

FACULTY SENATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 7 October 2025
4:00 p.m. – Via Zoom

ACTION MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jeremy Robinett, Chair; Lisa Wipperling, Vice Chair; Alice Melkumian, Secretary

ALSO PRESENT: Mark Mossman, Interim Provost; William Gblerkpor, Parliamentarian; Annette Hamm, Faculty Senate Office Manager

GUESTS: President Mindrup; Sarah Lawson, Registrar

1. *Qualtrics Usage Policy and consideration of requests for use*

Chair Robinett observed that under the proposed internal Senate policy he drafted, someone wanting access to use the Faculty Senate's Qualtrics license would have to submit their request in writing, and the Executive Committee would determine if it meets and is congruent with Faculty Senate purposes. He said the group making the request would have to work with the Senate Chair to build and get data for its survey. He stressed that at no point will any outside group or individual be given login information for the Faculty Senate-licensed Qualtrics. He added that Ms. Hamm will provide a list of who used the license and what it was used for to be reported in the annual report at the beginning of the following year.

NO OBJECTIONS TO THE POLICY

Chair Robinett will include the Senate Qualtrics Usage Policy in the shared drive for the October 14 Senate meeting as an informational item.

Chair Robinett reported that the University Committee on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Expression (UCOSOGIE) has requested to use the Senate's Qualtrics license for a targeted survey about issues or concerns related to the campus climate around sexual orientation and gender identity. The Executive Committee determined that in all cases the person requesting usage should bring the survey forward before ExCo makes a definite determination as to whether they can use the Senate's Qualtrics license. Ms. Hamm informed ExCo that even though UCOSOGIE is not a Faculty Senate committee, the Senate Nominating Committee does populate it with faculty appointed through the Senate process.

Chair Robinett reported that a library survey conducted by Professor Heather McIlvaine-Newsad has already been distributed using the Senate's Qualtrics license, and a student and faculty AI survey will be going out soon. He said that he proposed a more formal policy so that he would not have to make these usage determinations on his own.

2. *Senate elections for at-large seats*

Ms. Hamm reported that there were no petitions submitted by the extended deadline for the Macomb or the Quad Cities campus at-large seats; Robert Kelly, LEJA, did reach out to Ms. Hamm to express interest in submitting a petition on the deadline day of Wednesday, October 1 but did not have time to complete it. She added that by Friday, October 3, he had submitted a complete and valid petition.

Chair Robinett told ExCo that while he wants faculty to be involved, he thinks the Executive Committee has done a lot of work to that end. He noted that Faculty Senate is up and running and doing great work, so he is opposed to any further extension of the petition deadline or efforts to get more people to submit. He added that he has also given thought to the petition that has been submitted and recommends that ExCo accept that petition and declare Robert Kelly elected to the Macomb at-large seat but not to extend the seat for the Quad Cities position, which has remained unfilled since early Fall 2024. The other Executive Committee voting members agreed with this recommendation, and Senator Kelly will take his seat on October 14.

3. *Questions for Dean of Libraries*

Hector Maymi-Sugranes, Dean of University Libraries, will speak to Faculty Senate on October 14. Chair Robinett hopes he will present an overview of the staffing plans for the libraries moving forward. Senator Melkumian would like to ask Dean Maymi-Sugranes what kind of people are staffing the libraries – civil service? people with degrees in Library Science? – and how qualified they are. She would like to know if they are professionals trained in dealing with libraries and able to handle the needs of faculty and student research. Chair Robinett would like to ask what has been determined about space allocation in the libraries. He related that he and Provost Mossman have visited libraries that act as outreach centers for their communities and wonders if WIU’s library is already or would consider doing outreach.

Provost Mossman thinks it is reasonable for the Faculty Senate to ask a question about library collections as well and about periodicals and any strategies to update those for junior-level faculty. In terms of space usage, he was at Amhurst College this past summer, which has a central library as well as a community innovation center. He said it integrates what the town and community are doing with what is in the library. He noted that Amhurst’s library also has a museum which is accessible to grade schools; faculty and students do research there as well as working with visiting classes. He added this is the type of thinking that was behind WIU’s proposal for an innovation campus which would be integrated into the community.

Senator Melkumian asked if high school students came to Amhurst College for a class; Provost Mossman responded it was more like a field trip. He added they did not go into where the collections were housed but into a separate space. Senator Melkumian thinks it would be a good idea to encourage school classes and the community to utilize Malpass Library more because it is one of the best-kept secrets in Macomb. She pointed out, however, that someone would have to coordinate that. Provost Mossman would find it appropriate and reasonable for Faculty Senate to ask a question about this. Senator Melkumian thinks it is a fantastic plan, but if civil service employees are staffing the library, loading this type of work on top of that might be too much for them.

Chair Robinett thinks it is good to ask Dean Maymi-Sugranes what kinds of things he is looking at for the libraries since he is in a different space than some of the other academic deans. He noted there are other models for libraries where faculty do TED-type talks in subjects of interest that are not necessarily something grounded in their disciplines. He said community members come to these “coffee talks,” and the library becomes kind of a “third space.”

4. *President Mindrup*

Chair Robinett told ExCo this is their chance to ask questions that President Mindrup will build on when she meets with Faculty Senate on October 28. He asked the President to provide an overall view at seven weeks of where she sees the university is at this point.

President Mindrup updated the Board of Trustees last week and has had other opportunities to roll out what the focus will be this academic year. She stated the focus will be on strengthening in addition to growing enrollment and making sure that any higher enrollment numbers are financially sustainable. She noted that student recruitment is a critical piece of this focus; the university will be zeroing in on some new opportunities in student recruitment as it relates to expanding markets. She said there is overlap with Academic Affairs on some of these initiatives, such as programming, possibilities for alternative formats, and exploring new markets within existing programs. President Mindrup informed ExCo the administration is also exploring casting a different geographic net than it has previously, based on recommendations from EAB consultants who have been helping with recruitment strategies. She added there will also be a continuation of what has worked well with recruitment in the past.

President Mindrup is excited to work with the new Assistant Vice President for Admissions and Enrollment Support, who will be working very closely across divisions to develop an enrollment plan for the institution. She emphasized that he is only one person, and his role is to work collaboratively across divisions and levels of the institution to strengthen enrollment and contribute to that process. She recognizes that retention is a critical part of this process; faculty mentoring students early in the semester and departments making connections with students through organized activities or through student organizations with an academic focus contributes towards this. President Mindrup noted that the Division of Student Success this year implemented the First Four Days and First Four Weeks Initiative to recognize critical touchpoints for

students, offer opportunities for engagement, and provide access to resources in order to stay connected. She said this effort is intended to reinforce students staying engaged with the university during their first month here, with a focus on resources for their mental health, to address homesickness and adaptation issues, and to make sure students know who to contact

President Mindrup told senators the administration is as focused on recruitment and retention this year as it was on finances last year, but they will continue to focus on finances this year as well. She said the goal is to build and strengthen a culture of self-authorship and ambition on campus, which applies to students but can also apply to everyone at WIU. She hopes people will think about the ways they really contribute to the university culture and engage in personal improvement, which will also inspire that value in their students. She said this is important both because that is WIU's mission as an institution which has been recognized for social mobility and being an opportunity university, and because it is an opportunity to inspire WIU students and each other to reach our full potential as well as the institution's.

President Mindrup said another area of focus is amplifying Western's successes. She has noticed there are some headlines over the years that continue to be perpetuated, and WIU can tend to be the poster university for enrollment challenges, so everyone needs to emphasize the institution's successes. She related that University Communication and Marketing is adjusting university websites and social media as well as the way that university news is collected and distributed in order to build an overall awareness of the things happening with WIU's students and programs. She said this will culminate at the end of this year in the big announcement of the completion of the Goldfarb Center for the Performing Arts, which is one example of something the institution wants to promote in order to help strengthen our brand.

The President spoke about some of the financial information that was shared at the Board meeting. She noted that last year the administration projected a \$22 million deficit, but they were able to mitigate that. She recalled that last year's focus was on the difficult decisions, efficiencies, and other ways necessary to address those shortfalls, while this year the focus will be on creative solutions to revenue generation and advocating at the state level for an additional 2 percent that was noted as a possibility by the Governor's Office. She observed that UPI is being quite vocal in their support of this effort. President Mindrup noted that the administration has a great relationship with the WIU Foundation, and there is ongoing creative exploration of ways they can work together in order to support high-impact possibilities, whether continuing to improve campus spaces for upgrades or finding ways to make sure WIU's financial aid packages for students are competitive. She said the administration is working to create an alliance with the WIU Foundation that will allow them to invest in what they know will be return-on-investment types of activities.

President Mindrup is happy about the reversal of the decision that would have discontinued the ROTC program at WIU, which currently has about 44-50 students. She said the Department of the Army has fortunately decided to ensure that WIU still has a student ROTC experience on campus by designating the university as an extension site. She explained that WIU will partner with Illinois State University for some administration and staffing, but the student experience will mostly remain the same. She added that Chuck Jones will lead this initiative; even though there will be an administrative partnership with ISU, there will continue to be a point of contact on the WIU campus.

Regarding the Quad Cities campus, President Mindrup recalled there was an opportunity last year to closely look at the program offerings on the campus and zero in on those with great student interest as well as demand areas for the community, such as workforce development. She noted that programs which will continue to be offered include Education, Counseling, Museum Studies, and an evolving program in Engineering as the university assesses the resources, the program itself, and the needs of WIU's partners. President Mindrup noted that with the reduction in program offerings and courses on the Quad Cities campus, there was the opportunity to consolidate into one building, Riverfront Hall. She recalled that about a month ago WIU announced an agreement with her alma mater, Lincoln-Irving Elementary in Moline, to utilize Buildings A and B on the Quad Cities campus beginning this spring and through the 2026-27 school year. She said Lincoln-Irving is renovating its school and needed a space to temporarily relocate to; they will pay WIU a lease for use of the buildings. She hopes this will provide opportunities for connection through WIU's science education courses for teacher education students, so she is excited about this partnership and proximity. She noted there are some possibilities and interest in Building C, the main administrative building, for lease or, particularly, for sale of that property. She added that WIU will continue to have a dedicated

presence in the Quad Cities, but it will be scaled to what is sustainable and of interest to our students and the community while also providing opportunities for revenue generation.

President Mindrup thanked the Executive Committee for theirs and faculty's work on the academic revitalization Rebuild. She thinks there is real progress and is excited about the subcommittees that are forming and the opportunities for faculty to work together to add further depth to the overall Rebuild and what that turns out to be as it evolves and takes shape.

President Mindrup updated ExCo on some personnel items. She said the university will be running a search for a university general counsel after the individual in that position stepped down last week. She noted that searches for a university auditor and a Director for Advancement and Alumni are already underway. She hopes that faculty can attend those open sessions and provide feedback. She remarked that Provost Mossman will be opening several searches related to the Provost's Office and academic leadership in preparation for the Rebuild. She noted there are a number of opportunities for faculty to get involved in having a voice in the leadership of WIU moving forward. She is excited about these opportunities because it is nice to have that balance of institutional knowledge with fresh perspectives; she looks forward to what these positions can do by working creatively while balancing what is already known to work with possibilities moving forward.

Chair Robinett fielded some questions from faculty after the last Board meeting about EAB. He asked if EAB is working under the same contract they had originally or if that contract has been extended. President Mindrup responded it has not been extended, but it has been modified because there was no escape clause to enable WIU to get out of it. She explained that the administration repackaged how the contract was originally established, which was focused more on program reviews and those types of things, to zero in on the priority of strengthening enrollment. She said EAB was very gracious to make this adjustment to the contract, which essentially required changing divisions within the company; they allowed this change at the highest level to position WIU to work with their enrollment team. She thinks this change has been really useful as far as access to data and knowledge about strategy. She related that after one of WIU's sister institution in the state had a similar experience with EAB, they saw a 5 percent enrollment increase. President Mindrup is optimistic that what EAB is providing for data and strategy nicely aligns with the resources the university has available and the realities WIU currently faces.

Chair Robinett noted that Vice President Roselieb spoke at the last Senate meeting, and there are continuing questions about the university's budget and cash flow. He asked, from a university perspective, if there are remedies the administration has in mind to address the cash flow problems. He also wonders how the cash flow situation is different this year than last. President Mindrup responded that while cash flow is better this year than last, there are still a couple of key points that, without intervention, would be problematic; however, there are strategies to address this. She recalled that toward the end of last year, the legislature passed a bill that would enable WIU to borrow up to \$2 million in Foundation funds at a very low rate of interest. She noted there are also opportunities for revenue generation, as previously mentioned, and the administration will look internally at ways that some adjustments may be able to be made. President Mindrup said she is often asked if this will affect personnel. She told ExCo the administration is making every effort to avoid that, but she never says "never." She wants to provide reassurance, however, that this is a very different situation than last year, and the administration is optimistic about the strategies they have at hand to be able to mitigate the challenges.

Chair Robinett asked what the terrain is for higher education across the state of Illinois. President Mindrup stated that state public university presidents meet weekly, stay connected, and share challenges and opportunities. She said funding is a common topic; WIU is not alone in being underfunded by the state of Illinois, so advocacy for equitable funding has been a topic of interest. She related that university presidents have discussed whether the legislature will pick up discussion of the community college baccalaureate bill again. President Mindrup told ExCo that WIU's administration feels their work with that is done; they have shared what they think would be a reasonable approach if that legislation should pass, and they plan to remain neutral on it. She said that while WIU's administration does not want to throw up roadblocks to access higher education, they also have suggested some parameters and guardrails that would protect four-year institutions. She added that while this is less of a conversation than it was last year, this topic is still on the radar.

President Mindrup said the university presidents are looking at federal issues, as well, and the way they are

impacting their institutions, such as through funding. She related that the University of Illinois and other institutions that receive a lot of federal funding are particularly challenged to address those issues. She noted that WIU was impacted in a couple of ways, particularly in regard to public broadcasting, but they are trying to make adjustments.

President Mindrup related that, since all the universities are facing financial issues, they have talked about finding ways to work together toward some efficiencies. She said the entire presidents' group is looking at a very long-term project to share an ERP and information technology infrastructure in order to work together to get group pricing from vendors and share contracts and things like this. She admitted this would be a challenge for WIU since our ERP is just now getting implemented, but she is still participating in the process with a long-term vision for an ideal scenario. President Mindrup said that, in the meantime, university presidents have five areas they plan to work with each other on: cybersecurity; equipment; infrastructure, such as the way the universities audit their processes; software; and artificial intelligence. She thinks this could lead to efficiencies by sharing ideas and expertise as well as starting to find ways to work together in order to build up to the goal of sharing more of an information technology system.

Chair Robinett told the President he anticipates she might get questions about payroll changes and why they are happening; he knows this has become a growing topic of conversation across the campus. President Mindrup observed that Human Resources sent an email out this afternoon with some training opportunities related to this so that people can ask questions and better understand the rationale and the process for some of those changes. She explained that the current system has limitations with the number of fields and the opportunities to classify and categorize employees, which is a major driver behind the changes. She wants to make sure as much education is provided to the university community as possible; the President's Cabinet spoke the other day about ways to work with employees to ensure a smooth transition based on their situations. She can speak generally about this if questions come to her but will refer those needing a more detailed response and in-depth conversation to Vice President Roselieb.

Senator Wipperling has heard concerns that if faculty will now be paid twice a month, on the 15th and the 25th, and no longer just the first of the month when rent and other bills are due, they do not know how that will factor being paid for work done during the previous month. President Mindrup acknowledged this will represent a change in the way employees plan and organize, so the university is trying to allow them sufficient time to make that adjustment since some people have more agility with those types of changes than others. She said the administration wants to work closely with employees to educate them and to mitigate any negative consequences from those changes. President Mindrup noted that one challenge from the transition is that there will be an additional pay period added to paychecks for this fiscal year, which will have an impact on employees' tax situations. She added that everyone has accepted that the university needs a new ERP and financial management system because it cannot continue to run off of a Cobol program from 1984. She added that while this is contributing to some of the growing pains the university is experiencing, the administration wants to work together collaboratively to mitigate the negative impact on individuals while also making sure everyone understands how things are going to work and the timing of that project. She hopes word can get out about the training sessions and that faculty will consider attending one.

Chair Robinett noted that Stacie Hunt from Administrative Information Management Systems (AIMS) will come to Faculty Senate on December 2 to talk about the ERP, explain the rollout, and discuss what features are going live at what times. He said senators will also hear a phishing update at that same meeting showing where the university stands now compared with last year. He added that test cases for phishing will be rolled out this month to make sure that employees are paying attention and responding to these appropriately.

Senator Wipperling told the President she brought up to Vice President Roselieb last week that the financial aid packages going out late last year resulted in a significant loss of recruitment in her Department of Theatre and Dance, and she is sure this happened in other departments as well. She thinks the university would have had a better recruitment year if financial aid packets had gone out sooner. She asked how connected President Mindrup and Vice President Roselieb will be with the new Assistant Vice President for Admissions and Enrollment Support in terms of making sure that financial aid packages go out on time. Senator Wipperling recognizes that WIU may not be as competitive as other schools but hopes that Financial Aid can at least give students the information they need because she knows of at least half a dozen students who wanted to come WIU but went elsewhere because they still did not have a financial aid package in April. President Mindrup

responded this is a known issue that all areas and divisions plan to work collaboratively to address. She knows this is a primary concern and issue for Vice President for Student Services Justin Schuch, who just finished his Ph.D. yesterday and is working together with Rich Toomey, the new AVP for Admissions and Enrollment Support, on that timing. President Mindrup thinks there may also be some things the administration can do with the Foundation to adjust scholarship awards and some other incentive packages; she cannot promise this because it is the Foundation's decision, but this is on their radar as a way to make a significant impact on how the university is recruiting students.

President Mindrup thanked ExCo for their leadership and engagement on campus. She thinks it is important to have everyone's perspectives on the conversations occurring across the university. President Mindrup will visit with the full Faculty Senate on October 28.

5. *Discussion of Rebuild and committee charges updates*

Provost Mossman reported that he has not yet reviewed the Communication Committee report, but he hopes to receive the Interdisciplinary and Co-Curricular Committee report this afternoon. He will rejoin the Chairs and Deans Committee next week; he met with its chair this afternoon to talk about this.

Provost Mossman told ExCo the associate and assistant provost positions should be posted tomorrow. He said an announcement will go out to faculty to make sure that everyone has a link to those ads. He added the deadline for applications will be October 22 with the goal of hiring someone into those three positions by November 1. He added there will be an open session included in each candidate's itinerary.

Provost Mossman is currently working on dean searches for the two new positions in the Rebuild. He is determined to follow the Administrator Selection Procedures policies for these searches regarding how the searches begin and how the search committees are populated. He hopes to make progress on this by the end of this week.

Provost Mossman hopes to get the reorganization in place by July. He recognized that Chair Robinett has continued working on the digital dashboard to facilitate communication.

Chair Robinett commended Provost Mossman on his commitment to moving the university toward more open and transparent communication as the time comes to select academic leadership. He greatly appreciates that Provost Mossman plans to send an email to all faculty so that everyone knows these positions are open and available and so that it does not seem like they are only available to those faculty who are "in the know." He noted that the positions are already posted on the internal employment page. Chair Robinett also appreciates that a more inclusive process will be used for selection of the deans so that more people will have the opportunity to engage and know that their thoughts matter.

Chair Robinett has spoken with Senator Gravitt about her comment at last week's Faculty Senate meeting regarding having Rebuild committee chairs and Senate council chairs give presentations at Senate meetings. While Chair Robinett applauds the idea, he does not think that is fair to ask of people who are already very busy. He has sent to all the council and committee chairs the link they can use to submit information to the digital dashboard, and he plans to provide an overview to senators about it at next week's meeting so that everyone can know what this will look like. He thinks this will make Senate meetings more efficient. He recognizes that councils and committees are doing a lot of work right now as the university tries to navigate out of recent traumas into what the Rebuild and restructuring will look like. Senator Wipperling agrees with Chair Robinett that it would be too much to ask council and committee chairs to make reports to the Senate. She thinks that senators need to take steps to see the information themselves and become educated on how to do that. Chair Robinett observed that there are a lot of faculty on campus with tremendous skill sets, including Jessica Lin, Interim Associate Dean for the College of Business and Technology, who worked with Chair Robinett on making the digital dashboard work. He admitted that it is still a bit cumbersome to try to embed the digital dashboard on a webpage, but Dr. Lin and Chair Robinett are meeting on Monday, October 13 to address that. He added the digital dashboard will be embedded on both the Provost Rebuild webpage and the Faculty Senate website.

6. *Technology update*

Chair Robinett met with Bob Emmert, the new Director of University Technology, on Friday, October 3 to talk about the new multi-factor authentication process. Chair Robinett has heard comments from individuals who were troubled about their inability to login from off campus to check email and other things. He reported that University Technology has so far had only one request for a fob or device to help with that process; a phone was retooled for the individual that made that request. Chair Robinett asked that additional communication be sent out to students who are trying to use WIU Open while on campus and do not have a full understanding of how the multi-factor authentication works with WIU Secure. Chair Robinett said he is not hearing a lot of complaints from faculty about this process; Senator Wipperling is also not hearing a lot of complaints from faculty but has noticed the internet is more challenging right now, which may or may not be connected. Parliamentarian Gblerkpor has also not heard complaints from faculty in Morgan Hall about this.

7. *Finalize agenda for Senate meeting of October 14*

Chair Robinett thinks it is important to keep faculty in the loop about the Faculty Governance Committee's progress, so this will be an agenda item within the Chair's Report moving forward. He noted that there are a lot of governance issues being worked through on several of the Senate councils and will make a brief announcement on that during his report. He will also talk about AI and the Qualtrics Usage Policy during the Chair's Report.

Chair Robinett thinks it is great that so many people are talking about AI on the campus, but there is not a lot of empirical data from the WIU campus specifically about how many people are using it, what they are using it for, which tools they are using, and the overall comfort and knowledge level. He related that the Interim Director for Sponsored Projects provided a number of surveys used at different institutions, and a faculty-led committee modified these with plans to send a survey to WIU faculty and students next week.

Chair Robinett stated that Chad Sperry, Director of the GIS Center, will show senators a fantastic presentation on October 14 that he and a colleague have put together.

The Executive Committee meeting adjourned at 5:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Annette Hamm, Faculty Senate Office Manager
and Recording Secretary