

‘FACULTY SENATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, 20 September 2022

Via Zoom, 3:30 p.m.

ACTION MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: Bill Thompson, Chair; Lee Brice, Vice Chair; Julia Albarracin, Secretary

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

GUESTS: Tracy Brightwell-Kraft, Bookstore Retail Manager; Rebekah Buchanan, Dept. of English; Amy Carr, Dept. of Race, Religion, Gender, and Multidisciplinary Studies; Julie Cox, Chair, CAGAS; Ritchie Gabbei, Dept. of Kinesiology; Mark Mossman, Associate Provost; Joe Roselieb, Executive Director, Auxiliary Services and Risk Management

1) Chair Thompson stated that faculty members have expressed concerns to him regarding not having their textbooks on hand or in the quantities requested from the WIU Bookstore when school started this fall and the problems this has caused in their classes. He invited English professor Rebekah Buchanan to ExCo to relate her experience with this issue. Dr. Buchanan related that she turned in her book orders on time but then found out that the first textbook assigned for her class, a pedagogy book, was not available in the Bookstore, and many students could not purchase it online because there were not enough copies to be found. Dr. Buchanan had planned her class around having this book available on the second day of class and using it for the next couple of weeks. Some students had to end up coming to Dr. Buchanan’s classroom to borrow the book to read. She related that some students were able to find copies online to purchase, but were then unable to return the copy of the book they had ordered online to the Bookstore after the book they had ordered on campus came in, which basically meant that the book cost these students double since they ended up with two copies. Dr. Buchanan told ExCo that if she had known her first book was going to be unavailable for the start of class prior to students informing her, she could have tried to revise her class a little, and now her second scheduled book has not yet arrived either. She wishes there was a way to find out how many copies of a book are available or if it is on backorder and for students to be able to return their book to the WIU Bookstore if they have to buy a different copy online due to a backorder situation. She has spoken to Ms. Brightwell-Kraft about this but wishes there was a better way to communicate more in advance of these issues arising so that classes can be structured around potential problems with obtaining the books. Dr. Buchanan recognizes that the Bookstore cannot order as many books as there are students in a class, but she has heard anecdotally that some students have stopped trying to get books through the WIU Bookstore.

Ms. Brightwell-Kraft recognized the issues related by Dr. Buchanan. She stated that if students have an issue returning their books, they should see her because the Bookstore can absolutely accommodate the return of an online copy that was ordered because a textbook was on backorder as long as they can verify that is the reason for the return. Ms. Brightwell-Kraft described the supply chain issues this fall as “horrendous,” adding that she has never seen these kinds of issues before in her career. She said communications with publishers broke down, and they did not return her calls or emails, which was extremely frustrating when she ordered 30 textbooks, for example, only received ten, and is told the publisher is out of stock for the remainder and does not know when they will become available. She related that when the textbooks go on sale, she gets so bogged down with work that it is difficult for her to keep up, let alone to check on every purchase order to see if all of the books were available and notify faculty if they were not. Ms. Brightwell-Kraft related that 250 textbooks for ENG 180 just arrived today; she said the publisher told her if the Bookstore bundled the books at her end they could get them sooner, and Ms. Brightwell-Kraft agreed, but she still received them late and had to bundle them herself.

Ms. Brightwell-Kraft noted that a new policy allowing students to charge textbooks to their accounts for the first time this fall also created a lot of challenges for the Bookstore. Some students thought the ability to charge their textbooks meant they would be getting them for free, like a book award. She recognizes that the policy change helped a lot of students who did not have to wait on their federal financial aid to buy their textbooks, but there was a lot of confusion and onslaught of students, particularly close to the August 31 deadline.

Ms. Brightwell-Kraft also noted that there were a lot of late adoptions of textbooks this fall. There was a significant amount of courses overenrolled, so those classes would have been short of their textbooks no matter how many were ordered. Ms. Brightwell-Kraft is unaware if a class with a maximum enrollment of 30 is

overenrolled to 50 students, and at least 50 courses were overfilled by five or more students this fall. When ordering textbooks, Ms. Brightwell-Kraft looks at maximum enrollment for the current semester and what the final enrollment was the previous semester to determine a starting point. She said most of the time she can obtain additional books before a faculty member even notices a gap in availability, but that did not happen this fall. She received 360 textbook adoptions after the due date for fall semester book orders, and 218 of those were sent in during July and August. She also has to engage in a lot of conversations with professors who do not provide all of the required information on their orders or type in the ISBN number wrong, for example. With late adoptions, she also has to rearrange and re-tag the shelving to physically accommodate the additional textbooks. She stated that all of this makes it difficult for her to find the time to also see if textbooks are selling out for every class, check with professors to see where things are for their students, and communicate with faculty about backorders.

Chair Thompson asked what faculty could do to help solve this problem. Ms. Brightwell-Kraft replied that faculty could help reduce late adoptions by submitting textbook orders by the deadline and by not overenrolling classes. Chair Thompson remarked that his course was changed in July, which he knows happened to a number of faculty, causing him to submit a late adoption request. He asked if part of the problem is with the Bookstore's tracking system and its ability to keep track of orders and which books are selling out. Ms. Brightwell-Kraft replied that is not the problem because she does all of that manually. She stated that textbook orders were due in March, and although late orders in April through June do not cause much problem, late adoptions in July and August do because the Bookstore is already selling fall textbooks by that time. She recognizes there are lots of changes in classes, but she thinks 360 late adoptions is a large amount.

Mr. Roselieb pointed out that students are offered an electronic option for their textbooks if they are backordered. Ms. Brightwell-Kraft explained that if the publisher cannot provide stock and the printed books are not available, she asks the publisher for a free digital copy until they can provide the stock that has been requested. Mr. Roselieb asked how this is communicated to faculty. Ms. Brightwell-Kraft replied that she tries to let faculty know as quickly and efficiently as possible. She added that contacting many publishers this fall has been a nightmare, and their customer service in some cases has not been positive either. Mr. Roselieb remarked that a system to better notify faculty of this option may be something the Bookstore can work on in future. He asked if the ENG 180 students were able to use electronic versions of the textbook; Ms. Brightwell-Kraft replied that they were.

Dr. Buchanan remarked that Ms. Brightwell-Kraft has been great to work with and has respond to her concerns. She added that her class was not ENG 180. She knows a number of faculty tell their students to just forget trying to order their books through WIU's Bookstore, but she does not like that option because many students need the services the Bookstore provides. Ms. Brightwell-Kraft added that if instructors tell their students not to use the WIU Bookstore, her sales history will reflect that, which may cause problems if she under-orders textbooks in the future based on past sales. She stated that there is a fine line when determining how many textbooks to order, and telling students to buy them elsewhere can have an effect.

Dr. Buchanan asked if it would help if faculty communicated to Ms. Brightwell-Kraft which of their textbooks are a priority for them, such as which ones the class will be using first, so that Ms. Brightwell-Kraft can know which ones are most important to notify faculty about if they will not arrive on time. Ms. Brightwell-Kraft replied that it would not hurt so that she can prioritize the orders, but it is still difficult to communicate with faculty when late adoption issues keep her attention focused elsewhere and when publishers do not respond to emails or calls. Mr. Roselieb asked if departments whose classes are overenrolled are repeat offenders; Ms. Brightwell-Kraft replied that this is possible but she would have to check the data. She does not know why when classes are overenrolled departments do not raise the cap and notify her. Senator Brice suggested that Mr. Roselieb could write to chairs/directors in departments/schools where this is repeatedly occurring and ask them to communicate the problem to their faculty and plan accordingly.

Chair Thompson asked what the plans are for spring textbook ordering. Ms. Brightwell-Kraft responded that adoption requests will go out at the end of this week. Chair Thompson suggested that the email include a request that faculty rank order their textbooks; Ms. Brightwell-Kraft agreed to do this. Dr. Buchanan asked if faculty should be contacting the Bookstore to see if their textbooks have arrived and how many are available. Ms. Brightwell-Kraft responded that students sometimes tell their instructors they cannot get the textbook at the Bookstore but the Bookstore actually has it when the instructor calls to double check. She appreciates faculty reaching out to her if they think there is an issue so that she can nip it in the bud.

Provost Zoghi asked if it would help if administrative assistants in departments were in charge of compiling textbook orders so that Ms. Brightwell-Kraft would only have to deal with a single point person. Ms. Brightwell-Kraft responded that years ago every department had an office manager through whom most of the orders were funneled. Ms. Brightwell-Kraft stated that since many of those positions are no longer filled, she has become that person for the departments, which has been added work for her although in some cases it has helped to not have to go through a middle man because that can cause delays. She noted that although it is difficult to be the point person for so many departments, she does not know whether assigning a person in each department to be the point person can be an option these days. Provost Zoghi offered to invite Ms. Brightwell-Kraft to a Dean's Council meeting to see if they have any creative ideas to lessen the amount of work she is called on to do, which must be overwhelming. Ms. Brightwell-Kraft responded she welcomes opportunities to discuss ideas for bettering the situation.

Chair Thompson likes Senator Brice's idea about compiling data regarding where these difficulties are arising. He asked if Ms. Brightwell-Kraft can collect that data and said he would like to see it. Ms. Brightwell-Kraft responded she can collect data on which classes are overfilled and which ones turned in late adoptions in July and August. Provost Zoghi expressed his thanks to Ms. Brightwell-Kraft for her hard work and dedication, noting that she does all of the work single handedly. Chair Thompson observed that other universities have very automated systems that closely track textbook data. Mr. Roselieb stated that the WIU Bookstore's system requires a lot of manual processing on the back end. He said there are discussions about what could be done in the summer months to help Ms. Brightwell-Kraft, such as getting some additional support staff to work on customer service with faculty. He hopes to put together a document explaining to faculty why it is important to submit by the deadline and explaining why there are backups of some things. He thinks asking faculty to submit prioritized lists might help, as well as efforts to reduce late adoptions and solve supply chain management issues. Chair Thompson expressed the willingness of Faculty Senate to do anything possible to help.

2) The Executive Committee considered three items recently referred by CAGAS: a) a request to allow advanced placement credit for the Elementary Education: Early Childhood Option; b) a proposal for AA/AS degrees to equal completion of all WIU General Education requirements; and c) a proposed change to the freshmen admissions policy.

a) Dr. Cox told ExCo that an item related to the Early Childhood request is coming before CAGAS this Thursday, September 22. She said both items attempt to address the shortage of elementary, and particularly early childhood, education teachers in the state. In light of this information, the Executive Committee decided to postpone bringing the request from the School of Education forward to Faculty Senate until the October 11 meeting, at which time, presumably, the other request can go forward as well.

b) The second item, a proposal for the AA/AS degree to equal completion of all WIU Gen Ed requirements, was brought to CAGAS by Associate Provost Mossman. He explained that this policy would allow the university to accept any Associate of Arts or Associate of Sciences from any accredited community college nationwide; these students would enter with junior standing and be exempt from additional WIU Gen Ed requirements. He pointed out that this policy is already in place for select schools in the Iowa border counties and all community colleges in Illinois, so the rationale is to expand nationwide what is already being done regionally and statewide in order to increase accessibility for students in the domestic United States. Associate Provost Mossman hopes this will also help address the enrollment cliff in 2026 by increasing the number of available students. He said the policy proposal came from Enrollment Management, who has been developing ideas to attract a broader scope of students and to make WIU more transfer friendly.

Dr. Cox related this proposal came to CAGAS at one of the first meetings of the semester. She said CAGAS was truly split, voting 3 yes, 3 no, and 2 abstentions. She related that on a student appeal this year the chair cast the deciding vote, and some on CAGAS wanted Dr. Cox to do the same in this instance, but since this occurred during her first week as CAGAS chair and involved a policy, she was not comfortable doing so. She related that CAGAS understands that it could be a detraction for transfer students to have to take the 6-9 s.h. in additional Gen Ed courses that they might be short if they lived outside the preferred region and that these students might choose another state institution that would not require them to take two or three extra courses. Dr. Cox noted that other state universities already have this policy in place, so it seems to be a trend, and money is an issue for many college students so WIU

may just have to be pragmatic about this. She told ExCo members that CAGAS was truly deadlocked, even after a lengthy discussion. Associate Provost Mossman added that state universities that already have this policy include Eastern, Northern, Chicago State, Governors State, and both Southern Illinois campuses.

Senator Albarracin asked whether transfer students would still be required to have the same number of credits if WIU says it accepts all the Gen Ed courses they bring in; Associate Provost Mossman responded transfer students would be considered to bring in 60 hours with their associate's degrees from accredited institutions, most of which follow about the same degree plans as WIU with 120-hour programs. He noted that there will be different nuances in courses brought in from different institutions, of course, but students from California, for example, attending a community college believe that getting their associate's degree means they have completed their Gen Ed requirements, while WIU is currently telling them they have not. Associate Provost Mossman thinks this puts up a barrier to access, and students may choose to go to Eastern, for example, where they would have their Gen Ed completed upon completion of their associate's degree.

Dr. Albarracin asked if there is any study that measures, or tries to measure, how many more students WIU might attract if this policy change is approved. Associate Provost Mossman replied he tried to find out the cost benefit but does not think anyone can say with certainty how much this would increase WIU's enrollment. He thinks this is more of a philosophical problem about increasing the flexibility of the institution; enrollment will be increased through greater accessibility for students. He added that there will be more students in the admissions funnel, resulting in an expansion of the market. Associate Provost Mossman pointed out that although WIU saw an increase of 16 percent in freshmen enrollment, the institution is not growing its transfer students. He thinks WIU has a lot of barriers for transfer students and noted that the transfer population is declining in the state.

Senator Brice thinks the policy proposal sounds silly. He asked if data was provided to CAGAS when they considered it; Dr. Cox responded that it was not, although Associate Provost Mossman attended the meeting and provided an oral summary. Senator Brice would like to see some data, such as how many transfer students WIU currently gets from other states and how many withdraw from enrolling when they find out they must meet WIU's Gen Ed requirements. He noted that while Illinois and Iowa students come from accredited institutions similar to WIU, accredited community colleges in some states, such as Alaska, Wyoming, Texas, or Mississippi, may not have the same educational budgets as Illinois. He would like to see data on how many students WIU attracts currently from these areas and how many more it can expect to attract if the policy proposal is adopted. Senator Brice suggested that Associate Provost Mossman might be able to get numbers from Eastern, since they are a directly comparable institution, before the Faculty Senate meeting; otherwise, Senator Brice suspects senators may be reluctant to make a decision based solely on emotion. Associate Provost Mossman stated he does not feel comfortable with projecting but will try to obtain data on current numbers of transfer students and will try to gather information from other institutions as well. Senator Brice suggested Associate Provost Mossman should be able to at least find out how many transfer students WIU currently gets from Illinois and Iowa border counties; Chair Thompson stated that this information should be available from the WIU Fact Book or from Illinois Community College Board enrollment data.

Senator Brice observed the other concern is what the projected impact will be on the College of Arts and Sciences and other departments that are heavily impacted by Gen Ed if the 6-9 s.h. that transfer students currently have to take at WIU is now waived. Associate Provost Mossman responded this is a good question, but he also wonders if there will be an increase in majors in the disciplines with an increase in transfer students. He thinks the larger issue is one of denying accessibility to students that are obtaining an appropriate degree but are required to take additional courses in order to transfer to WIU. He reiterated that another concern is the pending enrollment cliff of 2026; Associate Provost Mossman believes that if WIU continues to limit the student market it will no longer have transfer students.

Chair Thompson observed that this policy would basically go down a road where the courses that make WIU's Gen Ed unique are eliminated. He noted that institutions seem to be increasingly buying into the 60-hour market, and it feels like a decision has already been made by the transfer market. Senator Carr would be curious to see how Gen Ed is structured at community colleges outside Illinois with which

WIU does not have agreements in place. She noted that the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI) forces a common denominator of Gen Ed that does not include the multicultural category, but she wonders what other differences there are. She also wonders how deterred out-of-state transfer students really are by having to take two or three additional courses. Senator Carr also observed that the ban on talking about critical race theory in certain states may affect early college courses taught by high school teachers, and she wonders if WIU wants to have a blanket acceptance of all Gen Ed courses brought in nationwide as part of an associate degree.

Associate Provost Mossman said he does not disagree with these comments. He thinks General Education in Illinois is tremendously frustrating because institutions cannot innovate the way they may wish due to transfer agreements with community colleges and other institutions. Associate Provost Mossman wanted to completely revamp WIU's Gen Ed on the model of California State-Chico, but after meeting with representatives from the Illinois State Board of Education he realized that it was impossible. He thinks enrollment remains the biggest issue, and noted that WIU does not have a large transfer student pool in Illinois.

Senator Brice commended Dr. Cox on her written summary of the CAGAS discussion about this issue, which will be included in Senate packets for the September 27 meeting. He wondered if any questions were raised at the CAGAS meeting about what departments should do if students transfer in with their Gen Ed completed but they need a specific Gen Ed course as a prereq for their major. Dr. Cox said this is a good question. She related that Speech Pathology and Audiology students, who she teaches, must take four Gen Ed classes for the major's national certification, one of which is a statistics course, and there is no choice if the major is to maintain its licensure. She suspects this would have to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis and would be dependent on the major. Senator Brice observed that it appeared from Associate Provost Mossman's proposal that students in these situations would have to file appeals with CAGAS. Dr. Cox said this question was raised by a council member, and potentially CAGAS could hear appeals on this or the major department would have to tell students they must take additional Gen Ed courses for their program. Associate Provost Mossman recognizes that those programs with accrediting bodies will have specific paths that their students must follow.

Senator Albarracin asked how students coming in with an associate's degree compare to students attending WIU for four years; she suspects students transferring in will have to take fewer credit hours. Associate Provost Mossman clarified that students must complete 120 degrees to graduate; those transferring in an associate's degree will just have half of their degree done. He pointed out that freshmen starting at WIU are on track from their first semester, whereas currently many transfer students are required to take additional Gen Ed courses so would actually be behind students who begin their college careers at WIU. He stressed there is no advantage to transfer students with this policy; it merely addresses their disadvantage under the current system. He thinks this is why transfer students may prefer going to Eastern, Northern, or Southern where the advantage is the same as for someone who starts at those institutions. Senator Albarracin noted that money issues are the main reason students choose to go to a community college; Associate Provost Mossman pointed out that under the current policy many out-of-state transfer students have to pay for up to an additional 9 s.h. of coursework. He added that waiving the requirement for additional Gen Ed will make transfer students on a par with students starting at WIU as freshmen.

Senator Albarracin said she shares the spirit of making WIU more accessible to help enrollment numbers and to help students get a college degree, but she is also concerned about the effect on WIU's General Education. Senator Carr thinks an even bigger effect on WIU's General Education is caused by students bringing in early college credit courses, but the proposed changes to the transfer policy cause some other concerns. She thinks it would be helpful for senators to have information on what states might have a Gen Ed structure that would be problematic to transfer in to WIU; maybe what is being accepted is not really that different in the end, but it would be good to see, particularly with concerns related to course quality or to social justice, which cannot be assessed very easily just from transcripts. She thinks there needs to be some additional concrete information to look at.

The proposal will appear on the September 27 Faculty Senate agenda under Reports from Committees and Councils.

c) Chair Thompson said that a proposal from Enrollment Management and Admissions, which was approved by CAGAS, would revert to an earlier admissions model where students with 2.7-2.95 GPAs would automatically be admitted to the REACH program. He related this change is requested because problems were noticed with students admitted to WIU the past couple of years with GPAs in this range who were not going through the REACH program. Chair Thompson thinks this change is probably appropriate. He asked the Vice President for Enrollment Management if students with GPAs of 3.0 or higher who want to go through the REACH program have the option of choosing to do so in order to have access to extra advising. He said Vice President Schultz thought this was a good idea but that there would not currently be enough staff to accommodate these requests. The proposed admissions change will also appear on the September 27 Faculty Senate agenda under Reports of Committees and Councils.

3) Chair Thompson read a statement from Dr. Gabbei: “For retention purposes, some Gen Ed courses only offer asynchronous online options. Asynchronous online options make it very difficult if not impossible to pass courses in subjects in which students may struggle. In some cases, this is a deal breaker for students and they drop out. Can we make sure that there is at least one section of Gen Ed courses offered face-to-face?”

Dr. Gabbei told ExCo that last year he had a student drop out when facing this situation. He said this was a strong student who worked very hard and had previously graduated from WIU, had a career, and wanted to become an educator, but there were no face-to-face courses that he needed. He related that this person knew how to be a successful college student and did well academically; he contacted Dr. Gabbei for conversations, stayed after class when needed, and asked for clarification on assignments, but he was “old school” and needed that face-to-face interaction. When Dr. Gabbei spoke to academic advisors about this issue, he got the feeling they also think this is a problem. Dr. Gabbei does not know if this is as prevalent now that the university is opened up for in-person instruction, but a quick review showed him that there are still some General Education courses that are only offered asynchronously. He thinks it is valuable to have at least one section of Gen Ed be face-to-face.

Senator Brice pointed out that part of the issue has to do with staffing. Senator Brice is the only person who teaches HIST 115; in fall, there are two sections, one of which is in-person, but in the spring it is only taught asynchronously online. During the pandemic, all of Senator Brice’s classes switched from in-person to online, and he saw the worst returns he has ever seen as far as withdrawal rates. He added, though, that when he has spoken to advisors for his major they have told him they struggle to get students to enroll in synchronous in-person classes. He recognizes that many students who need the extra attention will not take in-person classes, so he is not sure that there is much that can be done about this.

Chair Thompson asked if Provost Zoghi sees any retention issues associated with online classes and whether those students are more likely to have retention problems than those taking courses in person. Provost Zoghi responded that this has not been studied, but it would be a good thing to look into. He related the administration is doing a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) on the Office of Distance Education and Support (ODES) and the Center for Innovation in Teaching and Research (CITR), and this would be a good question to ask. Chair Thompson thinks there should be data on which students withdraw from classes and what classes they were taking, but Provost Zoghi pointed out that there are many reasons students withdraw, including how instructors teach their courses, how engaged the students are, etc. He thinks the SWOT analysis may be able to get some of this data.

Senator Albarracin expressed her thanks for trying to identify this, adding that it could be a trigger for students to withdraw. She teaches POLS 101 online every semester to 35-42 students. She always has about five students who fail but not from lack of support but because they do not keep up with the required work. She thinks some students are not ready to learn online and should not take online classes because they do not have the discipline or experience with college. She added there may be other factors on students, such as one or two jobs besides taking classes or family responsibilities. Provost Zoghi agrees there are lots of different parameters, including that about half of WIU students overall are first-generation students who may need more hand holding and do better with face-to-face classes. He said these students may not have the right mindset and maturity to take courses online, and those things need to be determined.

Chair Thompson observed that the administration seems to be pushing for increased online offerings; Provost Zoghi responded that this is the trend for all institutions of higher education. He explained that because WIU’s

enrollment is so vulnerable, especially in the upcoming years, the university needs to look at every opportunity and apply the lessons learned during the Covid pandemic. He noted that faculty are now more comfortable and familiar with offering classes online, but some courses, such as psychology, may be more conducive to online teaching than others, such as engineering technology. Chair Thompson wonders if pushing students to go online more will exacerbate the problem with those students who are not sufficiently prepared. Provost Zoghi responded that different students are constantly being recruited; for example, various companies in the Quad Cities may find online education attractive for their employees. Senator Albarracin related that a few of her students fall through the cracks, although she sends them email reminders, but she tried teaching synchronously and did not like teaching to a bunch of blank screens. The students in her 200-level hybrid class are doing very well and she is seeing great results. She does not think online learning should be ruled out automatically.

Senator Brice pointed out that Dr. Gabbei has the Provost's attention and asked what he would like to see done to answer his questions and solve the problem. Dr. Gabbei responded he did not think the problem would be solved in one meeting but just wanted to share his concerns. He said there are a variety of experiences teaching online and would like to know what kinds of students do well with those types of classes versus those offered in-person. Being in education almost 40 years, Dr. Gabbei has seen that highly skilled students can do well with any type of learning, but it is the lower and moderately skilled students that really need special attention and the best pedagogical methodologies that WIU can offer. He would like to know if the students who do not do well with asynchronous classes are also the students who are lower skilled. Dr. Gabbei's son took two asynchronous classes at WIU and hated one while loving the other, but he did well in both because he is academically strong. Dr. Gabbei understands the staffing problem but would like to see departments keep in their minds to offer one face-to-face Gen Ed section when at all possible because he thinks this will help retention.

Provost Zoghi related he has been working with college deans since he arrived at WIU, and the main focus has been student success and retention. He remarked that first-year student WIU retention dropped to 66.9 percent this fall, lower than the last couple of years, and an algorithm predicts that it will stay the same because the GPAs for incoming students have been on the low side. Provost Zoghi stressed the university needs to do everything possible to come together in this effort. He has proposed a Life Cycle Flow Model to identify these kinds of challenges and roadblocks and determine how to remove them in order to facilitate students' paths to graduation. The Provost observed that WIU's six-year graduation rate of 44-45 percent is much below the national average of 55-56 percent, and he thinks this is the university's low-hanging fruit that should be addressed first. Dr. Gabbei stated that if he can get students into their third year, they will graduate as Kinesiology majors; he thinks the first two years are critical. Provost Zoghi thinks peer mentor programs, such as leisure learning communities, enrichment programs, and tutors, can make a big impact on student retention.

4) One petition has been received so far to fill a sabbatical vacancy on the University Personnel Committee for fall semester only. The deadline for petitions is September 29.

5) One senator from the College of Arts and Sciences is needed to complete the membership of the Senate Budget Transparency Committee. The Executive Committee recommends that if no one from that college volunteers at the September 27 Senate meeting, Chair Thompson, who serves on the committee as a representative of ExCo, also act as the representative for Arts and Sciences so that the Budget Transparency Committee can move forward with its work.

6) President Huang and Vice President for Enrollment Management Amber Schultz will be the guest speakers for the Faculty Senate meeting of September 27. The President has another meeting that starts at 4:00 and will arrive as soon as it is completed. Vice President Schultz will speak about where the university is in terms of enrollment.

7) Provost Zoghi recalled that at the last Senate meeting there was a discussion about the appropriate amount of funds to distribute to faculty receiving Provost Travel Awards. He noted that historically faculty have received \$500 apiece from the Provost's office to finance their conference travel, and while some departments have provided additional funding, faculty may have had to provide part of the funding out-of-pocket. He observed that prices for travel have gone up post-Covid, so he asked Faculty Senate if an award of \$600 per approved applicant would be beneficial. He noted that there was debate about whether if the award was increased fewer faculty would be able to receive the award (instead of 50 faculty, the award could only be given to about 40 faculty), so the Provost has been looking to find additional funding in order to raise the total funds to \$35,000 from its current \$25,000 ceiling. He does not think \$500 per faculty member will go too far. Senator Brice agrees that

\$500 would have only made a small dent in the cost of travelling to his last conference, but he has to attend five conferences this year and will pay for most of that out-of-pocket.

Chair Thompson asked if Provost Zoghi has had any success finding additional funding. Provost Zoghi hopes that within the next few days he can come up with enough to reach \$35,000 because travel costs are very expensive for junior faculty. Chair Thompson thinks this would be a morale boost. Provost Zoghi stated he feels good and is hopeful about finding the additional funds.

Senator Brice expressed his support for allowing junior faculty to apply for the Provost's Travel Awards first, then allowing tenured faculty to apply for any extra money. Chair Thompson recalled there was formerly a mechanism in place to allow this to happen. Senator Brice said there was formerly a deadline date, then tenured faculty could apply after that date had passed. He said this was put in place when the awards were opened up one year first come, first served and entirely allocated 30 minutes later without any provision for prioritizing junior faculty.

8) The Executive Committee finalized the remainder of the Senate agenda for September 27, and the meeting adjourned at 5:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Annette Hamm, Interim Faculty Senate Office Manager
and Recording Secretary