<u>**WESTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY FACULTY SENATE**</u>

Regular Meeting, *2 December 2025*, **4:00 p.m.**

Via Zoom and Union Capitol Rooms

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

SENATORS PRESENT IN PERSON: D. Allwardt, E. Asare, S. Chakravorti, R. Di Carmine, N. Gillotti, D. Gravitt, D. McArthur, J. McKenzie, A. Melkumian, J. Robinett, R. Sharma, F. Tasdan, J. Walker, L. Wipperling, E. Woell

SENATORS PRESENT VIA ZOOM: P. Cole, E. Hamner, R. Kelly, S. Turkelli

SENATORS ABSENT: H. Elbe, A. Frederick, M. Hoge, H. Mason

EX-OFFICIO: William Gblerkpor, Parliamentarian; Mark Mossman, Provost

GUESTS: Dan Barclay, Tom Blackford, Keith Boeckelman, Amy Carr, Bob Emmert, Stacie Hunt, Bob Intrieri, Sarah Lawson, Jessica Lin, Kyle Mayborn, Lorette Oden, Renee Polubinsky, Tim Roberts Sebastian Szyjka

I.   <u>Consideration of Minutes</u>

      A.   <u>October 28, 2025</u>

            MINUTES APPROVED AS DISTRIBUTED

II.   <u>Announcements</u>

      A.   <u>Provost's Report</u>

Provost Mossman stated that the Provost's staff searches are completed and thanked Faculty Senate and the numerous people who participated in those searches. Provost Mossman came into the Provost's office in 2018, and there has never before been a search for a Provost staff position where there was both Council of Academic Personnel (COAP) and Faculty Senate representation on the search committees; it has always previously been just the Provost and Provost's staff on those committees, so he thinks this is a very good moment for the university and for WIU's shared governance model. Provost Mossman announced that Dr. Lori Baker-Sperry will be the new Associate Provost for Undergraduate Programs; Dr. Jessica Lin will serve as the Associate Provost for Academic Personnel and Budget; and Dr. Kishor Kapale will be the new Assistant Provost for Graduate, Online, and Outreach Programs. He noted that Drs. Lin and Kapale are in Day 2 in their new positions, so it has been a whirlwind. He said the dean searches are underway with the first of the campus interviews scheduled for next week.

Provost Mossman pointed out that Dr. Baker-Sperry was previously receiving ACEs to work as the Faculty Representative for the First Year Experience (FYE) Program and Student Learning Assessment. He announced that Senator McArthur will be moving into that role; he will work closely with the entire team on program assessment, mostly, followed by probably rebuilding FYE next year.

The Provost thanked Chair Robinett for working with Amy Hodges in his office to update the Provost's website and make sure those pages are improved, as well as creating a space for individuals to ask questions about anything regarding the Rebuild. He said that reports have been submitted by a majority of the Rebuild committees, including Interdisciplinary and Co-Curricular, Communication, and Chairs and Directors Committees; the Advising Committee is in the process of

finalizing their report and hopes to submit it by the end of the semester. He noted that the Rebuild Efficiency Committee continues to work on scheduling, ACE sheets, and other administrative activities. He added that the Constituency Committee is still meeting every couple of weeks to provide oversight of the whole process. He stated that Chair Robinett will provide an update on the Rebuild Academic Use of Space Committee because Chair Robinett has been working closer with Faculty Senate on surveys and those types of things.

Provost Mossman thanked everyone for their hard work this semester. He observed that there have been five searches running, and Faculty Senate has been involved in all of it, and he appreciates everyone's time and effort. Senator Tasdan observed that this academic year started a week late. He wonders if there was a reason behind this change. Provost Mossman explained that this is basically a cycle determined by the Calendar Committee, and every four or five years the semester starts and ends a week later than usual.

B.   Student Government Association (SGA) - None

C.   Faculty Senate Chair's Report

Chair Robinett expressed his thanks to all faculty, staff, and students who have been incredibly engaged in shared governance over the course of the semester. He has seen firsthand and heard in countless conversations in hallways and other places about the physical, emotional, and mental energy that individuals are giving to WIU. He understands that progress may seem slow, but he reaffirmed, as someone who sits in countless meetings, that there is a lot happening that people are actively engaged in and having conversations about, which is very different from what has been seen in recent times. He applauds that the Provost staff searches were inclusive of a variety of campus constituencies and noted that faculty voices were an active part of every one of them. He thinks this is a step toward what progress needs to be in terms of transparency and trust in those processes.

Chair Robinett reported that the Rebuild Academic Use of Space Committee continues to navigate a desire to respect departmental uniqueness while also facing the reality that the university cannot accommodate all of the space it is currently using. He noted that there are not enough building service workers and staff for all of the spaces, and there are numerous spaces across the campus that are rarely used. He understands the affinity that everyone has with their own spaces and ideas of how they want to be in those, but the simple reality is that if some of these resources can be freed up, it may allow for modernization of some university rooms and will allow for better usage of spaces. Chair Robinett related that one of the big challenges the committee faces is how to balance the unique spaces that individuals want to have with the reality of prioritizing WIU students. He noted that ultimately decisions need to be made about how to provide optimal experiences for students in the different spaces they need to be.

Chair Robinett related the Academic Use of Space Committee is considering a reset, and as part of this is conducting surveys with department chairs and directors in order to gain an appreciation of what spaces they need to have saved and kept for their own purposes. He said the committee is referring to these as "extraordinary spaces," and all of the other spaces are being referred to as "general use." He related that the committee is now working with the Provost's office and others to determine how to optimize classrooms so that they stay busy with people using those spaces from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. every day while accommodating that with the schedule in a more meaningful way. He noted that, as Provost Mossman says, there are a lot of moving parts, including that an overall master plan for buildings has not been undertaken for a very long time. Chair Robinett recalled that Senator Hoge pointed out a recent Senate meeting that the GIS Center's mapping does not always match how spaces are being used currently, but that is the reality of having four different spreadsheets and a system that is using different ways of doing things to try to bring all of that together. He asserted that progress is being made, and he anticipates a preliminary report from the committee soon.

Chair Robinett expressed his thanks to Ian Szechowycz, University Technology Digital Spaces and Online Learning Director; the people working in Administrative Information Management Services (AIMS); and those working in Purchasing for helping to move the university forward toward

addressing the federal legislation changes in regard to accessibility. Chair Robinett, along with several senators and other faculty members, had the opportunity to review an accessibility platform that provides in-line document remediation tools and other resources. He explained that this platform allows for documents to be made more accessible and aligned with what federal regulations require without having to redo every Word document to make it accessible, which would be an incredible amount of work. Chair Robinett stated that although he does not have all of the details at this time, the university is taking steps on this, and the process has reached the purchasing level.

Chair Robinett related that there continue to be many conversations about artificial intelligence (AI). He noted that the reading group has met and is engaging in a very lively email chain where they exchange resources, both positive and negative, in regard to AI, so pedagogical conversations are taking place in various spaces. He stated that the Qualtrics student survey about AI has been closed; about 228 students participated, which is a fairly good sample, and there will be information about that to share with Faculty Senate in the spring. Chair Robinett observed that preliminary review of the student and faculty surveys shows that both groups are using AI primarily as chatbots or for proofing and similar functions. He noted that, not surprisingly, there were more comments related to the ethical use of AI coming from the faculty than from students, while student survey results indicated a lot of confusion about what the AI policies are.

Chair Robinett reported that Senate councils and committees have been meeting very regularly, and he anticipates reports in January from CAGAS, the Council for Intercollegiate Athletics, the ad hoc Faculty Governance committee, and others. Chair Robinett has been working with Council on General Education Chair Josh Averbeck to revise a charge for general education. He said the two will work with Associate Provost Baker-Sperry on moving toward a review of WIU's general education in light of changes to the institution and the curriculum in recent years.

Chair Robinett announced that the Board of Trustees has a meeting on December 10. He noted that their Board book is not out yet, but he will send the link to senators once it is available, probably by Monday, December 8. He strongly encouraged senators to take time to review the Board book, even though it can be a little dry, because it helps provide a better understanding of the financial realities and priorities of the university. He noted that the Board book, based on what is included in it, can help those who review it begin to see what the university is spending time and money on as the institution readies itself to move forward. Chair Robinett thinks the Board book allows for a deeper understanding of the accomplishments that are happening at WIU. One of his favorite parts of the book is where the colleges report on the things happening in their areas because it is a quick and condensed way to see some of the successes that colleagues are having, particularly at a time when, as has been noted, it is more difficult to stay in communication all of the time than it used to be. He encouraged senators to congratulate their peers when they see something they have accomplished.

Chair Robinett observed that there have been a lot of conversations at Faculty Senate about recruitment being one of the fundamental things that everyone needs to be engaged in, as well as talk about disciplines and supporting the traditions of WIU. He noted that the Department of English has reached out and is trying to find individuals from across the campus to participate in a recruitment activity that they are doing in February, their tenth annual writing festival. He said English is looking for faculty to conduct some interactive workshops for high school students in order to introduce students to the types of writing they might encounter at the university. Chair Robinett observed that at a time when the university is talking about AI and the challenges it is presenting, this provides a way to get in front of some high school students and work on some of these things. He will send more information out via email and added that interested faculty can volunteer by contacting Alisha White or Rebekah Buchanan in English.

D.   Other Announcements

1.   Stacie Hunt, Director, Administrative Information Management Services (AIMS)

Chair Robinett told senators he invited Ms. Hunt to visit with them because there has been a great deal of conversation at WIU about the ERP – what it is and what it is not – and one of

the quickest way Faculty Senate can counter some of the challenges on the campus is by inviting people to provide education on topics.

Ms. Hunt explained that Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) is basically the software that integrates and manages an institution's core processes, such as finance, human resources, payroll, and student information systems (SIS). She said that WIU has been researching ERP solutions for about 10-15 years and in November 2023 made the decision to purchase the Ellucian Colleague system. She said in January 2024 that project was kicked off, and in January 2025 the university went live with its first module, the Colleague Finance System, which includes accounts payable and procurement. She noted that the university had intended to go live with the human resources and payroll modules this month and the student information system in April 2026 in order to register students for the Fall 2026 semester; however, the decision has now been made to extend all of these by a year. Ms. Hunt explained that AIMS assessed where they were in their implementation project in November and considered all of the outstanding tasks that still needed to be completed, upon which they thought it would be best to extend the roll out for human resources, payroll, and SIS.

Ms. Hunt observed that the university's current ERP system is running in the background, but not everyone understands what it is or who maintains it. She explained that it is a homegrown, custom system hosted on an IBM mainframe, which was developed over 40 years ago and has been continually maintained and enhanced by AIMS, a division within University Technology. She said that AIMS employees built HR, payroll, SIS, and all of their components by scratch as a very highly customized system specifically designed for WIU business processes. Ms. Hunt noted that WIU also has a purchased financial system that is hosted on its mainframe; this is fairly old, and AIMS has been maintaining and building on it for many years. She said this system supports the WIUP and STARS applications and thousands of batch processes that are running in the background; this entire system is called MVS.

Ms. Hunt tried to debunk a few of the myths she hears about WIU's current MVS system. She stated that although some assume that WIU's technology is obsolete, in reality the mainframe is only six years old; University Technology purchased the newest mainframe available for the model WIU had in 2019. She added that WIU's mainframe system is large, powerful, centralized, highly reliable, and very secure. Ms. Hunt said she also hears that the programming language that WIU uses, COBOL, is obsolete, but this language is still being used by many Fortune 1000 companies in industries such as banking, insurance, healthcare, airlines, retail companies, and even governments. She added that many of these applications are built on mainframes and are hosted using COBOL as their programming language.

Ms. Hunt has heard remarks about WIU using outdated 3270 (black and green screen) user interfaces, but AIMS actually maintains over 1000 WIUP applications, and probably two-thirds of these are developed with a web interface. She noted that AIMS maintains over 100 STARS applications, and the STARS system exists solely in a web environment. She said that while AIMS does have many applications that still have a 3270 interface on the front, AIMS has found that many people within the functional offices that use it on a daily basis prefer the efficiency and speed of doing a lot of data entry using that system as opposed to a web system. She said another myth is that WIU's system does not contain sufficient data, but in reality AIMS maintains over 1200 relational DB2 database tables of administrative data containing 10,000 unique data elements that are stored in order to be available to the campus community.

Ms. Hunt noted the final myth she wants to debunk is that WIU users do not have access to the data needed to make decisions, while in reality AIMS has created thousands of reports over the years that are distributed to the campus community on a daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual basis. She explained the problem is that these reports were created over many years, and there are employees within the university's functional offices today who were not around when these reports were created, so they do not understand what the

original intent was or what the reports are showing them, resulting in a lot of confusion. Ms. Hunt thinks the main issue with reporting at WIU is that there are too many reports, and the university is drowning in data. As the university moves forward with Colleague implementation, she has been working with functional areas to encourage them to really think about these core reports that are needed to run their daily operations and help them make key business decisions. She does not think there is a need to rewrite all of the reports that have already been developed.

Ms. Hunt addressed why the university needs a new ERP system. She explained the reason University Technology began researching a new ERP system 10-15 years ago was primarily due to the cost of maintaining the current system; at that time, the university had the hardware, the software, and the personnel to maintain a new system. Ms. Hunt said the second reason was that University Technology wanted to create a modern, intuitive user experience for WIU's staff and students. She noted the third reason was a desire for easier reporting and access to data. Ms. Hunt explained that through the years, due to deferred maintenance, University Technology has experienced the effects of aging on the hardware that supports the mainframe operations. She noted, for example, that tape drives have actually failed a couple of times, and when that happens the batch processes are halted until AIMS can acquire the parts and replace them.

Ms. Hunt observed that many of the individuals who designed, developed, implemented, and maintained the ERP over the past 40 years – not only within AIMS but also within the functional areas – have retired while others are close to retirement age. She also noted that AIMS has a limited workforce; the staff in AIMS has decreased to the point where they are really in maintenance mode only and are not able to do a lot of application development. She added that, in addition, AIMS has struggled to recruit and retain the new programmers they need. She thinks the reasons are the salary, WIU's location, and the prospect of coding on a mainframe system. Ms. Hunt thinks the biggest risk to the university regarding the current ERP system is personnel related. She explained there is a very high curve to learn the tools, databases, structures, and business process logic necessary for this job. She is concerned that within a few years there will be few people on campus who actually understand and know how to operate the current system.

Ms. Hunt noted that there are also increasing changes to regulations and security demands on the ERP system. She recalled that when University Technology began looking for a new ERP, they were looking primarily at cost, interface, and access to data. She thinks that this focus has changed over the years and that now the university needs to convert to a new ERP in order to transfer the risk of the infrastructure, personnel, changes in regulations, and security off of AIMS staff and onto a vendor.

Ms. Hunt explained that Colleague SaaS was chosen because Ellucian is a leading technology provider in the higher education sector, and the Colleague system was specifically designed for higher education institutions. She noted that the Colleague system is used worldwide as well as widely used at many colleges and university across the U.S. She stated that Colleague has a complete ERP system – a complete finance, human resources, payroll, and student information system – while some competitors did not have a student information system that had been completely developed and published in a production environment.

Ms. Hunt said Colleague is also right-sized for our university. She related that while working with Ellucian during the evaluation process, AIMS staff and others were comparing the Colleague system with the Banner system, and WIU's account representative assured them that Colleague would meet the university's needs. She said Banner would be needed for a university that has a medical school, a law school, or an international campus. She also noted that Colleague is affordable; when the evaluation team was looking at the annual subscription cost and implementation cost, Colleague was the system that fit WIU's needs

the best because while other systems had comparable subscription costs, Colleague's implementation cost was much less.

Ms. Hunt explained that in addition to basic financial, HR, and payroll systems, Colleague Saas also has within its student information system functionality for admissions, financial aid, student records, accounts receivable, and housing. Additionally, AIMS is implementing the Ellucian Experience Portal, a centralized location that will allow for storage of a lot of the applications that will access the Colleague data as well as the Ellucian information. She said AIMS will also implement the Insights Reporting Dashboard that will allow them to access all of the delivered reports that Colleague provides as well as write their own custom reports and publish them for the campus community.

Ms. Hunt believes that Colleague will meet the university's needs because it is a comprehensive ERP system designed specifically for higher education institutions that meets all of the regulatory requirements for universities and was built with industry best practices in mind. She noted that although its core system has basic functionality systems, it does not contain specific dedicated processes for WIU's business processes, but there is no system that can be purchased that would have that capability. She said the only system that has this is WIU's current homegrown system, so with Colleague, AIMS is implementing a basic, or vanilla, system. She explained that tools within the Ellucian products allow for building on the Colleague system, and enhancements can be added once the system goes live if this is determined to be necessary. Ms. Hunt wants AIMS to be very careful about customizations because the more customizations that are added, the harder it will be to maintain the system. She is encouraging all of the functional areas during the implementation process to review their needs, and if it is found to be necessary to add enhancements onto the system, those will be built.

Ms. Hunt told senators that AIMS knows Colleague will not do everything they need it to do because it is a basic ERP system. She said AIMS is aware they will need to purchase ancillary software to build on top of the system. She stated, for example, that they just purchased travel and expense management software that will allow the campus community to submit requests for payment. She said they are also looking at a large e-commerce system that would allow for payment collection in multiple different areas across campus as well as payment plans for students to pay their bills. Ms. Hunt related that event scheduling software is currently being evaluated as well as course scheduling software with academic analytics, so she is excited about that.

Ms. Hunt explained that the project was extended by 12 months because there is a lot going on at WIU, not just with this project but in other areas as well. She noted that WIU currently has a very large, customized, complicated system, and AIMS is trying to convert it to a very basic system; they are analyzing many complex business processes and trying to map those over to the basic Colleague configurations. She explained that AIMS is trying to migrate very large amounts of data from the MVS system to the Colleague system; as part of that process, WIU's data must be transformed into the format that Colleague requires, then loaded onto their system. Ms. Hunt explained that in addition to migrating the data from WIU's legacy system, AIMS programmers have to rewrite all of the data integrations, the data that would pass between the ERP and a vendor. She noted that on a monthly or annual basis AIMS sends information to insurance companies, to retirement entities, and to the government; on a daily basis, they send files to other software, such as WesternOnline and the ID card system; and information is also sent to testing agencies and to vendors who work with recruitment. She explained that all of these data integrations have to be rewritten using Ellucian tools and accessing Colleague data.

Ms. Hunt told senators that in addition to all this, AIMS has thousands of reports and are trying to determine and prioritize which ones they need to rewrite. She said each of these reports need to be rewritten using the Insights Reporting Tool and accessing the Colleague data. She related that during implementation, AIMS determined that the Colleague SaaS

does not have a batch utility process to take these large amounts of data and load them into their system, so many of these need to be entered manually. She noted, for example, that the 26,000 components of the degree audit rules, which are used in the WARD reports, have to be typed into the system for each catalog year. She explained that the catalogs could be rolled over, but there have been so many changes to them in the past few years that they would all have to be reviewed and updated, which takes a lot of time. She said the implementation team has hand-entered all of WIU's vendors and all of the academic programs for each calendar year.

Ms. Hunt related that in addition to all of these tasks, AIMS is juggling a lot of competing priorities right now. She said they have been implementing the Regent Education Financial Aid Software for a couple of years, but they are implementing the Slate CRM at the same time. She stated that, in addition, the academic reorganizations that the university is undergoing are causing them to have to rework the existing system, as well as reworking the things that were already put into the new ERP system.

Ms. Hunt noted that AIMS is also contending with staffing issues that affect this work; the Payroll office currently has no full-time staff, the Registrar's office is down a quarter of their staff, and the Graduate Studies office has also experienced staff decreases. She pointed out that these are the people that have been working on this project with AIMS, but they have had to be pulled out of the ERP project to cover the daily business due to staff reductions, which has slowed down the progress as well. Ms. Hunt observed that the Ellucian Company is also experiencing a lot of staffing issues and has had a hard time securing the resources to help train and mentor WIU employees in the functional areas. She said Ellucian has indicated they are also having trouble recruiting and retaining IT staff.

Ms. Hunt thinks the original 18-month timeline provided by Ellucian was unrealistic. She has always said that it would probably take three to five years to convert WIU's very specific, customized ERP system to whatever system the university purchased. She thinks that even if all of the other hurdles were not present, 18 months was still a very aggressive timeline. Ms. Hunt related that AIMS staff are meeting with Ellucian functional consultants who are helping to train them as well as helping them to configure the system. She said AIMS is doing a lot of analysis of WIU's system to figure out the business requirements for building system configurations and rules. She noted that they are migrating lots of legacy data from MVS over to Colleague while working on data configurations, writing custom reports, and testing system configurations. Ms. Hunt related that AIMS staff are defining security and access roles within the system, creating training plans, producing documentation, and evaluating and implementing ancillary software.

Ms. Hunt showed senators the new extended timeline. She pointed out the Colleague Finance system for accounts payable and procurement was implemented in January 2025, and the Colleague HR and Payroll system is expected to be implemented in December 2026, running the first payroll on the new system in January 2027. She said there are plans to go live with the Colleague SIS early in Spring 2027, getting applications for admissions in the system in January 2027, packaging financial aid in February 2027, running registration for the Fall 2027 semester in April 2027, and billing for housing and assessments in July 2027.

Senator Gravitt asserted that the delays to implementation of the Financial Aid system and letting students know how much aid they were going to receive affected enrollment. She asked if this problem is fixed or if there is a patch for next year until the university moves over to the new system. Ms. Hunt replied that the Regent Education Financial Aid system went live in Fall 2024, and there was a very short timeline to get that implemented. She admitted there were many problems and that this probably hurt WIU's enrollment. She related that by Fall 2025 all of these patches were mostly corrected, and there was a much better disbursement than in Fall 2024. She said AIMS plans to continue to use the existing Regent system through the point that the university goes live with the Colleague SIS system

in 2027. She believes that most of the issues that were experienced have been corrected, but there are still a few bugs, and AIMS will continue to refine that process.

Senator Chakravorti asked how difficult it is to migrate data from the very customized MVS processes to a relatively basic platform. He wonders if there are things that are falling through the cracks or whether AIMS must create new functionalities for the new system. Ms. Hunt replied that it has been very complicated and requires a lot of analysis, time, and planning. She explained, for example, that this week AIMS has been trying to figure out addresses because WIU's current system includes a student database, a personnel database, and an alumni database, and within each of these databases there is a home address, a work address, and a mailing address. She related that AIMS is trying to determine how to take all of those addresses across all platforms and move them into one, two, or three addresses per person. She noted that part of the problem is that they are not exactly the same; some might abbreviate road or route, some of the numbers might be in a different order, or the street addresses might be written differently, so AIMS is trying to determine how best to compare them to determine if they are different addresses or the same. She explained that there is a very prescribed order for taking the information from WIU's current system and moving it into the Colleague system, and AIMS staff are moving piece-by-piece, with analysis, planning, and testing, which is taking a long time.

Chair Robinett asked approximately how many people are working on this while also trying to protect the university from the cybersecurity issues that Senate has also heard about. Ms. Hunt replied that almost all of the 18 staff members within AIMS are working on this, and many are on multiple teams. She said that teams have been developed for payroll, human resources, student records, degree auditing, financial aid, and admissions applications, which is about all of the functional areas they are working with right now. She stated that since many staff members are on multiple teams, they are spending many hours a week in functional meetings. She estimates that 80 individuals across University Technology and other functional areas are actively involved in the ERP implementation project. Chair Robinett asked if this is in addition to the front-facing activities and daily routines these individuals are working on; Ms. Hunt confirmed that is correct.

Senator Tasdan assumes that Ellucian works with other institutions that have huge databases similar to WIU. He asked what that company's past experience is with different institutions and whether they can use that experience to help WIU migrate into the new system. He wonders why WIU's situation is so unique. Ms. Hunt admitted she asks herself that question a lot, but AIMS staff hears that WIU's situation is unique from many of the functional consultants they are working with. She thinks part of the problem may be that WIU is very late moving to a new ERP system. She explained that in the 1990s, a lot of universities moved to ERPs, so now they are upgrading from their current package system to Colleague, which is a much simpler process than moving from a homegrown, custom-built system that has been set up to give employees whatever they might ask for, and this has complicated the process quite a bit. She said Ellucian has prescribed a plan for WIU, and AIMS is trying to follow it, but they keep running into roadblocks. She believes that Ellucian is doing the best it can to help out, but they do not have the tools or the knowledge to get into WIU's system, evaluate the data there, and transform it for us, so AIMS is trying to evaluate all of the data and business processes and map them over to the Colleague system.

Senator Wipperling noted that Ms. Hunt said in response to Senator Gravitt's question that she believes a lot of the bugs are fixed now. She asked how confident Ms. Hunt is that Financial Aid will be more successful handing out student offers and financial aid packages in a timely fashion this spring. Ms. Hunt replied she feels comfortable that Financial Aid will be able to do that. She observed that this fall semester went very well compared to the previous spring semester; she saw a huge difference in how the university was able to disburse its funds. Senator Wipperling asked what the difference or corelation is between disbursement and telling students what their financial aid package will be. She related that her department lost a lot of potential students by offering them something in January and

then not following up with a financial aid package before April; students waited for four months and then told the department they felt they needed to go somewhere else. Senator Wipperling wants to make sure the university avoids this happening two years in a row. Ms. Hunt stated that from what she understands these errors have been mitigated and corrected, and this should go much better during the next award letter and disbursements process. She explained the main problem was integration between the current MVS system, which does the billing, and Regent Education Financial Aid System, which was initiating the disbursement. She said AIMS thinks it has corrected a lot of the problems it was experiencing at that point in time.

Senator Chakravorti observed that one of the strengths of the current ERP system is its ability to create multiple different reports that can be customized. He asked if the move from a customizable, process-based system to a relatively bare-bones system will impact AIMS's ability to customize helpful reports. Ms. Hunt replied that Colleague comes with many delivered reports that are already published within the Insights Reporting Tool. She said there are a couple different layers of skills that are needed to produce customized reports; one of these is the ability to program in SQL, which is probably something that AIMS can handle. She said reports made in this way would be more complicated because there are a lot of database relationships that have to be known in the background, but AIMS should be able to produce and publish those. Ms. Hunt noted the other method involves a drag-and-drop feature which is similar to a spreadsheet where users can remove, add to, or filter the existing fields. She said that if the correct data model is available to access the data needed, AIMS should be able to create a simplified report for users. Ms. Hunt stated that AIMS is still trying to figure out who will have access to reporting; they will probably roll that out slowly so that they have a better understanding of how to do it. She said eventually the goal is for individuals to have access to their data in order to produce their own reports.

Chair Robinett expressed his thanks for the work that Ms. Hunt and all of AIMS are doing, as well as the work being done within the functional groups in order to support this effort. He recognizes that the work is largely not seen, and he appreciates Ms. Hunt sharing this information with senators.

2. Amy Carr, WIU Representative to the Illinois Board of Higher Education Faculty Advisory Council

Dr. Carr told senators she will report on Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) Faculty Advisory Council (FAC) meetings she attended in September and October, while Senator McKenzie, who serves as the alternate WIU representative, will report on the meeting she attended in November. Dr. Carr said the September meeting was held at the University of Illinois-Urbana/Champaign, and there were several presentations from representatives of that university. She said one thing that caught her attention at the meeting was UIUC's inclusive course redesign initiative for selected introductory courses. She explained they will look at courses with high did not finish/failed/withdrew (DFW) rates, then take the opportunity to have a deeper course assessment and possible redesign of these courses. She said these courses might be ones where there are teaching assistants for 30-40 students each. She added that UIUC is creating sharable resources, and individuals will be paid $3,000 to do this assessment.

Dr. Carr related that UIUC is trying to enter the dual credit world by offering something other institutions are not doing where they will pair a UIUC faculty member with a high school teacher. She said they hope to pilot this dual credit learning accelerator initiative next year if they can find enough high school teachers with the right training. She noted that the courses they are offering are those not offered by community colleges, such as a disability culture course, although community colleges would have right of first refusal to offer them. She said others include Data Science Discovery, Killer Skies, Astro Disasters, and Introduction to Popular TV and Movies. Dr. Carr related that UIUC is reaching out to high schools that do not have a lot of students applying to college. She said the discussion at the

Faculty Advisory Council was interesting because community colleges feel they have ownership of dual credit courses, even though that takes away General Education courses from public universities. Dr. Carr was not entirely sure why UIUC is interested in pursuing this, although it might be because it targets low-sending high schools.

Dr. Carr related that Nora Heist, new Public University Faculty Representative to the IBHE, reported on the one-click direct admissions program, presenting on several of the IBHE's initiatives in this regard. Dr. Carr noted that UIUC does not participate in the one-click direct admissions program. She added that being admitted through this program does not guarantee that a student is admitted to a particular degree program, such as nursing. Dr. Carr said Dr. Heist also spoke about IBHE's occupation-related dashboards on their website; she suggested that senators take a look at the IBHE website to see what resources they have available.

Dr. Carr said another speaker at the September meeting was Dave Tretter, President of the Federation of Independent Colleges and Universities, who is sort of a lobbyist for them. She said he confirmed what Dr. Carr has heard from colleagues at small liberal arts colleges that they are increasingly sustained by regional athletes. She related that Dr. Tretter said some of these institutions are comprised of 60-70 percent athletes, who are probably not choosing to go because it is a liberal arts college or for their programs but because their families will get to continue to watch the students play sports. She said this contributes to an interesting tension in these institutions about how to define the nature of a school. Dr. Carr observed that a number of colleges, such as Monmouth's, are shutting down some programs that are traditionally part of the liberal arts, like history, philosophy, and religious studies. She noted that they are also starting to offer degrees that are offered at WIU, such as exercise science, so it is an interesting time for liberal arts colleges and universities, especially those that are less selective.

Dr. Carr said the October IBHE FAC meeting was held at Lakeland College, the second largest community college district in the state, located in Mattoon, somewhat near Eastern Illinois University. She said representatives from Lakeland shared how they are trying to be really accessible for working students She related that they do this by arranging schedules so that students can take all of their courses on just two days, offering more night classes, and allowing them to complete labs on their own schedules, coming and going when they want. She stated Lakeland is moving toward competency-based education, where instead of having deadlines, students can start and stop at their own pace. Dr. Carr wonders how this kind of experience at the community college level would translate if the student wished to pursue a four-year degree while continuing to work. She thinks it can be harder to accommodate working students at the same rate at a public university.

Dr. Carr said the FAC heard a presentation from two humanities professors regarding Lakeland's Glow-Up Initiative. She said one of the presenters, Ed Thomas, stated that the U.S. has entered a culture that is moving away from honoring institutions to esteeming the individual, so there is a need to personalize big institutions. Dr. Carr said Lakeland is doing this by trying to do creative, playful things, like having the faculty wear shared outfits some days that are low-key and modest, like tshirts with the same design, for instance. She said they have printed recruitment cards with faculty dressed as superheroes, and they have "fat heads" on the walls in the region of their offices with comments which they change periodically. She said Lakeland also has some professors ride around campus in golf carts where they can engage in Q&A and videotape those interactions. She added that they are trying to be very regionally focused on these initiatives.

Dr. Carr related the FAC also heard from Valerie Lynch, who worked for many years at Lakeland but is now the Senior Managing Director at the IBHE. She said Dr. Lynch spoke about some new realignments; Dr. Carr offered to share the photos she took of this presentation with interested senators. Dr. Carr reminded senators that the IBHE is a coordinating body, not a regulatory body. She said it has pillars that include Thriving

Illinois; Equity, Sustainability, and Growth; Academic Strategy and Quality; and Talent and Workforce Development. Dr. Carr stated the Talent and Workforce Development group focuses on credentialling below the associate's level because the IBHE is getting involved in all kinds of credentialling. She said the IBHE has also shown attention to food insecurity on campuses, and the FAC has created a new working group on this topic, the Student Needs Working Group.

Dr. Carr noted that the IBHE is considering creating a cross-section working group on reduced-credit bachelor's degrees, driven by workforce needs; she said this generated quite a bit of discussion at the meeting. She related that one of the concerns expressed asked if these degrees would meet accreditation expectations if they were not the same degree. She said one FAC rep suggested that these be referred to in some other way than bachelor's degrees to clarify that distinction. Dr. Carr thinks the FAC will be hearing more about this.

Dr. Carr related that another new IBHE initiative is called SUCCESS – Supporting Universities and Colleges in Creating Equitable Student Success. She said this is made up of three areas – holistic advising, first-year experience, and supporting basic student needs. She noted that the working group on food insecurity and the consideration of DFW rates both fall within the area of supporting basic student needs. Dr. Carr has sent an inquiry to Dr. Lynch, who was presenting on this, because there are supposed to be some updates in each public university's equity plans by May 2026, and she is curious what IBHE is working on in regard to DFW rates and has a lot of questions about this.

Dr. Carr related that Mike Phillips, an FAC rep from Illinois Valley Community College, has repeatedly brought up at FAC meetings the idea that Illinois should market itself as a state that protects academic freedom better than some other states, such as Texas, where his wife works and where he says about half of the faculty are trying to leave the state. She said Mr. Phillips emailed today a notice from the Texas Tech University system specifying that advocacy or promotion of race- or sex-based prejudice is prohibited; only two sexes are recognized under the law of forced content, and review of sexual orientation content is required. She said a flow chart asks if the faculty member believes the course material is relevant and necessary for classroom instruction, which illustrates that they are really trying to crack down on when race, gender, and other issues can be discussed.

Dr. Carr noted that the disappearance of the GradPlus loans is a really big deal for universities with mostly graduate students, such as the Illinois Institute of Technology or the Rosalind Franklin Medical School.

Dr. Carr related that at the public caucus meeting in October, Tena Hilton, the University of Illinois-Springfield FAC rep, remarked that the UIS D2L splash screens include a statement indicating that each individual faculty member is responsible for not being ADA compliant. Dr. Carr said UIS had been paying grad students to try to make everything accessible, but that has now stopped, and they just put the splash screen up. She thinks it will be interesting to see who is held responsible if there is a lack of compliance on that front. She believes the requirement kicks in during April 2026.

Senator McKenzie observed that the remark about Illinois marketing itself to other places is an interesting one. Dr. Carr said IBHE representatives have stressed that the state does not do that; it is up to the universities to do this if desired. She said there is a resistance to doing this at the IBHE level itself.

Senator McKenzie reported on the November IBHE FAC meeting, which was held at Southern Illinois University-Carbondale. She said their Assistant Chancellor for Research spoke first, and at the end of the day they heard from the Chancellor. Senator McKenzie remarked that SIUC's Chancellor said they recruit a lot outside of Illinois; Texas is one of the places where they recruit the most, including installing billboards in Houston that say "Imagine Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at Southern Illinois University." She said he also

informed the group that SIUC just received R1 status, so they are one of only 21 institutions in the U.S. that are both an R1 and an Opportunity College. Senator McKenzie related the Chancellor also said that SIUC students whose families have a combined income of $120,000 or less have their tuition and fees covered, but he never discussed how this is possible for the institution to offer.

Senator McKenzie said the IBHE rep reported that all institutions together across the state had a 2.3 percent increase, but the rep was unable to provide a breakdown by institution. She said the representative did indicate the majority of the increase was in undergraduates and that there was a 6.9 percent international student decrease statewide.

Senator McKenzie related there was a discussion about emergency preparedness on campuses, especially related to active shooter and lockdown situations. She said a representative from one institution had experienced a lockdown and spoke about what they had learned from that because the institution had thought they had good procedures in place until they actually had to use them, upon which they discovered a lot of communication gaps. She said this individual recommended that institutions revisit these plans more often than they currently do because they are often written and then forgotten, and people become complacent and do not update them for new situations.

Senator McKenzie reported that the public caucus discussion centered on the changes in general education that some institutions are engaged in. She said UIC started this conversation by saying they are considering creating Gen Ed clusters. Senator McKenzie thinks it sounds like co-teaching because they plan to establish cross-cutting themes across classes and have faculty work together so that student could take two different Gen Ed classes that build upon one another. She said UIC calls these focus classes and constellations; SIUE indicated they have something similar called their Pathways Program. Senator McKenzie reported that Illinois State University said they recently changed to where there are no automatic Gen Eds; every class had to recertify as Gen Ed, so they no longer have a list of Gen Ed courses. She said they indicated the basis for this is that it is more captivating for students to choose their own paths through General Education. She explained that in ISU's new system, content-specific courses can be offered by other areas; for example, Chemistry could offer a Gen Ed math class as long as it met the math Gen Ed requirement. She said it seems like a choose-your-own-adventure, in a lot of ways, which allows students and programs to build things which may not be traditional Gen Ed courses. Senator McKenzie related that after this discussion, the conversation turned to how honors colleges are suited to do these kinds of things while entire institutions are not, that it is too complicated to do this with all Gen Ed courses, and that institutions do not have the faculty or staff to support doing this. She said that even the individuals from UIC, SIUE, and ISU said that while this is what they are doing in regard to Gen Ed, they do not think they are doing it well due to lack of sufficient resources.

Senator McKenzie stated that the minutes are not published yet for this meeting but will hopefully be soon. Chair Robinett requested that she send him the minutes once they are posted because the conversation about General Education would be helpful as he works with Dr. Averbeck on the Council on General Education charge and with the Provost's office. Dr. Carr remarked that the minutes do not usually include details on the public caucus meetings. Chair Robinett thanked Dr. Carr and Senator McKenzie for the time and energy they put into these meetings, which are very long.

III.   Reports of Committees and Councils

    A.   Council on Curricular Programs and Instruction (CCPI)

        1.   Request for Change of Option

            a.   History

NO OBJECTIONS

IV. <u>Old Business</u> – None

V. <u>New Business</u>

A. <u>For the Good of the Body</u>

Senator Gravitt asked what will happen if faculty do not have sufficient time to make all of their materials accessible before April. Chair Robinett replied that this is where the accessibility platform will come into play because it will remove a lot of that responsibility from the faculty. He thinks it will require that faculty be careful not to use older websites, but it will enable faculty to access the software, input the things they are wanting to use, and see how it will appear, and students will be able to do the same. He stated that by using this software, faculty will not have to make all of their Word of PowerPoint notes accessible because the software will facilitate that.

Senator McKenzie asked if this is true of all documents because a lot of accessibility software has a difficult time working with .pdf documents and will indicate that they are unable to make them accessible. Chair Robinett responded that he will ask that question about .pdfs. Senator McKenzie has worked with two other accessibility software programs, although not with the specific one being purchased by WIU; both of them did a nice job of scanning everything, indicating what is accessible, and providing scores, but they both said that .pdf documents should not be used.

Senator Gravitt said she has audiovisual help material for students, and she does not think she will have time to teach five classes and convert all of the materials for the nine classes she has uploaded into WesternOnline unless she gets some help. She thinks she would have to either remove it all or risk it being flagged, and she is not sure what the penalty is for that. She asked if someone will be checking all of these documents and if the individual faculty member or the university will be fined if documents are found that are not accessible. Provost Mossman responded that this will be checked by multiple editors, including the Higher Learning Commission. He pointed out that this is a federal requirement and not a result of malicious intent by the university. He stated that the university must be in compliance, but he suspects that the language will indicate that continuous improvement helps. He compared this to the requirement to report attendance after the first ten days of classes; although the university does not get 100 percent compliance, if 80 percent or more comply, the institution is doing a great job. He stressed that this for the larger public good and is not a punitive exercise; it is so that people can have the materials to go to and be successful in college. Senator Gravitt remarked that it will be difficult for her and others in manufacturing because of the number of training videos.

Chair Robinet related that conversations have been occurring regarding how faculty will get trained on the accessibility program. He noted that historically things have sometimes been rolled out without actually providing the education to utilize the tools. He has asked several times how both faculty and students will be trained to use this software. He noted that the dollars to support this software had to be found, but he often makes the argument that this should be weighed against a calculation of the hourly rate of every faculty member and how long it would take them to perform this conversion on their own. Chair Robinett thinks the university will save money in the long run with software that will enable a lot of this to happen. He thinks the institution will need to go into this much like the ERP, where the best solution for our institution will be the software that is going to move it forward. He thinks individuals will need to figure out how it is going to work, submit their materials into it, and adjust as needed. He is very relieved that instead of being something the institution does in February or March, there was movement on this as early as September.

Senator Gravitt has seen notices on WesternOnline about moving things and having two modules per month, but she has not been able to look at the first month of materials yet. She thinks it is an issue of prioritizing. Chair Robinett remarked it was not until he had to start going to some of these meetings that he became aware of things that faculty often do not think about. He explained that when the university enters into contracts with vendors, and then vendors make changes to their

product, the university has no choice but to make those changes, which is what is happening with WesternOnline. He said the company has made a change to how it will deliver the product, and people around the country will have to navigate how this works. He added that WIU is somewhat disadvantaged because of having fewer staff to do a lot of this than other institutions, which shifts responsibility onto the end users – students and faculty.

Chair Robinett noted that while the WesternOnline changes go into play in 2026, the law has also changed for accessibility; regular sustained interaction (RSI) accessibility rules have been changed at the federal level at the same time that WIU's LMS is changing how it does things. He thinks that if training is provided, it may be possible to roll all three together in order to potentially move forward more effectively and efficiently do to what needs to be done rather than doing it piecemeal. He hopes this is the way it will be rolled out and that there will be some time to try these things out and figure out how they are working. Chair Robinett remarked that his department made the decision to be new adopters of the new LMS. He said both students and faculty have been asked to take notes in order to provide feedback on this to the Office of Online Teaching and Learning so that things that seem to be inefficient can be flagged and fixed before others have to navigate them. He added that there are some parts of the LMS that students are reporting that they really enjoy, adding that it is much more visual display than the older version of WesternOnline.

Senator Wipperling announced that this week, Thursday through Saturday, December 4-6, Musical Theatre and Theatre students will hold their Senior Showcase in Simpkins Hall Theatre at 7:30 p.m. Senator McArthur announced that a very talented graduating BFA student is holding his opening at the Art Gallery until 6:00 this evening.

Motion: To adjourn (Gravitt)

The Faculty Senate adjourned at 5:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Annette Hamm
Faculty Senate Office Manager and Recording Secretary