**SENATE AGENDA ITEM III.C.1.**

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**APPROVED BY FACULTY SENATE**

**14 April 2015**

**President’s Performance Survey Report ~ 2014-2015 Academic Year**

**March 26, 2015**

Faculty Senate Committee on Provost and Presidential Performance (CPPP)
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(Thanks to Roger Runquist and David Towers for creating and distributing the survey)

**Executive Summary**

A survey was conducted of the WIU Macomb and Quad Cities faculty asking them to evaluate President Thomas’ performance in 2014-2015. A total of 169 faculty members opened the survey instrument and 152 actually submitted the survey, out of a population of 609 as of December, 2014. They evaluated the President’s overall performance on a five-point Likert scale at a mean value of 3.10, with a standard deviation of 1.41. The respondents also provided evaluations of the President’s performance in the areas of Total Campus Enterprise, Academic Goals, and Personnel, Faculty Relations and Campus Issues. A summary of those responses follows. Finally, the respondents were given opportunities to comment on the President’s performance, and the comments provided are summarized at the end of this report. Both the qualitative and quantitative responses to the survey are similar to previous years, indicating a cautious approval of the President’s performance in the light of the significant budgetary and demographic constraints facing the University at present.

**Overview and Methodology**

At the request of the Board of Trustees’ standing Presidential Evaluation and Assessment Committee, the Faculty Senate conducts an annual survey of the faculty regarding their views on the President’s performance. In the spring of 2013, surveys were administered for the 2011-2012 year, addressing the first year in office for both President Thomas and Provost Hawkinson. After those reports were submitted, the Board of Trustees requested that the Faculty Evaluation conducted by the CPPP focus on the current year’s performance. Therefore, the surveys administered in the past two years were changed so as to address the President’s performance in the current academic year. The data in Table 2 include the previous evaluations for comparative purposes. Two minor changes were made to the survey used last year. Firstly, the numerical ranking of the President’s goals were reversed (changed from 1=most important to 1 = least important) so that high numbers were consistently associated with “important” or “agree” throughout the survey. Secondly, the wording for the rankings of the President were changed from 1=*Not Effective* and 5 = *Highly Effective* to 1=*Strongly Disagree* and 5 = *Strongly Agree*. This change was made so that the questions would be grammatically correct.

The survey was conducted on-line by e-mailing each eligible faculty member (609 faculty were invited to participate) a web link to complete the survey. Eligible faculty members had three weeks to respond (opened January 27th, 2015 and closed February 17th, 2015, 5:00 p.m.) and were given three separate reminders in addition to the initial invitation to complete the survey. **Only 169 faculty or 27.8 % of the total faculty opened the survey (in contrast to 35.3% last year), and 152, or 25.0%, of the total faculty submitted their survey. The CPPP believes that the response rate for the survey needs to be enhanced to provide a more robust and reliable data set.**

For the survey questions, a 5-point Likert scale was used (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree), with the additional option of No Response. The survey instrument asked questions divided into three focus areas: Total Campus Enterprise, Academic Goals, and Personnel, Faculty Relations and Campus Issues. The responses of No Response were not included in the statistical analysis provided below. Open comment sections were provided at the end of each focus area. Items requesting demographic information were also included in the survey. The quantitative results of the survey can be seen in Table 2: President’s Survey Quantitative Data.

**Demographic Overview**

Of the 152 survey participants 51% identified their gender as male, 41% identified their gender as female, and 7% did not provide gender data. Faculty respondents were spread out over the first two experience levels (18% at 1-5 years, 25% at 6-10 years). The majority of respondents (36%) were in the 11-20 years of experience level. Only 15% of the respondents had more than 20 years of experience and 6% did not provide their years of service. **Of those who indicated their college affiliation, 44% belonged to the College of Arts and Sciences or the Library, 25% were affiliated with the College of Education and Human Services, 16% were from the College of Fine Arts and Communications, and 15% identified with the College of Business and Technology.** Out of all those taking the survey, 26% indicated that they had interactions with the President at least 1 to 3 times in a semester, while 47% indicated they interacted with the President no more than 1-3 times in a year, and 10% said they had no interactions with the President in this year. Finally, 86% of the respondents indicated they were from the Macomb campus, while 8% indicated they were from the Quad Cities. It is noted that ten (10) survey respondents chose not to indicate their campus affiliation.

### Overall Effectiveness

The faculty reported (Figure 1) an overall mean rating of effectiveness for the President of 3.10, as compared to 3.22 from last year’s survey.



Figure 1. Distribution of responses to the survey prompt: "Overall, the President is highly effective at performing his duties (1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree)." The mean of the responses was 3.10.

When asked at the end of the section on Total Campus Enterprise if “overall, the President fosters the mission of the university,” the mean rating was 3.23 (compared to 3.37 from last year’s survey).

The respondents were first asked to rank the President’s goals for the current year in order of importance to them. The following table (Table 1) lists each goal, and how these goals were ranked in importance by the respondents, from least important (1) to most important (9). The greatest number of respondents indicated that the goal of enhancing the quality of Academic Programs was the most important (same as in 2013-2014), while the goal of Enrollment Management was second in terms of goals chosen as most important by the faculty. The goal of Campus-wide Committees was most often chosen as the least important goal by a wide margin (same as in 2013-2014). These relationships are more clearly depicted in Figure 2, which shows the weighted averages of the ranking of the importance of the President’s goals.

|  |
| --- |
| Presidential Goals for 2014-2015 |
|   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | Total |
| Academic Programs | 15 | 0 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 8 | 8 | 11 | 83 | 139 |
| Facilities | 0 | 15 | 9 | 10 | 8 | 18 | 30 | 38 | 7 | 135 |
| Enrollment Management | 3 | 8 | 10 | 8 | 9 | 14 | 32 | 30 | 22 | 136 |
| Alumni Relations and Development | 11 | 16 | 19 | 27 | 17 | 21 | 10 | 6 | 3 | 130 |
| Governmental Relations | 6 | 9 | 9 | 22 | 32 | 26 | 15 | 8 | 6 | 133 |
| Committees | 76 | 16 | 13 | 7 | 9 | 1 | 7 | 3 | 12 | 144 |
| Professional Development | 3 | 30 | 24 | 12 | 11 | 12 | 18 | 25 | 6 | 141 |
| Outreach and Communication | 12 | 14 | 15 | 35 | 19 | 18 | 8 | 12 | 2 | 135 |
| Campus Collaboration | 2 | 24 | 32 | 13 | 25 | 17 | 12 | 9 | 3 | 137 |

Table 1. The President's goals for 2014-2015, and how they were ranked in importance by the faculty respondents (1 = least important, 5 = most important).

Figure 2. Bar graph showing the weighted average of the rankings of the President’s 2014-2015 goals (from 1 = least effective to 5 = most effective).

The ranking of the President’s performance was also correlated with the other demographic data collected. The only statistically significant difference (*F*(3,131)=5.47, *p*=.001) between groups was found in the ranking of long-term strategic planning. The mean ratings of the 0-5 and 20+ years of service groups were significantly greater than the 11-20 years group.

**Total Campus Enterprise**

*Support for Scholarship, Teaching and Students*

When asked if the President “effectively promotes an environment for excellence in scholarship,” the mean response from the faculty was a response of 3.09. When asked if the President effectively promotes an environment for excellence in teaching, the respondents rated his performance at 3.23. The President’s performance was rated at 3.26 for “effectively promoting an environment for excellence in student learning.”

*Campus Mission*

There were a number of questions in the survey related to the President’s effectiveness in carrying out the University’s mission, or in his support of others in accomplishing their mission. With regards to short range planning, the President’s policies were rated at 3.22, while his policies related to long range planning were rated at 3.02. The higher rating for short-range planning is reflected in the comments of the respondents, where many people acknowledged the President’s ability to maintain budgets and initiatives in the face of the increasingly difficult financial position of the State.

With regards to the President’s effectiveness in promoting the University's mission to the local community, the western Illinois region, and beyond the region, his actions were rated at 3.16, 3.14 and 3.19, respectively. The ratings indicate that the faculty respondents consider President Thomas to be doing a somewhat better job in promoting the University and its mission regionally than he has been able to outside our region.

With regards to the President’s effectiveness in fostering relationships among the relevant constituencies on campus, the ratings for his effectiveness with government agencies was 3.24, with potential donors was 3.32, with alumni was 3.31, with the local community was 3.17, with the Board of Trustees was 3.78 and with the UPI was 2.95. His lowest ratings were for relationships with the UPI and government agencies. The highest ratings were for his relationship with the Board of Trustees and with potential donors.

The next questions concerned how effectively the President has managed and provided resources to the departments, colleges and overall university. The faculty respondents rated his performance in supporting their department and or academic unit at 2.76. They rated his performance in managing University resources at 3.06, and his effectiveness in securing funding at 2.83.

*Overall Rating*

Respondents rated the overall effectiveness of the President in fostering the mission of the University at 3.23.

**Academic Goals**

*Working with the Provost and Vice President for Student Services*

The faculty were asked to rate the President’s effectiveness in working with the Provost and the Deans to allocate resources to the departments. The respondents rated his work with the Provost at 3.32, but somewhat lower with the Deans at 3.01.

The faculty were asked to rate the President’s effectiveness in working with the Provost to meet the future needs of the faculty, students and staff. The respondents rated his effectiveness in doing so at 2.75 for the faculty needs, 3.10 for meeting the student needs, and 2.97 for meeting staff needs. Again, a consistent message from the faculty comments was the need to provide more opportunities for faculty travel and better support for teaching, classrooms, and technology.

The faculty rated the President’s effectiveness in working with Student Services to foster policies for student leadership and co-curricular participation. The respondents rated the President’s effectiveness in fostering student leadership at 3.46, and for co-curricular participation at 3.35.

*Academic programs in the Quad Cities and Macomb*

Those taking the survey were asked about the President’s support of the academic programs at the Quad Cities campus. The number of respondents to these questions, from 75 to 80, was significantly lower, indicating that most faculty having no experience with the Quad Cities refrained from responding. The respondents rated the President’s leadership in planning for the QC academic programs to be 3.24, in developing the QC academic programs to be 3.23, in implementing the QC academic programs to be 3.12, and in assessing the QC academic programs to be 3.08.

A parallel question regarding the President’s support of the academic programs at the Macomb campus had from 126 to 131 respondents. The respondents rated his leadership in planning for the Macomb academic programs to be 3.05, in developing the Macomb academic programs to be 2.99, in implementing the Macomb academic programs to be 2.99, and in assessing the Macomb academic programs to be 2.91. This year these numbers are lower than for those evaluating the Quad Cities programs whereas the scores for Macomb programs were higher than those for the Quad Cities on the survey administered last year.

*Overall Academic Standards*

The faculty were asked to rate the President’s effectiveness in fostering high academic standards for students at WIU. Respondents rated the President’s performance at 3.09.

*Support for research*

When asked to respond to the statement, “The President allocates resources so that your department or academic unit’s faculty can accomplish their research mission,” the respondents rated the President’s performance at 2.43. This is the President’s lowest rating. The comments indicate wide spread dissatisfaction with the support they receive for carrying out their research agenda.

**Personnel, Faculty Relations, and Campus Issues**

A series of two questions were asked regarding faculty, staff and student activities. The first question was whether the President’s management practices promote excellence. The respondents rated the President with regard to faculty at 2.83, with regard to staff at 2.83, and with regard to students at 3.08. The second question was whether the President’s management practices promote diversity. The respondents rate the Present with regard to faculty at 3.79, with regard to staff at 3.59, and with regard to students at 3.66. The President’s highest ratings of effectiveness are for his work in promoting diversity.

The faculty members being surveyed were then asked to evaluate whether the President is “responsive to your concerns”. The President’s responsiveness was rated at 2.89.

*Macomb Campus*

The survey asked the respondents to evaluate whether the President promotes the Macomb campus work environment to be healthy, safe, and pleasant. The respondents rated his effectiveness in promoting these characteristics at the Macomb campus to be 3.32, 3.33 and 3.23, respectively. The number of respondents averaged 141.

*Quad Cities Campus*

The same questions were asked regarding the Quad Cities campus, for which an average of 57 people responded. The respondents rated his effectiveness in promoting a healthy, safe, and pleasant environment to be 3.76, 3.76 and 3.77.

*Faculty governance*

The respondents were asked to evaluate whether the President supports faculty governance at all levels. The respondents’ rating was 3.15.

*Administrative appointments*

The respondents were asked to evaluate whether the President makes effective administrative appointments. They rated his effectiveness of making appointments at 2.64. Some commenters disapproved of the increase in the number of administrators being hired at the University.

*Physical facilities*

In response to the statement, “The President directs the university’s physical facilities so that they meet the needs of your department or academic unit,” the respondents rated the President’s performance at 2.88.

**Table 2: President’s Survey Quantitative Data**:

For each of the following series of questions the respondents were asked to rate how effective President Thomas is in performing various aspects of his responsibilities. The scale ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). If the respondent felt he or she couldn’t or shouldn’t answer, he or she could answer “No Response.”

***NB: “No Response” numbers were not used in calculating the mean or standard deviation. The labeling of the years in the columns refers to the academic year being evaluated, not the academic year during which the survey was constructed.***

| Q # | Question Text | Mean (Average) Score | Standard Deviation\* | N # of respondents per question\*\* |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2014-15 | 2013-14 | 2011-12 | 2014-15 | 2013-14 | 2011-12 | 2014-15 | 2013-2014 | 2011-12 |
| A1-3. | The President effectively promotes an environment for excellence in:i. Scholarshipii. Teachingiii. Student learning | 3.093.233.26 | 3.193.323.40 | 3.243.373.39 | 1.441.341.29 | 1.271.251.22 | 1.221.241.17 | 147145142 | 192194186 | 176182176 |
| A4-5. | The President effectively promotes policies that support the mission of the university relative to:i. Short term strategic planningii. Long term strategic planning | 3.223.02a | 3.453.18 | 3.623.44 | 1.311.43 | 1.231.33 | 1.101.19 | 143142 | 182181 | 164160 |
| A6-8. | The President effectively promotes the University’s academic mission to:i. The local communityii. The western Illinois regioniii. Beyond the region | 3.163.143.19 | 3.423.443.13 | 3.513.513.29 | 1.481.441.43 | 1.341.301.36 | 1.221.261.28 | 141136128 | 170168157 | 166160136 |
| A9-14. | The President fosters effective relationships with:i. Government agenciesii. Potential donorsiii. Alumniiv. Local Communityv. Board of Trusteesvi. UPI (University Professionals of Illinois) | 3.243.323.313.173.782.95 | 3.353.503.563.353.893.19 | 3.363.583.723.453.923.15 | 1.411.331.321.451.231.38 | 1.301.281.191.291.181.28 | 1.181.141.121.171.041.27 | 119111121131112132 | 126133148159140169 | 102110123146105131 |
| A15. | The President effectively promotes policies that foster the activities of your department or academic unit. | 2.76 | 2.97 | 3.06 | 1.46 | 1.35 | 1.28 | 147 | 190 | 181 |
| A16. | The President manages the University’s resources well. | 3.06 | 3.24 | 3.56 | 1.47 | 1.33 | 1.20 | 147 | 192 | 177 |
| A17. | The President effectively secures funding to support university initiatives. | 2.83 | 3.06 | 3.18 | 1.43 | 1.29 | 1.17 | 138 | 171 | 149 |
| A18. | Overall, the President fosters the mission of Western Illinois University. | 3.23 | 3.37 | 3.51 | 1.39 | 1.27 | 1.19 | 147 | 191 | 189 |
| B1-2. | The President works effectively with \_\_\_\_ to allocate resources for your department or academic unit to achieve WIU’s missioni. Provostii. Deans | 3.323.01 | 3.353.19 | 3.473.29 | 1.411.43 | 1.371.41 | 1.281.26 | 126129 | 165162 | 137135 |
| B3-5. | The President works effectively with the Provost anticipating future needs (i.e., technology, infrastructure, or student services) of:i. facultyii. studentsiii. staff | 2.753.102.97 | 2.923.083.04 | 3.013.273.07 | 1.531.431.49 | 1.361.261.29 | 1.301.211.27 | 137125115 | 177158134 | 159131109 |
| B6-7. | The President works effectively with Student Services to foster policies for:i. student leadershipii. co-curricular participation | 3.463.35 | 3.673.44 | 3.673.52 | 1.381.41 | 1.221.32 | 1.131.10 | 10398 | 117113 | 8989 |
| B8-11. | Regarding the Quad Cities academic programs, the President provides leadership in:i. planningii. developingiii. implementingiv. assessing  | 3.243.233.123.08 | 3.403.323.273.18 | 3.653.653.513.32 | 1.491.491.541.50 | 1.331.391.421.43 | 1.241.251.211.19 | 80807875 | 81818271 | 77757363 |
| B12-15. | Regarding the Macomb academic programs, the President provides leadership in:i. planningii. developingiii. implementingiv. assessing  | 3.052.992.992.91 | 3.593.513.503.63 |  | 1.441.461.461.47 | 1.511.531.521.66 |  | 130131128126 | 194192194194 |  |
| B16. | The President fosters high academic standards for students at Western Illinois University | 3.09 | 3.29 | 3.20 | 1.44 | 1.29 | 1.32 | 149 | 188 | 182 |
| B17. | The President allocates resources so that your department or academic unit’s faculty can accomplish their research mission. | 2.43 | 2.63 | 2.86 | 1.44 | 1.31 | 1.27 | 149 | 189 | 174 |
| C1-2. | Regarding faculty, the President’s management practices promotei. Excellenceii. Diversity | 2.833.79 | 3.043.79 | 3.113.95 | 1.451.20 | 1.391.24 | 1.371.07 | 147145 | 185174 | 178174 |
| C3-4. | Regarding staff, the President’s management practices promote:i. Excellenceii. Diversity | 2.833.59 | 3.083.70 | 3.183.83 | 1.491.31 | 1.381.19 | 1.331.11 | 115117 | 122125 | 130122 |
| C5-6. | Regarding student activities, the President’s management practices promote:i. Excellenceii. Diversity | 3.083.66 | 3.373.91 | 3.273.90 | 1.441.31 | 1.301.16 | 1.351.06 | 121123 | 132133 | 128122 |
| C7. | The President is responsive to your concerns. | 2.89 | 3.01 | 3.25 | 1.55 | 1.48 | 1.42 | 118 | 158 | 138 |
| C8-10.  | The President effectively promotes the Macomb campus work environment to bei. healthyii. safeiii. pleasant | 3.323.333.23 | 3.413.353.25 | 3.473.393.41 | 1.421.361.45 | 1.361.381.43 | 1.271.291.29 | 140142142 | 173177175 | 168166167 |
| C11-13. | The President effectively promotes the Quad Cities campus work environment to bei. healthyii. safeiii. pleasant | 3.763.763.77 | 3.673.613.67 | 3.803.803.88 | 1.411.331.41 | 1.521.501.53 | 1.121.191.12 | 585557 | 525151 | 494948 |
| C14. | The President supports faculty governance at all levels. | 3.15 | 3.35 | 3.38 | 1.35 | 1.37 | 1.33 | 142 | 175 | 159 |
| C15. | The President makes effective administrative appointments. | 2.64 | 2.91 | 2.93 | 1.46 | 1.46 | 1.36 | 137 | 169 | 162 |
| C16. | The President directs the university’s physical facilities so that they meet the needs of your department or academic unit | 2.88 | 3.03 | 3.03 | 1.37 | 1.34 | 1.27 | 145 | 168 | 171 |
|  | **Overall, I rate the President as** |  | **3.22** | **3.35** |  | **1.32** | **1.26** |  | **185** | **187** |
|  | **Overall, the President is highly effective at performing his duties** | **3.10** |  |  | **1.41** |  |  | **147** |  |  |

a There was a statistically significant difference between groups defined by years of service (*F*(3,131)=5.47, *p*=.001), with mean ratings by the 11-20 years group (*M*=2.62, *SD*=1.32) less than the 0-5 years (*M*=3.50, *SD*=1.27) and 20+ years (*M*=3.90, *SD*=1.26) groups. The 6-10 years group (*M*=2.97, *SD*=1.54) did not significantly differ from any other group.

\* Standard deviation is a measure of dispersion. In other words, it measures the degree to which responses are spread out around the mean. The larger the standard deviation, the more the scores differ from the mean. Alternatively, if the standard deviation is small, this indicates that the scores were very close to one another.

\*\* 169 faculty members began the survey. 152 submitted their survey by clicking the submit button. Not everyone filled out a response to every question. Thus, the total number of respondents does not add up to 152. The statistical means were calculated using the number of respondents who responded 1 through 5 on the Likert scale provided. This number is indicated in the third column of numbers in Table A.

**Qualitative Analysis of Open Ended Comments:**

At the end of each of the three sections in the survey, the respondents were asked to add any additional comments they might have regarding the President’s performance in those areas. In addition, the respondents were asked to provide any additional comments about the President’s overall performance. The comments have been separated by the section of the survey in which they were submitted, however many comments addressed other topics or were of a general nature.

Total Campus Enterprise

Many of the comments followed the same theme as in last year’s survey. Many comments addressed the President’s leadership. Comments ranged from “I see no effective vision for how to grow the Macomb campus.” “He is not an effective leader. He simply keep changing things around hoping that something works when all it does is cause upheaval and low morale.” “The President means well. He is sincere. Yet, I do not believe in him. Put another way: I know he is the President, but I do not believe he is the president. I see him acting Presidential, but I do not believe he is actually presidential.” to “He is highly skilled and effective, but underappreciated.” “President Thomas is a dynamic leader who encourages a culture of openness and promotes academic excellence. He has ensured effective relationships with various constituents. He has a demonstrated commitment to academic quality and shared governance and continues to lead the university in a clear and positive direction.” ”When I hear the President speak he always makes positive comments about students which I find helps create a more positive environment on campus. I believe he truly cares about student learning and well-being.” However, negative comments outnumbered positive comments.

Another area where commenters felt that right priorities were not being maintained is the area of support for faculty and academic programs. For example, “The freeze on hiring tenure track faculty (due to retirements or resignations) is a tremendous, totally unnecessary mistake. Cutbacks should be made elsewhere. This constant administrative practice is faulty in all respects and is seriously hurting WIU across the board. The Budget issue is a flimsy excuse and needs rethinking for the good of WIU as a whole. This statement is far from naive and submitted upon very consideration of the inter-related issues and concerns.. All this could be done a better way. WIU does not need to take this narrow path on a tenure track, hiring freeze. Please stop doing this now.” “The president does not always see the value of specialized faculty. We have lost a number of recognized talented scholars this year to other Universities because of budget cuts that make faculty work harder to try to keep programs going while other Universities have offered them more money and better working conditions. When we lose this faculty we also lose students who would have attended WIU to work with them.”

Two commenters felt that the Quad Cities campus was lacking proper attention. “While Macomb is addressed much work still needs to be done to fully support the QC presence.” “The President hardly seems to know the QC campus exists, e.g. his season greeting totally focuses on Macomb.”

There were several negative comments about the use of monies on campus aesthetics rather than academic improvements or routine maintenance. “Rather than worrying about the aesthetics of the campus, the president should focus more efforts on the crumbling infrastructure around all of us, i.e. buildings that continually leak, moldy ceiling tiles, etc. It is neither a healthy work environment nor a very appealing one.” “I regularly teach in a class in Simpkins that has a hole in the ceiling and bits of debris fall down on top of my students but nothing is done about it.” “Stop "beautifying the campus" and make WIU a truly excellent UNIVERSITY.” “The President and Provost have diverted funds from Library and other programs support to other initiatives. The Libraries have not been able to purchase new books as needed…”

A number of comments expressed sympathy for the budgetary constraints faced by the University, while questioning the manner in which the President communicates and works with the faculty on these issues. “Dr. Thomas finds himself in a very difficult position given our continuing financial problems and declining enrollment. There is a lot of fear and uncertainty permeating this institution, and unfortunately our university leadership team does not seem to have any viable plan to reverse our fortunes. We will not "grow out" of this crisis by increasing enrollment, nor will we be receiving any additional funding from the state. We know significant cuts are coming, and there are contractually-mandated pay raises on the horizon -- yet our leadership has said nothing about how these challenges are supposed to be met. Instead, we are told "don't worry -- be happy!" and that no decisions will be made until the state's budget report is released. We have been far too reactive as an institution, and need to be more proactive in developing contingency plans that are discussed, developed and shared with the stakeholders in this university. Yes, some of those plans may be scary -- but uncertainty creates fear as well.”

Some comments praised the President for his leadership in managing the University in spite of difficult economic conditions. “President Thomas is in favor of all of the above. However, the State Government in Springfield has not been helpful at all.” “We are living under impossible economic constraints. I think that President Thomas is as good as anyone, given the lack of money from the state.”

Academic Goals

Again, a large number of comments were directed toward the issue of support for faculty research and travel. “President Thomas does the best that he can with limited resources. Unfortunately, we have grown tired of being told "no" to requests for increasing travel funds, hiring lines, and additional resources for years now, with no hope of positive change in sight.” “Travel funding, support for scholarship has continually been cut…” “Travel monies and budgets have been cut and travel for tenure track faculty is nearly impossible. The workload in our department of 4/3 makes it difficult to research, too.” ”This department has absolutely no resources allocated for research yet faculty are held accountable for research and publication. I feel the president allows the provost to provide funds through budgeting regardless of need or usage.” “The President uses a "one size fits all" allocation of resources. For example, he cuts 2% from all the colleges’ budgets rather than analyzing the needs and growth potential of programs.”

Several commenters addressed the quality of our students. “It seems that although the university may be getting a number of high scoring students, overall it seems like pressure to make existing students happy and retain them is increasing. This translates to lowered academic standards and grade inflation.” “We are admitting some students to WIU that do not have the academic background to succeed in college. Therefore, many are dropping out. This problem needs to be addressed.” “He means well. But he has no idea what it is like to teach at WIU. He has never dealt with a classroom of under prepared students at WIU. He has never had to teach to students who do not have textbooks for the first two or three weeks at WIU…”

Personnel, Faculty relations and Campus Issues

Once again, a major concern is the physical state of the Macomb campus and the technology resources. “There are issues with facilities for educating students in. We are dealing with old classrooms that are limited in space and have archaic technology - computer resources. Many times computers are jury rigged to work and there isn't even enough connectivity within the buildings they are housed. It is nice to look good out in the community, but need some attention to the actual workings of the university.” “The computers in the classrooms that I teach in REGULARLY crash so that's my comment on physical facilities…” “The facilities at this campus are a joke. High schools have better classrooms and offices than does WIU…” “Infrastructure needs are mounting at an astronomical rate. It is more than roads, it is advancements in broadband and similar technologies that are holding us back. We NEED to develop our Summer offerings and my department is positioned to do so, esp. in the Graduate arena. However, our facility infrastructure hampers us from advancing in this direction. Please revise Summer programming and advance it as the 'new full time semester'. I will work it.”

Several commenters expressed disappointment in the handling of the “riot” video posted by the Western Courier editor. “While President Thomas is ultimately responsible for the debacle of The Courier Editor being let go and then reinstated, I assume he was acting on advice given to him by someone else. Whomever it was, I think the president should really consider the counsel he's receiving from that person. That was a mess; it was embarrassing. Whomever recommended that course of action does not seem conscious of how visible acts like that are and how they can easily escalate. A knee jerk reaction is rarely a wise solution to a problem like that... and frankly, I'm not sure the student's video was a problem. It just came off as reactionary and defensive.”

Several commenters addressed the President’s handling of diversity issues.. “I'm disappointed to see many people of color in leadership positions leaving the university. It seems that many of the people in leadership positions have been at WIU for many many years. In my experience that has never been a good strategy for an organization.” “People should not be asked to assume extra duties so that funds can be diverted to diversity hires who are only working half time (and finishing their degree the other half).” “While African American faculty and student population has increased which is a positive thing for the university, there has been a decrease in other groups. Where are the Latino students? Asian? Ethnic white? Rural?...” “define Diversity. if you mean getting a lot of different types of people involved - yes. but they may or may not be qualified. that is a problem he does not address. it's all look & feel. no substance.” “…He treats individuals fairly regardless of their race, status, or position. He wants people to do their jobs and do it effectively. The removal of an African American from a Dean's position, and the reassignment of an Associate Vice President of Student Affairs shows me that Dr. Thomas is unbiased in his decision making and he wants strong leaders regardless of their race.”

Overall Performance

“Very committed, open and encouraging/motivating despite budget constraints.”

“Dr. Thomas is a good man, and a sound manager. What we need, though, is a strong, visible leader with a clear vision and plan to turn WIU - Macomb around TODAY; not tomorrow, or next month, or next year. It is becoming increasingly believed on this campus (Macomb) that we are no longer sustainable as an institution with our current practices; in all likelihood enrollment will continue to slowly erode for the foreseeable future, facilities work will continue to be deferred, state funding will continue to drop. How do we survive this? We have heard nothing concrete from our leadership team in regard to either short or long-term solutions to these kinds of problems, and it should be the responsibility of the president to make certain contingency plans are in place and are communicated to the entire university. Our ship may not be sinking, but we are adrift and rudderless at the moment with a strong storm approaching!”

“It does not appear to me that he is moving the university forward. It seems like the focus is maintaining the status quo.”

“I believe that President Thomas is a strong, effective, and transformational leader who values high standards. He does a very effective job engaging students and others on social media which some college presidents are afraid to do. This shows that Dr. Thomas is cutting edge and he is an innovative leader who will raise the profile of this institution. I am sure there are a number of other higher paying universities who have or will come seeking his services as president. Western Illinois University is very fortunate to have him at the helm and leading this university.”

“The President has created an environment based on protocol, processes, procedures and tedious reporting.”

“President Thomas is a decent guy who is leading in a time that would be difficult for anyone. He needs to surround himself with stronger leadership to accomplish things such as recruitment and retention. A majority of the decisions made by the leadership are for political gain and not for keeping the University moving forward. Tough decisions need to be made by the people around him and he does not have those individuals.”

“President Thomas cares about this institution and I think he's doing an admirable job with the budget woes we're still facing.”

“Connect more with the QC campus. Visit and walk about getting to know us on a less formal level. We see you most frequently when "important" people are in town as opposed to fostering a sense of embracement evidenced on the Macomb Campus.”

“The President is out of touch with faculty and our needs. The President doesn't know about the student body and their inability to follow rules or treat instructors with respect. He needs to get out of his office....”

“It seems to me the focus on attracting more and more students when there just aren't students to be had is misguided. It would seem that choosing to cap enrollments and building quality programs is much better for the long term health of WIU. I have students who say that outside of Macomb WIU is a joke school and they are embarrassed to say they have graduated from here. Please reconsider the endless clamoring for students. Its not doing anyone justice.”

“I do think the President tries but the State of Illinois is ill run and managed.”

**Conclusions**

The quantitative ratings of the President’s performance were down across the board from last year, with a greater spread in the ratings but the difference is not statistically significant. The comments expressed a number of areas of concern, including the need to enhance our facilities, to support faculty efforts at scholarship and professional development, to prioritize academics in our spending, and to develop and articulate a vision for what kind of University WIU should be.

In contrast to comments from early portions of the survey, a higher percentage of the comments for the President’s overall performance were supportive of what he is trying to do. Many commenters recognized the difficulties he faces during these tough economic times. Just as last year, this speaks to the frustration the faculty feel in trying to overcome a number of impediments to doing their job as well as they can, and a sense that the President is working to address these issues, but with unfortunately limited success.