

WESTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY FACULTY SENATE

Regular Meeting, 23 January 2024, 4:00 p.m.

Via Zoom and in Union Capitol Rooms

ACTION MINUTES

SENATORS PRESENT IN PERSON: J. Albarracin, D. Atherton, B. Bellott, D. Brown, C. Chadwell, H. Elbe, D. Gravitt, D. Hunter, S. Ko, A. Lewis, K. Perone, M. Shamsuddoha, Y. Tang, S. Turkelli, L. Wippering

SENATORS PRESENT VIA ZOOM: S. Bailey, G. Cabedo-Timmons, E. Hamner, J. Land, J. Sarra, K. Wiseley

EX-OFFICIO: Jeremy Robinett, Parliamentarian; Interim Provost Mark Mossman

SENATORS ABSENT: D. Barr, L. Ebert Wallace, B. Petrocovic

GUESTS: Tom Blackford, Amy Burke, Amy Carr, Dennis DeVolder, Kynli Finley, Peter Gloviczki, Casey LaFrance, Sarah Lawson, Alisha Looney, Michael Lorenzen, Kristi Mindrup, Russ Morgan, Rafael Obregon, Lorette Oden, Renee Polubinsky, Linda Prosis, John Smith

I. Consideration of Minutes

A. November 28, 2023

APPROVED AS DISTRIBUTED

II. Announcements

A. Provost's Report

Interim Provost Mossman welcomed everyone back to the beginning of spring semester. He remarked that the university has seen a lot of success in the last couple of months with obtaining grants. He said this includes a large grant obtained through the efforts of Chair Albarracin as well as a number of others, both large and small.

Faculty and Staff Appreciation Day is February 8 at the women's and men's basketball games. Interim Provost Mossman observed that both teams are doing very well this year. Free tickets are available for faculty and staff to attend both games. Interim Mossman added that the games have been pretty well attended so far this year.

Interim Provost Mossman stressed the importance of enrollment verification, which is needed for both WIU's Financial Aid office and the Department of Education. He said the deadline for submitting this information has been extended to January 25. He added that the process of verifying enrollment in classes is easy and only takes about three minutes on WIUP .

Interim Provost Mossman reported that Leatherneck Care Referrals has been a very successful program. He explained they provide a way for faculty to directly engage with students and intervene in a way that can help students succeed and work through a variety of issues.

Senator Hunter asked, even though Financial Aid has extended the deadline, whether the enrollment verification date could be the tenth day of classes rather than the fifth day. He does not think verifying enrollment on the fifth day gives a sense of who is or is not actually going to attend a class. He said that some students enroll late, and he feels bad indicating on the form that they are not attending class. Interim Provost Mossman responded his understanding is that the enrollment verifications must

be processed within a certain time for the Department of Education; the deadline is set by them, and public institutions have to comply. He added that he would be happy to talk to the Director of Financial Aid to confirm that this is the reason and see if there is any possibility of extending the deadline to the tenth day. Registrar Sarah Lawson added that the enrollment verification data is also used for retention purposes as students are sought out to determine why they have not attended their courses and if they intend to return to class. Parliamentarian Robinett observed that those working in Retention Initiatives do a great job of checking with students. He added that the enrollment data also keeps the Financial Aid office from giving financial aid out to those students who are not actually attending their classes. Senator Wippering remarked that she had to go into the enrollment verification report and change the response for three students who just registered yesterday and began attending class today.

B. Student Government Association (SGA) Report – None

C. Other Announcements

1. John Smith, Vice President for Student Success

Vice President Smith thanked faculty for referring over 1,500 Leatherneck Referral cases to the Student Success Center last year. He said 53 percent of these cases involved faculty who noticed students were experiencing some difficulty or not coming to class and then referred them to the resources available in his division so that the students could get the help they needed or so that it could be verified that they wanted to drop the class. Vice President Smith stated that, given the number of cases, anxiety and depression are a top priority that his area is working toward alleviating. There are plans to create a health and wellness group to connect the Counseling Center with the Student Success Center, Beu Health Center, and the Campus Recreation Center. He said they will work to put groups of students with similar types of issues together so that students know they are not alone. Vice President Smith stated that Leatherneck Referrals help his division to do that, and he is thankful for those faculty who follow up with these.

Vice President Smith said the main project for his division is enrollment and recruitment. He believes that some of the admissions counselor positions that were missing this fall will soon be filled, including a plan to cover the St. Louis East metro area. Vice President Smith explained a lot of decisions in his division are based on where the university can get the highest yield, which is the 22-county region around the campuses followed by other areas throughout the state of Illinois. He said admissions efforts were pulled back in areas where the yield might be 2 for a particular area and a retention rate in the 40s in favor of concentrating efforts on areas of high retention and high yield.

Regarding retention, Vice President Smith stated that the Reach student buckets are being reconsidered, with efforts to try to pull away from admitting 2.0 students. He reminded senators that former Vice President for Enrollment Management Amber Schultz had signed a contract with Ruffalo-Noel-Levitz consultants, who provided a report on what kinds of students the university might be expected to gather, and so far WIU has attracted three times what was predicted. He said the university is adjusting its discount rate to meet the average in the state, which is about 35 percent. Vice President Smith would like to get it lower, but the university wants to get the highest quality students possible in order to increase the retention rate. He noted that once students arrive at WIU, they need help, and Chair Albarracin's grant should assist to get them the help they need.

The Student Success division is trying to engage people in the community to help with retention, including members of the Board of Trustees. Vice President Smith said efforts have been made to reach out to alumni in the Chicago and St Louis areas to get them to talk about their WIU experience at recruiting events. He said one Trustee suggested that WIU's band needs to be promoted more to potential students; Vice President Smith hopes to be able to get the band to play when people enter for Discover Western. He also hopes to get athletes and

cheerleaders involved more that day as well, such as throwing out t-shirts during the event. He thinks Discover Western needs to be more than a big room with people waiting for students and parents to come in for a presentation; people need to become excited about coming to WIU.

Vice President Smith is working hard on his division's component of the Board of Trustees Retreat on February 8. He said most of the decisions coming out of the Division of Student Success are designed to help provide the best experience possible for WIU students, including providing support for what faculty are doing in their classrooms. Vice President Smith has worked with the Departments of Social Work and Psychology to try to figure out different ways to reach students who are struggling with mental health issues. He thinks helping students through their struggles is one of his division's biggest hurdles.

Senator Gravitt recalled that Admissions Director Doug Freed asked for faculty volunteers two months ago to help with recruiting efforts. She asked if there is still a need for this assistance. When she volunteered at that time, she called a lot of freshmen that had not yet registered by a certain date and attended a Saturday event. Vice President Smith responded that on Thursday, January 25, Admissions will start looking at their upcoming events and determining what kinds of extra support they could use. He said they are trying not to dip too much into any one on-campus area, which is why they have reached out to alumni for assistance. He promised to provide senators with further information on help that might be needed and will accept whatever assistance people are willing to offer.

2. Alisha Looney, Interim Assistant Vice President for Communications, Marketing, and Media Relations, and Kynli Finley, Assistant Director for Marketing

Ms. Looney told senators she has worked in the Office of University Communications and Marketing for 11 years and has been doing marketing/public relations work for 14 years. She said her office puts a lot of their efforts into digital marketing, which is the most effective way to reach WIU's target audience and is an efficient method for tracking. Ms. Looney said her office can look at the analytics and see if they are actually reaching the intended target audience and whether their efforts are leading to conversions of students enrolling in the university. She said the digital marketing is layered with traditional marketing, such as television, radio, print ads, and billboards. All commercials and photos are done in-house with WIU's video and photo teams. Ms. Looney said the overall goal for her area is to manage a positive image of the university. They work directly with Admissions and meet with them weekly to help them recruit students. This includes generating new leads, increasing exposure and interest, driving traffic to WIU's website, encouraging visits and applications, strengthening brand awareness, and tracking conversions.

Ms. Finley stated that as part of the office's digital strategy, they partner with Carnegie, a company that specializes in higher education marketing. She said part of their strategy includes specific geolocation marketing, behavior and psychographic marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), and clarity interactions, which are the pop-ups that appear on WIU websites. She thinks the university is on track to experience a really high impression year; their efforts reached over 11,000 individuals between July 2023 and January 1, 2024, including 58,781 clicks and 2,852 conversions. Ms. Kinley said her office works with Admissions so that they can target the counties where most of WIU's high-yielding students are coming from since these students will retain well.

Ms. Finley said Carnegie uses both qualitative and quantitative data to sort students into different "dart" types so that specific messages can be sent to those students with targeted strategic drivers to motivate them. Ms. Looney added her office meets regularly with Carnegie to provide them with messaging and imagery input, then Carnegie executes the digital ads, tracks them, and makes sure they are performing well. She said the "darts" are based on research on WIU students completed a couple of years ago; it will probably need to be updated in a few more years.

Ms. Finley said University Communication and Marketing's pay-per-click (PPC) campaign with Google allows them to see which top key words are performing best, and Carnegie optimizes this information. She said one of the top performing clarity interactions this past fall was the "Apply for Free" pop-up. Efforts are underway to post a yield clarity interaction targeted to get students who have been accepted to WIU to complete the next steps. She added that the yield messaging will include a FAFSA push because students are a little behind this year because of the date change for filing. Ms. Finley stated that traditional ads, such as billboards in Macomb and the surrounding area and radio/television ads in nearby cities, are layered into the digital marketing, but efforts are made to have them be very strategic and relate to the target audience.

Ms. Finley told senators she was initially hired in 2021 specifically for academic marketing; Maggie Isley is the current Academic Marketing Coordinator. She said the Office of University Communications and Marketing can help academic areas with things like email communications, web redesign, spotlights (formerly known as flat sheets), select in-house digital campaigns, and video content. Ms. Finley said some departments have reached out to them with a specific amount of money they can spend on digital marketing, such as \$2,000, and her office can help departments do those kinds of smaller campaigns in-house, such as through Facebook, Instagram, Hulu, or Spotify. They can also help with brand management.

Ms. Looney told senators that her office writes over a thousand press releases every year. These are posted on WIU's website but also go out to local, regional, and national media outlets, depending on the topic. Ms. Looney said press releases are a free way for the university to promote what amazing things its students and faculty are doing. She encouraged senators if they have anything they feel is worthy of highlighting to reach out to her directly via email at AA-Looney@wiu.edu. Faculty can also email Communications@wiu.edu or Marketing@wiu.edu because Ms. Looney sees any emails to these mailboxes as well. She said the press releases also go out to the university community at 4:00 every weekday afternoon via a subscribable email. She added that after a press release goes on the WIU website, it will typically be posted to the university's flagship social media accounts as well. Ms. Looney said the stories might also be used in admissions recruitment materials or as a resource to find faculty who the office could reach out to for a marketing photo shoot. She said this circles back to the academic program marketing that Ms. Finley mentioned because the Office of Communications and Marketing has been trying hard to utilize its in-house resources to help departments in any possible way. She said that although they are a small staff, they are happy to help academic units update their landing page, webpages, or promotional materials as much as they can. University Communications and Marketing can also send out specific emails about academic programs through Admissions and will update spotlights/flat sheets with the current newer designs.

Chair Albarracin asked if the Office of University Communications and Marketing is able to track how many of the impressions or clicks become actual applications. Ms. Finley replied that they are and offered to send more detailed numbers on that to Chair Albarracin. She said, for example, the office is able to see if a potential student booked a campus visit or made an appointment with their advisor after seeing a pop-up ad. She said it's harder to track with the traditional media; it is impossible to gauge the impact of someone viewing a billboard, for example, so it is difficult to determine the return on investment. Ms. Finley said when an ad is streaming on WQUAD in the Quad Cities, for example, a pixel connecting to the website is able to show how soon after viewing the ad a student or parent visited the WIU website. She said the office tries to make these data-driven decisions as much as possible.

Senator Hamner asked what the breakdown is between percentage of digital advertising and percentage of traditional advertising. He particularly wonders whether nontraditional students are being reached by digital advertising and wonders if there is any breakdown showing whether this is happening. Ms. Finley suspects the bulk of the nontraditional students fall within the targeted transfer audience. She said that with the transfer marketing, the office tries

to geofence from WIU's top feeder community colleges and capture that audience. She stated that the bulk of the office's budget is spent on digital media and digital marketing because those are best practices for where marketing is now. Ms. Finley admits there is still a need for traditional marketing, and there is some benefit to putting up a billboard or an ad in the newspaper because it fosters brand awareness, but in terms of return on investment and getting quality leads these forms of media are difficult to track. She added that digital ads are able to be very specifically based off students' interests and can be targeted to parents with college-age students in their homes.

Senator Hamner asked if "the bulk of" means that WIU devotes 60 percent of its advertising budget to digital and 40 percent to traditional advertising, or some other breakdown. Ms. Looney said, without looking at the figures, she thinks 60-65 percent goes toward digital, but some of the money goes toward things like stickers handed out at events and other types of swag or toward community engagement, so there is not a firm break between the two types. Ms. Finley stated that some institutions have a million dollars to market one program, which is what Eastern Illinois University devoted to marketing its online nursing program, but that amount is more than WIU's entire advertising budget for all programs. She said the office tries to be strategic about where it spends its money.

Senator Hamner asked how WIU's total budget for marketing compares to peer institutions. He wonders if WIU is spending enough to make the institution visible. Ms. Looney responded that WIU's advertising budget is much smaller than that of our peers. Her office has done a lot of research over the past couple of years to try to obtain specific numbers, but it is hard to get specifics from the other institutions. She added that from what she can tell, WIU's budget is much smaller, and she thinks everyone is aware of that. Ms. Finley thinks because of this it is important to have these kinds of conversations and try to work together to create bridges because everyone is in the same boat.

Senator Yang noted that Ms. Looney said the marketing budget is small but he wonders if she can say how small it is. Ms. Looney replied she does not know if it is advisable to share an exact number and asked Interim Provost Mossman his advice. Interim Provost Mossman replied it is public information, but he thinks the point is that it is very small, and the problem is that WIU does not have the capital or revenue to invest in marketing. He said the vicious cycle is that if the university does not find a way to generate more revenue, it will not be able to invest in marketing, which will help the institution.

Senator Perone asked if there has been any outreach to alumni who might donate money specifically for marketing. Ms. Looney replied there have been discussions about this, and she is going to meet with Clare Thompson, Vice President for Advancement, Alumni Relations, and Athletics, to see what can be done in this realm. Interim Provost Mossman remarked he has been working for the past six months on trying to integrate academic affairs planning with philanthropy. He said his first job was at a small liberal arts college where it seemed everything was named after someone. He thinks, in a good way, a lot of WIU's foundation dollars have gone toward student scholarships and supporting students, which is a very positive thing and supports the mission of the institution. But he would also like to see a framework developed where philanthropy and donations can also go towards academic affairs initiatives, such as classrooms and buildings.

3. Amy Carr, WIU Representative to the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) Faculty Advisory Council (FAC)

Dr. Carr told senators she would like to share some items, in no particular order, about things they might find interesting. She said although she will talk a little about the IBHE-FAC December meeting, the minutes are in the Senate Google Drive for senators to refer to later.

- a. When the IBHE-FAC met last Friday at Kishwaukee Community College, near Northern Illinois University, a presentation she heard mentioned that Kishwaukee is

moving toward having 8-week courses, except for courses like biology. Dr. Carr stated that the community college is studying which courses would need to stay 16 week, but there is research that supports the shift to 8-week courses. She said students have indicated they would like this change because they get tired of classes after about week 10 and drop out. Dr. Carr wonders if this trend might end up pressuring four-year institutions to switch to 8-week courses down the road.

- b. An FAC working group on prior learning assessment has asked the IBHE to create a task force that would investigate the possibility of statewide standards for prior learning assessment or credit for prior learning. She said if anyone is interested, she will put them in contact with individuals working on this.
- c. There will be an opening for a public university representative to the Illinois Board of Higher Education. Jen Delaney, who has been serving in this role, is taking a job in California. Dr. Carr said that the IBHE usually puts forward a couple of names, and her name has been put forward along with someone from Chicago State. She stated that if any faculty member wants to serve on the IBHE or knows of someone who would might be interested, she can let them know how to access the portal to apply.
- d. Senate Bill 2606 will soon be coming before the legislature. This is the mental health bill sponsored by Senator Dave Koehler. Dr. Carr has emailed with faculty previously who expressed concerns about this bill, which would mandate five mental health days for students. She said faculty or departments with concerns should email Senator Koehler and let Dr. Carr know if they want more information on the conversations about this bill.
- e. Senate Bill 2838 would amend the Dual Credit Policy Act, which provides assistance from the Illinois State Scholarship Commission. Dr. Carr said the bill would amend the Act to provide state funding for high school teachers to work toward their master's degrees; once their degrees are earned, the teachers would have to agree to serve five years in their high schools. She said there are various perspectives on this bill, which is intended to retain high school teachers.
- f. The Illinois Commission for Equitable Public University Funding is supposed to have their report submitted by March 1; it was previously delayed. Dr. Carr said the report is supposed to propose a funding formula for ten years or more for public universities. Public comments and concerns about this formula can be found in recent minutes of the FAC. Dr. Carr has heard the funding formula model is based on K-12 models and asks what each institution would need to adequately fund various groups of undergraduate students. She said it looks like \$1.4 billion would be needed, which would require the state to double its current level of investment. Consultants who are part of this discussion have suggested adding an additional \$100,000 to each of the next ten years, allocated on the basis of who has the higher gaps in adequate funding.
- g. The IBHE has a diversity faculty initiative which would provide state funding support for minority graduate students to complete their master's and doctoral programs. If anyone know someone who might be interested in this, they can find more information on the IBHE website.
- h. Dr. Carr told senators the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) has perhaps been working toward developing legislation that would allow community colleges to develop four-year degrees in teacher training programs. Some of the Illinois Community College Board members and school leaders seem to be supporting this, but all of the community colleges that Dr. Carr has spoken to and the IBHE Faculty Advisory Council do not support this initiative. She said there has been a lot of pushback from four-year institutions, but it is something people need to be aware of.

- i. A Faculty Advisory Council working group is trying to develop a diversity-equity-inclusion (DEI) pedagogy toolkit. Dr. Carr said this group is trying to become a clearinghouse for DEI resources, so if anyone has anything they would like to share with this group she can let them know who to talk to about getting it included.
- j. Dr. Carr said some will recall that the IBHE's low-producing program report, also known as the Academic Program Effectiveness and Efficiency Report (APEER), led to some of WIU's programs and departments being eliminated in the past. She said it legislatively mandates reporting undergraduate and graduate programs with numbers below certain levels and indicating whether the institution wants to continue these programs or sundown them. Dr. Carr said the IBHE is trying to highlight the efficiency side of this reporting process, and the new reporting requirements will ask whether certain programs are available in various parts of the state. She stated, as an example, that if a foreign language program does not have 40 majors but is the only foreign language program available in that part of the state, that could be a rationale to have a small program.
- k. The December IBHE-FAC minutes provide detailed accounts of the group's presenters, one of whom discussed artificial intelligence. She thinks this presentation, which provided a lot of interesting links, overlaps with the Faculty Senate's AI task force report. One detail that Dr. Carr thought was interesting was that human resources departments are starting to ask applicants to include in their portfolios AI prompts that they have developed.

Senator Gravitt whether there is a push for universities to offer two-year programs since there is a push for community colleges to develop four-year programs. Dr. Carr does not know that universities offering two-year degrees would be very viable, but there is a lot of pushback on community colleges offering four-year degrees because they do not have as many scholarly research expectations as universities. She said her father taught a two-year program on forest technology at Michigan Tech, but over time those two-year programs have migrated to community colleges that did not previously exist. She said what is being seen more frequently nowadays are reverse transfers, where a student could take a course at a four-year institution and transfer it to a two-year community college if the student wanted an associate degree. Interim Provost Mossman stated that the legislature considers going down this road annually; in past years the push was for nursing, and now it is concentrated on teacher education because there is a teacher shortage. He said there are more community colleges than four-year institutions in the state, so they have more representation and more people talking about this. He has observed a rare allegiance among public universities that this would not be a good change, both for universities and for rural community colleges, such as Spoon River, which would not have the necessary infrastructure to support four-year programs. He added that this constant tug of war has been happening for about five to seven years.

Regarding the discussion of a possible change to the funding formula, Interim Program Mossman noted that the change may benefit WIU a lot given the political direction of the state. He pointed out that WIU's strategic planning documents align perfectly with Thriving Illinois, the planning document for higher education in the state. He thinks WIU might receive increased appropriations from the proposed change to the funding formula, although he does not know at this time if that is what would actually occur. Dr. Carr said the proposal is due March 1, although it was originally due last summer. Chair Albarracin asked if there is an advance copy being circulated; Dr. Carr replied there is not. Interim Provost Mossman noted that President Huang is on the larger committee, and Executive Director of Financial Affairs Ketra Roselieb is on the Technical Community Committee.

4. College Liaisons for Revenue and Enrollment Project for BOT Retreat

Chair Albarracin had a conversation with the Chair of the Board of Trustees (BOT) which resulted in an invitation for faculty to attend the BOT Retreat on February 8 to talk about

ways to grow WIU's enrollment and revenue. Chair Albarracin said senators must work very quickly on this initiative. The Executive Committee would like for one senator from each academic college and from the Quad Cities campus to gather ideas and information from deans and their faculty colleagues and return the information they collect to Chair Albarracin and Mrs. Hamm by February 1.

Chair Albarracin volunteered to gather input from the College of Arts and Sciences. She plans to conduct a survey within her college but suggested other senators may wish to have town hall meetings with their college faculty or have other ideas for collecting the data. Senator Gravitt volunteered to collect the information from the College of Business and Technology. Senator Gravitt brought this topic up a college meeting last week and shared her email address so that people could contact her with their input; she has already received some comments. Senator Sarra volunteered to gather data from the College of Education and Human Services; Senator Chadwell will be the point person for the College of Fine Arts and Communication; and Senator Hamner will oversee data collection for faculty on the Quad Cities campus.

Senator Chadwell asked if the volunteers will also need to be available to attend the Retreat. Chair Albarracin responded that is not necessary; right now, Faculty Senate is just looking for senators willing to be responsible for gathering the information from their colleges. Senator Chadwell asked what time the presentations will be made to the BOT. Chair Albarracin responded faculty have been given one hour for presentations, from 10:30-11:30 a.m. on February 8 in the Union Capitol Rooms, and this time must be shared with representatives from UPI. She anticipates each senator would prepare five PowerPoint slides for presentation. Senator Chadwell asked what volunteers should do if they do not get a good response to their survey. Senator Gravitt replied it is not necessary to send out a full survey; she simply asked faculty in her college to share their ideas for retention, recruitment, and new revenue streams.

Senator Hamner suggested that volunteers coordinate with each other to concentrate on a few main consolidated points, which might be more effective than six separate scattershot presentations. He suspects the UPI representatives might also appreciate consolidating ideas so that there is a little more room to pursue them. He suspects there may not be time for the volunteers to meet to consolidate their responses; he suggested an email thread where the volunteers can at least identify overlaps.

Chair Albarracin agrees with Senator Hamner's suggestion. She said the PowerPoints must be submitted to the President's office by February 2, so she will need no more than five slides from each volunteer on February 1 before 5:00 p.m.

5. Senator to Serve on Aspen-AASCU WIU-SRC Transfer Student Success Initiative Core Team

Chair Albarracin announced that a senator is sought to serve on the Transfer Student Success Initiative Core Team for Aspen-AASCU. She said Senator Gravitt is willing to attend the yearlong meetings, but she has a class conflict for part of the meeting time. Chair Albarracin asked if anyone else is interested in serving on this task force; there were no other volunteers.

Parliamentarian Robinett asked if it would be better to have someone attend part-time rather than having no representative at all, or if that would not be acceptable. Interim Provost Mossman replied it would be better to have someone attend the meetings part-time rather than not at all. He explained this is a partnership with Spoon River College to develop a model on how to increase transfers; Spoon River will be exploring how to successfully transfer their students to four-year institutions while WIU will study how to increase transfers into the institution. He said that in 12 to 18 months the partnership on this initiative with Spoon River College could be expanded to include other regional community colleges, such as Blackhawk and Scott. Interim Provost Mossman thinks it is important to have a faculty voice on the task force because there is a shared governance model at WIU; he does not think

it would be good to have just him and Justin Schuch doing this work on this initiative because there is a gravitas to this effort, and Faculty Senate should be represented. He added that it would be better to have Senator Gravitt attend for part of the meeting or for some of the meetings that to have no one there from Faculty Senate; ideally there should be someone at the meetings committed to improving transfer rates at WIU. Senator Gravitt said she has spoken to Admissions Director Doug Freed and Associate Director for Recruitment and Outreach Kassie Daly about transfer pathways.

Chair Albarracin agreed to attend the meetings that Senator Gravitt must miss. Interim Provost Mossman said it will be good to have the Faculty Senate Chair and a senator at the meetings.

III. Reports of Committees and Councils

A. Council on Curricular Programs and Instruction (CCPI) (Amy Burke, Chair)

1. Curricular Requests from the Department of Broadcasting and Journalism

a. Request for Change of Major

i. Broadcasting and Journalism

Ms. Burke stated that there are a couple of hidden prerequisites in the change of major that will be handled through minor changes to the Provost's office once the request for change of major is approved. Senator Hunter asked how the prereqs will be handled by the students and if there are very many of them. Ms. Burke responded that permission of instructor will be added to the two prerequisites.

Senator Tang remarked the proposed changes look reasonable, make sense, and are very important. He noted that Journalism and Strategic Media is one of the options that will be changed and asked Broadcasting and Journalism Chair Peter Gloviczki to explain what strategic media is since this is a term senators may not be familiar with. Dr. Gloviczki responded that strategic media is a term currently utilized in their field, and updating the title of the Multimedia Journalism Option will allow WIU graduates to be best positioned for the future that awaits them. He said strategic media is a term that carries forward the ways that broadcasting and journalism is increasingly a convergent program, which is to say that it reaches across a variety of broadcasting and journalism fields. He added that the proposed major changes come after the department's most recent IBHE review, and he appreciated the assistance across the campus community with that process.

CHANGE OF MAJOR APPROVED

2. Curricular Requests from the School of Engineering and Technology

a. Request for Change of Major

i. Construction and Facilities Management

CHANGE OF MAJOR APPROVED

C. Senate Nominating Committee (SNC) (Katherine Perone, Chair)

1. Faculty Nominations

SENATE COUNCILS AND COMMITTEES

Council on Admissions, Graduation, and Academic Standards (CAGAS)

Bret Bogenschneider, AFED replacing Lawrence Leff 2026 B&T

D. Ad Hoc Committee on Artificial Intelligence
(Michael Lorenzen, Chair)

1. Final Report

Dr. Lorenzen said the task force was a good one and he appreciates everyone who participated. He thinks Senator Hamner did a good job of writing the final 23-page report and making all of the points. Dr. Lorenzen said everyone is aware that AI is here and is making an impact on everyone. He said the task force tried to avoid too much fear-mongering about this but also avoided embracing it as a utopian solution. He believes AI is a reality that everyone has to deal with because employers will expect students to have some AI skills when they graduate from college. He said because of this, AI needs to be incorporated into the curriculum in some way.

Dr. Lorenzen thinks every faculty member will need to decide how AI will be used in their classes, including what will be allowed and approved for their students. The AI Committee came up with some options for different kinds of classes and language that faculty could use on their syllabi. Dr. Lorenzen related the committee also talked about some of the larger issues related to AI detection software. He hopes everyone can find the report helpful.

Senator Hunter asked if the AI report will be sent to all faculty; Dr. Lorenzen responded it already has been. Senator Hamner asked how many senators spent more than one minute with the report prior to today because he is curious about the kind of value it might have had. Many senators raised their hands. Senator Hamner said he was curious about what kind of readership a report of this length might get. He added the committee put real time and effort into the report and hopes it will be a valuable resource for everyone regardless of what point they are coming at AI. Senator Hunter remarked the report was quite concise for everything that was covered and was very complete. He thinks it was a very good read and said he learned a lot.

Senator Hamner reiterated the key recommendation that he would emphasize is that AI is not going away, and faculty need to think strategically about how to move forward with this moving target. He noted that the ad hoc committee recommended that senators consider creating a longer-term Senate committee or that AI be incorporated into an existing Senate committee; it could also be something the university integrates more fully. The ad hoc committee thinks a more permanent committee needs to incorporate University Technology as well as faculty representation. Senator Hamner emphasized that this topic should not be a one-and-done presentation because it is something that will continue to have real impact on a lot of pedagogical discussions.

Senator Gravitt asked if there was anyone from the Council on Writing on the Disciplines who served on the ad hoc AI Committee. She thinks this area will be one of the biggest ones affected by AI and wonders how they will evaluate it. Senator Hamner responded that no one from that council served on the ad hoc AI Committee, but he consulted with several people on the WID Council. He thinks a lot more conversations need to be held because AI will keep developing. He recognizes that many of these issues are not simple and not just the matter of a quick policy; there will be implications that keep developing.

Senator Hunter thinks it is important to discuss AI with students and get their ideas and input. He assigned students in his 590 research methods class to report on different AI blocks and discuss the safeguards and dangers of AI, including things they should watch out for as a student and as a professor. Senator Hunter thinks they all learned a lot through the exercise.

Senator Gravitt remarked that when she reviews papers for journals she can tell those that use AI to fill in the references because there is no standard APA format. Chair Albarracin wonders if it would be beneficial to offer AI workshops through the Center for Innovation in Teaching and Research (CITR). She has not yet had time to explore AI technology to determine how to incorporate it into her classes.

Building off what the ad hoc committee produced, Parliamentarian Robinett developed an AI syllabus statement for his classes. He said that friends of his at the University of Illinois suggested to him a way to talk about academic integrity in the classroom by having students log into ChatGPT and use a prompt from one of his assignments. Students are then asked to work in groups to write a paper as a D student, write a paper that uses XYZ, or other examples. He thinks this allows students to experience what AI can do. Parliamentarian Robinett said his students quickly figured out how old some of the information in ChatGPT is based on its responses to some of the prompts.

Chair Albarracin expressed her thanks to Dr. Lorenzen and the committee and said that what they produced was very impressive.

NO OBJECTIONS TO THE REPORT

V. New Business

A. Proposed Resolution on Embracing Neurodiversity

WHEREAS, Western Illinois University (WIU) proudly affirms its dedication to inclusivity and diversity in collaboration with the WIU Justice Inclusion Diversity & Equity Office (Carl, Ervin, Director, JIDE), WIU SGA (President Kyle Ramlow), WIU Political Science (Chair Greg Baldi) WIU Department of Speech Pathology & Audiology (Julie Curless, Initiatives in Accessibility Committee Chair) ,WIU-Quad Cities (VP Kristi Mindrup), and other university partners, we recognize and celebrate the diverse strengths and contributions that neurodivergent individuals bring to our community, encompassing those with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), whether formally diagnosed or seeking informal support; and

WHEREAS, Across our campuses in Macomb, Moline, and Online, WIU actively promotes the neurodivergent paradigm, acknowledging that neurological differences enrich the fabric of our university, we commit to cultivating an environment that supports the well-being and success of neurodivergent individuals by increasing awareness, providing tailored resources, and fostering inclusive spaces; and

WHEREAS, By encouraging dialogue and collaboration, WIU aims to create an open and accepting culture where neurodivergent individuals feel welcomed and valued, together with JIDE and WIU-QC, we are committed to building a diverse and inclusive community that reflects the richness of human experience.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT WIU embraces the neurodivergent paradigm, striving to create an environment where all members can thrive academically, socially, and personally, as

evidenced in the creation and maintenance of resources and opportunities for all students and community members.

Chair Albarracin read a statement from SGA President Kyle Ramlow, who was unable to attend the meeting: "The sensory room will bring new opportunities and accommodations for students and faculty and set the stage for more accessible projects to make WIU welcoming to all groups, no matter your ability, and continue to strive for an inclusive environment." SGA is a co-sponsor of the resolution.

Kristi Mindrup, Vice President for Quad Cities Campus Operations, said she and Casey LaFrance, Political Science, are part of an interdisciplinary multicampus team who are also bringing the resolution forward for consideration by Faculty Senate. Vice President Mindrup explained the resolution is in response to the Illinois General Assembly's urgency for higher education institutions to include and embrace neurodivergent programs into university environments and culture. She said the resolution is also in line with WIU's commitment to inclusion and social justice.

Vice President Mindrup told senators the interdisciplinary multicampus team is led by Casey LaFrance. Members include SGA President Kyle Ramlow; Curtis Williams, Director of Student Services on the Quad Cities Campus; Angela McClanahan-Simmons, WIU Museum Studies program; and many others. Vice President Mindrup said this group worked diligently over the past year to identify support and funding, assess and develop new campus spaces, establish virtual sensory projects, and take a research- and good practices-based approach to building and maintaining a positive neurodivergent culture on all WIU campuses. She said the group is also interested in pursuing opportunities that align with WIU recruitment and retention initiatives that can potentially serve 15 percent of the student population who identify as neurodivergent. Vice President Mindrup said Faculty Senate is being asked to consider and support this resolution that acknowledges WIU's commitment to establishing a campus culture and environments where individuals who are neurodivergent feel welcome and valued and whose contributions add to the richness of the Western Illinois University experience.

Senator Perone commented that the resolution is a great and progressive idea that social work students in her department have already started to talk about. She has gotten a lot of positive feedback about this initiative and is sure that students in other areas are starting to talk about it as well.

Senator Hamner reaffirmed Senator Perone's support and asked if neurodiversity could be defined in order to get that term into everyone's vocabulary a little more fully. Dr. LaFrance explained that neurodiversity means that a person's brain works differently than someone who has been defined as neurotypical. He said a lot of this has to do with the way information is communicated through the senses and the body. He added it is an inclusion term that has a big umbrella, so under this term would be included PTSD, ADHD, ASD, and other conditions.

Dr. LaFrance stated that since about 15 percent of the population self-identify as neurodivergent, it is important to note that there are a lot of people who historically and currently do not have resources to diagnostic care. He noted that this particularly tends to be missed in females, so adult women tend not to be diagnosed until later in life. Dr. LaFrance said the waiting period is around three years for a diagnosis, so there may be a lot of people that need this kind of support but do not have a formal diagnosis.

Dr. LaFrance believes there has been good cross-campus support for this initiative and also incredible support from external funding agencies. The Autistic Self-Advocacy Network donated some books, and grants have been received from The Ability Experience and the Illinois Autism Association. Dr. LaFrance is working on another grant from Autism Amazing. He said this means that there will be money for student scholarships, sensory room equipment, and, most importantly, to recruit graduate students.

Dr. LaFrance recommended that if individuals want to learn more, they should check out the neurodiversity network. He said WIU will be one of only 14 institutions in the world listed on that website as a neurodiversity supportive institution. There will be a logo developed with the assistance of Visual Production Center. Dr. LaFrance believes there is a lot of support for this project, both internally and externally, and expressed his thanks to everyone involved.

Vice President Mindrup expressed her appreciation for Dr. LaFrance's leadership, as well as to Mr. Ramlow and everyone involved. She believes this initiative is more than just a symbolic gesture because there are people who are really active and involved seeking resources that can actually make things happen on both of WIU's campuses. She also expressed gratitude for the collaboration across both campuses and for thinking about students at all of WIU's locations – Quad Cities, Macomb, and online.

Dr. LaFrance told senators that a lot of this effort has been based out of the Justice Inclusion Diversity and Equity (JIDE) office. He said Julie Curless, Speech Pathology and Audiology, chairs the committee and is most knowledgeable about ASD. He recommended that persons with questions about the clinical rationale behind some of the neurodivergent programs or ideas reach out to her. He said JIDE Interim Director Carl Ervin is probably the best person to talk to about inclusivity questions.

Motion: To approve the resolution (Gravitt/Perone)

MOTION APPROVED 20 YES (14 IN-PERSON/6 ZOOM) – 0 NO – 0 ABSTENTIONS

B. For the Good of the Body

Senator Gravitt stated that up to this point she has been able to use the CITR website to be able to access a comma delineated list of students in her classes to use to create an email list. She said faculty can also text all the students in their classes from this website. She tried to access the website yesterday, and it is no longer available. Senator Hunter thinks it has been inoperable since last semester. Senator Gravitt asked if some other office on campus will provide this same service for faculty so that they can reach out to their students, who often do not check their emails and can only be reached by text. She was going to send a group text out yesterday informing them that class was cancelled but had no way to do that.

Interim Provost Mossman remarked that he was able to text and email all of his students last fall. He explained there is reorganization happening in the former CITR area; his personal goal is to get a version of CITR up and running within Academic Affairs. He recalled that for years the CITR office was able to put on many faculty workshops, and workshops are needed for pedagogy. He noted that DEI and race theory are among the things that need to be addressed together as a faculty. Interim Provost Mossman stated that the technical side of CITR – WesternOnline – is something he can follow up on if there are problems with a course; he was able to use WesternOnline in the fall to contact students as he normally has been able to in the past. He hopes by the end of the semester to be able to reorganize CITR and get that office moving forward again.

Senator Gravitt said she can still send group emails to her classes using the Guava system, but, especially for her newer classes, students do not know to check their emails every day, especially early in the semester. She thinks the best way to reach her students, including new freshmen, is to send group text messages, and the CITR website used to have a link to enable this. She also thinks directors of the various units would love to be able to send group texts to all of their various majors. She stressed that some group texting system needs to be enabled for both faculty and the administration because students check their phones rather than their emails. She thinks this communication will also help with retention.

Parliamentarian Robinett observed this service used to be included under Faculty Tools, which was a different resource on the CITR website. He said it operated last fall but was removed over the winter break. He thinks there have been conversations about whether Slate could provide opportunities for

individuals to be able to do this more effectively and efficiently, but he thinks it is one of the discussions that WesternOnline has outsourced back to the company, and some of these resources may not be included in that outsourcing. Interim Provost Mossman said he will follow up on this with University Technology CIO Greg Kain.

Chair Albarracin said that while many senators used to attend Faculty Senate meetings via zoom, it is no longer an option for most. She said that the change was not made because of a desire to meet face-to-face but is mandated by the Open Meetings Act. Chair Albarracin said attending virtually is only an option when senators have no choice, such as because they work in the Quad Cities, are sick, or have childcare issues. Other than that, senators are expected to attend in person. She expressed her thanks to senators for their cooperation.

Motion: To adjourn (Gravitt)

The Faculty Senate adjourned at 5:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Annette Hamm, Faculty Senate Recording Secretary