

‘FACULTY SENATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

**Tuesday, 17 January 2023
Stipes Hall 501, 4:00 p.m.**

ACTION MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: Bill Thompson, Chair; Julia Albarracin, Secretary

ALSO PRESENT: Manoochehr Zoghi, Provost; Craig Whetten, Parliamentarian; Annette Hamm, Interim Faculty Senate Office Manager

1) Senator Banash suggested at the last Faculty Senate meeting that the Executive Committee discuss how to have a broader discussion about the direction of General Education and other curriculum at WIU in light of several waiver requests which senators were asked to consider during fall semester. Chair Thompson agrees that a larger discussion should be held to see what is working and what is not, what areas of Gen Ed are struggling with student credit hour production, and which areas are doing fine. Provost Zoghi remarked that this discussion would seem to fall under the Academic Affairs core group for strategic planning, on which the Faculty Senate Chair serves. Chair Thompson remarked that the discussion needs to occur sooner rather than later because these questions are coming up for consideration live on the floor of the Faculty Senate, and there are other pressures besides those of Gen Ed. Provost Zoghi stated the Academic Affairs core group for strategic planning will be conducting a SWOT analysis and laying the framework at its next meeting. Chair Thompson said he thinks a broader discussion needs to occur this semester at least. Provost Zoghi thinks the strategic planning process is needed to consider curriculum improvements across the university because this impacts student retention. Chair Thompson agrees that Gen Ed is probably a big piece of the retention puzzle since for most students it comprises most of the 60 hours of coursework they take in their first two years. He thinks part of the discussion needs to be the effectiveness of offering General Education courses online. Provost Zoghi pointed out that a large number of WIU’s student population is first generation and may need more individualized attention. Chair Thompson observed that many WIU freshmen come from underfunded high schools; Senator Albarracin added some students may not have had a very positive experience with online classes during Covid. Provost Zoghi stated that the Academic Affairs core group for strategic planning will be a working group initially but will later reach out to the campus community for additional input. He thinks this will be a game changer with a focus on student success. Ms. Hamm asked if this will address Senator Banash’s concerns; Chair Thompson replied he thinks it will. He added that when more input is desired from the broader campus community, the Faculty Senate could help organize that, and Senator Banash could be part of that discussion. Provost Zoghi added that the intention is to develop a more integrated, holistic approach.

2) Election notices will be emailed this week to solicit faculty interested in filling seats on Faculty Senate for fall 2023. Faculty are being sought to fill two three-year vacancies each for the College of Arts and Sciences, the College of Education and Human Services, and the College of Fine Arts and Communication; one three-year vacancy each for the College of Business and Technology and the Macomb campus at-large; and a one-year Macomb at-large vacancy to fill Chair Thompson’s seat since he will be retiring in May. Completed petition forms must be submitted by February 1, and an election will be held for any contested seats.

3) As discussed at the last Executive Committee meeting, Chair Thompson and Senator Albarracin have prepared a resolution to the President asking that a faculty representative be added to the Policy Review Committee because many policies were created by Faculty Senate and the Senate was asked in the past to provide their input or endorsement on others. Consideration of the resolution will occur during New Business at the Faculty Senate meeting of January 24.

4) Chair Thompson stated that Athletics is bringing in a consultant to meet with their strategic planning committee and he wondered if the Senate Council on Intercollegiate Athletics had been invited to meet with the consultant or participate on the committee. Chair Thompson remarked that Faculty Senate has a lot of interest in Athletics, and since Senate has a council, it would seem to be an appropriate place to get faculty input. He added that it might be useful to ask the consultant to come to a Faculty Senate meeting. Chair Thompson will reach out to Jeremy Robinett, who is chairing the committee, about any plans to involve faculty or Faculty Senate and its councils.

5) A faculty member suggested to Chair Thompson that CAGAS be asked to consider whether language specifically about use of artificial intelligence (AI) on written assignments should be added to the Academic Dishonesty Policy. The Executive Committee will charge CAGAS to consider this.

Chair Thompson has heard a lot of concerns lately about ChatGPT, an AI program which can prepare student papers based on simple queries. He told ExCo a fourth iteration of ChatGPT will be coming out soon which is supposed to be even more powerful than the current version, and Microsoft Office plans to incorporate a similar program in future. He stated that faculty are concerned about how to respond to AI usage in their classrooms. Senator Albarracin asked if someone should be invited to a Senate meeting to talk about ChatGPT. Parliamentarian Whetten explained that ChatGPT is very simple to use; students submit a prompt, such as “1000 word paper about history of Vikings in North America,” and it will produce an organized paper with an introduction and various points. He said faculty can sometimes tell these papers were not written by students by comparing them with students’ previous work or because they include information that has not been covered in class, but it can be difficult and may become more so in future. Chair Thompson related he tries to foil AI programs by requiring that students write papers in class; he assigns three papers and gives students one week each to write them in the classroom. Provost Zoghi asked if ChatGPT is free; Chair Thompson replied that it is free, although Parliamentarian Whetten added that a pro version can be purchased. Senator Albarracin thinks there is a limit to the amount of policing that faculty have the time to do; she tries to assign papers that are specific and hard to find online.

6) Chair Thompson pointed out that recent information released by Senators Durbin and Duckworth about federal earmark dollars did not indicate that WIU received any of that funding. He noted that the United States Senate has to disclose who receives earmark money – federal dollars that senators and representatives are allowed to direct for specific projects in their home states – but the House does not. He noted that Monmouth College, which is private, received \$600,000 in the most recent round of earmarked funding. Provost Zoghi noted that WIU received approximately \$2 million in federal earmark funding two years ago for the Emergency Management Center. Senator Albarracin remarked that the Library applied for \$40 million in the current funding round. Provost Zoghi noted that many universities have lobbyists in Washington to try to promote their institutions’ interests. Chair Thompson would like to know which units at WIU tried for earmark funding this year. He thinks the university should make an effort to get different areas – academic colleges, public safety, facilities management, and others – to apply next year. Provost Zoghi hopes that the Academic Affairs strategic planning process can help identify areas that should be focused on.

7) The Executive Committee finalized the remainder of the Senate agenda for January 24, and the meeting adjourned at 5:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Annette Hamm, Interim Faculty Senate Office Manager
and Recording Secretary