compounded by the COVID pandemic, which further reduces in-person contact on campus, and the ability to connect with various colleges and departments. Although the Libraries remained open, library visitations and instructional sessions greatly declined as a result of on-campus restrictions.

Level 1A: College Partnerships (continued)

Threats:

Continued budget cuts due to declines in state revenues reduce the Libraries ability to acquire and sustain the necessary resources for supporting research across the University. The same cuts likewise prevent UW Libraries from filling necessary faculty and staff vacancies.

Opportunities:

The COVID-19 pandemic forced UW Libraries to provide services and resources in new and creative ways; likewise, the emergence from that pandemic gives UW Libraries the ability to offer services, resources, and spaces in new ways as well. The recently opened Student Learning Commons is but one dynamic example. New academic leadership and faculty likewise provide opportunities for additional resources and services within each College partnership.

B. Level 1B: UW Campus Partnerships

Strengths:

UW Libraries actively partners with Information Technology (IT) in providing a busy, two-level computer lab in Coe Library, as well as providing supporting technology for library classrooms, learning commons, librarians, and staff. Partnerships with UW Assistive Technology Resources (WATR) ensure accessibility for all library users. The Ellbogen Center for Teaching and Learning (ECTL) and UW Writing Center have partnered with UW Libraries on space and services for more than 30 years. The Learning Resources Center in the Education Building remains an ongoing partnership with the Albany County School District, and specifically the UW Lab School. UW Libraries actively supports programming for the Black Studies Center and Wyoming Humanities Institute for Research (WIHR). Highly visible space partnerships with the College of Engineering (Campus Student Innovation Center) and LeARN (including the STEP tutoring center and the Writing Center) coexist within Coe Library as well. Partnerships with UW Police (UWPD) and UW Physical Plant ensure security of library facilities and collections. Partnerships with Financial Services ensure effective billing for library fines and services. Partnerships with UW Wellness include supporting finals de-stressor events in Coe Library and suicide prevention initiatives on campus.

Weaknesses:

Turnover of administration, faculty, and staff on campus has occasionally impeded the expansion of existing campus partnerships and the establishment of new ones.

Threats:

Continued budget reductions naturally reduce the effectiveness and number of campus partnerships. The recent presence of security guards in Coe Library, while an effective safety partnership with UWPD, may in fact be alienating to BIPOC faculty, staff, and students.

Opportunities:

The slow return to “normal” operations across campus likewise enables existing campus partnerships with UW Libraries to flourish as well. Face-to-face contact also encourages the potential for additional campus partnerships.

C. Level 2: State of Wyoming Partnerships

Strengths:

UW Libraries maintains close ties with the Wyoming State Library, with circulation staff interacting on user questions as well as best practices through training and presentations. Digital Collections also partners with the State Library on digitization initiatives, including the Wyoming newspaper project. Joint purchasing of library resources via WYLD makes them available to Wyoming residents statewide. Library 2 Business (L2B) services from UW Libraries have directly benefitted the larger county libraries in the state. UW Libraries supports the Wyoming Library Association (WLA) with programming, occasionally providing leadership and venues for the annual WLA Conference.

Weaknesses: L2B programs could further be expanded to support smaller county libraries. Joint resources from UW Libraries and the Wyoming State Library could be better promoted to county libraries and ultimately, Wyoming residents.

Threats: Limited time, personnel, and funding to support statewide partnerships. It is challenging to do extensive outreach around the state and serve UW constituents at the same time. Lack of consistent communication between UW librarians and librarians outside of UW, including Wyoming county librarians and Wyoming community college librarians.

Opportunities: More shared programming with county libraries. More outreach with UW faculty to provide programming at county libraries.

D. Level 3: Regional Partnerships

Strengths: As an active member of the Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries, UW Libraries participates in remote borrowing and lending of materials with libraries in Colorado, Kansas, and Missouri via the Prospector lending service. The Greater Western Library Alliance (GWLA) provides a level of academic library prestige as well as consortium leverage for acquiring important electronic resources. UW Libraries is also a member of the Mountain Plains Library Association (MPLA) as well as the Rangelands Partnership, a University of Arizona consortium primarily involving Western Land Grant universities. Digital Collections partners with Colorado Virtual Library for the digital newspapers platform and storage. UW Libraries are members of the Western Regional Storage Trust (WEST) and participates in shared print collecting for journals.

Weaknesses: Small library faculty size and reduced funding naturally limits the quantity and quality of regional partnerships.

Threats: Losses of faculty due to retirements or new positions elsewhere weakens existing partnerships, especially if those faculty held leadership roles.

Opportunities: New positions in the Libraries can create new opportunities for regional partnerships.

E. Level 4: National Partnerships

Strengths: UW Libraries maintains active memberships in numerous national groups, including:

- Association of Research Libraries (ACRL)
- Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR)
- Center for Research Libraries (CLR)
- Digital Library Federation (DLF)
- HathiTrust
- SPARC

These memberships provide multiple benefits, including professional development, shared collection initiatives, open access initiatives, and discounts.

Weaknesses: As the only academic library at a four year research library in the state, UW Libraries must seek partnerships outside of the state and region to remain up-to-date in services and collections. The pandemic lessened our ability to participate in-person in these events.

Threats: Shrinking library budgets mean that we must choose our memberships carefully. We decided to let our Lyris membership lapse in 2022 as an example of tough choices in memberships.

Opportunities: The primary opportunity for national memberships is the ongoing goal of UW Libraries to attain membership in the Association of Research Libraries (ARL).

Conclusion:

Self-Study 2021 was certainly a beneficial exercise for UW Libraries, both in the process of conducting it—across library departments, faculty, and staff—and what we have been able to glean from it after the fact, including our conversations with entities outside of the Libraries. As the University of Wyoming moves forward in strategic planning, our vision has become clearer for how we can tangibly support the University’s objectives—by continuing to do what know we do well, identifying what we know we can do better, and preparing ourselves for the opportunities ahead of us.

The timing and outcomes of *Self-Study 2021* have been fortuitous for UW Libraries, not just as the University emerges from limitations brought on by COVID, but in support of the Provost’s strategic aspirations for attaining Carnegie R1 status. As we progress through this year, UW Libraries stands ready to do its part for moving the University of Wyoming forward, not only in 2022, but for current and future stakeholders in the many years to come.

Acknowledgements

Self Study 2021 SWTO Leadership Teams

I. University Libraries Services and Spaces

Co-Leaders: Debbie McCarthy (Assistant Dean: Resource Discovery & Management)
Enid Teeter (User Services)

Members: Denis Shannon (Resource Discovery & Management)
Jessica Rardin (Education & Research Services)

II. University Libraries Organization, Management and Business Operations

Co-Leaders: Paula Martin (Assistant Dean: User Services)
Laurie Mendick (Administration)

Members: Brenna Philbrick (Administration)
Larry Schmidt (Education & Research Services)
Jen Strayer (Resource Discovery Management)
Pamela Reeves (User Services)

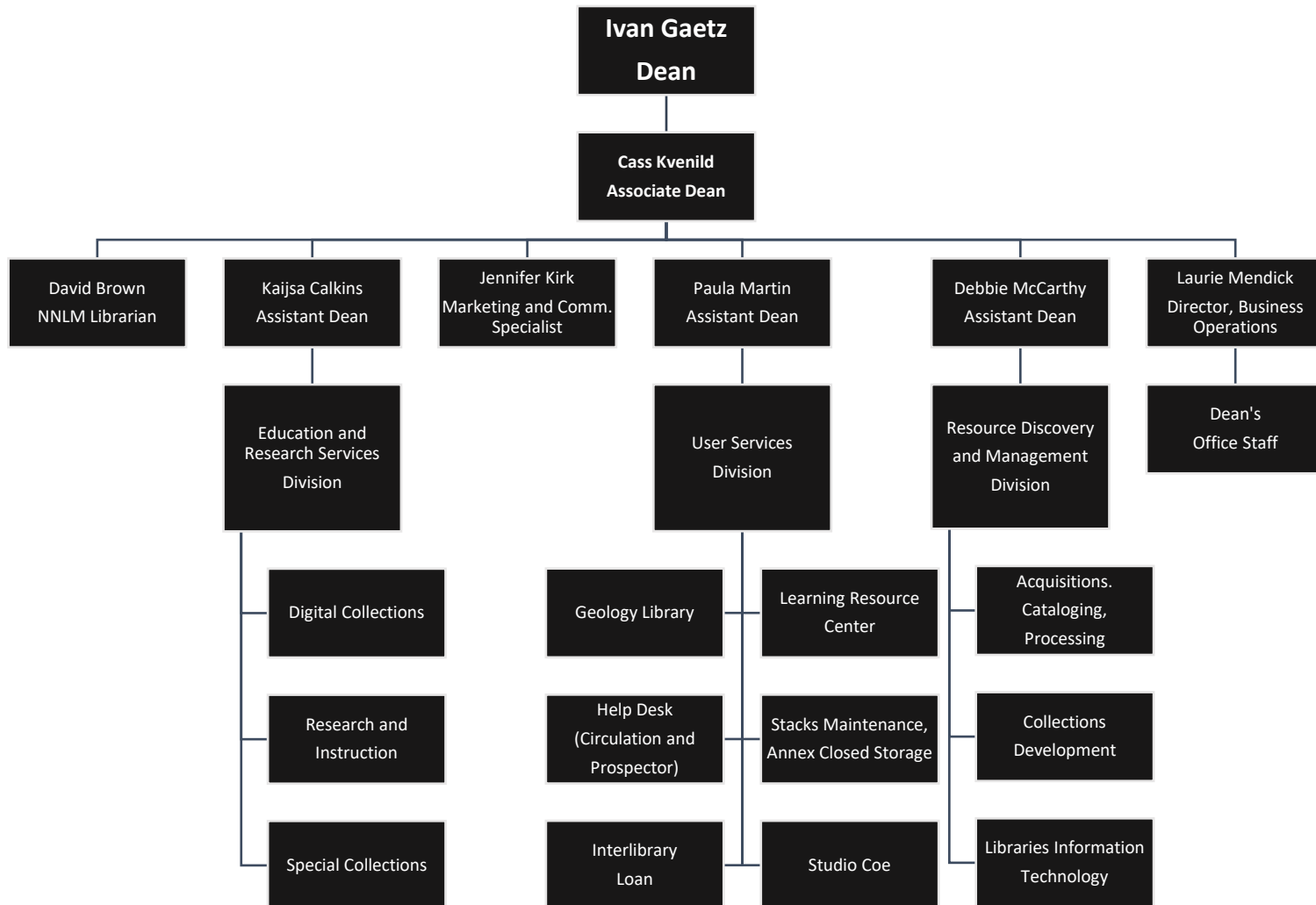
III. University Libraries Partnerships and External Relationships

Co-Leaders: Kaijsa Calkins (Assistant Dean: Education & Research Services)
David Kruger (Education & Research Services)

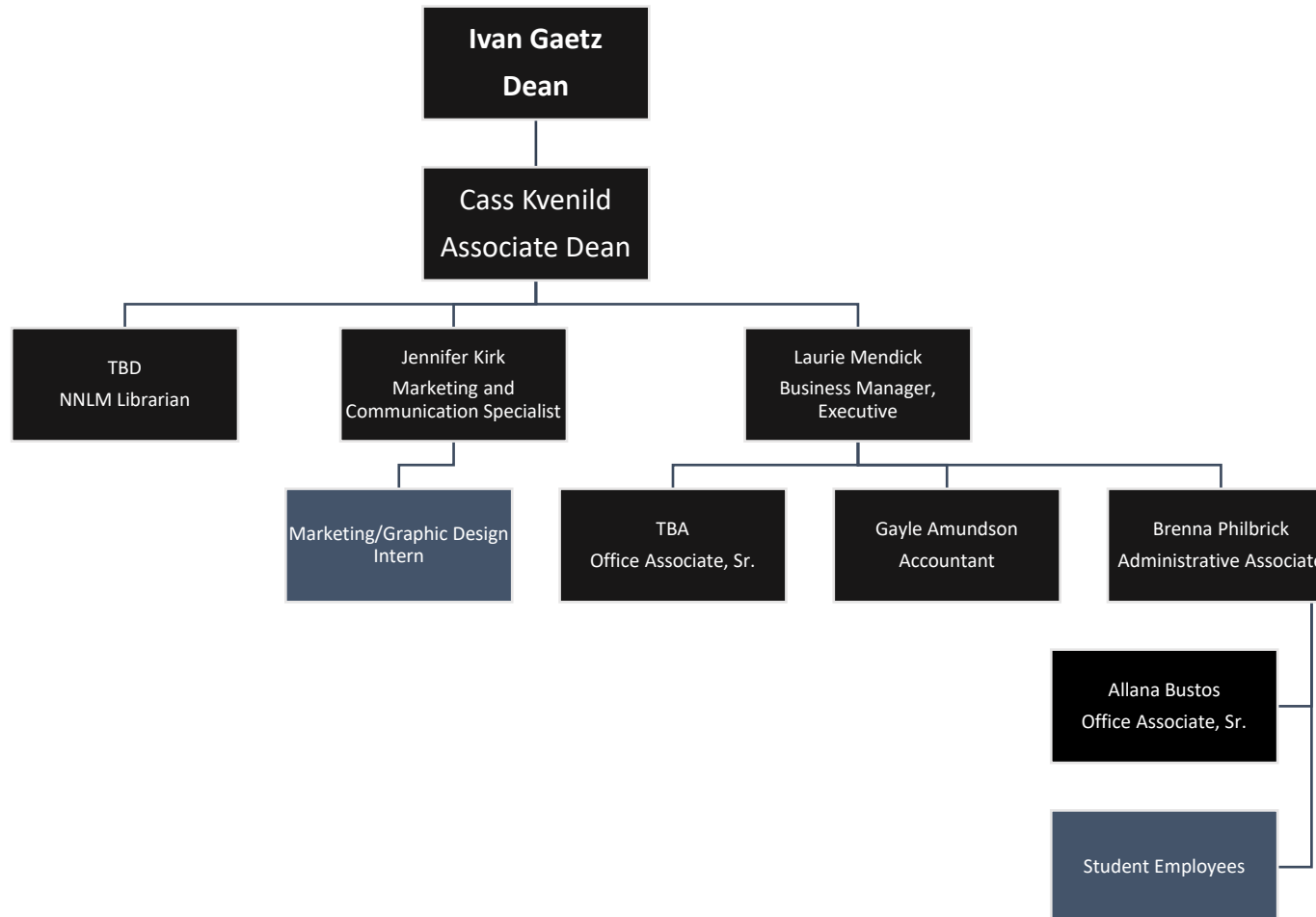
Members: Cynthia Hughes (Resource Discovery & Management)
Susan Schultz (Education & Research Services)

UW Libraries Organizational Charts

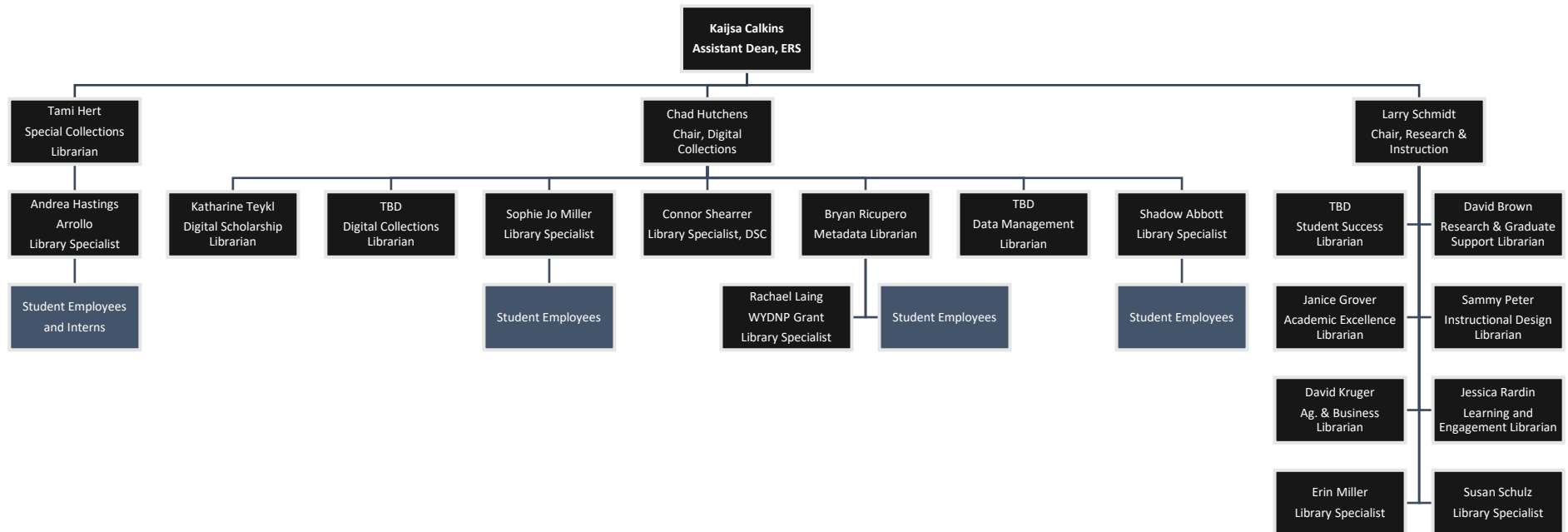
UW Libraries Organizational Chart



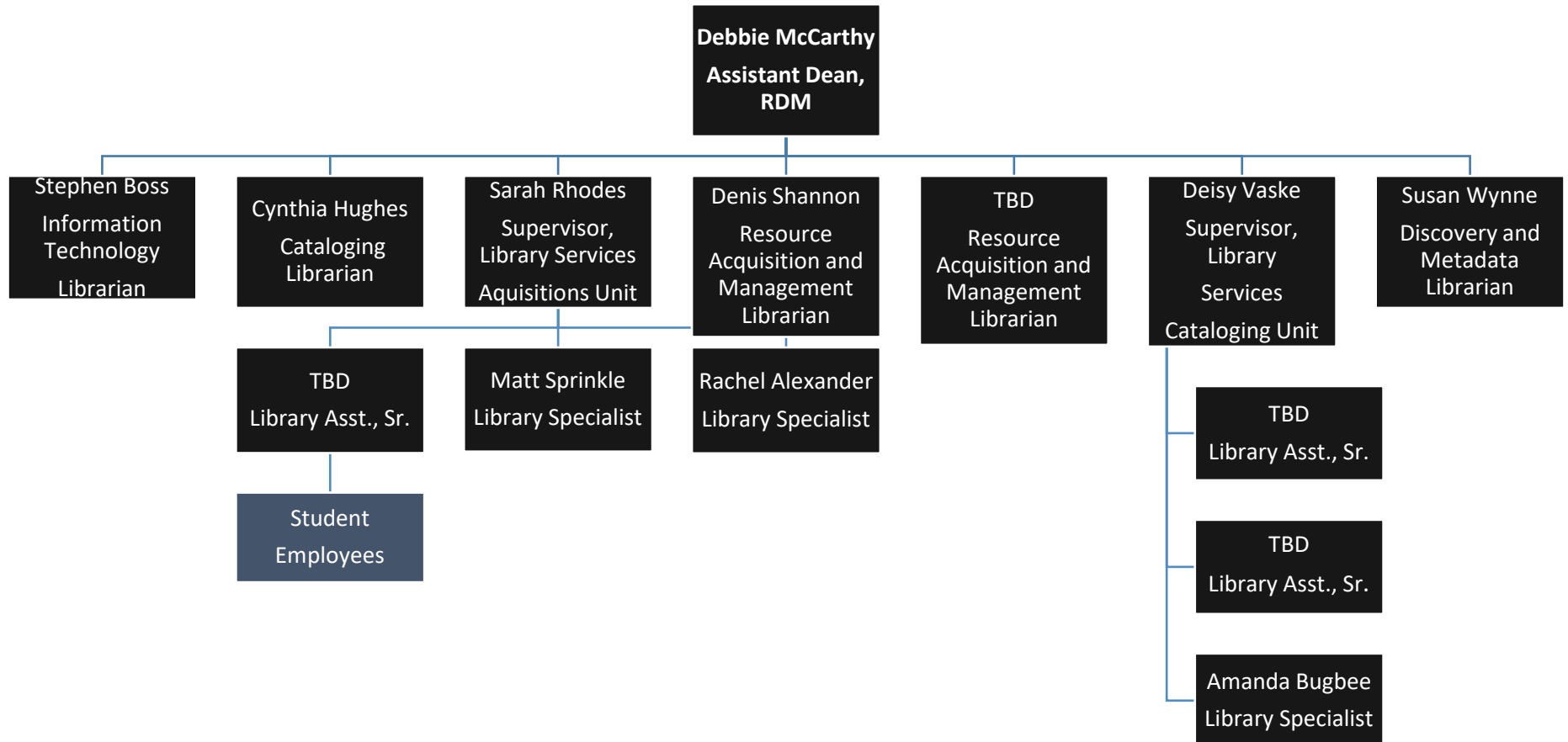
Dean's Office



Education and Research Services



Resource Discovery and Management



User Services Division

