

Introducing Stephanie Walker



Our new Dean of University Libraries, Stephanie Walker has traveled here from North Dakota on a mission, to help us - the students. This is her first time back in Boston since August 2006 when she worked at Harvard University Medical School but her third time being a Dean of Libraries. Walker returned for a few reasons, instead of building from scratch she was excited to be a part of something pre-established. She also knew as a first-generation student

herself she could relate to over half of the student population at UMass Boston. According to the Office of Institutional Research, Assessment, and Planning at UMB sixty-two percent of the undergraduates here are first-generation students. The passion she has for her work has brought her to many libraries but the opportunities in Boston were too good to pass on. With her skills, resources, and long-term goals for the improvement of the Healey Library, she hopes to make a significant impact and be useful at the university as we continue to grow as a community.

Aside from her experience in the library, Walker has worked in many other places including writing several scholarly publications and being the Executive Director of Academic Information Technology (AIT) at CUNY Brooklyn College. She also has teaching experience from working at four universities located in New York and Canada. Between 2006-2018, she won five awards including Mountain Plains Library Association's "Most Innovative Library" Award, the Finalist - North Dakota Governor's Public Service Award and the Peer-to-Peer Award for Outstanding Leadership & Management.

When asked about the first thing she would like to do with her position, Walker's ideas and plans flowed like a waterfall - there are several projects she would like to see through. Her main focus is how the space is being used. One of her main goals for the beloved Healey Library is to see it undergo more than simple repairs but instead an entire renovation. When asked about her thoughts on the current space Walker replied, "Schooling has changed since the 1970s and the Healey Library was logically designed for education at that time. Students need more space, we have the tech, power, and the data, but we need to work on the spaces a little bit. I'd like to build group study rooms." Included in these plans, would be one-button recording studios similar to the ones at Penn State University, to aid students who need to record themselves for their assignments but may not have the tech to do so. Whether they are studying or doing an assignment her goal is to create good and reliable sources for the UMB community.

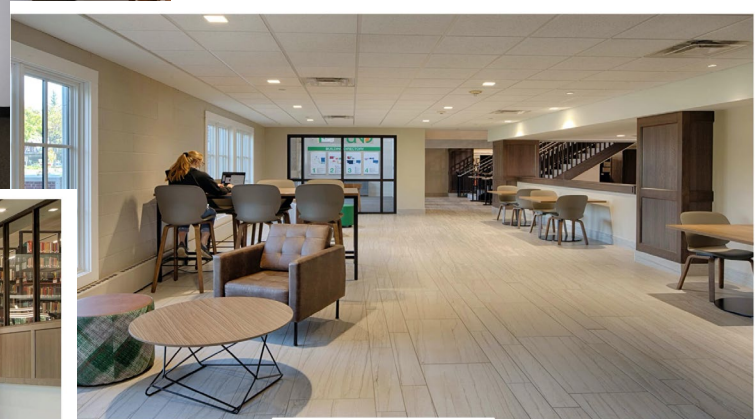
Aside from her goals to transform the library, Walker has a long-term goal to make education more affordable. Although she cannot help with tuition, athletics, or lab fee she says she can help with textbooks. Due to her experience, she believes there are other great materials out there for lower-level courses such as psychology or accounting that could be used instead of buying the newest edition of textbooks each year. “In 1984 I was a math major, and Stewart’s fundamentals of calculus textbooks was \$84.00 and now it’s ‘s something like \$239.00 and then you have to buy a book and problem sets or that solutions manual,” the total cost for taking Calculus I (not including tuition) at her last job was \$408.00. For those students, it was buying those two textbooks or paying rent for the month.

“To me, it’s absolutely obscene that you should change the entire trajectory of your life and career because of the sake of a few textbooks” It pains her that individuals must worry so much over textbook costs. She has seen instances when students cannot afford it and end up failing their classes because they hoped they could get by with the information on google or individuals change their majors to avoid the textbook cost. “It’s all commercial, if I could get students through a lot of the more general stuff, we can get it so they don’t have to pay for nearly as much of their textbooks if it’s down to just some more of the electives and things,” because she cannot measure which books are best for each discipline her goal is to collaborate with faculty and staff to plan for possible solutions to this pressing issue.

Before & After photos of Chester Fritz Library renovations at the University of North Dakota that Stephanie Walker’s vision helped make happen.



“We started having a conversation about student study spaces because people have different ways they like to study, some people can’t stand too much quiet, and some people can’t stand any noise at all, some people need to work in a group,



some want to do something on their own you know working on their own on their doctoral thesis and I would like to make it so there are a different variety of spaces in the library, that people can use for just about anything.”

- Stephanie Walker

Works Cited

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