

FACULTY SENATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 19 March 2024
4:00 p.m. – Via Zoom

ACTION MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: Julia Albarracin, Chair; Everett Hamner, Vice Chair; Denise Gravitt, Secretary
ALSO PRESENT: Mark Mossman, Interim Provost; Jeremy Robinett, Parliamentarian; Annette Hamm, Faculty Senate Office Manager
GUEST: Dan Atherton, School of Agriculture

1. *Budget Transparency Committee – Dan Atherton, Chair*

Dr. Atherton presented Executive Committee members with an outline of ideas the Budget Transparency Committee (BTC) has discussed for the remainder of this year and into next year. He said that as his career prior to coming to WIU was as a 6-Sigma black belt for Caterpillar, which involved problem solving and project oversight, he has taken a similar approach to the BTC and thinks it should explore return on investment (ROI) for various aspects of the university. He proposed this might include looking at the university as a whole, by campus, by college, and/or by school/department, as well as specific areas of the university, such as the health center or student housing.

Dr. Atherton was provided with some historical documentation about the Budget Transparency Committee by Ms. Hamm. He noted that the committee was on hiatus during covid and is now trying to get back to regular meetings. Dr. Atherton goes off of Faculty Senate at the end of this academic year and would like to set the stage for the committee to be productive into the future.

Dr. Atherton noted that BTC members are supposed to talk to their peers (water cooler talk) to develop budget-related questions that they can explore and provide answers to in the interests of transparency. He noted that some of the questions on the outline presented to ExCo come directly from this process; for instance, whether parking lot fees are used for specific projects or applied to the general funds, how faculty hiring choices are made, or if there are plans to cut programs are questions that faculty have asked BTC members.

Parliamentarian Robinett asked if some of the questions on the BTC outline might be answered within the report from the university consultants, EAB. Interim Provost Mossman replied that the focus of EAB right now is on Academic Affairs, which is 50 percent of the university's budget and which has been generating revenue every year. He noted that since WIU is not a corporation, not every department or school needs to generate revenue; the moment that this is expected is the moment the university departs from its institutional mission. Interim Provost Mossman stated that there are many details involved in the budget process, and to try to get budgets specific to each campus or college is nearly impossible and almost always politicized. He noted that the revenue generated by Academic Affairs is used partly to cover deficits in other places, which is appropriate since the university needs such services as its health center and auxiliary services.

Interim Provost Mossman thinks the model should be collaboration between the Budget Transparency Committee and the Budget Office, as he understands it worked in the past when Letitia Trepac oversaw that office. He recalled that in the past the committee and the Budget Office reviewed the university's budgets and talked about the challenges of appropriated funds, restricted funds, and the philosophy of philanthropy, rather than going into discussions about how much associate professors get paid, for example, because that will be variable. He thinks those kinds of comparisons are contrary to what should be done with shared governance.

Dr. Atherton said he understands Interim Provost Mossman's points and asked what major outcome was gained from the work that the BTC did in the past. Interim Provost Mossman replied there was an appreciation on both sides for the communication that occurred. He stated this is a very fluid, dynamic time because the university is likely to soon develop a new way to budget, and by 2025 there will be a new funding formula for state appropriations.

Chair Albarracin said she told Senator Gravitt, the Executive Committee representative to the BTC, that analyzing faculty salaries sounds more like a Union responsibility than something BTC should pursue. Senator Gravitt had FOIA'd the salary information on the recommendation of former Senate Chair Bill Thompson. Chair Albarracin agrees that the BTC should work in collaboration with Paul Edwards, Vice President for Finance and Administration, but he has not been very responsive to her emails, although Renee Georges, Budget Office Director, does respond. She agrees with Interim Provost Mossman that the Budget Office and BTC should work in parallel and collaborate, and she thinks this would align with Vice President Edwards's thinking since he, too, is trying to analyze the investment of each unit at the university.

Interim Provost Mossman understands that EAB has three charges: to look at marketing and gather information on academic programs with 360 analyses, to look at the way the foundation is structured, and to analyze WIU's budget model. Parliamentarian Robinett remarked that although it would be nice if programs were judged in an equitable way with the opportunity to dwell on different aspects, it has not seemed to work that way since he came to WIU in 2014. He recalled that when his program was considered for elimination during the last APER process, no one asked them about the quality of their programs but instead only considered the dollars and cents. He stated that the College of Education and Human Services is now considering reorganization, and money is a lot of what is driving that process. He also noted that in reading the Board of Trustees minutes money considerations seem to make the most points when they look at what various programs are doing. He added that WIU used to have signature programs, but programs are now discussed in terms of recruitment and production. Parliamentarian Robinett applauds what Interim Provost Mossman is saying but thinks it would have been nice to have financial information that would have helped his area prepare to argue the value of their program to the APER Committee, and he thinks departments would appreciate having information that would allow them to know where they are situated.

Interim Provost Mossman does not want to see a repeat of 2019 where the two campuses were warring with each other. He thinks what would help change the conversation is if the Budget Transparency Committee held three meetings each semester with Vice President Edward, Renee Georges, and Interim Provost Mossman to talk about budget related issues. He respects the work of Faculty Senate committees but would not like to see a report that pits different departments against each other in a scramble for resources or a narrative that Academic Affairs is losing money because the division does generate revenue and is successful at what it does.

Chair Albarracin asked if Parliamentarian Robinett thinks it is better for the Senate to have this knowledge independent of the administration in order to be prepared in case of another APER review. Parliamentarian Robinett stated that if another APER is not coming and the university is not making decisions about an upcoming reorganization based on financial considerations, then WIU is operating as a university, but if decisions are being made primarily based on finances, then he thinks departments have the right to know this information. Interim Provost Mossman replied it is a tightrope, but being viable as an institution also means meeting the initiatives in Thriving Illinois, increasing access to higher education, and other things that he deeply believes in and that WIU has successfully done for 125 years. He thinks it will be very difficult for the BTC to determine revenue loss by campus, college, or department/school because of many factors, such as the way WIU's discount rates work. Interim Provost Mossman recalled that in the 2017 program eliminations, the Women's Studies program was eliminated even though it was the highest generator of income for the College of Arts and Sciences. He does not want to see this kind of ill-informed decision made in the future based on ideological viewpoints; he thinks there needs to be a different way to evaluate programs, and there needs to be transparency in that process. He thinks these types of conversations are important, but he would not like to see the BTC chasing a cart that is going the wrong direction.

Chair Albarracin thinks it is possible to come up with numbers without pointing fingers. She understands that even though WIU is not-for-profit, it cannot lose a lot of money or it will become unsustainable. She noted that African American Studies was reestablished after being eliminated for the right reasons – not because it will be a big money maker for the university but because WIU has a good number of African American students, the program is important for their sense of identity and self-esteem, it is important for retention, and because African American students asked for it. She thinks it would be healthy as an institution to have an honest conversation about what areas of the university are considered important even though they are not money makers; she would have kept philosophy, for example, instead of eliminating it because it is embarrassing for a university not to have a Philosophy major. She does not think anyone should fear seeing

the numbers because there is the chance that different areas might fight with one another.

Ms. Hamm suggested it might be helpful to hear the overall purpose of the Budget Transparency Committee; its duties are “To review budgetary items and documents, meet with the Budget Director, serve as consultants to the Faculty Senate and respond to any concerns which may arise at Senate meetings about budget-related matters, and serve as a resource to the faculty and Faculty Senate on budgetary questions, issues, and ideas.” She noted that as a standing Senate committee, the conversations will not have specific end dates, unlike the AI Committee that Dr. Atherton served on, and could continue into the next year. She also noted that if budgets will now not be available until April every year, the BTC will probably just have to work with the previous years’ budget because to wait that long to get started would mean they could not accomplish anything in the month remaining in the academic year. She stated that as a standing Senate committee, the BTC needs to have access to the budgets and to the people that can explain those budgets to them so that they can answer some of the questions coming from their peers.

Interim Provost Mossman said, based on the charge that Ms. Hamm read, he would really value meetings with the Budget Transparency Committee and thinks this would be beneficial to the entire university. He hopes the committee can help with communication and transparency on sharing information, and he would value that. He would enjoy meeting with the committee three or four times a semester to discuss how different aspects of the budget will affect the institution.

Senator Hamner remarked he is hearing a lot that seems harmonizable and is about good faith and trust building. He thinks there is good reason for the faculty to be concerned historically and want more transparency. Senator Hamner asked Interim Provost Mossman if he thinks there is a point now or in the next six months where faculty will have clarity with the new ERP system or state appropriations formula, and whether he thinks there is something worthwhile that the BTC could do in this short period to help with this. Interim Provost Mossman responded he thinks communication is valuable, and there is always something to talk about with the state budget and appropriations. He observed that the two percent budget increase for higher ed next year is really a decrease when inflation rates are considered. He noted that the new funding formula can be very positive for WIU or it could be very harmful, and there is a lot of competition among the state institutions. He thinks it would be helpful for everyone to understand this environment, its challenges and possibilities, such as workforce development, and to work toward shared governance. Senator Hamner asked if this means the Executive Committee should encourage the Budget Transparency Committee in the near term to build a shared understanding of the institution’s position relative to the state and get some tutorials on understanding the bigger context rather than the impacts on departments or colleges. Chair Albarracin asked if this means that instead of looking at the numbers internally the BTC could instead look at, for instance, the equitable funding formula, because it would be helpful to have a better understanding of this 90-page report. Senator Hamner remarked he is not saying this would exclude other avenues, but in the short term, given that the budget process is in a state of fluidity, it might be helpful for the BTC to try to understand how that is going to change.

Dr. Atherton suggested it would be helpful if the administration were to disseminate what it is doing every month campuswide because there are very few BTC members to get this information out; Interim Provost Mossman said that is a good suggestion, but there are time constraints. Senator Hamner remarked he is sensitive to what Parliamentarian Robinett said and recognizes that that the situation could be different college by college, with some faculty being desperate for information and feeling serious pressures. He thinks the need for specific budgetary information makes a lot of sense if faculty feel like they are going to have to mount a defense of their programs in the near term. Interim Provost Mossman agrees this is justified based on the budget situation WIU has been in in the past and in which many Illinois institutions are still in because no institution has been entirely healthy since the Illinois budget impasse. Interim Provost Mossman thinks the way to fix faculty feeling this way is through communication, and the BTC provides an opportunity for groups to discuss in general or specific terms what is happening with the budget at this moment. He thinks this sharing of information is true shared governance.

Ms. Hamm asked if the financial strategic plan document that Vice President Edwards was going to present to the BOT last fall might now be available for the BTC to review. Parliamentarian Robinett replied that this document never materialized, and now the process is in the hands of the consultants, but he is not sure who has seen their recommendations. Interim Provost Mossman replied that EAB is not going to deliver a single

document, but they have delivered a preliminary report on Academic Affairs which he would be happy to share, although he has already had to ask them for a revision due to some faulty data. He thinks EAB will be useful in helping WIU with workforce development, fixing the budget model, and orienting Foundations in a different direction.

Parliamentarian Robinett recalled that President Huang told the Executive Committee not long ago that there have been actions taken already based on the recommendations that have come from EAB so far, such as departments doing things differently from the data they have received. He said that ExCo is being told different things about what is going on, and, since it is getting closer to the end of the semester, the window for reorganization or doing things in a different way is rapidly closing. He is happy to hear there is no concern that an APER committee will be created this year, but thinks that, while the university is not a corporation, there is still the need for budget data to know what is coming. Interim Provost Mossman said he is unaware of any department using data that came out of EAB. He thinks a better way to get information is through multiple meetings because he wants this process to be a collaboration rather than different sides taking positions. Chair Albarracin pointed out the whole idea is collaboration because the Faculty Senate and its committees needs the administration to provide them with the numbers. She recalled the Budget Transparency Committee was created because at one point there was very little transparency. Ms. Hamm added that former Senate Chair Christopher Pynes noted from talking to other senate chairs across the state that some other institutions had similar committees and thought it would be helpful to create the BTC so that faculty had a voice and to help faculty understand some of the decisions that were being made.

Senator Gravitt remarked that the Aspen AACSB group that she and Chair Albarracin serve on, which is working with WIU and Spoon River College on the transfer process, has talked a lot about workforce development; it has already provided some data and will be providing more from a broader area. She thinks this might be helpful to the effort Interim Provost Mossman has mentioned. Senator Gravitt also noted that there are many full professors within five years of retirement, but she does not know of any expressed plans to keep the viability of certain programs going when they leave. Interim Provost Mossman thinks the university needs to develop a new strategic plan. He noted that WIU had a very good strategic plan, which has been revised, that came directly out of the Higher Learning Commission. He thinks developing a division plan will help people across the divisions realize that everyone is on the same team and driving toward the same goals.

Senator Gravitt said she and Senator Atherton, both coming to WIU from industry, do not understand why there are not searches for replacement faculty before the retiree walks out the door rather than a scramble to replace them. She said the local community thinks that Macomb is coming out of Covid and thriving while the university is perceived to be failing. Interim Provost Mossman recalled that the previous budgeting system, where departments submitted their priority lists to the deans, who reported them to the provost, who then made prioritization lists to present to the President and university community, failed not because of internal factors but because the state had no consistency in distributing appropriated funding. He said WIU's situation is not unique across the US right now; institutions are seeing budgets that are the same or reduced from previous years, and the bigger issue is lack of confidence in higher education. Dr. Atherton said this is why he wanted to talk about returns on investments because if this information was released, even if complicated, everyone would know the issues and could make decisions on this basis. He noted that if the government was funding universities the way they did 20 years ago, this conversation would not be necessary, but they are not. He pointed out that when one area of the university gets data about how they are doing, they do not have the information to see how they are performing compared to their university peers. Chair Albarracin remarked she does not think the various areas of the university should live in blissful ignorance.

Chair Albarracin shared "the matrix map," a chart used by nonprofit organizations to analyze which programs to keep versus which they need to let go based on profitability and impact on mission. She explained that if a program has a low profit but a high impact, the organization should still keep it because it impacts on the mission, but if the program has low mission impact and low profitability, it should be eliminated. She added that there are other considerations besides economics that come into play with nonprofit institutions, and some programs will need to subsidize others. Senator Gravitt expressed her agreement with Chair Albarracin but noted that the institution still needs to be sustainable and have a plan to reach those goals.

Parliamentarian Robinett said he would support collaborative discussions if the Budget Transparency Committee could obtain the numbers it needs in a positive way. He stated that on February 13, President Huang told ExCo that “if a program is not working out or producing at the same level as in the past, that program will be given time to do some different things,” and that was said during the conversation about EAB. He noted that the minutes indicate that President Huang said the university “is not using EAB to cut programs or lay off employees” but that “the administration wants to see the strengths and weaknesses of WIU’s programs.” Parliamentarian Robinett suggested perhaps there needs to be a conversation about what role priority funding or finance is playing in decisions about programs or whether the focus is on missions, and whether there is a matrix for how well a program is meeting the university’s mission. He reiterated that if the Interim Provost says there will not be an APER committee charged this semester, he feels much better. Interim Provost Mossman stressed that he is deeply concerned about funding issues because the university needs cash. He also stated, however, that there is no way EAB will give a recommendation to cut certain programs because that is not what it is supposed to do; EAB’s job is to consult. Interim Provost Mossman understands what President Huang said at the ExCo meeting as saying that if a program is no longer attracting students, it should be phased out or, perhaps, changed into a new program. He understands, though, why faculty have been very concerned because the university does need more dollars.

Chair Albarracin expressed her appreciation to the Budget Transparency Committee for their efforts. She suggested that they try to come up with a plan for next year. Ms. Hamm asked if the Executive Committee thinks the BTC should use the short amount of time remaining to them this semester to try to complete any of the items on the list provided to them by Dr. Atherton or if they should instead just use that time in meeting with Vice President Edwards, Renee Georges, and Interim Provost Mossman. Chairperson Albarracin recommends that they meet with the three administrators to get some idea of the numbers. Interim Provost Mossman said he thinks Budget Director Renee Georges would be very happy to speak with the BTC.

2. *Evaluation of President Huang*

The Executive Committee asked Senator Hamner, who represents ExCo on the Committee on Provost and Presidential Performance (CPPP), to convey to the committee that ExCo does not think there is any reason to evaluate President Huang this year. Chair Albarracin checked with the Board of Trustees to see if they wanted the results of a Senate evaluation, and they said they did not need to see a report. She also asked President Huang if he wants to see a report even though he would be gone when it is completed, but he said he did not.

ExCo also asked Senator Hamner to see if CPPP wishes to add any language to its policies and procedures about whether or when to evaluate a president or provost if they leave before the end of the academic year. Chair Albarracin suggested CPPP might want to consider that there be no survey if it has not been sent out before a president or provost leaves the university but that the process continue if surveys have already been distributed. Senator Hamner asked if it would be best not to determine this in advance but rather on a case-by-case basis; he thinks it would be wise for the senators in that moment to make that decision. Chair Albarracin would prefer to have some specific guidelines in place so that the decision does not give the appearance of being arbitrary.

[Note: Senator Hamner reported back following the ExCo meeting that CPPP members recommend that no survey be sent out this year and that the policies and procedures not be changed.]

3. *Guests and upcoming topics for Senate meetings*

Billy Clow, Dean, College of Fine Arts and Communication; Mick Cumbie, Development Director, College of Fine Arts and Communication; and Ted Renner, Interim Director, Facilities Management, will speak to Faculty Senate on March 26 during Announcements about the Center for the Performing Arts. Ilon Lauer, Communication, will fill in as parliamentarian for the March 26 meeting in Parliamentarian Robinett’s absence.

Newly named Interim President Kristi Mindrup will speak with the Senate on April 9 about her new duties. Newly elected senators will attend the April 9 meeting to vote for officers for next year.

Audrey Adamson, Executive Director for Career Preparation and Quad Cities Operations, will speak with Faculty Senate at their last meeting on April 23 about what is happening on the Quad Cities campus.

4. *Changes to set up of Union Capitol Rooms*

In order to help attendees on zoom and senators in the Quad Cities hear the meetings better, the room set up will be moved closer to the two ceiling microphones at the front of the room for the next meeting and a standing mike will be available in the back of the room for guests.

5. The Executive Committee finalized the agenda for the Faculty Senate meeting of March 26, and the ExCo meeting adjourned at 5:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Annette Hamm, Faculty Senate Office Manager
and Recording Secretary