

I Love My Librarian!

2017 Award

Mary Jo Fayoyin

Asa H. Gordon Library, Savannah State University
Savannah, Georgia

Nominator: LaTasha Denard

1. Please tell us in 2-3 sentences why your nominee should win this award. What sets them apart?

Mrs. Fayoyin is nominated for the award by a current student, a former student, and a library staff member. We feel that Mrs. Fayoyin should win the “I Love my Librarian” award because she is a true professional who is dedicated to her job, and provides the highest level of service to all library patrons. She is a true example of a “student centered” servant-leader. She is not above working the Circulation Desk, the Reference Desk or anywhere she is needed.

The library’s slogan “Friendly, Focused, Fast: Improving the Library Experience” is her philosophy. It incorporates the mission and vision of Savannah State University of “engaged learning” and “personal growth” in a student-centered environment while encouraging students to “maximize their potential in a nurturing environment”. Mrs. Fayoyin wants the library to foster a “nurturing environment” for all students. She has successfully created such an environment as demonstrated by comments that students have left on the Comment Board, which she created to give students a voice into library services.

2. Please discuss how the nominee has helped you and/or others and made your experience of the library a more positive one. For instance, did the nominee assist you in a research project or enhance your students' learning experience?

Using the results of surveys, the comment board, and observation, Mrs. Fayoyin listens to what students say they need to succeed. Examples are many. Students commented that it would help them to complete their work if the library’s study room computers had advanced software packages because the library is open after the university’s computer labs are closed. Now all the library’s computers have the software that the university’s computer labs have. Graduate students commented that they needed a place to eat before going to their evening classes so Mrs. Fayoyin designated a café area for them with vending machines, a change machine, a microwave and café styled tables and chairs. Students love it. She noticed that students were constantly stopping by the employees’ offices and asking for paper clips, scotch tape, the use of a ruler, stapler, or a hole punch, etc. So, she created a student workstation where they can put the finishing touches on their documents. The student workstation gets used constantly. The students needed a

place to practice their class presentations. She designed a Presentation & Collaboration Room for them with a 42 inch HD monitor and a multimedia podium.

Mrs. Fayoyin has both formally and informally served as a mentor to a number of students. One of which is one of the nominators for this award. When this particular nominator was a student at Savannah State University, Mrs. Fayoyin provided her with an internship that ended up facilitating her love of the library profession and for academics. The internship was the first class the student had taken after a 3 year hiatus, and she was very nervous about returning to school. She was fearful that she would not be able to meet the academic standards. However, during her time at the library she knew that Mrs. Fayoyin would not accept anything less than her best effort. Mrs. Fayoyin did not “dumb things down” for her or give her “busy work”. She expected her to perform at the highest level of her capabilities. While working for Mrs. Fayoyin, she learned about all of the resources the library had to offer and how to access them for research. She earned an “A” for that internship and it gave her the confidence to complete all of her other courses from then on with excellent grades. Afterward, whenever Mrs. Fayoyin would see her around campus or in the library, she would ask her how classes were going and tell her about scholarships she could apply for. She also talked to her about continuing her education in graduate school. She was very encouraging and the nominator knew that Mrs. Fayoyin was personally invested in her success. Mrs. Fayoyin is the same way with other students and with the library staff, as well. She truly wants to help others succeed and see them reach their full potential.

Mrs. Fayoyin began the current information literacy program with a grant. Because the program was deemed valuable by the faculty and administration, the program was funded by the university at the end of the grant period. Now all students are exposed to information literacy learning outcomes enabling them to write better papers and conduct better research.

3. How does the nominee make the college, community college, or university a better place? Please be specific.

Mrs. Fayoyin makes the university a better place because of her focus on assessment and evaluation. She is constantly evaluating library services, resources, and instruction. There are numerous examples. Mrs. Fayoyin assessed library use by instituting hourly patron counts to make sure that the library is fully staffed when librarians are needed the most. When she noticed that more and more students were engaged in studying at closing time on Fridays, she extended the library’s hours. When students said that they would benefit from extended hours during the week leading up to exams, the library hours were extended for 2 weeks rather than just the week of exams so that students can have even more opportunities to study. Mrs. Fayoyin also insists that library instruction has goals that are measurable. One example is the test bank which she had instruction librarians to develop so that there is a uniform method of assessing learning outcomes for students in the Freshmen Year Experience classes.

Mrs. Fayoyin also provides services to students that are not usually viewed as library services. She believes the library should be, and has become, a “one stop shop” for all

students. One example was that because students constantly needed a notary she had one of the staff members certified as a notary. She also collaborated with the bookstore to provide a vending machine for study supplies so that students would be served after the bookstore closed. Mrs. Fayoyin knows that students live and breathe by their electronics and so she is in the process of purchasing charging stations for the library.

She makes sure that staff members are knowledgeable about not only their areas but the entire library as well as other departments on campus. This push for awareness and understanding means that librarians can answer questions or at least guide students to the right campus department.

She believes that the library, as stated in the library's vision, is "the heart of University's academic and research culture and should substantially contribute to the intellectual activities of the University." To that end, she has hosted a variety of programs at the library each year that help students grow intellectually while increasing their knowledge base. With one recent event, the library hosted accountants who were able to give students one on one advice about managing their money and establishing good credit. It was a great opportunity for students to come out and talk to actual accountants about their finances as college students. A student evaluation of the event stated that students "find it refreshing to have someone care so much about their present and their future".

Mrs. Fayoyin facilitated Savannah State University's very first Scholar-In-Residence Program. The scholar is the former mayor of the city of Savannah. The scholar is housed in the library where he meets with students, gives lectures, and conducts symposiums. This program gives students real world access to politics and government.

4. How has the individual demonstrated leadership in the campus community?

Mrs. Fayoyin believes that everything about the library should have a positive impact on students and faculty. This includes library instruction, the library building, staff, equipment and resources.

Measurable goals for library instruction have been developed which focus on student learning outcomes. Mrs. Fayoyin sits in on library instruction classes periodically to evaluate and to offer suggestions to improve instruction. Mrs. Fayoyin believes that students should be met where they are in regards to knowledge of research and library resources. So the library hosts drop-in sessions where students can meet one on one with a librarian to get help with papers and research. Because she understands that faculty members may also need help, the library also holds sessions for faculty to introduce them to new databases and software and to assist them in embedding information literacy into their curriculum. A new program, New Faculty Orientation, was created last year to assist new faculty in using library resources and services. A "Faculty Guide to Library Services" which is available online and in hard copy has also been developed.

Although the library building is almost 40 years old, most patrons don't realize this because Mrs. Fayoyin has renovated the space and purchased modern equipment. For example, during last year's evaluations, she noticed that if television monitors were

added to both sides of the large instruction lab students would be more engaged with the class because they could more easily see what the librarian in front of the room was demonstrating. So, she purchased and had 2 large monitors installed. She believes that the library should be accessible to students so she changed library hours. The library now opens at 7:30 AM on weekday mornings so that the students who need to finish something before their 8:00 AM class can do so.

The library is also closely involved in accreditation efforts. Mrs. Fayoyin serves on the SACS accreditation as well as several professional accreditation committees and is currently a member of the Savannah State University's School of Education initial accreditation committee.

5. How has the library, and the nominee in particular, had an impact on students and faculty and the teaching and learning process? Please be specific.

Mrs. Fayoyin is recognized as a leader by students, faculty, the administration, and the alumni. Recently, Mrs. Fayoyin's title was changed from "Director" to "Dean". I think this speaks to the high regard that the administration has for her. Mrs. Fayoyin is deeply involved with the governance of the university as an active member of the Dean's Council, the Faculty Senate, and the President's Forum, just to name a few.

As the leader of the library, in addition to responding in writing to every suggestion, complaint, question and kudos left on the comment board in the lobby, Mrs. Fayoyin always attends the President's Forum so that she can address anything the students have to say about the library. Students appreciate the personal touch that she brings to everything she does. A recent comment by a student said that it would be extremely helpful if the other departments on campus followed her lead and put the same effort and work in their departments. Because she is so dedicated to the success of the students, a student organization, the 100 Black Men of Savannah State University, presented her with an award, thanking her for her leadership as Dean of Library Services.

Because Mrs. Fayoyin works hard to let everyone on campus know how important the library is to the university, she is visible to the administration. In fact, the president of the university thought of Mrs. Fayoyin and requested her, by name, when it was discovered that no women were assigned a role in the campus' Fall 2012 Faculty-Staff Institute. She was asked to be the master of ceremony of the institute.

Alumni recognize her as a campus leader. Because of Mrs. Fayoyin's commitment and enthusiasm for the alumni, they always feel loved when they return to the campus. Recently, during a Savannah State University Alumni lunch, Mrs. Fayoyin was surprised with a plaque thanking her and her staff for their work in providing resources to the alumni; in particular, the digitizing of yearbooks, student papers, etc. Alumni feel so positive about the library that it has informally been designated as the "go-to" place during Homecoming celebration. In fact, the library hosts the alumni's Queen's Coronation and reception every year. Her leadership in relating to the alumni has resulted in them asking to fund a library project.

Mrs. Fayoyin is also seen as a leader by her off-campus colleagues. She was elected chairperson of the University System of Georgia Regents Academic Committee on Libraries and chairperson of the HBCU Library Alliance, a consortium that represents libraries serving Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the United States.

Finally, we have nominated Mrs. Fayoyin because we know that she has made a difference on campus and because we “Love Our Librarian”!