

‘FACULTY SENATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, 6 September 2022

Via Zoom, 3:30 p.m.

A C T I O N M I N U T E S

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

GUEST: President Guiyou Huang; Vice President for Enrollment Management Amber Schultz; Admissions Director Doug Freed

1) President Huang told the Executive Committee the semester is off to a strong start, with new faculty orientation and receptions all going really well. He is seeing a lot of new faces as the university welcomes larger freshmen and international classes who are bringing new energy to the campuses. President Huang stated that while official enrollment numbers will not be released until Thursday, they are looking very strong. He stated that the freshmen cohort will be the largest of the past five years; for the first time, their enrollment numbers will be over 1,000, an important improvement from the stable enrollment WIU saw in 2021-2021. The university saw record enrollment last year for international students, both undergraduate and graduate, but this year’s figures will be even higher. There were 424 new international students last year, and there were already 425 a couple of days ago. President Huang stated that this will be the first time in WIU’s history that enrollment of international students has gone beyond 1,000; the closest was in 1987 when the university had 570, and this year that number will be doubled. President Huang expressed his thanks to the School of Graduate Studies, International and Undergraduate Admissions, the Center for Global Studies, and Enrollment Management for doing a fabulous job. President Huang stated that there are now over 2,300 graduate students enrolled, which is a record for about the past 14 years. He noted, though, that while WIU is seeing good enrollment numbers, those numbers are not necessarily generating a good proportion of revenue yet.

President Huang believes that, after 16 years of effort, WIU will this time very likely get its Center for the Performing Arts. He observed that funds have been allocated twice before, and both times the effort broke down, but he hopes to be able to issue a formal announcement in the next few days or weeks because he thinks things are very close to happening this time. He noted that the \$110 million building will be the first one that WIU has built since Malpass Library in 1974. President Huang predicts that the university will likely not get its next building for another decade. He thinks building the Center for the Performing Arts, which is predicted to take two to three years, will send a very powerful message to the university community and the region that WIU is here to stay in west central Illinois. He hopes that state dignitaries and perhaps even Governor Pritzker will attend the groundbreaking ceremony.

September 23 has been set as the kickoff date for the WIU comprehensive campaign. It will be a busy couple of days because September 22 is the Board of Trustees meeting on the Quad Cities campus, then Trustees and members of the President’s Cabinet will return to the Macomb campus to get ready for a series of events on September 23, WIU’s Founder’s Day. President Huang told ExCo there will be an early morning ceremony on the 23rd where the President, Provost, and Chair of the Board of Trustees will speak for 30-40 minutes, followed by a University Foundation meeting. At 5:00 p.m. on September 23, a reception will be held for those attending the campaign launch, with a dinner at 6:00 p.m. where the five-year campaign will be formally announced. President Huang stated that the target for the campaign will be \$100 million, but the amount will not be finalized until the formal announcement. He thinks the comprehensive campaign will offer a great opportunity to promote and create momentum for the university, particularly since now the university has a very expert leader in the division, Mike Murtaugh, to lead the campaign. President Huang added that this past academic year saw the second highest fundraising amount in WIU’s history with over \$10 million raised.

President Huang informed ExCo members that efforts to develop a financial sustainability plan have begun and will hopefully soon be released formally. He explained the sustainability plan will provide guidance on what track needs to be taken for revenue generation. He related that former Vice President for Administrative Services Matt Bierman in 2012 issued a memo that spelled out some of the financial weaknesses of WIU up to that time; in a 2018 memo, he provided an update on the importance of having reserve funds for the university, with which President Huang agrees. President Huang noted that over the past two years WIU has received over \$20 million

in federal funding for students and university operations to address the effects of the Covid pandemic, but that funding ended this summer for institutions of higher education. He noted that while WIU had a \$370,000 surplus last year, this year saw the university in a deficit situation because of the loss of those dollars and a philosophy that WIU has historically followed of a financial aid distribution model that resulted in high discount rates. President Huang feels positive that WIU will be able to get out of its deficit situation in a couple of years, but he thinks the current year will be a tough one, and this must be tackled for the university's future financial health.

President Huang observed that the university needs to improve its student retention. He thinks that retention efforts have been effective since the creation of the Retention Initiative office, however, a better job still needs to be done retaining from one year to the next in order to see stronger graduation rates in students' fourth and sixth years. He said WIU is making progress but that more needs to be done because a retention rate of, say, 75 percent would put the university in a much better place in terms of enrollment management.

Chair Thompson asked why the President does not expect that WIU will get another new building within the next ten years. The President responded that in looking at other state universities he has noticed that no one seems to get new buildings sooner than within a ten-year period, and it has required quite a bit of work on the part of the state and WIU to get the Center for the Performing Arts. President Huang would be happy to say he is wrong if WIU gets another new building sooner than ten years in the future, but historical patterns do not project this happening.

Chair Thompson asked what percentage of student headcount is represented by graduate students. President Huang responded he does not have that information now, but graduate student headcount was about 2,330 a few weeks ago, the largest in the past 15 years. He thinks there will be about 7,600 students in total this year, and there was 7,455 last year at the same time, so there is the strong possibility of a two percent increase.

Senator Brice remarked that awareness of the enrollment cliff in 2026 has non-senior faculty members concerned about what is coming down the pike for them. He remarked that some majors are having problems filling their classes and wonders if the university has plans to buy out senior faculty or encourage them to retire to prevent possible future layoffs of junior faculty. President Huang responded that two conditions must be in place to allow this to occur: first, there must be senior faculty willing to retire, and second, a university must have the financial resources to make this happen. The President reaffirmed that it is not his intention or his administration's intention to lay off employees or cut programs in the foreseeable future. He observed that if enrollment does not continue to grow, and the university does not want to lay off employees or cut programs, one good solution is to not backfill positions that become empty through natural attrition and to continue to be lean on the operational side of the house. He hopes the university can try to address some of the issues enumerated in former Vice President Bierman's memo this year, but he suspects everyone will need to be more prudent economically and in how institutional dollars are spent.

Senator Albarracin noted that WIU is not-for-profit, but the goal is to build a surplus. She asked if the financial sustainability plan has set a goal for surplus dollars. President Huang does not think a specific amount has been set. He said the goal is to determine a strategy for saving money and determining the right ratio between faculty and students. President Huang wants the message to be clear that his intention is not to lay off people or cut programs; the strategy is to grow enrollment. He noted, however, that this is only one aspect of growth because the number of bodies is one thing while the revenue they generate is another. He hopes that WIU can control the discount rate for various groups of students in order to put the university back on solid footing to be successful for the next few years and into the next decade.

Chair Thompson recalled that Dr. Bierman's memo spoke strongly about Athletics and recommended changes to the program. President Huang stated that he has tried to be as transparent and down-to-earth as possible since taking office. He stated that "deficit" is an umbrella term, but some areas have their own specific deficit, and Athletics has one of the largest. He noted that Dr. Bierman's memo recommends that WIU change to Division III, which would cost the university less in scholarships, and the President thinks this is something that should be discussed while being mindful of the political facets of such a move. He noted that some Trustees and alumni want to see WIU stay in Division I, which President Huang understands the merit and importance of, but the President stressed the question is one of sustainability. He said the topic has been opened for discussion, and he hopes to have a good resolution within the next year or two; he hopes to have people at every level state why the university should remain where it is or change divisions.

Chair Thompson remarked the Bierman memo may not be something the university should use for guidance since during his vice presidency programs were cut that WIU is trying to restore now. He knows the memo contains strong medicine, but he does not know whether its ideas about how to resolve the university's fiscal problems would be popular or work today. President Huang observed that Dr. Bierman at the time predicted some issues, and the administration is trying to look back for some potential resolutions; he thinks that if WIU had acted on some of these items ten years ago, some things might have been different. President Huang said he has been calling for a financial sustainability plan since his arrival at WIU, and that will be the guide, not Dr. Bierman's memo. Chair Thompson observed that the large reserve that WIU formerly held, and which was cut by former Governor Rauner, was built while Dr. Bierman was vice president. President Huang remarked that a reserve fund for a university is similar to a savings account for a family; without a reserve, the family may not be able to buy its groceries. He added that the University of Illinois has billions of dollars in reserve but still receives billions from the state every year. Chair Thompson stressed that he does support building a university reserve, but not an overlarge one. Ms. Hamm asked if there are any faculty serving on the financial sustainability committee. President Huang responded that he does not have that information and advised asking Interim Vice President for Finance and Administration Shannon Sutton.

2) Chair Thompson said he has spoken to the President and Provost about a crisis situation with the elevators in Malpass Library: both the public and the staff elevators break down frequently. He believes this is a Faculty Senate issue because the library is a shared resource for students, faculty, and the wider community. Chair Thompson noted that the elderly and visitors often access the sixth floor archives, and if someone gets sick up there without elevator access it could be a serious issue. He said the administration has appealed for emergency funds but has not yet gotten them, and Chair Thompson thinks thought needs to be given to what to do about the situation. Senator Brice recommended that the Executive Committee send the issue to the Senate Council on Campus Planning and Usage (CCPU). The Director of Facilities Management also attends CCPU meetings, and the CCPU Chair can raise the issue to him and bring a status update back to ExCo.

3) Vice President for Enrollment Management Amber Schultz and Admissions Director Doug Freed brought to ExCo a proposal for a change to the freshmen admissions policy. The proposed change would affect students being admitted for Fall 2023. Vice President Schultz explained that during the pandemic the state of Illinois required state institutions to change to test-optional admissions, as most other universities were doing, but Admissions thinks this change is affecting WIU's retention numbers. Enrollment Management and Admissions believe a minor modification to the criteria would lead to more successful first-year students. She explained that prior to changing to a test-optional system, all students below a 3.0 GPA were conditionally admitted; that GPA threshold decreased with the change to test-optional. Currently students with a 2.75 to 2.99 GPA are admitted as regular admits, but Vice President Schultz stated that the lack of wrap-around services for this group is leading to them retaining at less strong rates than those who are conditionally admitted with a 2.74 or less and get extra support services through the REACH program. The proposal would see students with a 2.75 to 2.99 GPA offered REACH admission.

Additionally, Vice President Schultz explained that letters of recommendation are one of the methods used to determine admission, but this is not always very predictive of college success. In order to determine if students understand the process of becoming a successful college student, Enrollment Management and Admissions would like to change to evaluating five essay questions to assess such factors as motivation, determination, desire for success in higher education, and ability to advocate for themselves and address adversity. Vice President Schultz stated that students who respond to the essay questions demonstrate responsibility and express motivation for how well they will do in college, which cannot be shown as well through letters of recommendation. She said these non-cognitive variables would be implemented for those student applicants with a GPA of 2.74 or below.

Vice President Schultz told ExCo that the first-time full-time retention rate will likely show a decrease from last fall based on algorithms from Institutional Research and Planning. She related that these algorithms have historically been very accurate at predicting retention rates; in 2020, the algorithm predicted a 72 percent retention rate, and it came in at 71.9, and for Fall 2021 the algorithm predicted a retention rate of 66 percent. The current retention rate is 66.7 percent, which is only a slight improvement from that number, so Vice President Schultz thinks the university needs to look at "low-hanging fruit" to see what changes to certain populations could positively impact the retention rate. She projects that with Covid learning loss and other characteristics,

the retention rate this fall will be worse than Fall 2021, and the changes being proposed could positively impact students admitted for Fall 2023.

Chair Thompson asked if the proposed changes would cost the university, such as through hiring more advisors. Vice President Schultz responded her office is looking at modifying the advising load. She has spoken to Provost Zoghi and said the two are aligned in seeing this as an opportunity to improve the student advising experience, but she is hopeful the student experience can be improved without dramatically having to increase the number of advisors. She admitted that advisors may be shifted in their duties; for instance, additional authority was granted to the Athletics advisor, and the new HOPE-Chicago advisor, Tammy Leigh Brown-Edwards, was originally going to be hired as a coordinator but was instead made an advisor, which should take some of the load off the first-year experience team. She added that there are plans to meet with REACH students two more times than advisors meet with them currently.

Provost Zoghi remarked that these plans support his vision of a student lifestyle flow model by creating a holistic approach and a collaborative, systemic way to address student success. He believes that removing certain barriers to student success, such as financial instability and mental health and wellness issues, can give students a better sense of belonging to WIU. He thinks these changes can perhaps be addressed without additional costs to the university by simply aligning resources appropriately. Chair Thompson expressed his support for students receiving a quality advising experience so that the number of advisors allows for sufficient time to spend with their students.

Senator Albarracin asked who will assess the essays and whether there will be some kind of rubric. Vice President Schultz responded that St. Cloud State and Northern Illinois University have already gone through this process, so there is a rubric that the Enrollment Management team are currently being trained to use. She thinks there needs to be three reviewers for each response, but WIU has a large team of reviewers, and if they follow the rubric the process will be consistent.

Chair Thompson asked how SLATE is working for Enrollment Management's efforts. Vice President Schultz responded her team is in the process of working through an intensive online learning lab with a deadline for completion by September 30. She is excited about the quality of the tool and has heard rave reviews from Administrative Information Management Services (AIMS) personnel about it. She said there is a huge difference between the SLATE product and the one from Unified, the company the university was previous contracted with.

Chair Thompson asked if Vice President Schultz is seeing a difference between this freshmen class and previous ones, such as in such factors as gender breakdown. Vice President Schultz responded that WIU has increased its diversity in African American and Latinx students compared to last year, and there is a little more geographic diversity. She stated that new freshmen are coming from 24 states and nine countries, although there are still very many coming in from Illinois. Admissions Director Freed added that new freshmen are skewed slightly more female than male in comparison to the last several years. Vice President Schultz said she looks at GPA, distance from Macomb, and whether students are from historically underrepresented groups because these factors might indicate the need for a greater level of support for successful retention, and this year's incoming freshmen appear to be slightly more at risk than the previous class.

Provost Zoghi expressed his appreciation to the Enrollment Management team for their efforts. The proposed change to admissions will be sent to CAGAS for consideration and to bring a recommendation back to Faculty Senate.

4) CAGAS has approved a request from the School of Education to allow the Elementary Education: Early Childhood option "to adopt the Advanced Placement credit 'swap' process utilized by the Nursing program to provide credit for previous work/life experience." Chair Thompson observed that he did not see any evidence in the proposal that faculty in the School of Education approved these changes. He has emailed College of Education and Human Services Interim Dean Katrina Daytner and CAGAS Chair Julie Cox to provide data for this. He wonders if this might lead to more programs wanting to adopt this system. He also wonders how this system works with tuition. Ms. Hamm suggested Bachelor of General Studies Director Jeff Hancks might be able to answer that question since the BGS program has used a prior learning portfolio process for years. **[Note:** Following the Executive Committee meeting, Chair Thompson received a response from Eric Sheffield, Associate Dean for the College of Education and Human Services and Sebastian Szyjka, Interim Director of the

School of Education, confirming that Education faculty will not be discussing and voting on the proposal until September 16. Since this is after the next Faculty Senate meeting of September 13, the Executive Committee decided to postpone putting this item on the agenda until the September 27 Faculty Senate meeting, following the Education faculty meeting.]

5) One petition each was received for the recent elections for Faculty Senate and the University Personnel Committee. Katherine Perone, Department of Health Sciences and Social Work, will fill a two-year vacancy on Faculty Senate beginning immediately and continuing until Fall 2024. Dave Hunter, School of Engineering and Technology, and Jongnam Choi, Department of Earth, Atmospheric, and Geographic Information Sciences, will fill three-year vacancies on the University Personnel Committee for their colleges.

6) The Executive Committee discussed possible charges for some Faculty Senate councils:

- Chair Thompson would like to see the Council on General Education (CGE) report on the yearly amount of student credit hour (SCH) production by Gen Ed classes since Fall 2015 and the percentage of Gen Ed courses in tutored study this fall. He thinks that looking at this as a percentage of the whole might indicate how early college credit is having an effect on Gen Ed SCH production. Senator Brice asked if CGE would be capable of separating out a decline in Gen Ed SCH due to taking early college credit classes as opposed to a decline in student enrollment. He noted that the university will not have good statistics for 2020-2021 due to the unusual Covid years. Vice President Schultz remarked that students' course credit taking behavior pre-pandemic was higher, so this issue is not cut and dried. Chair Thompson asked how this data can be captured. Senator Brice thinks accurate data is not yet available and this might be better to look at down the road. Chair Thompson remarked that early college credit has been going on at WIU since 2010, although he recognizes that Covid makes recent comparisons more challenging. Vice President Schultz remarked that WIU's current MVS system makes it difficult to run the reports that might generate accurate data to respond to this question. Chair Thompson thinks the data would show less SCH in General Education and more brought in through early college credit; Vice President Schultz responded that depends on if everything else stays the same, but for the last three years the freshmen class was decreasing and now the numbers are moving back up. She offered to speak to the data analyst who works with Enrollment Management to see if he knows how to mine this data. The Executive Committee will ask CGE to work with Enrollment Management to determine how to solve this problem and bring the information back to the Executive Committee.
- Chair Thompson suggested that the Council for International Education and/or the Budget Transparency Committee provide Faculty Senate with a short report on the discount rate for international students and show how this will work fiscally. He thinks it would be useful for faculty to understand the finances involved with the discount rate, especially with international students but also with graduate students. He thinks a lot of people do not understand that while enrollment numbers are increasing, the intake of dollars is not increasing in the way one might expect. Vice President Schultz believes it is important to compare ourselves with our peer institutions, and what is publicly available from them is limited to information about the first time, fulltime freshmen cohort. She thinks it is important to compare across the board, which is not something WIU has dealt with systematically in the past. She said her office is trying to develop a better understanding of where WIU sits in comparison to its peers when the discount rate is broken down further, and she does not yet have that model ready for comparison because it is in the process of being built. Chair Thompson does not think faculty understand the discount rate; Vice President Schultz offered to give interested senators a session about it.

Senator Brice expressed doubts that this could easily be managed by a Senate committee and does not think it is a Faculty Senate issue. Chair Thompson thinks the Budget Transparency Committee could report on this; although they may not be able to give a comprehensive review, they could talk about discounts, positive and negative aspects, and what they mean. Vice President Schultz remarked that the university has net tuition/discount rates across the board, so this topic is broader than just one population, such as international students. She has data, for instance, on where WIU sits historically in relation to its first time, fulltime freshmen cohort and where that compares with our peers; WIU uses institutional dollars to offer scholarships such as the Western Commitment. She added that, anecdotally, other state institutions do not offer discounts for international students while WIU does, although WIU's international student tuition is still 1.5 times the domestic rate. Chair Thompson noted that tuition is WIU's largest sources of revenue, so he thinks faculty should know about how money flows through

because people need an idea about how things work. He said he would be content, however, with the Budget Transparency Committee just describing the situation and doing a short report on discount rates for students in general.

- Chair Thompson suggested that ExCo charge the Council for Instructional Technology (CIT) to report on how much money was generated by the adoption of a paper usage fee for students. He would like to know how much money the university is saving by doing this and how it is being spent – new computers for labs, bandwidth, other kinds of infrastructure, etc. Senator Brice thinks it is also important to know how much students are spending on printing since this change. Chair Thompson observed that students seem to fairly quickly run out of their 250 page limit (500 pages front and back) and are surprised that they are only allowed this much for the whole year and not by semester. Senator Albarracin thinks asking for a brief report on this could be awareness raising for faculty who might ask their students to print things out less.
- Chair Thompson suggested that ExCo ask the Council on Intercollegiate Athletics (CIA) to report on how the transfer portal is changing WIU Athletics, how it works, and what it does. Ms. Hamm pointed out that Athletics Director Paul Bubb will be speaking to Faculty Senate on this and the Athletics budget on October 11 and suggested perhaps CIA can be present and contribute to that discussion as well.

7) Senator Brice told Chair Thompson he has heard concerns from faculty about communications he sends out as Secretary of University Professionals of Illinois (UPI) and as Chair of Faculty Senate. He pointed out that the two groups have different constituents/audiences and must function differently: not all faculty represented by Faculty Senate are members of the faculty union, and UPI has some members who are not faculty. He advised Chair Thompson to be cognizant of his audience and more intentional when sending out email communications. After additional discussion, it was suggested that one way to minimize any confusion regarding emails to the two groups would be if Ms. Hamm sent out most of the communications to the Faculty Senate listproc, of which there are usually not many each semester. Following the meeting, Chair Thompson asked that a statement be added to the minutes indicating that he has not, to his knowledge, sent any union-related emails to the Faculty Senate listproc, nor were any examples of such emails provided to him, but, that being said, he appreciates the vice chair's concerns.

8) The Executive Committee finalized the remainder of the Senate agenda for September 13, and the meeting adjourned at 4:43 p.m.

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