

0

SHARES

[ShareTweet](#)

888 views

Donald Handy

dhandy@radford.edu

Steven Helms is the new Dean of McConnell Library. Dean Helms summed up his duties into four categories: leadership, advocacy, personnel administration, and budgeting.

“(My duties are to) provide strong intellectual leadership and articulate a creative vision for McConnell Library,” Helms said.

Dean Helms added that “maintaining continuous improvements and evaluate library services, collections, and technology to ensure that the teaching, learning, and research needs of Radford University community are met.”

His duties also include fund raising, development, public relations, and ensure compliance with university, state and federal policies and practices.

Dean Helms was appointed Dean of McConnell Library after going through a lengthy selection process. First, Dean Helms went through the application process, then through telephone interviews. Afterward, he was invited to RUs campus for a “two day interview including: dinner with the search committee, interviews with all library employees, two presentations, lunch with the deans, interview with the Provost, and finally an interview with the search committee.”

Dean Helms commented, “my favorite part of the day was giving my two presentations”.

The two presentations were “What are the major challenges facing universities today, and what are the best ways academic libraries can meet these challenges?” and “How might we ensure that McConnell Library remains essential to all of its constituents?”

In these presentation, Helms focused on keeping the cost of higher education in check by “outsourcing cataloging and physical processing, strategic planning and budgeting, using open-source software; favoring and advocating for open-source software, favoring and advocating for open access journals,” as well as many other things. All these things “have a direct effect on your tuition and fees, since Radford University is a public institution on state taxes.”

By managing the library, Dean Helms can keep the amount of money the library spends in check and won't have to take more money from what RU receives from state taxes.

When asked what the biggest challenge he will face as Dean of McConnell Hall, Helms replied "the rising cost of subscriptions to journals and databases that have been rising 6-9 percent each year." To counteract the rising cost of subscriptions, Helms has to decide which subscriptions to let go.

Another challenge will be trying to get good prices on e-books that are needed, and unifying the building to be student-centered, as well as inviting.

When Dean Helms isn't in the managing the library, he is spending time with his family. He also enjoys listening to, and making, music. He is "passionate about a wide range of environmental and social justice issues; and is an avid motorcyclist.

Before Helms was appointed as dean, he was an interim librarian, where he was juggling the responsibility of both Interim University Librarian and Coordinator of Library Technology.

"Each position can easily consume more than 40 hours per week, so attempting to keep both areas involved a lot of juggling, prioritizing, very long days, and many evenings and weekends," Helms said.