

# WESTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY FACULTY SENATE

**Regular Meeting, 18 February 2025, 4:00 p.m.**

**Via Zoom and in Union Capitol Rooms**

## **ACTION MINUTES**

**SENATORS PRESENT IN PERSON:** D. Allwardt, E. Asare, D. Brown, C. Chadwell, H. Elbe, D. Gravitt, D. Hunter, B. Petracovici, J. Robinett, S. Turkelli, J. Walker, L. Wipperling, E. Woell

**SENATORS PRESENT VIA ZOOM:** J. Albarracin, B. Bellott, E. Hamner, B. McDonald, J. McKenzie, R. Sharma

**SENATORS ABSENT:** B. Brewer, D. McArthur, A. Melkumian

**EX-OFFICIO:** Krista Bowers Sharpe, Parliamentarian; Interim Provost Mark Mossman

**GUESTS:** Marjorie Allison, Aaron Ames, Josh Averbek, Lori Baker-Sperry, Steve Bennett, Zaire Bradsher, Amy Burke, Amy Carr, Rich Filipink, Anita Hardeman, Sarah Lawson, Betsy Perabo, Jennifer Plos, Renee Polubinsky, Linda Prosise, Christopher Pynes, Jim Schmidt, Alisha White

### **I. Consideration of Minutes**

#### **A. February 4, 2025**

### **MINUTES APPROVED AS DISTRIBUTED**

### **II. Announcements**

#### **A. Provost's Report**

Interim Provost Mossman told senators the report from the Academic Program Elimination Review (APER) Committee is complete. He said the Provost's office is reviewing the report and should have some sort of action on the report by the end of the week. He expressed thanks to the committee members for their excellent and hard work.

Interim Provost Mossman related that the working group addressing the larger restructuring or rebuilding of Academic Affairs has now met three times and continues to do good, difficult work. He thinks they are making progress and stated that they will continue to meet weekly going forward.

Interim Provost Mossman is glad that the Faculty Senate created an ad hoc Committee on Responses to Federal Transitions because every day there is more news coming from the current administration. The newest action was a "Dear Colleague" letter that was sent to every public institution in the state of Illinois and elsewhere basically stating that universities need to end their various diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives within the next two weeks in order to continue to receive federal funding. He related that President Mindrup met this afternoon with presidents and chancellors across the state and will be providing more direction. Interim Provost Mossman stressed that WIU will maintain its commitment to its core values as an institution, no matter what, while simultaneously endeavoring to avoid losing all federal funding.

Interim Provost Mossman noted that tomorrow is Governor Pritzker's budget address, which is a big moment for the state as well as for WIU.

Senator Albarracin asked if the federal government seems to be changing its strategy from trying to eliminate funding grant-by-grant to just doing it for the entire institution, or whether these are parallel initiatives. Interim Provost Mossman responded that he has no idea. He related that another big scare occurred a couple of weeks ago when an announcement was made that all Pell grant money and

government student loans were going to be swept and taken away, but that was pulled back. He said there seems to be a tactic being used of saying something and then pulling back, but he is not sure where things will land or what the federal government is doing.

Senator Hunter asked if Financial Aid and the Counseling Office are equipped to handle student concerns. Interim Provost Mossman responded they are doing the best they can. He pointed out that the Counseling Center is also working with students who experienced a terrible tragedy yesterday on campus. He stated that with both of these offices, as with everyone else, there is a lot to deal with that affects students. Interim Provost Mossman thinks that the strength he has seen both at WIU and across the state is good communication. He has particularly seen this between presidents and provosts across the state who are working to make sure everyone is on the same page and who are giving good guidance to colleagues at other institutions.

Interim Provost Mossman stated that, as a follow-up to his response to Senator Albarracin's question, it has seemed that Chicago institutions are a bit more under the microscope at this moment than our institution in the rural western part of the state. He believes there has been good communication on both the Macomb and Quad Cities campuses, adding that everything is being run through WIU's legal office. He noted that university attorneys across the state, as well as the presidents and everyone else, are getting guidance from the Deputy Governor. He recognizes that a lot of energy is going toward the Governor's budget address tomorrow, and these are unfolding issues.

Chair Robinett explained, in regard to Interim Provost Mossman's earlier comment, that a WIU student passed away yesterday, and he anticipates more information will be coming out about that. Interim Provost Mossman apologized if he was vague in his earlier remarks. Chair Robinett noted that the student was a wonderful young man who was highly involved in a variety of things across the campus, including some of the activities sponsored by the Admissions Office, the Honors College, and fraternity and sorority life. He said the student had a very active role in things around campus, and a lot of students have been mourning his loss.

#### B. Student Government Association Report

Mr. Bradsher informed senators that Alonso Ruffin, SGA Vice President for External Affairs, is planning for the next faculty luncheon with SGA. Mr. Bradsher expects that faculty will be informed via a mass email.

Mr. Bradsher stated that SGA's Vice President for DEI, Katilyn Crisantos, is planning her second Anti-Racism Task Force "Conversation Series" event for faculty and students. He encourages everyone to come because a lot of work is put into these events, and the first one had low attendance.

Mr. Bradsher read a statement from Jade Cross, SGA Director of Public Relations:

"Based on conversations I had at WIU ANEW, I definitely got the feeling that faculty aren't sure how to get students involved or [get their] attention for events they may plan or opportunities available. Due to that and not being able to talk to all the faculty, are there any ideas from faculty that we [SGA] can play a direct role to combat this issue? Or should we try to schedule a type of brainstorm [session] because I know this isn't just an issue for faculty but for organizations as well."

Mr. Bradsher added that Ms. Cross has been busy working with public relations currently because SGA's election season is coming up fast. He said Ms. Cross will be releasing an SGA newsletter in March to start a monthly process to help SGA become more well known among students and faculty.

Mr. Bradsher related that Stephen Druse, SGA Director of Technology, is still working on his AI Codex and collecting responses. He asked faculty to email Mr. Druse at [SJ-Druse@wiu.edu](mailto:SJ-Druse@wiu.edu) with their course syllabus policies. Mr. Bradsher related that Mr. Druse is also working on the University Writing Center Restoration Project, including orchestrating meetings and planning. He said Mr. Druse hopes to get everything figured out soon so that a bill can be presented to SGA to get the restoration started.

Mr. Bradsher has been working on the Staff Mental Health Project and has set a date for March 27 from 12-3 in the Union Capitol Rooms. He explained this will involve coffee and chatting between SGA and faculty. He hopes this will provide an opportunity for both to get to know each other and for students to express their appreciation to faculty for all the work they do. Senator Albarracin asked if there is a flyer for this event. Mr. Bradsher responded that he will try to make one and will definitely send a mass email to faculty inviting them to the event.

C. Faculty Senate Chair's Report

Chair Robinett said he wanted to start by thanking some people who do vital work but often go unseen. He expressed thanks to the facilities and grounds crew for keeping sidewalks shoveled and salted. He noted that, like many areas across campus, they have lost staff, but the university has not lost the amount of sidewalks and parking lots that they work to keep ready for everyone.

Chair Robinett expressed thanks to the faculty and staff who participated in the appreciation events last week for Athletics. He noted that the NCAA were on campus for a mid-year review of the Accelerating Academic Success Program (AASP) grant. He said the review was favorable, and Athletics has been invited to apply for that grant again. Chair Robinett said the grant has been enabling Athletics to partner better with the Student Learning Center and the Writing Center in order to collaboratively provide services for all students. He added that NCAA representatives suggested some great things that Athletics could continue doing to benefit everyone.

Chair Robinett announced that the first meeting of the ad hoc Committee on Responses to Federal Transitions is scheduled for next week. He said the "Dear Colleague" letter that Interim Provost Mossman received and a letter from the Office of Budget Management have both been uploaded to the shared Google drive for today's Senate meeting. He noted that the ad hoc committee will not have standard, set meetings but will rather meet as issues come up. He sees it as representing a rather nimble process of getting feedback from stakeholders and constituencies when things happen; there will be a group of names that the President and Interim Provost can pull from to call together when needed so that a lot of people can be involved.

Chair Robinett reported that a charge was given to CCPI this week asking that they review language to possibly be added to the Course Syllabus Policy. He said the language came out of the last visit of the Higher Learning Commission (HLC); they want to see consistent learning objectives on syllabi across sections of the same courses. He said the question of adding language relating to learning objectives needing to be on syllabi has been referred to CCPI to bring a recommendation back to Faculty Senate as the university prepares for the HLC four-year review and its next visit.

Chair Robinett pointed out that the shared drive folder also includes a Report of the Generative AI and Natural Language Processing Task Force that Amy Carr, WIU Representative to the Illinois Board of Higher Education Faculty Advisory Council, shared with senators at the last Senate meeting. He said it was a very interesting and helpful document about the ways that AI is being incorporated through a variety of processes that Chair Robinett had not considered. He added that the document is lengthy but uses a large font and can be read fairly quickly. Chair Robinett expressed his thanks to Senator Sharma and others who are sending him information about AI.

Chair Robinett has received a variety of emails related to the SOS suicide prevention training that faculty and staff were invited to participate in. He explained the training was sent out by the Counseling Center and helps the institution to meet the requirements of the Mental Health Early Action on Campus Act. He recalled that Cara Cerullo, Director of the Counseling Center, visited with Faculty Senate earlier this year to talk about all the things they are doing to support students and to be in compliance. He said this rollout of the SOS suicide prevention training was part of meeting the requirements of their grant and in order to keep the university compliant with the Act. Ms. Cerullo has confirmed to Chair Robinett that participation in the training is not mandatory but is very encouraged. Chair Robinett noted that the reminder email for the survey actually got sent out before the actual invitation to participate, so the rollout did not go as smoothly as the Counseling Center had hoped when working with an outside agency.

Senator Hunter remarked that the reminder email did not include any indication of who it came from, so he called the Provost's office to ask about it; Charlene Greuel, Administrative Assistant to the Provost, told Senator Hunter she thought it was a phishing exercise, so she deleted it, contacted University Technology, and found out that it was legitimate. Senator Hunter had in the meantime found the training exercise on WesternOnline and tried to complete the pre-survey, but it had some questions which he thought could not be answered honestly. He thought there was a lot of vetting on the pre-survey, and now he feels kind of stuck and unable to move forward to take the training. He applauds the effort by the Counseling Center to push this through but thinks it perhaps needed to be vetted by the Research Council to identify issues, such as the fact that questions 13-16 have no option for "none," which was the response he had for all of those questions.

Chair Robinett told senators he will follow up with Ms. Cerullo about the concerns that are being brought forward. He said she has been very responsive to his emails trying to figure out what needs to be improved and what the Counseling Center needs to do to make things good on the university side while also being compliant with the Act.

Senator Hamner remarked that he felt similarly to Senator Hunter and simply did not answer those questions. He said the survey allowed him to just click through them without answering, so Senator Hunter might want to try that strategy. Senator Wipperling said she also ran into this problem, and the survey allowed her to skip some of the pre-survey questions but afterward the actual survey did not populate for her to take. She asked Chair Robinett to include this in his email to Ms. Cerullo.

Chair Robinett said Ms. Cerullo asked that he share with senators that through the grant, the Counseling Center has been able to get 14 people trained as mental health first aid facilitators so that these trainings can be held on campus a bit more easily. He said Ms. Cerullo told him that the training has been extended to those in the community as well. He added that she said the Counseling Center continues to roll out support in order to allow faculty and staff to work with WIU students who may be navigating a lot of things. Senator Hunter reiterated that he applauds their efforts and thinks this will really benefit the campus. Chair Robinett will pass this along to Ms. Cerullo along with some possible suggestions for things she might do.

Chair Robinett echoed Interim Provost Mossman's information about the Governor's budget address, which will be held at noon tomorrow. He has been told there are a variety of places, especially online, that will be airing that address. He has also been told that what the Governor talks about tomorrow will likely provide a pretty strong blueprint for what his priorities for the year will be. He has heard that there is usually not much space between what the legislature does as compared to what the Governor talks about in his speech. Interim Provost Mossman confirmed that is correct; there are usually not a lot of changes, however, this has been an unusual year.

Chair Robinett reminded senators that the state advocacy event for the equitable funding model also occurs tomorrow. He said this is coming out of the Coalition for Transforming Higher Education, which has been working to develop a more equitable state funding system. He said the lobbying event for state higher education is scheduled for March 18 in Springfield.

Chair Robinett stated that the Space Allocation Committee has not held any additional meetings since the last time he reported out at Faculty Senate. He said the Academic Affairs Reorganization Committee meets every Monday. Chair Robinett meets with Interim Provost Mossman tomorrow to address some of the items coming out of that group, and he anticipates having more to report on that at the next Senate meeting.

Senator Hamner asked if March 18 is still the date for lobbying for higher education because information he got from UPI seemed to indicate that this may not be as much of a priority as being in Springfield when President Mindrup testifies about the Quad Cities Innovation Campus. Interim Provost Mossman replied he does not know if the date has been set for the President's presentation. He clarified that the President, the Interim Provost, and the Budget Director go to testify before the legislature, but last year that event occurred after the lobbying event where WIU faculty and

administrators visit legislative offices to advocate for certain things. He added that there will be a representative from the Provost's office at that event, as there was last year.

Chair Robinett related that several faculty members have spoken to him about ways they are communicating, either within their departments or within their classes. He said the Executive Committee discussed using discussion boards as a vehicle for people to connect asynchronously across time on topics that are important to them. He related that the Executive Committee was asked if they would be interested in providing a space for faculty to engage on a variety of topics, such as AI, pedagogical considerations, and professional development resources. He said this could involve a space where faculty would register in order to enter and engage with one another across a variety of discussion boards. Chair Robinett said one point that was made to him was that faculty have lost many of their previous points of contact; they do not see each other in the hallways or on campus as much as they used to and do not always know how to connect with others who share their interests. He said the question is whether Faculty Senate would be willing to serve as a nexus for creating these discussion rooms. He noted that they would not be anonymous discussion rooms, and faculty would need to choose to be in there. He said that, as Senator Gravitt suggested at ExCo, the discussion rooms would include a link to the intellectual property statement so that faculty would know that anything they put in the discussion room could be used by WIU or others. Chair Robinett added that the Executive Committee would be tasked with monitoring the discussion rooms to make sure that anything is eliminated which is inappropriate in that space. He said this is not yet a motion, but he would like to get a sense from senators as to their thoughts on this.

Senator Hunter remarked that there was something similar in place using the email system before the university went to Gmail. He thought it was really nice because he was able to catch the tenor of the academic community across campus and learn about the issues that were happening. He thinks discussion boards would be a great idea.

Chair Robinett read comments from Josh Averbek in the zoom chat: "Google Classroom would be a great location for that. It's easier to navigate than WesternOnline discussion boards."

Chair Robinett asked if senators have any general concerns or objections to this idea. There were none. Chair Robinett said the Executive Committee will move forward with exploring this possibility and try to have something for senators to look at for the next meeting.

E. Other Announcements

1. Election of Senator to Budget Transparency Committee to Represent the College of Education and Human Services

Senator McKenzie, Education, volunteered to fill the vacancy. There were no further nominations, and she was declared elected.

III. Reports of Committees and Councils

A. Council on Admission, Graduation, and Academic Standards (CAGAS)  
(Rich Filipink, Chair)

1. CAGAS Response to Request to End Y Graduation Requirement

Chair Filipink pointed out to senators that they have his report regarding CAGAS's response to the proposal, and he is happy to answer any questions. CAGAS voted against the proposal from the Provost's office to eliminate the Y graduation requirement. There were no questions, and Chair Robinett declared the report accepted.

**NO OBJECTIONS**

B. Council on Curricular Programs and Instruction (CCPI)

(Amy Burke, Chair)

1. Curricular Requests from the Department of English

a. Request for Change of Minor

i. Professional Writing

**CHANGE OF MINOR APPROVED**

b. Request for Change of Major

i. English

**CHANGE OF MAJOR APPROVED**

c. Requests for Changes of Options

i. Creative Writing

ii. Literature and Language

iii. Professional Writing

**CHANGES OF OPTIONS APPROVED**

C. Council on General Education (CGE)

(Alisha White, Chair)

1. Requests for Inclusion in General Education

a. RPTA 110, Concepts of Leisure, 3 s.h.

**RPTA 110 APPROVED FOR GEN ED INCLUSION**

b. GEOL 113, Energy and Earth Resources, 3 s.h.

Senator Gravitt observed that the course has an extensive list of goals and objectives, which she does not object to, but she wonders if the department wants all of those being measured. She asked if this is the same list of goals and objectives used in similar IAI-approved courses. Steve Bennett, professor of the Department of Earth, Atmospheric, and Geographic Information Sciences, responded that this is the same list that was used when the course was submitted for inclusion in the Illinois Articulation Initiatives (IAI). Dr. Bennett serves as co-chair of the IAI panel on the physical sciences, and he confirmed that IAI strongly supports having a lot of objectives for this category; if a department wants to go through the process smoothly, having a lot of objectives is better than too few. Senator Gravitt said her program has been advised to only have three objectives, for example, rather than 20, and this seemed like a very long list of objectives that, in theory, would all have to be assessed. Dr. Bennett clarified that departments are only asked to choose two of the Gen Ed goals to assess in order to be approved for WIU General Education inclusion.

**GEOL 113 APPROVED FOR GEN ED INCLUSION**

D. Senate Nominating Committee (SNC)

(Julia Albarracin, Chair)

1. Nominations to Ad Hoc Committee on Responses to Federal Transitions

Jonathan Hammersley, Psychology (A&S)  
Anna Valeva, Accounting and Business Administration (B&T)  
Hollie Mason, Education (E&HS)  
Andrea Baker, Music (FA&C)

Chair Robinett told senators there were more faculty wanting to serve on this ad hoc committee than there were vacancies based on the way he and President Mindrup originally established the membership. He expressed thanks to the Senate Nominating Committee for determining the college nominees and announced that if there are individuals who, while not appointed by the Senate today, strongly want to participate on this committee, they can reach out to Chair Robinett who will confer with President Mindrup about the possibility of adding more members. He stressed that they are in no way trying to keep people from advocating on behalf of service, students, and their communities, so if there are people who really want to serve on this committee or populations who are not represented, he will have that conversation with President Mindrup and move forward on that.

There were no further nominations, and the four were declared elected.

IV. Old Business - None

V. New Business

A. For the Good of the Body

Senator Albarracin stressed the importance of attending the listening sessions related to the proposed equitable funding formula on Thursday, February 20 from 12:00-2:00 p.m. She thinks it is very important to have a good showing and to explain the conditions in which faculty sometimes have to conduct operations at this university. She thinks it is important to show up so that individuals can hear how hard everyone works and that financial support is needed for this institution. Senator Albarracin explained that, if the equitable funding formula passes, universities would also be funded based on how many underserved students they support and not just on how many students they have. She noted that there is a discrepancy between the amount of funding the University of Illinois gets per student and the amount WIU gets per student, which is not well known, and this effort is intended to try to correct those types of inequities.

Chair Robinett asked senators to please consider the time not being used for today's meeting as credit toward the times that will be used moving toward the rest of the semester. He anticipates that there will be a lot of curricular requests moving through, and there are committees that are currently doing yeoman's work on everything from WesternOnline to establishing how courses count toward Multicultural Perspectives and other things that he and Interim Provost Mossman have mentioned. Chair Robinett anticipates that Faculty Senate will also be very busy in discussions about Academic Affairs reorganization in the coming weeks.

Senator Gravitt related that she spoke to the Director of the School of Engineering and Technology this morning who reiterated that they do not have official workload documents or college documents in terms of promotion and tenure criteria. She stated that even though ACE sheets are being completed, there is still no definitive comparison because workload documents have not been approved. She thinks there will be issues with ACEs not being approved because there is nothing to compare them to. Chair Robinett stated that if Senator Gravitt sends this to him in an email, he will discuss it with Interim Provost Mossman at their regular meeting. Dr. Filipink remarked that he spoke to the Provost's office about this issue earlier today, and they indicated they would have something for everybody by next week. He added that they are waiting on responses from several departments to changes that had been requested or required. Dr. Filipink stated that if there are issues regarding work that faculty did this year and for which they are not getting ACEs, they should inform him about it in his role as UPI Grievance Officer.

**Motion:** To adjourn (Gravitt)

The Faculty Senate adjourned at 4:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Annette Hamm, Faculty Senate Recording Secretary