

WESTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY FACULTY SENATE

Regular Meeting, 15 September 2026, 4:00 p.m.

Via Zoom and Union Capitol Rooms

A C T I O N M I N U T E S

SENATORS PRESENT IN PERSON: D. Allwardt, E. Asare, A. Baker, M. Blankenship, S. Chakravorti, P. Cole, R. DiCarmine, A. Frederick, N. Gillotti, C. Kovacs, H. Mason, J. McKenzie, A. Melkumian, S. Nash, J. Walker

SENATORS PRESENT VIA ZOOM: R. Kelly, R. Sharma, Y. Tang, F. Tasdan

SENATORS ABSENT: M. Hoge

EX-OFFICIO: William Gblerkpor, Parliamentarian; Mark Mossman, Provost

GUESTS: Tawnya Adkins-Covert, Lori Baker-Sperry, Keith Boeckelman, Amy Carr, Merrill Cole, Patty Eathington, Tara Feld, Everett Hamner, Sarah Lawson, Jessica Lin, Kyle Mayborn, Kristi Mindrup, Amy Patrick Mossman, Lorette Oden, Renee Polubinsky.

Faculty Senate welcomed two new senators: Chris Kovacs and Sandy Nash will represent the School of Nursing, Applied Health, and Human Performance. At the previous Senate meeting, Senator Tang took his seat to represent the School of Communication, Media, and Experience Industries.

I. Consideration of Minutes

A. September 1, 2026

MINUTES APPROVED AS DISTRIBUTED

II. Announcements

A. Approvals from the Provost

1. Request for New Course
 - a. CSEC 493, Topics in Cybercriminology, 3 s.h.
 - i. Educational Studies
2. Request for New Minor
 - a. Special Education

B. Provost's Report

Provost Mossman reported that he participated in meetings yesterday about the embedded tutor and the career readiness pilot programs in General Education, and both seem to be going very well. He has heard great news about attendance and student engagement in those classes. He noted that since these are pilot programs, a lot of information will be collected which will frame how the administration approaches Fall 2027 with those two programs in the curriculum.

Provost Mossman has tried very hard in the past couple of weeks to send out as many event dates as possible because the more engagement in the university, the better things are for everyone. He thinks a sense of presence is always good to have, especially for first-year students. He encouraged

everyone to send him information about events that he can pass on to the entire Division of Academic Affairs.

Provost Mossman, President Mindrup, and others have just come from the Grand Opening of the Goldfarb Center for the Performing Arts. Provost Mossman noted that it was a pretty full house and an excellent event with a lot of great moments. He encouraged those who have not yet been in the building to visit it.

C. Student Government Association Report – None

D. Faculty Senate Chair's Report

1. Highlighting Good News

Chair McKenzie had emailed a link so that the campus community could share items of good news that she could include in her Chair's Report, and she chose three for today from her stockpile that she will be sharing at subsequent meetings.

Tahir Khan in the School of Computing, Data, and Mathematical Sciences shared with Chair McKenzie that the university has been awarded a GenCyber grant for \$89,401.33 to host the WIU GenCyber Cybersecurity Camp in June 2027. Thirty high school students (15 male, 15 female) with little or no prior cybersecurity experience will be selected to participate in this residential camp from June 6-11 at WIU's Macomb campus.
(https://www.wiu.edu/news/newsrelease.php?release_id=21423)

Honey Zimmerman from the School of Accounting and Business Administration informed Chair McKenzie that WIU is the lead institution for maritime and logistics training and education in a new consortium formed in April. The Corn Belt Ports Rural Maritime and Logistics Training and Education Consortium unites ten institutions from Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, and Wisconsin. The Consortium was designated a 2026 Center of Excellence for Domestic Maritime Workforce Training and Education by the Maritime Administration (MARAD). Dr. Zimmerman says this federal designation will create many opportunities across multiple academic disciplines at WIU.
(<https://www.maritime.dot.gov/sites/marad.dot.gov/files/Corn%20Belt%20Ports%20Rural%20Maritime%20%26%20Logistics%20Training%20%26%20Education%20Consortium%20Overview.pdf>)

Erica Wurth of the School of Humanities told Chair McKenzie that she recently signed with Mark Gottlieb of the Trident Media Group.

Chair McKenzie told senators that there were all kinds of submissions, and she tried to choose three that were very different from one another to showcase the awesome things going on with faculty across the campus.

Chair McKenzie would like for senators to think about how they are sharing the activities of the Faculty Senate with those that they represent. She said that in addition to letting them know what is happening at Faculty Senate, she would like senators to consider how they can solicit and make themselves available to get information from their colleagues about matters that may need to be discussed at Senate meetings. Chair McKenzie is finding that she receives a lot of information in her role as Senate Chair and has to kind of parse through it to see what might be good to bring to this body, but she thinks it would be much richer if information could be brought forward from more people so that it is not just coming from the spaces she is in and the people she knows.

Chair McKenzie encouraged senators to consider participating in University Conduct Board training if they have never done that before. She did this as soon as she began working at WIU. She explained that the University Conduct Board holds disciplinary hearings for students and is an interesting and important service opportunity for faculty as it ensures that the university is providing

students with the due process that they deserve. She included a flyer in the Senate's Google Drive so that senators can use the QR code to register for upcoming dates in October, November, and December. She thinks that University Conduct Board service can help faculty to hone their decision-making skills because part of the training includes suggestions about how to think about complex problems. She suggested that even if faculty do not have an interest in participating in the hearings, going through the training might be something they would find beneficial.

Chair McKenzie put information on tenth-day enrollment numbers in the Senate's Google Drive folder, and President Mindrup will be talking more about those. She also put a flyer in the folder about self-guided accessibility trainings that have been created by the Office of Online Teaching and Learning. She noted that while this will not give faculty everything they need to make their documents accessible, it is a fantastic place to get started. She added that since they are self-paced, faculty can jump in and out as needed.

Chair McKenzie pointed out that near the end of the meeting senators will consider creation of a new ad hoc Committee on University Accessibility. She noted that accessibility is something that is near and dear to her and something that everyone needs to pay attention to.

E. Other Announcements

1. President Mindrup

President Mindrup thanked Chair McKenzie for reaching out and setting up time for her to meet with Faculty Senate and to Ms. Hamm for helping keep the President's Office connected and coordinated with the Senate. She always appreciates the opportunity to speak with senators. She also wants to open up time for questions, ideas, thoughts, and comments from senators because she thinks it is as important to hear input as to share information and sees her visits as a two-way street.

President Mindrup noted that before starting with the positive news, she wants to contextualize that as president it is always her job to be the university's number one cheerleader, so whether she is off- or on-campus, it is her responsibility to highlight WIU's momentum. She said her job is to talk to the community and tell the WIU story and its successes, such as those which were mentioned at today's Grand Opening. She thinks these are the things the university should amplify because that provides the opportunity to continue to build on momentum. She hopes that faculty will continue to share their stories – their successes in the classroom, with their research, and with their service and performances – because they contribute to the overall WIU success story. She thinks they demonstrate to the university community and to legislators the impact that WIU brings, to its students, the region, the state, and beyond through its international presence.

President Mindrup hopes that senators can see the positive momentum reflected in their students and classrooms. She noted that last year represented the start of what she would say is a shift away from the Covid group of students who were perhaps a bit less engaged, and the university is now seeing a lot more engagement on campus. She thinks part of this is due to students themselves and what they are seeking out, part is what faculty are doing in their classrooms, and part is what the Student Success division is doing to really incentivize and encourage students to connect with one another and with engaging opportunities on campus in order to create a full holistic experience as students.

President Mindrup thinks part of the excitement students are experiencing comes from the idea that WIU, after 40 years, finally has a new building and a new space to celebrate on the Macomb campus. She said the ribbon cutting for the new Goldfarb Center for the Performing Arts held this afternoon had great participation from community leaders, legislators, and the Illinois Deputy Governor. She thinks it is great to have that connection to be able to demonstrate the best of WIU. She believes the Goldfarb Center for the Performing Arts represents more than a space where the university can bring in traveling acts for

everybody to buy tickets to and enjoy an experience; while that is certainly part of it, the Center is, most importantly, an educational building. The first day of fall classes, President Mindrup walked over to the Center and thought it was great to see students literally singing with joy and pride in the hallways and really looking forward to the opportunities they will have to engage with that space. She thinks this space will provide a great function, value, and opportunity for the institution; it is also symbolic in showing that the state is invested in WIU, the university is here to stay, and it will continue at a top level. President Mindrup related that former President Al Goldfarb observed that this facility is at the top of its class for the state of Illinois and is really a shining example of what WIU can do with vision. She noted that now the university is at the stage of implementation and determining what that means for the university and for the students who are in programs that utilize that space specifically. She noted that the SGA President and Board of Trustees Student Representative today were discussing how being in the space for student organization meetings, events, or just as a study area will be so meaningful for the students involved.

President Mindrup believes the new Emergency Operations Center (EOC) will do the same type of thing for the public safety programs at WIU. She thinks it provides a great opportunity to demonstrate that WIU is a space for hands-on learning and that it will be a trusted hub for the activities that will happen in that Center. She stated that the EOC will connect the university to law enforcement, emergency management, and many other areas of the work that connects WIU to other areas of the world, so this provides some exciting momentum as well.

President Mindrup recommended that senators take some time to visit the lower level of the University Union to see the really fantastic new Student Engagement Center. She thinks these examples illustrate that WIU cares about its spaces and the ways that students interact with them. She added that everyone will continue to see these types of improvements throughout the campus. She noted that one conversation she has had with Faculty Senate over the years has involved the university's learning and student support spaces, and there are some things that can be done with slight modifications and renovation that can really create new spaces in which to engage with students and to highlight on student tours, as well as, most importantly, providing additional educational opportunities. She is very excited to see these spaces taking shape on the Macomb campus.

President Mindrup expressed her thanks for all faculty have done to participate in or be a part of the First Four Days and First Four Weeks of the fall semester. She noted that the university is now in the first four weeks of that experience and making an impression on new students, and faculty are a critical piece of that in the ways they engage with students and get them connected with their courses, disciplines, and the university.

President Mindrup acknowledged that enrollment is something everyone is thinking about as the university has just passed its tenth day of classes. She said the university headcount is 4,447, a number that the administration projected for the fall semester. She stated that Provost Mossman and Vice President Schuch could provide further information on some of those details, which she understands that Chair McKenzie provided to senators so that they can see the breakdown of full- and part-time students, semester hours, and those sorts of things. President Mindrup recognizes that the number is certainly one of the lower ones the university has seen in a long time during a period when population changes have affected WIU, although that is only a partial explanation. She and Provost Mossman spoke with McDonough District Hospital representatives today, and they are seeing these effects of being in a rural area as well, so there are challenges associated with that.

President Mindrup stressed that the enrollment number was planned for in concert with what was known to be the amount the university would get from state appropriations. She said that means that the university is in a spot where it can be said to be stable, although it is important to still be cautious about the bottom line in regard to cash flow and those types of things. She noted that the university deficit has been reduced from \$22 million in 2024 to

what is estimated to be \$4 million. She added that, without any unexpected expenses and with diligence throughout this year, there could possibly be a balanced budget by the end of the year, which is significant progress. President Mindrup recognizes there are questions about data and different stories floating around about the actual financial picture of the university, and she welcomes Faculty Senate as well as any individuals or groups to connect with her about this. She added that Vice President for Finance and Administration Ketra Roselieb would also be happy to go over that information with Faculty Senate. She added that the current administration has attempted to be as transparent as possible but was waiting on tenth-day numbers in order to do a more definite projection through the end of the year.

President Mindrup thinks that WIU has made significant financial progress and that this is due to the university community and the significant changes that have been made. She noted that, simultaneously while making these changes, there has been a lot of work, particularly in Academic Affairs, to re-envision how the university can position itself and build a solid foundation. She stated that although WIU has planned for the moment it is in, with an enrollment of 4,447, at the same time there are efforts to further strengthen the student population through retention. She noted that there are already gains being seen in retention, which is exciting momentum to build upon and which will also strengthen the university's foundation so that, through the new facilities and collaborations that faculty will engage in within their disciplines and the new academic structure, there is an opportunity to really think about what it means to be west central Illinois's regional university. President Mindrup thinks this might involve considering how WIU impacts its students uniquely, how the university should define what it does for this region of Illinois, and how to attract students from throughout the state to come and experience the programs that Western offers – the majors, the minors, and the courses that are uniquely WIU's.

President Mindrup observed that part of the foundation that is being built for WIU's future involves the work faculty are doing across disciplines to consider things like artificial intelligence; the interdisciplinary nature of programs, such as sociology and economic development, for example; and all sorts of different collaborative opportunities available through the new academic structure. She stated that this is part of what is being sought as opportunities to grow and sustain students because these innovations will create programs that will generate new markets and new interests for the university.

President Mindrup noted that another piece of the puzzle involves working with state legislators for adequate funding. She plans to share with legislators that WIU's enrollment is reflective of the state's investment in WIU. She said that the university has done what it needs to do to be sustainable at this number, but the state's investment in WIU is needed in order to be able to invest in growth areas and new, innovative opportunities.

President Mindrup has been hearing a lot of discussion about some of the grants that are being awarded to the university, which will be critical for some of the initiatives that are needed to get things started or to try to add a layer to a program, another area where she anticipates growth. She said another anticipated growth area involves the university's recruitment model; the university's website, which can be a major recruitment tool, is being overhauled this year, and there is excitement about the opportunities that having a more modern web presence will create for students and for attracting new international markets. She noted that the university has hired a new Director of International Recruitment, Eric Fry, who is looking at different part of the world and at very populated areas throughout the international realm. She anticipates some new opportunities to stabilize some of the impacts on international students that came about through policy and the changes that affected the institution.

President Mindrup related there are also efforts to look within Illinois to make sure that WIU is competitive within its own state. She believes it is important to attract students from Illinois as well as to look across the borders to those areas where students might respond to an amplified message about WIU being an "opportunity university" which inspires students

to meet their full potentials. She thinks the strategic planning process will provide the opportunity to do this by defining what this means for WIU and what is special about this university. The President believes one of the special aspects of WIU is the personalized experience its students receive, which is truly unique from many other institutions. She thinks WIU students experience a feeling of home and that faculty, staff, and administrators are accessible, which is one of the university's strengths, and there are many others as well.

President Mindrup noted that over the summer a University Strategy Council was formed to create an initial framework of a strategy. She said this framework is not intended to be something to vet and possibly adopt but is intended to create inspiration; it is a tool to react to because those reactions will help in the next step in the process, two-way communication and input. She thinks having a starting point can accelerate the process a bit more than trying to build something from scratch. President Mindrup noted that the University Strategy Council used data, looked at information, and considered feedback from the different discussions that have occurred over the past two years, while Provost Mossman and President Mindrup have been in their positions, in order to collect initial input from the university community. She said this is not coming from one person's pen but from conversations happening across the university. She encouraged senators and others in their areas in the next couple of months to connect and be a part of the planning process that Amy Patrick Mossman is coordinating and convening to keep the strategic plan moving along.

President Mindrup noted that one thing being discussed is that there is an opportunity to ensure the strategic plan being created is agile. She believes that even the process of strategic planning needs to reflect the agility and speed that universities must operate within in this world of ever-changing higher education that everyone is currently experiencing. She commended Dr. Patrick Mossman for the framework and groundwork that has now been laid for everyone to come into the process and contribute ideas, provide for future growth, and add meaning. She noted that the university is evolving from where it was two years ago – when there was a need to evaluate where the university was in the moment and make quick decisions and adjustments – through to laying the framework and working through the university Rebuild. She noted that now a layer of strategic planning is being added, while still delivering a high quality education leading to student success in and out of the classroom through experiences students have with their organizations, professional groups, activities, athletics, arts, and everything they are involved with on campus.

President Mindrup thanked senators for the opportunity to speak with them, noting that her goal was to provide an overview, but she is willing to delve deeper into anything she discussed today. Senator Frederick asked if individuals can reserve space in the new Goldfarb Center for the Performing Arts. President Mindrup responded she is certain this is possible, but she does not know how this works yet. She is sure this is something that can happen and that the team is working on a framework to ensure that any booked acts and performances will be taken care of from different areas that will need to be utilized. She noted that there are many spaces within the building – social spaces, instructional classrooms, different theatres – that may provide opportunities, particularly the Clow Theatre, which is a very flexible studio theatre. She imagines that even beyond the performing arts, which are supposed to be in spaces where the audience can engage with the performance, different disciplines may be able to think creatively about how they can be molded and shaped into those spaces. She would like to make connections and work together with those areas that want to use and preserve those spaces. Chair McKenzie thinks the blackbox theatre is pretty awesome, and she can envision lots of ways it can be used. President Mindrup agreed, noting that the walls are black, and it features really impressive lighting and catwalks. She can imagine creative minds doing cool things with it.

Senator Mason understands that the university is within what was projected for enrollment this year, but she wonders what the goal is for next year, other than not doing worse than projections. She asked if there is a number that everyone should be shooting for. President Mindrup responded that in the past, institutions everywhere, including WIU, picked a nice

round number; 10,000 was thrown out as a goal in the past because it felt good and seemed like something familiar. The President has had conversations with Provost Mossman and Vice President for Student Services Justin Schuch and believes the university needs to identify incremental growth, which can mean different things for different programs and for recruiters. She thinks that, through the strategic planning process and other academic planning occurring right now, the university needs to get a handle on what this number should look like. President Mindrup noted that in the immediate future the university needs to get back to 5,000; then it should be defined incrementally what WIU should grow to so that it is meaningful growth. She believes there also needs to be an understanding of the data behind this number and a plan developed that can actually be enacted because the university has the capacity and the available faculty and can then make incremental growth in areas to prioritize the investment. President Mindrup said she is not dodging the question but wants to emphasize the importance of everyone working together to create what that goal number should be. She added that certainly 5,000 is a much better spot from which to start seeing the revenue for projected expenses that would allow the university to not have to be so diligent about cash flow and some of the month-to-month things that have to be monitored very closely and to be able to build confidence toward being able to reinvest where strategically possible and where, as a group, it has been decided to put that investment. For the immediate future, President Mindrup thinks the goal should be to figure out the metrics that would allow the university to achieve 5,000 students, whether through core sections, new programs, or enhanced programs where there is known to be growth or opportunity; all of these things will define how this number is shaped in future.

President Mindrup invited Provost Mossman to speak about how he is looking at some of this in terms of planning. Provost Mossman thinks the most important thing for Academic Affairs that is coming out of the data is the two consecutive semesters of improved retention rates. He noted that even though there are plummeting demographics in the state, the Midwest, and Northeast in regard to student populations, resulting in WIU having to compete with every other university in the state of Illinois, what the university can do is retain the students it has. He stated that if the university is able to improve the retention rate by one or two percentage points each semester, this will lead to a retention rate that will really help with overall enrollment growth while moving through the four-year cycle. Provost Mossman pointed out that the previous strategic plan had a 10,000 student goal, but there were no metrics behind it whatsoever, except perhaps nostalgia for a previous era, and he would not like for the university to fall into that kind of trap again. He thinks retention is definitely something that can be improved and fits the idea of the university as a transformative experience because the students who stay at WIU are the ones who succeed. He thinks this is a good way to approach this question.

President Mindrup emphasized that everyone in the room – senators around the table, as well as the administration and those who work closely with recruitment and retention – understands the urgency; even though she speaks positively with optimism about the university, she does not want anyone to interpret that as not understanding the urgency to address enrollment as an institution. She also understands, however, that momentum, optimism, and pride in what the university is doing is not generated through fear and the wringing of hands; that is not the approach the university should take. She thinks, instead, the university should build teamwork around the idea of enrollment growth and strengthening existing enrollment. She thinks this is a really important moment for the WIU community in which everyone needs to leverage assets, such as some really great new spaces on campus and a new academic structure that is creating new opportunities for collaboration, as well as continued intentional connection with the surrounding region.

President Mindrup related that she and Provost Mossman had a great meeting today with McDonough District Hospital officials, and they have some similar challenges as WIU. She stated that with these challenges also come opportunities to join forces and leverage the MDH/WIU partnership to strengthen the region and make the case to legislators that west central Illinois is important, and not just for what it generates for the students who come to

WIU from Chicago, out of state, or all around the world. She would like to work together with others, such as Senator Mason, to further define what those goals might look like for next semester and next year. She does feel like there are some positive trends, such as retention and some other factors, as well as the fact that WIU is coming out of some bad press that it has had over the past couple of years and is starting to change that messaging. She appreciates the help of senators to get those good stories out there so that WIU can start to sway that narrative and create momentum. She noted that this all goes on while still, internally, handling business as a university community, tackling challenges, and addressing things that there may be disagreement about because it only takes one bad story to really impact the narrative, especially when the media can tend to have a negative focus on kinds of “gotcha” moments. She wants the university to keep feeding the media with positive stories illustrating the success of WIU.

Senator Kovacs understands that 4,447 was within the range that the administration projected for this fall, and he hears plans for the future and trying to change the direction for enrollment, but he also recognizes that the university will be graduating a class of 1,000 seniors in the spring, so he wants to be realistic about the university’s situation. He asked how WIU is in the short term. He thinks it is very unlikely, unless WIU brings in 1,500 students next year, that next year’s enrollment will not be even lower than this year’s because of losing this large graduating class. He asked if the university is prepared for this in the short term. President Mindrup replied that the administration is prepared for it but is not sitting on it. She encouraged Faculty Senate to bring in Rich Toomey, Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Management, to let him talk about recruitment. She also understands there are initiatives underway through Academic Affairs to address enrollment, including some new centers and opportunities for students to earn credit, different scheduling tactics, and ways to create new access points for students. She thinks the university community needs to discuss quantifying these methods as part of projecting toward the future.

President Mindrup stated that the university continues to work with an education advisory board to identify where students are; it showed a little uptick geographically in certain central Illinois markets, so there are individuals looking at how to make an impact in these areas. She added that there are others who can speak more to Faculty Senate about the different specific tactics, and she encourages that they be invited to a future meeting where she would be glad to join them, if requested.

President Mindrup reiterated that, as she said in her university assembly remarks last year, as much as the university’s financial picture was such an important piece to tackle, the university community now needs to give the same attention and persistence to enrollment. She noted that this includes continuing to press legislators and the Governor to invest in WIU’s growth through adequate funding, which is still on the radar. She just had a meeting last Tuesday about this, and she is aware that UPI is encouraging everyone to get involved and providing some great advocacy around this topic because it is a critical piece.

Senator Kovacs asked if there is a projected timeline when the final decision will be made about equitable funding. He feels like he has been hearing about it for a long time. President Mindrup thinks the goal of everyone who has been working on adequate funding is to have it enacted by Spring 2027. She noted that Advance Illinois is one of the groups that is spearheading this effort along with legislators. She has seen some momentum as legislators are appearing to take this initiative under their wings; at the budget testimony last spring, the administration was asked by legislators how equitable funding would impact WIU, and some legislators have told her they recognize that it is necessary. She thinks the question now is not whether to pass adequate funding but where to find the money to implement it, but that question is different than the one that started the conversation. She observed that implementation of adequate funding would be a gamechanger for WIU as well as for the other regional public universities with similar challenges. She thinks the public institutions

need to work together to make the case that adequate funding is not just good for their universities but also an investment toward the economic vitality of their regions.

Senator Frederick asked if part of the strategic planning will be that if enrollment continues to decrease there will need to be a process built in for staff or faculty reduction, if needed, and how that would look. President Mindrup replied that the administration would need to evaluate that, but they do not currently see the university on that trajectory. She stated that some planning has already been built in around that decrease – in addition to attrition because a pretty significant wave of retirements is expected. She added that faculty or staff reductions are always a last resort, and the administration would do all that they can to avoid that type of scenario. She recognizes that the university is in a position where programs have been optimized as much as possible, as faculty probably know and feel in their daily lives, and she appreciates that effort. She thinks the next steps need to be focused growth and moving forward from there. She added that the administration has not defined specifically what it would look like if WIU's enrollment continues to decline, but that is obviously something that they need to pay attention to. She added that this is a fair question, and this conversation needs to keep going.

President Mindrup observed that her administration has gone through the experience of inheriting a situation, so they know what that looks like and what the prompts are; they know what the cues are for the kinds of planning that needs to occur for the long term, so that would be handled with great care and awareness that the administration did not have previously when a situation was handed to them. She stated that the administration is monitoring the financial numbers and enrollment, but it does speak positively that they were able to offer pay increases this year and make that a priority because the university has some pretty great people working in it, and investing in people is a huge part of recruitment and retention. She recognizes that there is always more work to do, but the pay increases are a piece of evidence that was built into the administration's planning to show that they prioritize Western's employees, and that planning needs to continue for next semester, next year, and beyond.

President Mindrup told senators that she has been at WIU 30 years today, and in that time, she has never seen the level of incredible collaboration across the VP areas that she is seeing today, which allows all levels of the university to look holistically at the planning that is going on. She has noted that individuals are not protecting their turf as they have in the past or saying that their area's finances do not have anything to do with academics or with recruitment and retention. She observed that the reorganization has been a collective group effort with deans, faculty, and others.

President Mindrup told senators that Athletics is something being looked at from an enrollment management perspective. She noted that Athletics is not an isolated part of the university, so it is being looked at financially and enrollment-wise to consider what a sustainable D1 program should look like. President Mindrup stressed the administration is committed to D1 because that is important for recruitment, but it is considering, holistically, how it can be made sustainable, whether Athletics expenses can be done better, and how the athletic experience can be more closely tied to the academic or leadership experiences on campus. She would like to see Athletics be able to plan for teams and rosters that are efficient for coaches but perhaps also maximize the number of students who can be recruited through WIU Athletics. President Mindrup told senators this is just the seed of an idea right now, but an example is that there is a huge push right now for flag football on university campuses, which could represent a huge roster of potential students as well as some scholarships associated with it. She thinks students from a lot of different majors might come to WIU just because Western offers flag football, and this is just one opportunity that might have potential and possibilities that could be utilized similar to the ways students are recruited and retained for academic programs. Senator Frederick suggested pickleball might be another example; President Mindrup agreed this is another hot sport right now, but she will have to look into that in regard to NCAA.

Senator Walker noted that President Mindrup has said part of her job involves being the university's cheerleader, but unfortunately there has been a lot of negative press about enrollment and other things. He asked how the President's Office or other areas of the university can try to control the narrative a little bit to tell WIU's story and whether there are things that faculty can do to help carry that momentum. President Mindrup responded that there are a few ways she has in mind and related a recent example that was implemented around tenth day. She observed that the national culture of the United States has an obsession with "growth means quality," without any tie to the meaning behind growth, but the administration had already been projecting what WIU's enrollment would be, so they released a series of positive stories about WIU, kicking off with the university assembly in conversations with the media there, and carrying on through social media and other avenues. She said that although Vice President Schuch spent 45 minutes with the media talking about WIU's enrollment and including information about the momentum the university has going and the strategies that are in place to address the enrollment, the stories the media put out did not include any of this information. She wishes the media could put a little more meat in their stories because it is supposed to be unbiased reporting, but if it is not telling the complete story, it can be biased by omission. She noted that the same media representatives showed up for the ribbon cutting for the Goldfarb Center, and now they have a different story to tell. She thinks there is a new intentionality in putting out stories that reflect the collaboration across areas that she has mentioned.

President Mindrup noted that in higher education there is always a critique of what is referred to as "administrative bloat," and she thinks some of that is correct because as the university's administrative structure has been cut as part of the Rebuild, it has increased the amount of collaboration that has occurred across different areas, including a coordinated media response strategy that has intentionally been put in place to try to combat some of the negative narrative. She pointed out that Martin Torres, Illinois Deputy Governor for Education, attended today's ribbon cutting as a representative of Governor Pritzker. She stressed that the administration wants the Governor's office to see what this building means to the community so that legislators understand – through PR, the media, and storytelling – the regional impact of WIU.

President Mindrup appreciates that Chair McKenzie is collecting good news to highlight at the beginning of Faculty Senate meetings because that feeds into the positive momentum. She sees many faculty sharing on social media the things they do with their students day to day, and that creates a storyline rather than an immediate splash, which is more impactful because people see that faculty interact with their students, show up and mentor them, and do great things, like bringing musicianship to campus. She thinks that the things faculty do to highlight their work contributes to the narrative because the web is a great way to promote the university. She would not encourage engaging directly with naysayers but instead finding ways to bring those people into conversations; she thinks these people should be brought to campus to show them what WIU does, so that they are not asking if the university is still open, because there are a lot of good things happening at Western.

President Mindrup thinks that the narrative can be shifted, but it takes everyone to do that, not just the university's small but mighty PR office. She noted that while people always default to thinking that billboards are the best way to advertise, there is a shift to pushing out more digital media. She noted that the billboard just outside of Good Hope costs \$30,000, which is a lot of money when taken into account the amount of traffic that goes past it compared to a \$30,000 billboard in the Quad Cities, so the university is also revamping some of the areas being highlighted. She said the administration is looking to partner with Good Hope to see what other areas can be used to brand WIU and Good Hope rather than buying a billboard. She noted that Augustana College in the Quad Cities, for example, has street signs that are blue and gold, and it might be a good idea to have some purple and gold street signs around campus. She encourages everyone to send her their ideas and brainstorming because her door is always open, and the marketing/PR team also always

welcomes ideas and feedback. She said they have a form that can be filled out, whether to provide feedback or ideas for marketing or to share stories, and she encourages faculty to share information about awards, accolades, and recognitions they may receive so that those can be highlighted as part of what makes WIU special.

Senator Kovacs observed that the enrollment information was released late on a Friday, which made it appear, although this is not necessarily true, that the administration waited to put it out until the last minute. He said some people expressed their perception that since it was bad news the administration chose to wait until late on Friday to announce it. President Mindrup responded that it takes the Institutional Research staff awhile to vet the numbers they receive through the system, but the administration could wait until Monday morning next time instead. Senator Kovacs suggested that it would be beneficial if the announcement could be made faster because a lot of people viewed when the announcement happened as a negative. He thinks that even if the news is not the greatest, it should be confronted head-on as soon as possible. He added that even if it was not intended, it does not help that the news was released at that point in the week. President Mindrup explained the problem stems from the mechanics of how data is collected from WIU's antiquated systems. She stated that while efforts are underway to bring these technology infrastructure systems up to speed so that things can be done more quickly, the conversion from MVS to Colleague is creating new challenges that were unanticipated but must be addressed. She noted that the old system still has to be navigated to accomplish certain things, and even as some challenges are met there may be times when the need arises to defer back to some of those archaic systems in the future. President Mindrup said the administration wants to see the university continue to move forward with its technology in a way to be able to build enrollment, administrative systems, and an operating system, and produce those numbers a little bit faster. She appreciates what Senator Kovacs is saying and understands that it would be better to release the numbers on Thursday than Friday, and Monday would be a little too late. She added that WGEM put their story out on Monday, but Tri-States Public Radio sends their story out at 3:30 on Friday afternoon after the tenth-day numbers are released. She agrees that anything that can be done to expedite not just tenth-day data but all of the data the university works with needs to be done, and she recognizes, as Senator Kovacs pointed out, that perception is everything.

President Mindrup encouraged senators to continue the great work they are doing because it is a time for optimism about the things being done at WIU. She also thinks it is a time to be diligent and intentional to make sure the university takes care of its finances and enrollment, but she does not think that should stop the momentum that is underway. She offered to come back to Faculty Senate to continue the discussion. Chair McKenzie informed President Mindrup that Vice President Schuch and Assistant Vice President Toomey are already scheduled to meet with Faculty Senate at the first meeting in October, and Vice President Roselieb is scheduled for the second October meeting.

2. Strategic Planning Process

(Amy Patrick Mossman, Executive Director, Strategy and Institutional Effectiveness)

Chair McKenzie told senators that Dr. Mossman has been organizing and leading the charge to update the strategic plan. Chair McKenzie has also been a part of this, beginning with serving on a working group over the summer and currently serving on the University Strategy Council. She noted that President Mindrup spoke a lot about collaboration, and she thinks that is something that is coming to fruition through the strategic plan process because the group has collected a lot of information about differing perspectives to come up with themes. She thinks that now the hope is that everyone can find themselves in the updated plan. Chair McKenzie does not think a strategic plan should just be in a binder or a link on a website but should be something that everyone can find themselves in and can situate their work within in some way, shape, or form.

Dr. Mossman followed up on President Mindrup's comments about Institutional Research in regard to enrollment data by pointing out that the short week did not help because they did not receive the numbers until Tuesday evening and have been working late hours. She agrees that the system is antiquated and noted that the numbers cannot be released until they are reported to the Governor's Office. Senator Kovacs remarked that is good to know.

Dr. Mossman told senators the current strategic plan runs through 2027, so work is underway to evolve into a new strategic plan intended to take the university through 2032. She said the University Strategy Council was formed and began work on the strategic planning process in February through April. She said they conducted an internal survey to allow the members to do a deep dive on their own thoughts or reflections, their conversations with their constituencies, and their experiences; then the council looked at the results, added in some institutional content, pulled data that they wanted to look at and other strategic plans, and looked for recurring themes. She stated that out of this came the idea for four working groups, which worked from May through August; they reviewed information, talked through issues that emerged, started to develop recommendations, and wrote reports on those recommendations for the full council to review in August and September. Dr. Mossman said the council has been looking for common themes and direction, as well as engagement which is happening right now. She anticipates a mission and vision survey will be sent out through university announcements tomorrow; she shared the link with Chair McKenzie earlier today and is willing to share it with others.

Dr. Mossman related the council has been holding constituent feedback sessions, and this one with Faculty Senate is one of the first. Over the next several weeks she plans to meet with the Civil Service Employees' Council, the Council for Administrative Personnel, the Student Government Organization, and other leadership groups. She stated that a larger survey will be sent out in October, and larger sessions will be held to gather feedback with more targeted consultations, depending on who reaches out and what kinds of follow up are needed. She told senators the goal is to revise the plan in November and December based on feedback received through October, go through a final review, and bring the completed document to the Board of Trustees at their December meeting.

Dr. Mossman anticipates that implementation planning will begin in November and December. She explained that there are really two parts to the process: the strategic plan, which acts as the overall guide, and the initiatives, actions, and implementation on how to get there. She said this implementation process is a plan in and of itself that needs to start this semester as well, but a little bit later. She added that right now the council and working groups are sharing the two parts of the plan the while at the same time starting that broader engagement process.

Dr. Mossman explained the University Strategy Council was built around areas that need to connect if university strategy is going to work right. She stated the university is similar to an ecosystem with interconnected systems within it, but they should not be thought of as silos. She observed that as the university has gotten smaller it has become more apparent how much the various areas on campus need to work with each other to collaborate and to think about how what they do affects those other areas.

Dr. Mossman stated that some of the key areas the council really wanted perspectives and institutional knowledge from included:

- Academic leadership and faculty governance;
- Finance, resources, facilities, and operations;
- Student Success, advising, enrollment, and outreach;
- Workforce, systems, and employee experience;
- Quad Cities, alumni, community, and regional perspectives;
- Institutional research, assessment, accreditation, and effectiveness.

Dr. Mossman stated that, depending on where the discussions went, some of these groups were brought into the discussions as the council looked at recurring issues and determined some areas they really wanted to give deeper attention to, which is where the working groups grew out of. She explained the working groups grew out of four main focus areas:

- Enrollment, Identity, and Outreach – Who are we? Whom do we serve? How do we strengthen recruitment, visibility, and outreach?
- Student Success, Progression, and Completion – How do we make the student path from entry through completion more connected and effective?
- Workforce, Culture, and Organizational Capacity – Do we have the people, communication, systems, and capacity to do the work well?
- Financial Stability and Institutional Resources – How do we align resources with priorities and build long-term capacity?

Dr. Mossman noted that the working groups broadened participation beyond the standing council. She stated there are 16 members on the University Strategy Council, and an additional 23 people were brought in to participate in the working groups from across units and divisions. She said these included people with broader institutional knowledge and leadership perspectives but also those who are involved in the day-to-day work and really see how things are working or not working on a daily level. She said the working groups were charged to look at existing plans, initiatives, reports, and data and share things with each other that perhaps not everyone knew about so that each group developed a much bigger picture. She related that the groups talked through strengths, barriers, tensions, opportunities, and a lot of the realities that people are dealing with, then identified questions that need to be answered in order to be able to move forward and areas where change or greater focus is needed. She said their last step was to develop recommendations for the full council to consider.

Dr. Mossman stated that by August all four working groups had completed their recommendation reports, which showed several recurrent themes:

- Student opportunity, success, and educational value;
- Clearer institutional identity and priorities;
- Regional engagement and partnerships;
- Sustainable enrollment and institutional sustainability;
- People, culture, and organizational capacity;
- Better coordination and communication;
- Resource decisions tied to priorities;
- Evidence, accountability, and continuous improvement.

Dr. Mossman related there was not a lot of debate that these themes seemed to rise to the surface; she found it really interesting to see that despite where everyone is coming from, they are still seeing some of the same things. She said the emerging strategic plan structure has emerged from all of this. She explained it shows two strategic directions: student opportunity and success, and regional and public impact. She noted that while there are things the council thinks the university should achieve, there are also things that need to be in place in order to achieve them. She said some of these fell under strategic goals and objectives related to student opportunity and success while others were related to institutional commitments in order to be able to support and enable the objectives across those strategic directions.

Dr. Mossman stated those institutional commitments include investment in people and culture, financial and resource stewardship, organizational effectiveness and coordination, partnerships and engagement, and evidence and continuous improvement. She explained that all of the strategic objectives will be connected to one or more of these institutional commitments, so these need to be in place for the others to happen. She explained the implementation planning is a separate stage of the process that will include initiatives that might be tied directly to strategic objectives, such as initiatives that are capacity building.

She noted that this is not the way strategic planning has been done in the past, but she thinks this is the way everyone really needs to think about it in order to complete all of the things that have to be in place first. She noted that the Strategy Council and working groups to date have had to not just put things out but to also think about the order that things have to be undertaken and completed.

Dr. Mossman noted that once the plan is completed, the implementation stage will include tracking progress through a strategic plan webpage where the mission, vision, strategic directions, goals and objectives, initiatives, institutional commitments, measures of initiatives, and progress will be placed. She said there will be short updates as the draft is developed, followed by regular campus updates on what has happened, what is next, and what has changed. She remarked that after initial updates, there will be regular progress reporting, to include more substantive semester and annual reporting on goals, measures, accomplishments, barriers, and adjustments. She added that there will be efforts to get the message out to individual units who are doing the planning on their own initiatives. Dr. Mossman said the council plans to work on a communication system so that all can hear what others are working on and acknowledge the work that is happening.

Dr. Mossman plans to have meetings with constituents from now through October 1, then prepare a fuller draft to be able to share it university wide and with the Macomb community for review. She noted that there is a member of the Macomb community on the Strategy Council to help them think about ways to engage the community and get their feedback. The council will continue targeted consultations in November, followed by revision, finalization, and starting to think about implementation, with the Board review and approval occurring in December. She welcomes questions and emails about what resonates, what might be missing, what the council should prioritize, and what progress should look like, which are the kinds of things she would like to hear feedback about. She added that as a draft is developed, it will be shared to get feedback.

Senator Chakravorti noted that typically strategic planning includes a SWOT analysis. He asked if the working groups performed a SWOT analysis and whether the themes reflect the weaknesses and opportunities. Dr. Mossman replied that while there was not a formal SWOT analysis, the process started with the Strategy Council being asked to consider the university's strengths and weaknesses, which were discussed prior to determining the working groups. She noted that sometimes the opportunities and barriers ended up in the same "bucket," and groups were formed around that. She said the recommendation reports included things like how to build on strengths in ways to do them better and on ways to address weaknesses or barriers. She said while they were not written as a SWOT analysis, that was part of the process.

Senator Kovacs asked if there is a timeline for the implementation after December or if the university will just move into that and figure it out at that point. Dr. Mossman responded that the strategic plan will act as an overall guide, while implementation will involve looking at the objectives and continuing to develop initiatives. She thinks some things might be able to be addressed right away – for example, a future objective might be able to be achieved through an initiative that could be put into place by March – while others might be addressed over the course of six or 18 months. She stated that while the timeline might vary, the biggest thing is to have a plan in place that is flexible enough to provide guidance to help with initiatives that are really tied to it rather than just throwing spaghetti at the wall to see what sticks.

Dr. Mossman noted, as a hypothetical example, that if the strategic plan included an objective to work on regional partnerships, the next steps might explore what things are already happening in this area, what could happen if there was more behind those efforts, what some concrete initiatives might be, and how it would be determined that they have succeeded. She said this might take more coordination, such as a determination of who should work on this, who will take the lead, and what the timeline should be. She thinks this

stage of the strategic plan will be constantly evolving and make it a living plan. She added that it will also be important to track these efforts, hopefully online, and show what has been accomplished to date. Dr. Mossman said the council hopes that the university will see thoughtful, intentional activity starting in the spring semester.

Senator Chakravorti asked what metrics or criteria were utilized to look at all of the themes that evolved and then determine the initiatives. He noted that eight or nine themes were developed, including community and student success, and he wonders if these highlighted a combination of weaknesses and opportunities. He noted that two strategic directions were also developed from these themes, and he wonders what criteria were used to narrow down to those two. Dr. Mossman responded that this was not done in a quantitative way; through consideration of everything the groups were looking at, these seemed to be the things that drive the university. She noted that if a question comes up about why the university needs to build a certain capacity or develop enrollment, the answer is because it will help with students and with connecting better to the region. She said that every question that came up could be tied to these two strategic directions. Chair McKenzie confirmed there was more of a qualitative approach involving looking at all of the themes and where they overlap. She said when the groups started to see enough significant overlap, it seemed like every theme fell into one of these two buckets. Senator Chakravorti remarked it sounds like a quality factor analysis which resulted in these two initiatives; Chair McKenzie confirmed that was exactly the process.

Chair McKenzie observed that past strategic plans were endorsed by Faculty Senate before they went to the Board of Trustees. She asked if this will be the process this time as well. Dr. Mossman responded that is why the council wants to make sure it is getting feedback early, but she is not sure exactly when that will occur – probably mid-October or early November. She needs to see what has been done in the past with other groups – civil service, COAP, and other constituents. Chair McKenzie stated that the reason she wanted to end with this question is that if Faculty Senate is going to endorse the strategic plan, as a body, then the Senate needs to be invested in the building of it. She thinks it is important that the Senate’s voices are heard in this process – through surveys, by sending information to Chair McKenzie, by senators having discussions within their departments and schools – so that when the time comes to endorse the strategic plan, Faculty Senate can have a good discussion about how they feel about that. She encouraged senators to make sure they are engaging as well as encouraging others to engage with the process. Dr. Mossman stated that she or any of the Strategy Council members are willing to talk to Faculty Senate in more targeted ways or to have one-on-one conversations as well. She recognizes that the strategic plan is on an aggressive timeline, but the council plans to just see where they are at in November because it would be really great to have the strategic plan in place for January 2027 and to be able to tie the initiatives to what is being worked on and accomplished.

IV. Reports of Committees and Councils

A. Senate Nominating Committee (Peter Cole, Chair)

1. Faculty Nominations

Council on Curricular Programs and Instruction (CCPI)

Eric Sheffield, Education	new Education seat	2029	CHASE
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Council for Instructional Technology (CIT)

Shaoyong Zhang, Natural Sciences		2028	CHASE
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Council for Instructional Technology AI Subcouncil

Lisa Parzefall, Humanities		2029	CHASE
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<u>Council for International Education and Multicultural Perspectives</u>				
Roberta DiCarmine, Humanities	replacing	Charlie Chadwell	2029	CHASE

<u>Council on Writing Instruction in the Disciplines (WID)</u>				
Anita Hardemann, Visual & Perf Arts	replacing	Bill Knox	2028	CHASE

UNIVERSITY COUNCILS AND COMMITTEES:

<u>Honorary Degrees (Committee on)</u>				
Leesa Thompson, Nursing	replacing	Bruce Western	2027	AT-LARGE

<u>University Technology Advisory Group (UTAG)</u>				
Anna Valeva, Accounting & Business Admin			2029	CBHCP
Andrea Hyde, Education			2029	WIUQC

There were no further nominations, and the slate of candidates was elected. Chair McKenzie noted that there are a few Senate seats remaining to be filled as well, and senators should spread the word about those.

V. Old Business – None

VI. New Business

A. Proposed Charge to Create Ad Hoc Committee on University Accessibility

Membership of the Ad Hoc Committee:

- Faculty Senate Chair
- One Senator
- Two faculty members, one from each college
- Two representatives from SGA
- At least one At-Large Student Representative
- Representative from the Office of Student Development and Success
- Representative from Facilities
- Representative from Online Teaching and Learning/Utech
- Representative from Provost Office

Charge to the Committee:

Conduct a comprehensive assessment of digital and physical accessibility across Western Illinois University (WIU), benchmark findings against other institutions in the state of Illinois, and deliver actionable, prioritized recommendations, including budget requirements, across five key, focus areas:

- Evaluate the efficiency and impact of current student accommodation processes, specifically examining the effects of recent Disability Resource Center staffing changes on faculty and students.
- Measure faculty awareness, training needs, and utilization of accessible tools (such as Panorama with Western Online) to ensure institutional readiness for digital publishing standards.
- Inventory existing accessibility resources for faculty and students, identifying gaps in awareness and support.
- Assess current facility access across the Macomb campus to move beyond baseline ADA legal compliance toward universal physical design and excellence.
- Outline necessary budget allocations and resource shifts required to execute and sustain accessibility improvements university-wide.

Rationale: The rationale for this committee is twofold: compliance and excellence.

1. Federal mandates require WIU online course content to meet WCG 2.1 Level AA standards by April 26, 2027. Assessing faculty, understanding and integration of Western Online Panorama tool is necessary to identify training gaps well before the deadline.
2. Staffing reductions in the disability resource center has shifted testing administration duties onto faculty and full self-advocacy responsibility onto students. The university must determine how these changes affect course delivery and learning outcomes.
3. While WIU facilities meet minimum statutory, ADA compliance, institutional excellence requires an ongoing detailed evaluation of physical barriers across the Macomb campus to foster a fully inclusive environment

Preliminary Findings Report (Digital Accessibility): December 1, 2026

Preliminary Findings Report: February 9, 2027

Final Report: March 23, 2027

Chair McKenzie noted that she will serve on this committee because it is something that is important to her, and the proposal also calls for one Senate representative and two additional faculty reps, one from each college. She pointed out that the membership also includes two representatives from SGA and one student representative at-large; the Executive Committee expressed the hope that at least one of the students might use the Disability Resource Center and could therefore provide a unique perspective. Chair McKenzie observed that the recommendations related to digital accessibility will be delivered first because the university has a deadline to have this completed. She anticipates that the physical accessibility report, which will occur in the second semester, will include a benchmark of findings against other institutions in the state of Illinois. She is excited that the School of Education faculty advisory council will discuss this topic at their upcoming meeting, so this is part of a larger conversation. She hopes the ad hoc committee will deliver some actionable and prioritized recommendations, including related to budget. The final report deadline is March 23.

Motion: To approve creating the ad hoc committee (Frederick/Blankenship)

MOTION APPROVED 16 YES (13 in-person, 3 zoom) – 0 NO – 0 ABSTENTIONS

Chair McKenzie asked if any senators want to serve on this committee; Senator Baker volunteered. There were no other nominations, and Senator Baker was elected to serve.

B. For the Good of the Body

Chair McKenzie announced that the university's memorial tree planting will occur at 3:00 on Friday, September 18. She noted that there are two opening shows in the Goldfarb Center for the Performing Arts on Wednesday, September 16, and Sunday, September 20, which is exciting.

Motion: To adjourn (Allwardt)

The Faculty Senate adjourned at 5:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Annette Hamm

Faculty Senate Office Manager and Recording Secretary