

FACULTY SENATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

**Tuesday, 22 September 2026
4:00 p.m. – Stipes Hall 101**

ACTION MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jen McKenzie, Chair; Hollie Mason, Vice Chair; Deb Allwardt, Secretary

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

1. The Western Collaborative Commons

Provost Mossman had hoped to have a proposal ready for the Executive Committee today on restructuring the offices that directly report to the Provost's Office, but it has proven to be quite an intellectual exercise to determine how to reconfigure these divisions. These units include the Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board Executive Institute, which is run through a state agency, conducts a lot of trainings, and was a major part of the new Emergency Operations Center; the Office of Career Readiness and Workforce Development; WIUM; the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs; and the Registrar's Office. Provost Mossman said there is also a proposal to create a new kind of C.T. Vivian Fellows Program which would report to his office; the current program was created ten years ago and worked well then, but the competition for potential Fellows now is very competitive.

Provost Mossman explained that his office is working on how to take all of these areas and potentially make something connected which would serve a larger purpose for the institution. He noted that on one level the various offices could be kept as is, but he does not think this will be good in the long term for Academic Affairs. He noted that a number of institutions within the past 20 years – such as the University of Missouri-St. Louis and Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville – have been successful with “university park” models – a special area in which to develop things that would serve both the institution and the wider community. He thinks the new Emergency Operations Center is a good example of this; the intention is to work with the Illinois Emergency Management Agency on this effort.

Provost Mossman said the university is also working with the rural health and economic development communities. He engaged in a discussion with McDonough District Hospital officials recently in which they expressed their real staffing needs, such as for accountants. He noted that the university has been successful with its Seymore Center for Rural Education and the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs, which was created by the Governor in 1996. He thinks there are many things that are possible in the university that can contribute to the economic and cultural development of the region. He noted, however, that many of the good things Western does are at scale, on a local level, and he sees reconfiguring the divisions that report to the Provost's Office as a way to scale up once it can be determined how to best do that.

Provost Mossman noted that WIU has outstanding library collections and is in the process of framing pieces by artist Fred Jones to be featured in Malpass Library. The Provost would like to use Malpass Library spaces to meet community needs, such as to address concerns about health and wellness in the community. He has spoken with Heidi Lung in Museum Studies; Library Dean Hector Maymi-Sugraves; Christopher Merrett, Dean for Innovation and Economic Development and Director for the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs; and the two college deans about his ideas, as well as previous Faculty Senate Chair Jeremy Robinett and last year's Executive Committee. He noted that the former Library Atrium Society is being rebooted.

Provost Mossman observed that it is difficult to maintain subscriptions to research periodicals because of their cost and the lack of funding for higher education over the past 15 years, but junior faculty in particular need access to those periodicals through interlibrary loans. He told ExCo that the University of Illinois was the third largest public library in the United States at one point around the 1980s, but following the decrease in higher education funding in the state, there has been stagnation in Illinois. He said this has tended to create

state universities which are public in name only, so there is the need to create spaces where WIU can generate funding for the institution, create economic development, and provide access for students and faculty needs while continuing to maintain historic collections. Provost Mossman hopes the Western Collaborative Commons will be a structure which can accommodate all of these things and can achieve buy-in from most of the Division of Academic Affairs (because it is unrealistic to expect 100 percent buy-in). He thinks this type of thing will not work if it is done in a top-down fashion; there has to be a commitment to it.

Chair McKenzie likes the idea, particularly because she supports things that draw in the local community, and she thinks the library would be an excellent place to do this – better than the Student Recreation Center, for example. She hopes that it would expand cultural and learning opportunities to lots of people beyond WIU students. Her concern, however, is with the optics of laying off all faculty librarians but now saying the Library is a really important piece of this proposal; she noted that it was not said previously that the Library was unimportant, but she can see this being a hard sell despite what the actual proposal is. Provost Mossman acknowledged that he definitely recognizes this and knows that it will be a challenge. He does not think initiatives such as this proposal work, in principle, if created without buy-in. He noted that the Rebuild did achieve a lot of faculty support, if not 100 percent, and Faculty Senate voted to approve it.

Provost Mossman noted that the Goldfarb Center for the Performing Arts has united the community in a lot of ways, but the challenge is that it has to be an educational building and involved in student learning. He stressed that Interim Director Mick Cumbie has done an excellent job, and that space has already started enlivening investment in the community when that is not even its main intention. He thinks that if the university could develop a space with planned events for the community five days a week, those possibilities would grow. He believes that WIU should develop strong partnerships with such entities as McDonough District Hospital and help them provide solutions to problems by sharing resources and invigorating the community rather than waiting for something to happen.

Senator Mason understands that there might be a negative reaction to the proposal, but she thinks that if this issue is acknowledged up front, the initiative can be presented as the way that the university is now moving forward. She noted that if things are addressed openly, it can make subsequent things feel better. She supports any idea that will get more bodies in buildings to avoid the feeling that WIU is a dead campus. She wants to see WIU ingrained into the community rather than two separate entities.

Provost Mossman related that President Mindrup supports conducting an economic impact study of WIU on the region. He noted that the last economic impact study was conducted internally, but this one would be conducted by an outside agency. He thinks it will be easier to show how impactful WIU is if the study is done externally. He noted that often the university provides support for the community but does not talk about it; when St. Paul's gymnasium flooded, for example, WIU immediately offered to let St. Paul's students practice in the Horrabin Hall gym. He thinks these kinds of examples should be part of the narrative to show what the university does for the community.

The Executive Committee discussed ideas to help invigorate the university that would not be overly costly:

- Malpass Library used to be known for its multitude of plants (prior to the person who oversaw the plants being laid off in 2016). Senator Allwardt noted that this individual propagated the plants and sold them once a year. ExCo members would like to see the Library become the showcase for its plant life that it was formerly known to be.
- Cardinal Gardens at the south entrance to Horrabin Hall needs some attention. It was suggested that Macomb Beautiful might be willing to help with some of the outside landscaping projects in specific areas that they could adopt and help maintain.
- Developing alumni student lounges in several faculty buildings was suggested.
- There was discussion of a gaming area on the first floor of Malpass and study tables, which have been successful with student-athletes but a challenge to get other students to use.
- Pizza events to encourage student, faculty, and staff participation.
- Parliamentarian Gblerkpor thinks that events with regional status, such as the annual balloon festival, should be more broadly showcased, such as by soliciting community, student, and faculty photos of the event and highlighting them in some sort of gallery.

- Better advertising for the fossil collection and collaborations with school classrooms as well as public events. Provost Mossman noted that CHASE Interim Dean Kyle Mayborn and retired EAGIS faculty member Leslie Melim digitized the entire collection.
- Senator Mason suggested some sort of scavenger hunt to highlight some spaces at the university with prizes for completion.
- Senator Allwardt suggested using the Center for the Performing Arts as a springboard to interest retired patrons in beginner piano lessons.
- Hold more events at WIU rather than elsewhere; one example is LIFE courses which are often held at Spoon River College. Provost Mossman has asked deans and directors to increase the number of events held on the campus as part of an effort to address town/gown relations. The Military Ball should be held at WIU, as should other student events. Senator Allwardt suggested a spot be easily accessible on the revamped WIU website where individuals can reserve campus spaces for their events.
- Parliamentarian Gblerkpor suggested that programming be developed around the Rocky statues. His Introduction to Anthropology students made posters of the statues across Macomb and interviewed businesses about why they installed a statue and what they see as the relationship between Macomb and WIU. Parliamentarian Gblerkpor thinks these statues could be highlighted in a similar fashion to the balloon festival, including reinterpreting them with a photographic or artistic lens.
- The “Think Purple” campaign was very successful about 15 years ago. Senator Mason suggested some sort of “get caught wearing purple” campaign where students could be rewarded with purple and gold points.

Provost Mossman will bring the Western Collaborative Commons proposal to the Executive Committee once it is completed and will be asking for Faculty Senate to consider endorsing it.

2. *Accessibility student worker*

Chair McKenzie related that efforts are underway to employ students to work with faculty to update their digital accessibility. Provost Mossman confirmed that Chair McKenzie has completed a proposal, but he has not yet presented it to the Budget Office. He said the idea began in Spring 2026 in discussions with Tahir Khan, faculty member in the School of Computing, Data, and Mathematical Sciences, about cybersecurity students helping with University Technology, and this effort is a continuation of that conversation. He has spoken with University Technology Director Bob Emmert and explained that the idea is to develop student roles that would be between a student worker and a graduate assistant and held by junior or senior majors in cybersecurity, law enforcement, or computer sciences. Chair McKenzie added that the students could also come from Special Education. Provost Mossman reaffirmed there is a university-wide commitment to accessibility compliance and meeting the April deadline for digital materials. Chair McKenzie thinks this could be a possible quick solution to the problem of not having time to train all faculty on how to best revise their materials.

3. *UCOSOGIE survey*

Chair McKenzie related that the University Committee on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression sent out a survey last spring but did not get a lot of responses. She said they have asked the Executive Committee to send out the survey again. She noted that it is the exact same survey as last year and asks about the campus climate toward LGBTQA+. She added that last year it was decided that the survey would be sent out to faculty, but the Senate would not use its Qualtrics license to send it out to students. The Executive Committee approved sending the survey out to faculty again this fall.

4. *Status of Senate election petitions*

Ms. Hamm reported that two vacant seats have been filled on Faculty Senate: Lisa Parzefall, English, has submitted a petition to represent the School of Humanities this semester while Senator Woell is on sabbatical, and Matt McConnell, Chemistry, will fill the three-year seat to represent the School of Natural Sciences. The Executive Committee agreed to extend the deadline one last week to try to fill the remaining vacant Senate seats to represent the College of Business, Health, and Community Programs at-large; the School of

Computing, Data, and Mathematical Sciences; Engineering and Technology/QC Engineering; and the School of Social Sciences.

5. *Finalize agenda for Senate meeting of September 29*

Special guests for the September 29 meeting will include Jackie Price, Director of the Student Development and Success Center; Miguel Huerta, Executive Director for Advising and Student Support; Ian Szechowycz, Director for Digital Spaces and Online Learning; Dawn Sweet, Instructional Technology and Design Manager; and Joan Nkansah, Instructional Design and Technology Specialist. They will discuss various aspects of the university's disability resources with senators.

The Executive Committee meeting adjourned at 4:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Annette Hamm, Faculty Senate Office Manager and Recording Secretary