

WESTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY FACULTY SENATE

Regular Meeting, 24 February 2026, 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, P. Cole, H. Elbe, D. Gravitt, M. Hoge, D. McArthur, J. McKenzie, A. Melkumian, J. Robinett, R. Sharma, F. Tasdan, S. Turkelli, L. Wipperling, E. Woell

SENATORS PRESENT VIA ZOOM: R. Di Carmine, A. Frederick, E. Hamner, R. Kelly, H. Mason, J. Walker

SENATORS ABSENT: N. Gillotti

EX-OFFICIO: William Gblerkpor, Parliamentarian; Jessica Lin, Associate Provost

GUESTS: Tawnya Adkins-Covert, Lori Baker-Sperry, Victoria Baramidze, Keith Boeckelman, Amy Carr, Merrill Cole, Katrina Daytner, Dennis DeVolder, Patty Eathington, Anita Hardeman, Tahir Khan, Samantha Klingler, Rick Kurasz, Kyle Mayborn, Kat Myers, Lorette Oden, Betsy Perabo, Jennifer Plos, Renee Polubinsky, Justin Schuch, Eric Sheffield, Amanda Silberer, Ligu Song, Sebastian Szyjka, Rich Toomey, Riley Zanger

Senator Wipperling observed that there is an “AI Note Taker” in the Zoom and asked if that was allowable. Chair Robinett responded that no rules have been set down prohibiting this type of attendance, but it is probably something that should be discussed with the Parliamentarian after the meeting.

I. Consideration of Minutes

A. February 10, 2025

MINUTES APPROVED AS DISTRIBUTED

II. Announcements

A. Provost's Report

Associate Provost Jessica Lin expressed Provost Mossman’s regards since he could not be present. She told senators that one important announcement following the last Senate meeting and various discussions is that an appointment has been made for the Dean position for the College of Humanities, Arts, Sciences, and Education (CHASE). She announced that current Interim Dean, Kyle Mayborn, has agreed to serve as the one-year appointee for next year. She explained that he will help the college get through the Rebuild, then discussions about subsequent searches can happen later. Associate Provost Lin said the Provost’s Office thought Interim Dean Mayborn’s appointment would help drive the next phases, the appointment of associate deans, the workload documents, and all of the other things that need to happen. She said Interim Dean Mayborn and Tara Feld, Dean of the College of Business, Health, and Community Programs (CBHCP), are working in conjunction on the logistics of getting the Rebuild off the ground.

Associate Provost Lin hopes that Interim Dean Mayborn’ appointment will help kick off the associate dean searches more formally, and work is already beginning on what the job descriptions will look like. She said Chair Robinett will speak about the search committee structure, but she is optimistic that those searches can be launched soon so that applicants can start applying before spring break. She hopes that the candidate review process might be able to begin shortly after spring

break because after that the searches will begin for director positions. She said the Provost's Office is very much committed to getting this done, and she thinks they are on track to do so.

Associate Provost Lin observed that some of the reports from the Rebuild committee have been loaded onto the dashboard. She thanked those groups for their hard work, noting that she is aware there was a little delay in posting them, but the Provost's Office appreciated the time to look them over and discuss them with the Rebuild Constituency Committee. Associate Provost Lin also commended the advisors who did a ton of work in soliciting a lot of feedback; she appreciates them taking this extra step.

Associate Provost Lin noted that senators will be considering school structures at today's meeting and hopes that once these structures are in place there can be conversations not just among the academic units but also with all of the services that go on behind the scenes, such as those dealing with finances, reporting lines, and human resources paperwork, so that there can be as smooth a transition as possible on July 1. She said the Provost's Office is excited to bring civil service into the conversation more formally on Thursday, February 26 at 11:00. She noted that the meeting will now be held in the Union Capitol Rooms because there was a bigger than anticipated response to the meeting announcement. She said civil service is being invited so that the Provost's Office can hear their concerns and questions before decisions are made. She thinks everyone can agree that civil service positions are widely understaffed, and their input is critical.

Senator Cole expressed a sense of shock because just recently his college did not have a dean and now they suddenly do. He recalled that at the Faculty Senate meeting two weeks ago senators were told that filling this position would have to wait, but now they are being told that the position is filled. He stated that while he appreciates Interim Dean Mayborn immensely, this course of events is rather shocking. He asked if Associate Provost Lin can say anything more than that the Provost's Office has totally switched gears and what they said before is no longer the case. Associate Provost Lin replied she would not say the Provost's Office has truly switched gears because this appointment is not permanent in any way; this is a very clear one-year contract to get through next year. She asserted that the Provost's Office is not trying to bypass a search; what she said two weeks ago is that they thought they might be able to relaunch a second attempt at the end of the spring semester. She explained that as the Provost's Office listened to feedback on that plan, it became clear to them that there may need to be a different path and that people really thought that the associate dean search needed to have a kind of point person to move forward. She does not think this is a complete 180; rather, the Provost's Office listened and found a response to the concerns that they heard. She admitted, though, that it is a slightly different message.

Senator Gravitt observed that at the last Senate meeting there was a lot of concern about someone being appointed without any real input from the faculty, but since Senator Cole just found out today, she assumes this appointment has not been widely announced so that faculty could get on board with that for next year. She asked if the Provost's Office got some consensus that this was something that CHASE faculty could agree to. Associate Provost Lin responded that she does not know whether sufficient opportunity was available to solicit large amounts of feedback for a one-year appointment. She thinks the priority has been to keep things on track. She thinks everyone already knew that Interim Dean Mayborn was working to coordinate things for CHASE, so the Provost's Office just kind of formalized that effort. She stressed that they are not bypassing the permanent appointment of a dean; the Provost's Office remains very committed to that. She added that they also remain committed to this for the associate dean and director searches, which is why they want to keep the train moving so that they can continue to honor that commitment with the next positions.

Senator Gravitt remarked that she is happy with the one-year appointment because that will provide more time to engage in a more thorough and thoughtful process for the permanent dean and will allow more people to consider the position and provide good evaluations. She stressed that her support is contingent upon still having equal faculty input for the next searches. She added that one reason she is in support of the appointment is because she has been feeling very rushed the past year.

Chair Robinett related that in his conversations with Provost Mossman and with the deans, Faculty Senate, as well as others, will still have roles in subsequent searches. He pointed out that, as opposed to the way things have been done in the past, faculty were more involved in the selections of the associate and assistant provosts, and there will be more opportunities for faculty involvement, all the way through the selection of school directors. Chair Robinett told senators that he plans to ask for volunteers for the associate deans searches when he gets to the Faculty Senate Chair's Report. He said that while the Provost's Office will lead those searches, the committee will include a director or chair from each of the colleges, two Senate reps for each college, a civil service representative, and a representative from the Council of Administrative Personnel (COAP). He observed that while it is not exactly the same as the Administrator Selection Procedures, that policy is being very closely mirrored for searches that have not had very many faculty on them historically. Senator Gravitt asked if there will be two separate committees, one for each college; Chair Robinett responded that is correct. He added that senators would serve on the committee for their college.

B. Student Government Association (SGA)
(Ripley Zanger, SGA Director of Academic Affairs)

Ms. Zanger reported that SGA has met only once since the last Faculty Senate meeting, and that meeting did not include any formal business, just announcements; they did not meet last week because there was no new business to discuss. SGA is trying to promote the Illinois Supreme Court's hearing to students; they will be on WIU's Macomb campus on March 11.

Ms. Zanger said SGA is also in the campaign period for their elections. She noted that the petitioning period has ended, and voting will be held from March 4-11. Ms. Zanger told senators that four candidates completed their petitions for positions: Kaitlynn Tutt, currently Vice President for Internal Affairs, who has been on SGA for two years and previously served as a senator, will be vying for SGA President against Alonzo Ruffin, who was previously Vice President for External Affairs and is currently serving as eBoard member on the Inter-Hall Council. She said that for SGA Representative to the Board of Trustees, graduate student Bradley Jenkins is running against Ms. Zanger, who prior to serving as SGA Director of Academic Affairs served as a senator for two years.

Senator Gravitt asked if SGA has been discussing the April 16 trip to Springfield in support of the equitable university funding formula. Ms. Zanger responded that she brings it up at SGA every week. Senator Gravitt asked if Ms. Zanger has seen much support from students. Ms. Zanger reaffirmed that she has been announcing it, but there is no sign-up sheet yet, so she has no way of assessing student support. Chair Robinett said he will follow-up with UPI Chair Merrill Cole and ask him if there will be a way for students to sign up, then communicate that information back to SGA. Senator Gravitt observed it will be difficult to organize transportation without knowing about how many people might go. Ms. Zanger thinks there are a lot of SGA senators who would be interested in the trip, but posting a link to a sign-up sheet would be a much better way of determining how many are interested in going.

Senator Hoge remarked that he is pushing for as many Agriculture students to make the trip as possible. He said that the School of Agriculture has been invited to Springfield in recognition of their national success, but he would like to take the same group of students back on April 16. He has asked Agriculture faculty to do what they can to encourage students to make the trip since he has heard that the legislature does not want to hear from faculty as much as they want to hear from students. He thinks it would be wonderful to have standing room only for this event and hopes that the place can be packed with interested students. He thinks Ag will bring about 30. Ms. Zanger thinks that faculty promoting the event to students will really help, but it would be good if they could give students the sign-up sheet so that they can really commit to making the trip. She agrees that the more students who attend, the better. Chair Robinett said that he regularly has conversations with Dr. Cole, so he will be sure to bring up the sign-up sheet to him and convey that information back.

C. Faculty Senate Chair's Report

Chair Robinett met with the Council of Illinois University Senates (CIUS) last Friday, February 20; this is a meeting of the chairs of academic senates across the state. He said deferred maintenance was one of the large issues that everyone seemed to share. He noted that WIU is not the only university that is reorganizing; several other institutions are changing in terms of the number of colleges on their campuses and also how the colleges themselves are constructed.

Chair Robinett said there were many conversations related to shared governance; some institutions have senates that include more than just faculty, while some have university-wide senates. He related there was a great deal of discussion about the relationship between senates and their collective bargaining units. He observed that this is Illinois State University's first year navigating collective bargaining, and they are having some adventures in who does what, how they do it, and what the lines are for these sorts of things. He said there was discussion of release time for those involved in shared governance and what that looks like on different campuses.

Chair Robinett related that CIUS discussed tuition and other forms of increases that institutions are considering. He observed that some universities use differential tuition so that if students are in certain programs, their tuition may be a different cost in order to try to line up the things they are doing. He noted that one thing most of the institutions agreed on was that they wish the pie of higher education funding was bigger across the state. He added, however, that they also had a rather clear conversation that not all institutions are in the same situation, so while they may all be in the same storm, they are not all in the same boat.

Chair Robinett related that some senate chairs in the University of Illinois system are not particularly happy with the equitable funding formula and expressed their opinions about why they do not support it. Chair Robinett, as well as senate chairs from Eastern Illinois and Northern Illinois Universities, pushed back that while it may seem like a small amount of money to institutions in the University of Illinois system, it can be a large amount of money to others, like WIU. He noted that Northern Illinois University's senate voted last week on a resolution encouraging the Illinois Board of Higher Education to advocate more on behalf of the equitable funding formula as well as for funding overall for higher education. He said Eastern is considering doing the same based on the conversation from last Friday, and Chair Robinett included in senators' packets the resolution from Northern and a suggestion on what WIU's Faculty Senate might potentially do. He added that CIUS also talked about April 16 and the advocacy efforts that all believe are really necessary.

Chair Robinett stated that what is needed now regarding all of the reports collected about the Rebuild is feedback. He pointed out there is a Jot Form on both the Provost's website and the Faculty Senate website that enables the sending of comments and questions about the Rebuild. He suggested that if a response from Faculty Senate or the Executive Committee is sought, the Jot Form on the Faculty Senate website should be used, but if a response is sought from the Provost, the comment or question can be sent directly there using the Jot Form on that website. He added that the comment can be sent to both if it is something that both the Provost's Office and Faculty Senate should consider.

Chair Robinett told senators that members of the Academic Use of Space Committee did building tours last Thursday and Friday, February 19 and 20, but this was not intended to make decisions about anything. He said the purpose was so that the group that is pulling together the recommendations would have a better understanding of the intricacies and complexities of the buildings that WIU has. Chair Robinett thinks there is a lot of space that is being underutilized on the Macomb campus, and, in some cases, departments have developed sort of squatter's rights in certain areas, but that may not be the best use of those spaces. He stressed that the people touring the buildings were not doing so in order to limit what people are currently doing but to understand what exists in the buildings and how things are working. He added that their report is not due until the end of the academic year because the Provost's Office wanted some of the schools to be in place before having some of these conversations.

Chair Robinett noted that senators today will be considering changes to the Faculty Senate Constitution, including its composition moving forward. He noted that, as of today, there would be

13 schools, and senators would serve on a 1:20 ratio. He appreciates that Senator Hamner reached out to ask Chair Robinett where the number 17 came from as a baseline rather than 23. Chair Robinett responded that 17 is the number of schools plus two at-large senators from each college. He said that number emerged as the ad hoc Faculty Governance Committee compared a variety of permutations; they wanted to have a baseline for representation and then sort of build from there. He added that faculty in the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs would be able to serve at-large.

Chair Robinett pointed out that under the proposed changes to the Constitution, Faculty Senate would move from its current 23 members to 25. He observed that, given the Senate's present numbers and the anticipated movement of some chairs and directors into faculty lines, there would be no changes to apportionment until Fall 2027. He noted that Senate currently has some areas that are not as represented and one area that is over-represented, but no one is getting kicked out of Faculty Senate or its councils or committees based on the Rebuild; instead, the determinations will be made in tune with apportionment and how that works. He stated that, as of today, based on the number of faculty within its schools, CHASE would have 13 votes in Senate while CBHCP would have 12, a fairly even distribution as things move forward.

Chair Robinett told senators that most of the Senate councils and committees have communicated to him and to Ms. Hamm how they would like for their memberships to be adjusted. He recalled that this charge was given to the councils at the second meeting of Faculty Senate this past fall, so people have been talking about this in their meetings. He noted that while most of the councils prefer to just increase the number of college representatives when the number of colleges is reduced to two, others prefer to go to more of a school model because they felt that type of representation was important. He added that Senate councils cannot work on their operating papers until the constitutional amendments are approved; then, the bylaws will help specify some of that information for them. He said that Senate councils and committees will bring changes to their policies and procedures documents and their annual reports to Faculty Senate for consideration at the first meeting in the fall.

Chair Robinett asked senators to encourage their colleagues to participate in the president and provost evaluation surveys since as of today there has not been much response to them. He told them that a reminder will go out on February 26 along with the email of updates from this meeting. He recalled that the Board of Trustees conducted their own evaluation of the president in the fall, but there was not a large response to that, so if faculty could provide a larger response to the Faculty Senate survey it would be appreciated. He thanked the Senate Committee on Provost and Presidential Performance for the work they did on the survey.

Chair Robinett announced that the Senate Nominating Committee survey has also been sent out. He said that chairs and directors were allowed to participate in the survey this year given that it is not certain what will emerge from the collective bargaining process regarding those positions; because of this, the decision was made not to bar them from potential possibilities for service and to provide them with the same opportunities as everyone else. Chair Robinett also noted that the survey from the University Committee on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression (UCOSOGIE) has also been emailed out. He highlighted that there are lots of different ways that faculty are being asked to participate in decision making and understanding what situations may be around the university.

Chair Robinett asked for senators to indicate if they are willing to serve on the search committees for the associate deans in CHASE and CBHCP. He explained that, similar to the dean searches, he will compile a list of senators who are willing to volunteer for these committees; then, as the search is refined, dates will be sent out to this group to see what works well for them. He understands that senators are all busy and wants to be respectful of their time. Ms. Zanger asked if there will be student representatives on any of these search committees. Chair Robinett responded there are no student representatives on this level of search, although there are on searches at the vice presidential level, but this is something that he could visit with her on.

Volunteers for the associate dean searches for CHASE were Senators Wipperlind, McKenzie, Cole, Sharma, and Mason. Volunteers for the associate dean searches for CBHCP were Senators Allwardt,

Hoge, Melkumian, Gravitt, and Kelly. He added that if there are additional senators who wish to serve on these search committees, they should reach out to let him know.

Chair Robinett pointed out that there is a lot going on, and he hopes that when senators look at the numbers and data they take a moment to reflect on how much faculty are participating. In reference to the number of surveys which have gone out recently with perhaps more to come, Senator Mason remarked that it would be helpful if there was a website where all of the links to the various surveys could be listed so that faculty would not have to rifle through their emails to find them because she feels that they can get lost. Chair Robinett explained that, for the integrity of some of the surveys, Faculty Senate uses Qualtrics, which sends them out via direct email to one person, and each of those links is unique. He said that would make what Senator Mason proposes challenging, but he can talk with Administrative Information Management Services (AIMS) about it to see if there is a way to make this happen. He said that if there is a way that AIMS could do this while maintaining the integrity of the surveys, he would be willing to look into it.

E. Other Announcements

1. Justin Schuch, Vice President, Student Success

Vice President Schuch reported that last year the division really focused on developing an updated mission statement for which they solicited feedback from many individuals:

“The Division of Student Success strives to support students by **meaningful connections**, promoting **inclusive well-being**, and empowering students to **build their future capacity**. Through these efforts, the division equips students with the skills, knowledge, and resilience needed to thrive.”

Vice President Schuch reminded senators that the division went through a pretty large organizational restructure last year, so some of the things being reported this year are the successes from that while others are things the division continues to focus on. He noted that the Division of Student Success was organized into three areas: Access and Support; Connection and Engagement; and Health and Wellness. He said there are multiple individuals who hold leadership roles within the division; Joe Roselieb, Assistant Vice President of Student Success and Auxiliary Services, oversees Connection and Engagement, but since he is on the Quad Cities campus today, Vice President Schuch will discuss his area.

Vice President Schuch introduced Rich Toomey, Assistant Vice President of Admissions and Enrollment Support, to talk about his area of Access and Support and some of the enrollment efforts going on. The area of Access and Support includes new student and family programs, undergraduate admissions, transfer student services, veteran student recruitment, and international student recruitment. Assistant Vice President Toomey said he took his position in Student Services in October 2025 and over the past four and a half months has been trying to work his way around the campus to visit with individual departments and chairs. He asked those who have not met him yet to please invite him because he would be happy to connect with senators and their departments. He told senators he has had about 33 years in public higher education and worked at four other public institutions before coming to WIU; among them, he spent about six years at his alma mater, a flagship campus of the University of Massachusetts, four years at a small state school in Massachusetts, and 18 years at Indiana State University in a variety of capacities, including admissions, financial aid, marketing, and new student orientation.

Assistant Vice President Toomey explained the focus for him and the team he gets to work with will have a two-fold approach coming into the next year; they will work primarily on the concepts of service and of process. He said the process side includes working with Colleague and Slate and looks at how the university can better utilize the tools that are coming but are not fully optimized yet. He explained that Slate is a CRM (Constituent Relationship Management) program which provides an opportunity for tracking all of the

inbound and outbound messaging with prospective students. He said it will serve as a complement to Student Information Systems (SIS) which are currently being converted over to Colleague. He pointed out that any time individuals are operating a new system, there will obviously be pains and woes, but Student Success will be going through two at once.

Assistant Vice President Toomey emphasized that the division will be focused on service in the context of what expectations will be set, how they plan to put enrollment first, and what that means. He said the division plans a number of new initiatives, including a new focus on military-affiliated recruitment of both undergraduate and graduate students. He said that Ron Pettigrew has been brought into the Division of Student Success as the Assistant Director for Military-Affiliated Student Recruitment to help with that effort. Assistant Vice President Toomey said this is in response to the focus on trying to think about different populations that can be appealed to and how to reach out to niche populations. He informed senators that current thinking about the demographic cliff indicates that things will not change in the foreseeable future; in fact, projections now show the demographic cliff still being impactful well beyond 2037, which was the initial prediction, and as far as 2051 because of the state of the U.S. economy. He said that Student Services is seeking to focus on other aspects of recruitment in light of there being little anticipation of seeing significant change in the population of traditional age students coming into the university.

Assistant Vice President Toomey said this is the division's first attempt as they start to embrace the idea of military-affiliated recruitment. He pointed out that he is being very specific with his word choice because this is not necessarily just about veterans. He explained the effort also includes active military, both undergraduate and graduate students, and children of veterans and active duty military, so Student Success is being very intentional about how they are trying to broaden the scope.

Assistant Vice President Toomey told senators that Student Success will also be changing the portfolio of what is involved in international recruitment. He noted that there have been some changes in personnel, so the division is taking this as an opportunity to focus more specifically on how to restructure international recruitment. He said this will involve thinking about how to respond to national and political impacts on international recruitment and working within those parameters. Assistant Vice President Toomey announced that Student Success is looking at a new role for a Director of International Recruitment, both graduate and undergraduate. He said they will also be looking for an immigration specialist who would focus on how and when the university issues visas and the process with students on that front. Assistant Vice President Toomey said he would be glad to come back to Faculty Senate to talk more about this.

Assistant Vice President Toomey told senators he has offered these examples to highlight that his area will be working to draft a strategic recruitment plan over the next couple of weeks, if not months. He explained that a strategic recruitment plan is an operational plan to coincide with the institutional strategic plan. He hopes to present the first draft of a strategic recruitment plan at a Board of Trustees meeting as well as to other important constituencies, like Faculty Senate. He thinks this will help Student Success to focus on what direction to go in. Assistant Vice President Toomey told senators his emphasis moving forward is to highlight the specific levers that Student Success has the ability to move back and forth as they try to shape what enrollment will be. He thinks this is an opportunity to think about the fact that the size of the pie is not changing, but individuals can impact what size of slice the university might get from that. He related that the strategic recruitment plan will emphasize specific levers, including financial aid and scholarships, promotion and marketing, and academic programs, and how to represent those. He compared this to lighting a theatre production and trying to get the perfect setting by adjusting the different pieces.

Assistant Vice President Toomey plans to provide more details in future on some of these plans and will be looking for feedback. He has been trying to make his way to the various academic areas and has already held two public, open listening sessions where he presented

a little bit about the strategic recruitment planning process as well as soliciting feedback about what his area's priorities should be moving forward. He is open to presenting more of these sessions as well as visiting units in order to gather all the feedback necessary to create a shared plan going forward. He would like for everyone at the university to share the mantra that "Enrollment is Job 1." He would like to see this mantra recognized at every level from the President to groundskeepers and everyone else because everyone has a role in determining WIU's enrollment and how to shape that going forward. He thinks this starts with strategic initiatives, such as the strategic planning process, which will allow for a determination of ways that every individual associated with the university can play a part in recruitment.

Vice President Schuch recognized that in addition to coming to a new institution only a short time ago, which is always difficult, Assistant Vice President Toomey arrived mid-cycle and has really hit the ground running. He said the fact that many people at the university have already met him shows that he is doing a great job helping shape what the division's future efforts will be. He wants to lift Assistant Vice President Toomey up because he knows it is really hard to walk into a new place of employment at any time, but it is particularly hard right here, right now, stepping into an enrollment-focused position, and Vice President Schuch thinks he is doing an exceptional job.

Vice President Schuch said that Assistant Vice President Joe Roselieb oversees the Connection and Engagement area, which includes Building Services, the Golf Course, the Multicultural Center, the Office of Student Engagement, University Housing and Dining Services, and the University Union. He pointed out that Building Services was recently added to this portfolio because Auxiliary Services was already paying for about 75 percent of those operations, so having them report to Assistant Vice President Roselieb allows Student Success to focus in on what the needs are for academic buildings, residence halls, and the Union. He noted that this switch is very recent, and some adjustments will hopefully be made over spring break to enable that team to focus on needs within academic buildings that have happened over time. He thinks that a restructuring of the reporting lines will allow for better collaboration.

Vice President Schuch said senators may have heard some updates about the Union, both physical moves and things that are coming up. He pointed out that the Office of Scheduling and Events is walled off currently because some adjustments are being made to that operation. He noted that over the past year that operation has grown, both in their outreach on campus as well as with the number of events being scheduled, and there needs to be better access to that area. He pointed out that a wall was removed this morning, but he hopes the team will be able to quickly get back into that area.

Vice President Schuch related that construction will begin right after spring break on the larger move of the Office of Student Engagement to a redeveloped space downstairs in the Union. He explained the vision for the lower level of the Union is for it to truly be a student engagement space. He noted that The Neck has gone over really well with students over the past year, and Student Success plans to redefine the use of some of the other spaces on that lower level with the goal of having it open later into the evening so that it can really be a student-centered space. Vice President Schuch noted that the move of the Office of Student Engagement to the Union lower level will provide them with more room than they have in their current location and allow for creation of some meeting spaces for elected student leaders. He thinks this will allow for better use of space that has not been utilized in the past.

Vice President Schuch stated that once the Office of Student Engagement has moved down to the lower level, the Office of Housing and Dining Services will move into their former space. He noted that they are the only operation left in Seal Hall, which will be taken offline; once the heating and air goes out in Seal, it will not be repaired. He said there are only a handful of staff in Seal now, and moving them to the Union will provide a better space for Housing and Dining than where they are now.

Vice President Schuch said his office is sending out a survey to allow faculty and staff to vote for what restaurant they would like to see in the Union. He explained that Chick-fil-A, as a company, has decided to change their business model and move away from any small front operation that does not gross over \$1 million per year. He stressed that this was not a WIU decision, and Student Success is not overly pleased with this decision. He said Sodexo is currently working with Chick-fil-A because that company wants to be out of WIU this summer, but the university does not think that is an appropriate timeline. He hopes that Chick-fil-A will agree to stay in the Union one more year, but Student Success is preparing in case they do not. He said they are working to provide a really good option that students, faculty, and staff can be excited about. He noted there are three options that students have provided feedback on, and the same survey is being sent to faculty and staff to vote for Popeyes, Sonic, or Panera. Vice President Schuch pointed out that whichever restaurant is chosen would provide a limited menu. He asked faculty to reinforce that this decision was not initiated by WIU but was a result of the Chick-fil-A company moving to a new model. He said that if they leave this summer, Student Success will work immediately to try to get a new option in, but they would likely not be able to open in Fall 2026 but shortly after, which is what happened when Chick-fil-A came to WIU.

Vice President Schuch told senators that Purple and Gold Points is a new initiative for the division which has had great success in terms of getting students involved. He said that something was needed to get students engaged again post-Covid, and this program has been very helpful. He noted that over 960 events occurred through this program in Fall 2025; during Fall 2024, 2,614 separate students swiped into events, and those students swiped in a little over 13,000 times. He said this year there have been 2,675 unique students swiping into events, so even with the decline in enrollment the number went up a little bit, and those students swiped over 20,000 times, over a 50 percent increase in students coming out to events. Vice President Schuch believes this program is working and said Student Success is going to continue to reinforce it. He added that student leaders have been excellent in sharing information about it. He noted that some faculty have worked with the Office of Student Engagement to get some of their events included. His office plans to reassess the program this summer and continue to build on it.

Vice President Schuch introduced Samantha Klingler, Assistant Vice President for Student Success and Wellness, who oversees the Health and Wellness area within Student Success. He said she will highlight the great work done through a state grant that has supported a ton of great things for Student Success. The Health and Wellness area of Student Success encompasses the Beu Health Center, Student Recreation, the Student Development and Success Center, Student Rights and Responsibilities, the University Counseling Center, and the Veterans Resource Center.

Assistant Vice President Klingler told senators the Health and Wellness team have been working really hard during the past year and chose two main goals that they would like to accomplish this year, one of which was awareness. She explained the goal surrounding awareness involves promoting early intervention for WIU students, a goal for which her area has reached out to many attending the Senate meeting. She related that her team has conducted intervention training with new faculty, new administrators, deans, chairs, some departments, the Council of Administrative Personnel, the Civil Service Employees' Council, and Human Resources. Assistant Vice President Klingler said her area has tried to get in front of numerous groups to really talk about the Intervention Teams in Student Success and the care reporting process, which she thinks is really working very well. She asks faculty to continue to partner with her area as everyone works through the number of situations that WIU students find themselves in.

Assistant Vice President Klingler noted that the Intervention Team website has been updated to wiu.edu/intervention. She said it discusses in depth the behavioral Intervention Team, the Threat Assessment Team, and where care reports go; this is in a graph form and shows what

happens when faculty and others share concerns about students. She also has new flyers that are being funded through a grant which include a QR code that will take viewers to their new reporting page with options on the left for students and on the right for faculty and staff concerns. She added that a faculty and staff care reporting system has been developed in partnership with Human Resources so that faculty and staff can have easy access to Employee Assistance Program benefits. She suggested that this reporting can be used if a faculty or staff person has a conversation with a colleague that they think HR needs to be made aware of. She added that her area is working closely with Assistant Provost Kishor Kapale, who oversees graduate programs, since they plan to partner with graduate program directors soon to get this information out to them as well.

Assistant Vice President Klingler related the other thing her area has really been working on is collaboration, with the goal to really get students the services and support that they need. She pointed out that oftentimes faculty are the first line of defense when students struggle; faculty share those concerns with Student Success, and then students can get wraparound services. She explained that once care reports are submitted, the Student Development and Success Center (SDSC) acts as the case managers; students might need the services of the Counseling Center if they have experienced something traumatic, they might need medication from Beu, or they might need to have a conversation with Kelly Severs, Director of Student Rights and Responsibilities, about changing some behaviors they have been exhibiting. Assistant Vice President Klingler observed that the move of the Counseling Center to Beu Health Center has really facilitated greater working partnerships so that they are able to meet both students' mental and physical needs in one area. She noted that Assistant Provost Lori Baker-Sperry acts as liaison when concerns arise involving academic issues so that the Provost's Office is aware of some of these larger issues; Assistant Provost Baker-Sperry can then also offer support and insight from her perspective to the faculty who might be struggling with a student in their classroom.

Assistant Vice President Klingler told senators that most of these initiatives are being funded by a \$445,000 Mental Health Early Action on Campus (MEHAC) grant that was received in September. She said this has enabled speakers and training, such as have been offered for Purple and Gold points; one last speaker will be coming in March. She said the grant has paid for motivational interviewing training offered to faculty and staff and bystander intervention training, which will be offered to those involved with fraternity and sorority life in March and April. She noted that last year's grant paid for the Mental Health First Aid program and MindWise SOS, which are both ongoing, so they are seeing some good results from the use of that money.

Assistant Vice President Klingler outlined a service offered by the Counseling Center, WellTrak After Hours, which enables students to obtain counseling anytime, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. She said students can call the Counseling Center number, press 3, and be connected to WellTrak with a real live person on the other end of the phone. She stated that if students are off-campus, such as doing student teaching, and are not able to come to the Counseling Center in person between 8:00 and 4:30, vouchers are available that they can use to see different providers or take advantage of programs in their communities at no cost to them so that students can still have access to in-person counseling if they choose. Assistant Vice President Klingler said the grant has also helped with EdSights, Maxient, and MediCat, different software programs that are used on campus to interact with students. She noted that the grant has provided a stipend for a graduate student intern at the Counseling Center who is finishing up his last year at WIU through the Psychology Department.

Assistant Vice President Klingler told senators the grant also supports peer support and case managers in the Student Development and Success Center. She said it has enabled the purchase of computers for a lot of the Health and Wellness areas, upgrades which would have been impossible without those funds. She noted that the grant has also provided a lot of support for the Purple and Gold Points program, which they will continue since that program has really helped WIU students be engaged.

Vice President Schuch remarked that while the enrollment position that Assistant Vice President Toomey holds is a tough job, mental health and wellness is something that does not get easier year after year, and Assistant Vice President Klingler took on the charge for leading this area extremely well. He expressed appreciation for the work of her team. Vice President Schuch pointed out that the other areas with the Division of Student Success include Leatherneck Athletics, the Office of Public Safety, Student Belonging and Community Relations, and University Marketing and Communications. He said the division is really focused on where they are going now and maintaining momentum.

Vice President Schuch told senators that WIU fall-to-spring freshmen retention rose for the first time in six years. He noted that there has been a significant amount of work to achieve this, including finding new ways to help students, such as increased resources. Vice President Schuch is often asked which retention efforts are paying off and what has been beneficial and helpful, and some of that is certainly the work of faculty. He acknowledged that faculty did a remarkable job submitting early warning grades and enrollment verifications this year. He noted that while enrollment verifications are federally mandated and help Financial Aid, Student Success uses the information to do quick follow-ups with students. He said that this effort is led by Lorette Oden, Assistant Vice President of Student Belonging and Community Relations. He credits some of the rise in fall-to-spring retention to faculty reporting because Student Success was able to reach out to students much earlier, before there were bigger problems, which was very effective. He hopes that momentum can continue. He added that the Connections Mapping early intervention program has allowed for focused follow up that also has contributed toward retention.

Vice President Schuch noted that the MEHAC grant helps pay for EdSights, the RockyBot that students can interact with to answer questions 24 hours a day, seven days a week. He explained this provides both proactive and reactive top-of-the-line services using cutting-edge technology. He noted that 97 percent of WIU freshmen opted into that program and agreed to receive texts from Rocky, and 64 percent are actively texting back and forth, asking questions of Rocky and receiving responses. He said that number increases to about 75 to 77 percent when it is broken down into some of the underserved or underrepresented populations in the freshman class. Vice President Schuch thinks this is a great tool for Student Success which is beginning to move the needle on getting resources to students much faster than what could have been accomplished in the past. He noted that freshmen sent over 19,000 texts to RockBot over the past year, and it would be impossible to answer all of these without this tool.

Vice President Schuch told senators his division has launched a new website to let people know some of the great things happening at the institution: wiu.edu/successhappenshere. He noted that great news stories are happening all the time, but these are often focused on bigger things that impact the larger WIU community. He said this website will help people who want to know what new things are coming up or what is exciting. He said it will be updated weekly with some of the stories happening around the institution. Vice President Schuch often hears that University Marketing and Communications is not talking about some of the great things happening at the university, but that is often because they just do not know about them. He promised that if anyone submits a news story on the University Marketing and Communications website, the team will reach out to get more information and highlight it in an appropriate way. He realizes there are phenomenal things happening within the academic programs that University Marketing and Communications does not know about, and it is frustrating to see amazing things on Facebook that have already occurred but could have been promoted through them in advance.

On the topic of maintaining momentum, Vice President Schuch highlighted Leatherneck Athletics. He noted that WIU's women's exceptional basketball team is number one in the conference and will play their last regular home game on Saturday, February 28.

Senator Hoge asked if other options for Union restaurants had been considered, such as Raising Cane's. Vice President Schuch replied that because the current option, Chick-fil-A, has been popular, Student Success sought for options that would be similar in offerings and price point and those for which the company is willing to have a smaller operation that Sodexo would find workable. He said that Popeye's is the one which fits these criteria the closest.

Senator Tasdan asked about the current status of the international office staffing issue. He knows that Dana Sistko left the university and wonders if anyone is covering her position. Assistant Vice President Toomey responded that there are three positions that are currently being searched. He said the first position will be a Director of International Student Improvement to replace Randy Glean, who is retiring. He explained that this position will spearhead the undergraduate and graduate international student recruitment efforts as well as being charged with writing a specific strategic recruitment plan for the international student population. Assistant Vice President Toomey said there were 19 candidates for the Director position, and four will be brought to campus for a second-round interview sometime between March 9-27, and the campus community will be invited to open sessions for those. He said the second position is an Immigration Specialist to replace Dana Sistko, who left in December. Assistant Vice President Toomey told senators that Student Success has been contracting with her for extra help because the university had two people listed as their SEVIS contacts, which is the federal tool used to issue visas, and since one of them left it is not a question of who can do the work as much as it is a question of who has access to do it. Assistant Vice President Toomey submitted his name to SEVIS in October to be added as a designated official, and this was just approved yesterday. He noted that it took three and a half months for him to get approved, and the division is in the process of designating additional individuals. He is working with Human Resources on the Immigration Specialist search and understands there are three names in the pool. Assistant Vice President Toomey stated that the third position will work out of the Multicultural Center at the assistant director level. He thinks the focus of this position will be new for WIU as this person will work specifically with currently enrolled international students, both grad and undergrad. He stated that, much like many of the affinity groups currently in the Multicultural Center, this is an opportunity to better connect the international students with the larger campus population while also providing support systems to make sure that they have a go-to person, sort of an ombudsman, to a certain extent. He said the goal is to fill all three positions by the end of the spring semester. He was impressed that there were 19 applicants for the Director position and thinks Student Success will be in good shape for that one.

Vice President Schuch explained, because funds are at the top of everyone's minds, some of the restructuring, such as having international recruitment report through Assistant Vice President Toomey and housing current international student support in the Multicultural Center, will allow Student Success to see some actual salary savings. He pointed out that there is no new money requested even though Student Success will be netting a new position. He explained that the division took advantage of the timing of Dr. Glean's retirement to net an additional position which can focus on current international student support. He told senators that if they know of anyone who would be good in these positions, it is not too late to apply, and they should let those individuals know of the opportunities.

Senator Gravitt asked if Student Success has anyone who is addressing the issues of those WIU students who may be undocumented and are experiencing fears related to the current political climate. Vice President Schuch responded that the state mandates that the university have one person who is designated as the contact person for these students, but Student Services now has two people in that role. He noted that Melissa Telles formerly served as the undocumented student liaison and did an excellent job in that role, but, while she still helps with that, she has now moved into a different position in Admissions, and Kelly Severs is now serving as the liaison. He noted that Ms. Severs did the work to develop this position for the university originally.

Chair Robinett announced that Student Success is creating a campuswide Homecoming Committee for next year's event and has asked if a Faculty Senator would be willing to serve on it. Vice President Schuch explained that his division is bringing back this campuswide committee, which was disbanded for some reason several years ago. He said the senator would help communicate what is happening with Homecoming and share ideas on how to re-engage faculty and staff in that event. He said that while there will be committee meetings moving up to Homecoming, it should not be a tremendously time-consuming event, and Student Success hopes to find representatives from all of the major constituent groups. Senator Hoge volunteered to serve on the committee, stating that he thinks Homecoming is a critically important event for the university.

Chair Robinett thanked the representatives from Student Success for all they are doing to support students and for sharing those things with Faculty Senate. He told senators that if they have additional questions, they can send them to Chair Robinett, and the representatives can be invited back for a future meeting.

III. Reports of Committees and Councils

A. Council on Curricular Programs and Instruction (CCPI) (Bob Intrieri, Chair)

1. Request for New Course

- a. CHEM 459, Professional Practice in Forensic Science, 3 s.h.

NEW COURSE APPROVED

2. Request for Change of Major

- a. Forensic Chemistry

CHANGE OF MAJOR APPROVED

B. Council for International Education (CIE) (Tahir Khan, Chair)

1. Enrollment Trends in Foreign Language and Global Issues Courses, Fall 2022-Summer 2025

Chair Robinett reminded senators that this report was part of the charge given to the council last fall. He added that the report is presented as an informational item.

Senator Gravitt noted that her school offers a major-specific course that was formerly Global Issues but now has the new Multicultural Perspectives designation. She asked if this course would have been counted in terms of declines or increases in enrollments since it was major-specific rather than being open to everyone. Chair Robinett observed that, having read the report numerous times, he thinks the council did a fantastic job showing how some of this has changed over time. He noted that they frequently pointed out in the document that numerous courses were infrequently offered, which Chair Robinett found eye opening. He observed that a key recommendation to come out of the report is a desire for a process to review the courses making up some of these categories.

Chair Robinett does not believe the charge to CIE specifically asked them to address the drastic change that happened when General Education was changed. He told Senator Gravitt that something like her school's 351 course in the Business Core would not have fallen specifically within the charge that the council was given because it would not have existed in Summer or Fall 2022, which was to be the starting point for their charge. He thinks it would

have been difficult for the council to look at all of the curricular changes that happened specifically within that window. Dr. Khan agreed this was the case.

Senator Gravitt found it interesting that there were so many courses that were expanding due to over-enrolling them. She recalls that one of the Provost's biggest issues was that the university was offering too many courses, but she thinks the report shows that, in some cases, the university was not offering enough. Chair Robinett agreed that this is well noted.

Chair Robinett will make sure this report is shared with the Council on General Education when he meets with them. He pointed out that some of the results came from shifting courses online during Covid, so there was a great deal that could have affected enrollment. He asked Dr. Khan to express thanks to his council for the thoroughness of the report. He greatly appreciated that the methodology was included in order to help senators make sense of what they were reading. He thinks it was a very comprehensive report and plans to post it where others across the campus can see it as well.

- C. Senate Nominating Committee (SNC)
(Denise Gravitt, Chair)

SENATE COUNCILS AND COMMITTEES

Council on General Education (CGE)

David Banash, English replacing Sol Catala-Valentin 2027 AT-LARGE

Senator Gravitt explained that this nomination goes against the policies and procedures of this council; however, the SNC made every effort to get volunteers from the desired representative area and were unable to do so, so when Dr. Banash volunteered, they recommended to the Senate Executive Committee that his name be brought forward for consideration. She noted that ExCo had a robust discussion about the nomination since it did not fit the exact guidelines, but they determined that there are procedures allowing for this to happen. She added that this guideline may change with changes to the Bylaws; it is tied to the former Council on General Education structure which had more restrictions in terms of who could serve and from where. She said that there were discussions about whether this appointment would stack the deck towards one group rather than another, but she always assumes that people are volunteering as a good faith effort in terms of being considerate of the entire university's health. She is willing to say "yes and welcome" to anyone willing to serve.

Chair Robinett pointed out that the operating papers of many of the Senate councils have not been updated in recent years. He noted that what led to this particular situation is that in one place the CGE operating papers said that individuals had to represent particular areas and only a certain number of representatives could come from any one college, while later in the document it said that those areas could be filled by someone else if no one was willing to serve. He said Dr. Banash is willing to serve, and no one else from that area volunteered, but this puts one particular college over the number of representatives allowed. He explained that in an effort to make sure the Senate maintains integrity in the ways that they make nominations to committees and in order to be as transparent as possible, ExCo spoke about this situation at length, especially in light of the fact that the General Education review is getting ready to begin.

NO OBJECTIONS TO THE APPOINTMENT

IV. Old Business

- A. Proposed Changes to the Faculty Senate Constitution

1. Second Reading and Vote

Chair Robinett confirmed that the required number of senators are present in order to review the constitutional amendments. He thanked senators for their engagement with this process. He pointed out that the resolution was written in such a way as to make it divisible, so if they wish to vote on each amendment separately, they can, or the amendments can be voted on all together.

Motion: To vote on all of the amendments together (Gravitt/Melkumian)

Chair Robinett asked if all of the senators are comfortable proceeding in this way. There were no objections.

Senator Chakravorti observed that in Article III, under Representation, it says that a ratio of one senator for every 20 full-time faculty will be used. He asked where that number comes from and whether it is historical. Senator Wipperling, who chaired the ad hoc Faculty Governance Committee, related that they looked at lots of different institutions of similar size and representation in terms of what their constitutions specified, and between that and what the Faculty Senate has now for a body, the committee determined a similar size for the representation of schools. She explained that in this way current senators would be represented in a similar number to the current Senate. She said the committee tried to do this as equally as possible, so if a school has any number of faculty under 20, they will be represented by one senator, but schools with 21 and over would be represented by two senators.

Chair Robinett complimented the Faculty Governance Committee on their work. He noted that Senator Asare did a wonderful job of explaining that this particular system would allow for each school to have representation but would also allow for those schools that are larger to have more representation.

Motion: To approve the amendments (Gravitt/Melkumian)

MOTION APPROVED 22 YES (16 in-person, 6 zoom) – 0 NO – 0 ABSTENTIONS

Chair Robinett noted that the amendments passed with the two-thirds required. He said they will be distributed to faculty next week, where they would have to pass with a majority of those voting. He asked senators to please communicate with their colleagues about the proposed amendments so that they can contextualize what Faculty Senate is trying to do.

V. New Business

A. Creation of New Schools

Chair Robinett explained that Faculty Senate will handle the vote for revisions to the school designations the same way that the original votes were handled in May: voting on each school individually in its own right. He pointed out that one change to what was submitted for today's meeting is that Mathematics and Computer Sciences faculty asked to change their name. He said chairs of both areas submitted those votes, and they have been verified, so rather than the School of Computer Sciences and Mathematics this unit will be referred to during voting as the School of Computing, Data, and Mathematical Sciences. He reiterated that this was supported by faculty in both areas, but if there are questions, they can certainly be discussed.

Senator Gravitt asked if this will be the last time that senators will vote on the reorganizational structure. Chair Robinett responded that, as he has reiterated throughout this process, as new information emerges, such as if the state budget changes or as other things happen, senators may have to react to some of these things. He noted, however, that at this point Faculty Senate voted last year, and faculty have had the course of the year to go through and consider things. He said that when looking at the number of faculty who took the opportunity to vote and participate in this process, he feels fairly confident at this point.

Chair Robinett stated that while the current proposal is what is moving forward, it does not bar that there might have to be some changes in the future as different things could happen. Senator Chakravorti asked what kinds of changes those might be. Chair Robinett responded that some schools, as they refine their mission next year, may decide they want to make slight changes to their names, or faculty may potentially decide they want to move into a different school as they work through the next year. He thinks there still may be some sand that will shift, but overall, the Senate is setting the bottles in which the sand will go.

Senator Gravitt asked if existing schools that are basically staying the same would still have the potential to tweak their missions or make similar changes. Chair Robinett responded that they always have had that ability. He thinks one of the best things that has come out of this process is that faculty are learning about the shared governance process. He has had more people ask him about Board of Trustees regulations in the past three months than he heard over the course of the past year.

Chair Robinett stressed that this is not a reorganization; it is a rebuild. He said that means that as the university moves forward, both colleges have to come up with new missions. He pointed out that even schools which currently exist are not the same school because they will be in a different college, so their roles and relationships will be changing. He noted that this also means that if there are processes that are being done now that do not make sense, they should be called out.

Chair Robinett clarified that the faculty in these units have voted, so now senators will be voting as representatives of the entire university. The votes for the schools were:

School of Visual and Performing Arts

Yes: 19 No: 0 Abstentions: 1

School of Applied Clinical, Educational, and Professional Programs

Yes: 20 No: 0 Abstentions: 1

School of Computing, Data, and Mathematical Sciences

Yes: 21 No: 0 Abstentions: 1

School of Communication, Media, and Experience Industries

Yes: 21 No: 0 Abstentions: 1

School of Humanities

Yes: 22 No: 0 Abstentions: 0

School of Natural Sciences

Yes: 21 No: 0 Abstentions: 1

School of Nursing, Applied Health, and Human Performance

Yes: 21 No: 0 Abstentions: 1

School of Social Sciences

Yes: 22 No: 0 Abstentions: 0

Chair Robinett explained that the next three just want to return to their previous names based on shifts that have occurred since the vote was taken on May 13:

School of Accounting and Business Administration

Yes: 21 No: 0 Abstentions: 1

School of Engineering and Technology

Yes: 21 No: 0 Abstentions: 1

Note: No vote was taken on the School of Agriculture and the School of Education since they were not requesting any changes to what had been approved at the Faculty Senate meeting of May 13.

Chair Robinett expressed his thanks to the many faculty who have voted and participated in this process and to the chairs, directors, and deans who helped coordinate and get this done. He noted that one thing that can happen now is that the Registrar can begin refining some things related to programming.

B. Resolution in Support of an Adequate and Equitable Public University Funding Formula

Whereas, Illinois public higher education has experienced long-term structural disinvestment, resulting in significant erosion of institutional capacity, academic programming, student support, and workforce stability; and

Whereas, continued underfunding has shifted the cost of public higher education to students and families, increasing debt burdens, constraining access, and undermining the public mission of Illinois regional universities; and

Whereas, the FY2016–FY2018 state budget impasse produced severe and lasting reductions in real state support for Illinois public universities, the effects of which continue to constrain institutional capacity today; and

Whereas, Illinois state investment in public colleges and universities declined by nearly half (46%) in inflation-adjusted dollars between 2000 and 2020 and, despite modest increases in recent fiscal years, remains well below historic and adequacy-based funding levels; and

Whereas, the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE), through the Illinois Commission on Equitable Public University Funding, has documented that Illinois public universities operate substantially below equity-centered adequacy levels and has identified the need for \$1.4 billion in additional state funding to universities to support the full cost of equity-centered adequacy; and

Whereas, 10 of the 12 Illinois public universities are funded at less than 75% of the IBHE-identified adequacy level, with 8 universities (Eastern Illinois University, Governors State University, Illinois State University, Northeastern Illinois University, Northern Illinois University, Southern Illinois University–Edwardsville, University of Illinois–Chicago, and Western Illinois University) funded at less than 65%; and

Whereas, from FY2004 to FY2024, the average tuition at Illinois state universities increased by 199%, while the national average increased by 108%, a discrepancy that has contributed to increasing numbers of Illinois students attending out-of-state colleges and universities or being deterred from pursuing higher education altogether; and

Whereas, the student share of Illinois college education costs from tuition and fees has increased from 25.4% in FY2004 to 64.4% in FY2022; and

Whereas, the average graduating student debt in Illinois is now approaching \$30,000; and

Whereas, Western Illinois University is recognized through national classification and access metrics as an institution that advances social and economic mobility by providing accessible, affordable, and high-quality education to first-generation students, low-income students, rural populations, and historically underrepresented communities, and sustained inequitable public funding threatens the University’s capacity to continue fulfilling this critical public mission; and

Whereas, at its January meeting the IBHE recommended a 4.5% budget increase for FY2027, a recommendation that addresses neither the shortfall created by the 1% approved and released by the Governor for Illinois universities in FY2026 nor the structural inequities between Illinois universities; and

Whereas, the IBHE has recommended only a \$50 million increase in Monetary Award Program (MAP) funding, despite the state's failure to meet the outcomes of the IBHE strategic plan for the past two years; and

Whereas, the IBHE has not approved a motion to support the Equitable Public University Funding Formula, despite clear evidence of systemic inequity and institutional need;

Be it resolved, that the Faculty Senate of Western Illinois University declares that adequate, equitable, and sustained public investment in Illinois public universities is essential to the educational, economic, and civic future of the State of Illinois and our region; and

Be it further resolved, that the Faculty Senate of Western Illinois University calls upon the IBHE to advocate for increased state funding for higher education, including release of the remainder of the legislatively approved FY 2026 budgetary increases of 3% for Illinois universities, of which 2% has been withheld by the Governor of Illinois; and

Be it further resolved, that the Western Illinois University Faculty Senate calls upon the Illinois Board of Higher Education to take immediate and decisive action to strongly advocate for implementing the Equitable Public University Funding Formula and to close the documented adequacy gap; and

Be it further resolved, that the Western Illinois University Faculty Senate joins with other Illinois public universities in calling for the full and timely release of all legislatively approved appropriations to Illinois public universities; and

Be it finally resolved, that this resolution be transmitted to the Illinois Board of Higher Education, the Governor of Illinois, members of the Illinois General Assembly representing Western Illinois University's service region, and the leadership of Illinois public universities.

Chair Robinett clarified that this resolution was moved forward by ExCo but was not seconded by them, so at this point it is a discussion item. He explained that senators, if they choose, can move and second the resolution. Chair Robinett has spoken with Amy Carr, WIU's representative to the Illinois Board of Higher Education Faculty Advisory Council, to ask if she saw any reason that Faculty Senate should not move forward with this resolution; she did not. He also reached out to Zach Messersmith, the university's governmental liaison, to ask if he saw anything problematic in the resolution. Chair Robinett said Mr. Messersmith appreciated the language that was brought forward by Northern Illinois University academics on which this resolution was modeled.

Chair Robinett pointed out the only significant changes between this resolution and NIU's was a change to the amount of funding that the IBHE originally requested; they originally requested more than 3 percent, but the 3 percent figure made it into the Governor's recommended budget. He said the other change that is significantly different between the two is that Chair Robinett thinks WIU should be recognized every time they can for their Carnegie classification in support of the social and economic mobility the university provides for its students. He pointed out that WIU serves a group of students that are not served in the same way by other institutions, and he would hope that the IBHE and the state would be aware of that.

Motion: To approve (Gravitt/McArthur)

Senator Gravitt asked if almost every state university supported the resolution. Chair Robinett responded that he does not think that any university within the University of Illinois system will be supporting a resolution similar to this. His takeaway from their conversations at the Council on

University Senates meeting was that they may pass resolutions asking the state for more money for higher education but would not specifically advocate for the equitable funding model. He said some of their representatives expressed that while they believe there should be more funding for all schools, they do not believe that any model should take funding away from any existing schools. Senator Gravitt had understood that it was not that the University of Illinois would be funded less; rather, they would get a smaller portion of the additional money, so they would not be losing, just not getting as much. Chair Robinett thinks this exceeds the purpose of this resolution but noted that there have been a variety of resources shared about that. He recommended the Thriving Illinois and the IBHE Equitable Funding Model reports as valuable and eye-opening documents, but he reiterated that this is outside the context of this resolution.

Senator Tasdan pointed out that the resolution includes the University of Illinois-Chicago within the list of ten Illinois public universities that are funded at less than 75 percent of the IBHE-identified adequacy level. Chair Robinett acknowledged that they are funded less, but that does not mean that they will pass a resolution such as this in their senate because they are part of the University of Illinois system. He said their chairs were quite clear that while there may be some parts of the equitable funding model that would benefit their own institutions, it would not be viewed as systematically helping the University of Illinois system.

Senator Tasdan asked what the likelihood is of the equitable funding model passing the Illinois Senate. Chair Robinett responded that he does not know, but he believes strongly enough in it that when President Mindrup and Provost Mossman speak at the legislative hearings over spring break, he plans to attend to give his support. He stated that, speaking as a citizen of the State of Illinois and not as an employee of WIU, he thinks opportunities to advocate, such as April 16, are important.

Dr. Carr remarked that at the IBHE Faculty Advisory Council meeting last week, Nora Heist, the IBHE public university representative, made it clear that it does matter that the public express things that might push against what the Board does or what the Governor is proposing in regard to higher education because that might shape the conversation down the road. She noted there were several individuals, including students, who testified on behalf of the equitable funding formula at the last IBHE meeting. Dr. Carr said the message Dr. Heist was sending very clearly was that it matters to express support for the funding formula.

Chair Robinett stressed that the resolution is not in any way a violation of advocacy rules but is just intended to say that this is something that Faculty Senate supports. He stated that Eastern Illinois University will vote on a similar resolution soon.

MOTION APPROVED 20 YES (14 in-person, 6 zoom) – 0 NO – 0 ABSTENTIONS

C. For the Good of the Body

Senator Wipperling announced that the Department of Theatre and Dance is producing their spring musical this week, “She Loves Me.” She said this is based on a little story called *The Shop Around the Corner* which was turned into a movie in the 1990s called “You’ve Got Mail,” but WIU’s musical is a more classical version of that story. She invited everyone to come Thursday through Saturday nights, February 26-28 at 7:30 or Sunday, March 1 at 2:00 in Hainline Theatre.

Senator Gravitt announced that the Career Fair is next week, and it is looking kind of grim for several different professions in terms of companies that are registering, which reflects what is going on politically. She noted that there were a lot of representatives looking for Law Enforcement and Justice Administration students, so senators with LEJA students in their classes should encourage them to attend.

Senator Gravitt observed that the ExCo minutes talked about a budget update and asked when the next budget update is scheduled for Faculty Senate. Chair Robinett responded this will be March 31. He said both President Mindrup and Vice President Roselieb will attend to provide an update on

where the university stands in some of its various accounts. He added that by this time a little more should also be known about what the legislature is going to do about budgets.

Chair Robinett asked senators who want tickets to attend the men's or women's basketball games to reach out to him directly. He has tickets that he does not always use and would love to see more faculty at the games.

Motion: To adjourn (Gravitt)

The Faculty Senate adjourned at 5:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Annette Hamm
Faculty Senate Office Manager and Recording Secretary