

WESTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY FACULTY SENATE

Regular Meeting, 30 September 2025, 4:00 p.m.

Via Zoom and in the Union Capitol Rooms

ACTION MINUTES

SENATORS PRESENT IN PERSON: D. Allwardt, E. Asare, S. Chakravorti, P. Cole, R. Di Carmine, A. Frederick, N. Gillotti, D. Gravitt, M. Hoge, H. Mason, D. McArthur, J. McKenzie, A. Melkumian, R. Sharma, S. Turkelli, J. Walker, L. Wipperling, E. Woell

SENATORS PRESENT VIA ZOOM: E. Hamner, J. Robinett, F. Tasdan

SENATORS ABSENT: H. Elbe

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

GUESTS: Lori Baker-Sperry, Dennis DeVolder, Patty Eathington, Tara Feld, Sue Hum, Sarah Lawson, Jessica Lin, Lorette Oden, Holly Nikels, Ketra Roselieb, Sebastian Szyjka, Ripley Zander

Chair Robinett, who attended via Zoom, told the Senate that he and Provost Mossman were attending a conference based on some grant dollars the university had received. He expressed his thanks to Vice Chair Wipperling and Parliamentarian Gblerkpor for coordinating the meeting in the Capitol Rooms and to Mark Behymer, University Union Facility Operations Coordinator, for helping to set everything up.

I. Consideration of Minutes

A. September 16, 2025

MINUTES APPROVED AS DISTRIBUTED

II. Announcements

A. Provost's Report

Provost Mossman said he has no report but expressed a willingness to answer questions. Senator Gravitt observed that the Executive Committee minutes discussed some kind of app that would be used in the future to help with sharing progress or with transparency. She wonders if instead it would be possible for someone from the seven new Rebuild committees to physically come to a Faculty Senate meeting every two weeks to share their progress, which would enable the information to go into the Senate minutes where it could be found in one place. Provost Mossman responded that would be possible because, as noted at the ExCo meeting, the entire purpose is to increase communication and create an environment where everyone can access reports and information, not just about the Rebuild but also about what Senate councils and committees and Academic Affairs in general are doing.

Chair Robinett clarified that the digital dashboard that was discussed at ExCo will be a Google Sheet that will contain information about what every committee is doing, what tasks they have, and what data they are using. He thinks that rather than asking people who are already very busy with a variety of meetings to physically attend a Faculty Senate meeting, it would make more sense to just pull up the digital dashboard at a Senate meeting to quickly review it. Senator Gravitt agreed this would work and suggested that the information could just be put into the Senate agenda. She noted that not everyone is good with apps and smartphones, so she was trying to find a way that the information could be in one central place. Chair Robinett explained that the Google App is being used to create a system that will populate into a Google Sheet which will be available the Academic Affairs or the Faculty Senate website, so individuals will not actually have to download an app onto their phones. Provost Mossman reiterated that the purpose of the project is to provide as much accessibility to information as possible,

and it will be as simple as going to a website. He added that if anyone needs to come to a Senate meeting to provide an update on one of the Rebuild committees or something else in person, the Provost's office would not be opposed to that at all, but the digital dashboard project is intended for everyone to be able to have that information in front of them.

Chair Robinett shared his screen to show what individuals will be able eventually to see on the digital dashboard. He explained that, based on committee chairs inputting information into the Google App interface, what will be available to see will include the committee name, the charge that particular group is working on, what each of its tasks are, what month they will be doing things in, their deadlines, the resources they will need, and the resources they used to complete the tasks. He added the digital dashboard will also include information about any particular forms or data that the committee needs so that if others already have this information they can provide it, potentially saving some work for Administrative Information Management Systems (AIMS) as well as for each other.

Chair Robinett asked if this helps explain what is meant by the app. Senator Gravitt replied that it does, but she would still like to hear a five-second summary at a Senate meeting from someone on each of the seven committees who could explain where they are at. Senator Wippering asked if it might be possible for a brief report to be given to Faculty Senate when a task is completed, for example. Chair Robinett pointed out that Provost Mossman has said yes to this request, so someone in the Provost's office could do this. He asked senators, however, to be mindful of how often people are asked to come to a Senate meeting to report, given everyone's schedules and recognizing how very busy their colleagues are. He thinks that asking them to come to every Senate meeting, every two weeks, might be asking a lot of their colleagues.

Senator Gravitt explained she knew that Chair Robinett serves on a lot of committees and thought maybe someone from Faculty Senate was on almost all of them and could provide an update. She asked if the Provost is tied to all of the Rebuild committees and could provide a quick, regular summary. Provost Mossman replied he is happy to provide summaries during his Provost's Report or to ask committee members to come to Senate in person, adding that the information on both Rebuild and Senate committees will be available on the websites, as well, in order to make communication as accessible and transparent as possible. He noted that as the Rebuild moves forward, some committees may wind down, and there may be a need for new committees in addition to the seven that are active now. He suspects that as the practice of checking the Faculty Senate or Provost's websites for information moves forward, it will serve a practical operational purpose in order to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort, as well as increasing communication across the Division of Academic Affairs.

Senator Mason understands that the Rebuild is a reaction to the smaller student populations that WIU has right now, but she wonders if there are a vision or long-term goals for growth and goalposts along the way for what is envisioned as happening after the Rebuild. Provost Mossman replied there are. He thinks this is where the conversation of WIU's Carnegie Classification becomes important, as well as using the Opportunity University as a way to work on various sets of initiatives, such as enrollment or retention. He noted that at the conference he and Chair Robinett are attending centers on student athletes' academic achievements, there were numerous ideas about intervention and ways to help students retain from the first semester to the second and from Year 1 to Year 2 that would apply to all student populations. He explained that the immediate vision of the Rebuild is not just to work on reorganization of departments and colleges but also to improve the efficiencies of the processes that happen within the Division of Academic Affairs. He stated that as the university moves forward, the vision is to really lean into the fact that what has been done at Western with student success is remarkable, and there is a need to continue to do that, as well as having conversations about career readiness and what that means in the curriculum and in different disciplines.

Senator Mason remarked this topic is being discussed, and she thinks it is important to include this information in some of the Rebuild initiatives in order to make this vision more concrete and visible. She thinks it is important to show what the university would like to grow into afterwards because it cannot keep shrinking. She noted that there is a lot of discussion about student potential, which is really important, but there is also potential in WIU's faculty and staff, and as a university. She noted that there is space and a lot of areas to grow, but right now it feels like the university is just reactive

instead of being proactive. She thinks it is okay to be reactive but that it is also time to start sharing that vision and getting it out there. Senator Mason remarked that it is great that WIU is an Opportunity College, but efforts need to be made to get that label out there and share it. Provost Mossman replied he totally agrees. He pointed out that the Rebuild is in Phase 2, and this will probably dominate the discussion in Phase 3 of the Rebuild as the university moves forward on all of these different initiatives.

Senator Hoge asked if there is a Rebuild committee for growth and recruitment within the Rebuild process. Provost Mossman responded there is not because Phase 2 of the Rebuild concentrates on working out various levels of academic efficiencies. He noted that there is a Rebuild Communication Committee that is working on the way information is shared internally and transparently within Academic Affairs. He said the Provost's office also has an Opportunity Committee which works with first-year topics and the Learning Center; it includes several advisors and collects data on, for instance, what seniors did in their last three years, what they did in their first year, and who graduates. He said this data is used to develop an immediate, specific retention plan for students in their first year. He explained that, guided by how students are succeeding, the goal is to scale that up so that more students succeed and the university's retention rates increase from 60 percent to 65 or even 70 percent.

Senator Hamner said he co-chairs the Rebuild Interdisciplinary and Co-Curricular Committee, and they are also trying to do these types of things. He related the committee is trying to imagine how to meaningfully integrate career readiness while building interdisciplinarity across WIU in ways that are actually plausible, given the university's constraints, and in ways that are attractive to students, hold them, and make their opportunities more visible. He told senators the committee has worked together for five weeks and will deliver a tentative, draft version of their report to the Provost's office tomorrow. Senator Hamner noted that one thing the committee will propose is to have more consultations with groups, like Faculty Senate, explicitly, in order to get feedback, float ideas, and see what resonates. He thinks this will help the committee be open to things that other colleagues might think of that committee members may not have considered. He said this is one quick glimpse of one of the Rebuild committees which shows the ways that the things being discussed at Faculty Senate are on the table.

Senator Cole remarked that a discussion he had with an online student in his office recently pertains to this topic of retention. He said the student is a resident of Macomb but takes almost all his classes online, including Senator Cole's class. Senator Cole related that the student told him his advisor pushes him into online classes even though he lives in Macomb, and he has only one in-person class. Senator Cole has taught for 30 years, eight of those online as well, and believes strongly that online education pales in comparison to in-person education. He thinks it would increase retention to drive more Macomb students to take classes in person and wonders how that can be accomplished. He noted that when he has an in-person conversation with a student who takes his class online, it changes the entire class experience for that student as well as for the instructor, and he thinks it is unfortunate that students who could take classes in person are being pushed to take them online.

Provost Mossman told Senator Cole his office has been working on this, alongside the Return to Campus Policy. He thinks developing a policy is the answer to address what Senator Cole described. He recalled that prior to Covid the university had a policy where Macomb students were restricted as to how many hours they could take online, but there has been a reluctance to bring this back because of a fear that it would actually drive students away at a time when the university is so dependent upon tuition dollars. He anticipates, however, that he will be recommending such a policy to the Faculty Senate in about a month. Provost Mossman said this also connects directly with the efforts to address issues related to scheduling and space. He noted that sometimes the only option for a Macomb student is to take an online class, and this is partly because schedules have not addressed the declines in enrollment; it is a complicated issue with three or four things that need to be addressed. He stated that, this being said, he agrees that it needs to be addressed.

Senator Gillotti wonders, among the discussions of retention and the success of having students come to class in person, how much of this is playing into recruitment. She realizes that while what is done in the School of Music may be very niche, a lot of the relationships that faculty form with their students

were started two to three years before they come to WIU. She does not know what recruitment looks like in other departments or if they rely primarily on Admissions to do that, but for Music the faculty have met and spent time with students, in many cases, years before their arrival at WIU. She thinks that if faculty are considered to be the superpower of this university, it raises the question of how to use that to generate more interest in the university at large. Provost Mossman pointed out that the new Assistant Vice President for Admissions and Enrollment Support arrives tomorrow, and that will certainly entail some concrete discussions and probably shifts in the strategies for recruitment. He thinks there are several departments and schools, including Music, Agriculture, and Law Enforcement and Justice Administration, that do a significant amount of work with prospective as well as with transfer students. He thinks the challenge for WIU is to scale that work up and make it more prevalent across the division. He is looking forward to the new AVP developing, in the coming weeks or months, a different set of strategies and approaches that would apply across the board for all departments and schools.

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

Ms. Zanger reported that SGA did not meet last week because they did not have an agenda and the Speaker could not attend. She related that the week prior, however, the Students of Caribbean Affiliation (SOCA) attended and gave a very nice presentation. Ms. Zanger said SGA hopes to get more student groups to speak to them so that their senators can know more about what is going on around the campus. She said SGA is very excited that Provost Mossman will be speaking to them this week.

Ms. Zanger thinks that overall SGA is doing very well so far with a lot more senatorial involvement than the last few years, possibly due to some of their new policies. She thinks this is exciting because it helps SGA to know what is going on across campus rather than just hearing their Executive Board speak.

In response to Senator Cole, Ms. Zanger agrees that online learning is not as good as in-person. She has three online and three in-person classes this semester and thinks that what she gets from her in-person classes are above and beyond what she receives from her online classes. She tries to take in-person classes because of this but had to take three of her classes online because she had no choice to take them in person. She thinks that if the policy was to be reactivated, the classes offered online should also be offered in person or students will still be stuck taking online classes. Senator Wipperling said she appreciates Ms. Zanger's input.

C. Faculty Senate Chair's Report

Chair Robinett stated that since the last Faculty Senate meeting, he has participated in several discussions that he thinks senators should be aware of. Chair Robinett said the three key themes that really stood out to him from the Board of Trustees (BOT) meeting he attended on September 26 were 1) the focus on WIU's success in enhancing social mobility for students, 2) the continued importance of recruiting and retaining students, and 3) the financial realities that the university continues to face. He thinks there is no way to understate how much of a priority recruitment and retention will need to be for everyone at the institution; everyone needs to figure out what part of that puzzle they best fit in and how they can best go about doing that. He related that several individuals at the BOT meeting spoke about underfunding from the state and the advocacy that will be needed for the equitable funding formula. Chair Robinett said that is one reason he appreciates Vice President Roselieb coming to Faculty Senate to share more about the university's fiscal situation; for many years, the institution was not as open about some of these things, so he welcomes and appreciates that Vice President Roselieb is willing to help everyone stay informed.

Chair Robinett has attended a number of meetings related to Generative AI and tried to clarify a point of confusion he has heard from several persons around the campus. He stressed that Faculty Senate has not charged a committee to create a university-wide AI policy, which would be beyond the scope of the Senate. He clarified that the Senate's Council for Instructional Technology has been charged to

develop a syllabus statement template so that faculty may indicate if and how AI may or may not be used in a course. He stated that in the coming weeks two surveys will be circulated to provide a bit more information on AI usage: Heather McIlvaine-Newsad will conduct a survey on faculty library needs, which will include a few questions related to Generative AI, and a survey has been developed by a faculty-led committee in collaboration with Sponsored Projects that will explore student and faculty perspectives regarding generative AI across the campus. Chair Robinett said the goal is for conversations to occur at the department/school level to start to understand what is happening there, and the surveys will allow for discussions to move from those that are primarily anecdotal in nature or focused on research done at other places to conversations grounded on what is happening at WIU. He added that Mary Pat Wohlford, Interim Director of the Office of Sponsored Projects, has shared that, based on faculty concerns brought to her, the AI modules which are part of the CITI IRB trainings that faculty do are now available.

Chair Robinett related that another meeting he attended focused on regular and substantive interaction and accessibility issues, which are tied to federal requirements. He said these requirements can actually affect a university's Title IV funding, so there is a lot going on related to not only how the university delivers these things but also whether it is meeting the federal guidelines related to them.

Chair Robinett has also attended multiple Academic Affairs Rebuild committee meetings. He stressed that these deal only with the Division of Academic Affairs, although the information coming from these committees may impact and influence some things the rest of the institution is doing. He applauded Senator Gillotti who spoke about the great recruitment efforts in the School of Music and thinks that providing that kind of information to new Assistant Vice President Toomey as he gets started is something that might help move this effort along.

Chair Robinett noted that Senator Hamner has said the Rebuild Interdisciplinarity and Co-Curricular Committee plans to submit their report tomorrow, and the Rebuild Communication Committee has submitted a plan to the Provost that is focused on facilitating transparent and consistent communication about the Rebuild across the campus. He said this plan includes incorporating regular emails, the digital dashboard, and other ways to get information out. Chair Robinett said the Rebuild Academic Use of Space Committee meets Friday, October 3 to explore topics such as how campus spaces are designated for exclusive or general use. He added that the Faculty Senate's Faculty Governance Committee will meet Tuesday, October 7 to begin reviewing the Senate Constitution and Bylaws.

Chair Robinett will meet on Friday, October 3 with Bob Emmert, who has been named the Director of University Technology. He noted that WIU is in the process of implementing multi-factor authentication, and some concerns have been expressed by UPI, as well as by students and others, related to that process. He looks forward to hearing updates on the rollout and learning more about it. He pointed out that the university does not have a large staff to monitor WIU's technological infrastructure and security, so it is susceptible to, for instance, phishing emails. He said University Technology is trying to guide WIU through this process through education and some of the actions they are taking.

Senator Chakravorti asked Chair Robinett to elaborate on some of the concerns that UPI, faculty, and students have shared about the new multi-factor authentication system. Chair Robinett asked senators to remember that UPI and Faculty Senate have somewhat different focuses, but his understanding of UPI's issue is that individuals would be asked to use their own personal devices in order to participate in the authentication. He said UPI does not think employees should be asked to use their personal devices in order to do work-related activities, and they have requested fobs that people can use if they do not want to do that. Chair Robinett said students have brought up that the process is inconvenient; as they are in different classrooms, knowing which secure or open internet to use is creating confusion for them in navigating this process. Chair Robinett said that overall, the biggest concerns he is hearing, and the one he hopes to address with Mr. Emmert on Friday, is that everyone needs to be better educated on what is happening so that individuals are not caught off guard when they suddenly have to login to something as they are trying to do work.

1. Motion to Reorder Agenda

Chair Robinett explained the reason he is asking that the agenda be reordered is because the Senate Nominating Committee has done great work in trying to make sure faculty are participating in their responsibilities for shared governance and would like to have the Motion to Suspend Senate Bylaws Pertaining to Service Requirements voted on prior to consideration of their report on faculty nominations.

Motion: To reorder the agenda to move Item III.A.1., Senate Nominating Committee Faculty Nominations, just after Item IV.A., Motion to Suspend Senate Bylaws Pertaining to Service Requirements (Robinett/Gravitt)

Chair Robinett noted that a motion to reorder the agenda requires a two-thirds vote for approval, but he would be comfortable with, after checking into the possibility of this, approval by unanimous consent if there are no objections. He added that if anyone would like to object to this reordering of the agenda, they should feel free to do so, after which senators would just need to more formally vote on it.

NO OBJECTIONS

E. Other Announcements

1. Ketra Roselieb, Vice President, Finance and Administration

Vice President Roselieb expressed her thanks for the opportunity to continue to come to Faculty Senate to present and expressed a willingness to answer any questions. She noted that her presentation is similar to the one she gave last fall and spring, but she has updated and built on it as she continues to have these financial conversations with senators. She related that there was some discussion about the financial situation at the Board of Trustees meeting on September 26 and the fiscal realities at the close of fiscal year 2025.

Vice President Roselieb's PowerPoint presentation showed the All Fund History and FY 26 Projections, which she said demonstrate the monumental efforts by the campus community to try to right-size the university's operations for the amount of revenue the institution now has. She showed the expenses from all funds versus the amount received from state appropriations, tuition, housing and dining operations, fees and outside charges, grants, and similar sources of income. She pointed out that the university has operated in a deficit for multiple years and, beginning in FY 23 and 24, began to see a significant decline in revenue based on decreased enrollment. Vice President Roselieb pointed out that although the enrollment declines started over a decade ago, the university was able to buy a little bit of time from a revenue standpoint through Covid relief dollars, which enabled the university to offset some of its costs, although expenses were not being adjusted to get it back in line. She said it is only sustainable to have expenses exceed revenue if there are enough cash reserves to float that type of operation over a significant amount of time, and WIU does not have that.

Vice President Roselieb told senators that on June 30, 2025, WIU's expenses exceeded its revenue by \$400,000 even though expenses from FY 24 to FY 25 decreased by \$19 million. She recognizes that this decrease represents a significant amount, but she stressed that it had to happen when looking at how the university's revenue has decreased over time. She told senators, as she had told the BOT, that because of WIU's cash situation and fiscal straits, the administration was transparent with the State of Illinois throughout the last fiscal year, as they continue to be about the realities the university faces. She noted that these include broken HVAC units that would cost a million dollars to fix and contractual obligations that were made previously and have to be fulfilled, and the university can do nothing to change these realities. She related that because of these conversations, WIU received \$2.2 million from the state Capital Development Board, which funds deferred maintenance dollars as well as any large capital projects. She said the reason WIU was given this one-time amount is because the administration was able to show how many emergency deferred maintenance expenses have

occurred over the past five years that really should have been funded by the Capital Development Board. She added that while the university is very grateful for this reimbursement, it inflates the university's revenue for FY 25 by \$2.2 million, so the \$400,000 deficit is really closer to a \$2.6 million deficit.

Vice President Roselieb explained that the All Fund History shows revenues and expenses as they are being recorded; thus, when a student is billed, that is recorded as income. She pointed out, however, that this does not reflect what is actually received from students; the receivable amounts – what students have not paid yet or may never pay – have actually increased, which makes the difference in revenue and expenses actually more than \$400,000.

Vice President Roselieb noted that the Board of Trustees approved the All Fund Budget at their meeting on September 26, because it is a state statute that they must give the university the authority to make expenditures. She said the total approved on Friday was about \$189.4 million. She noted that the projected income for FY 26, however, is about \$179 million at this time, mainly because of the decline in enrollment and things associated with that, such as tuition dollars, fees, room and board. She said it also reflects the 1 percent increase received from the state, which amounted to only about \$500,000 – not enough to cover increases in light bills, deferred maintenance, or what WIU students continue to need in order to be successful.

Vice President Roselieb acknowledged the monumental effort that went into reducing expenses by \$19 million in one fiscal year, which required every person's buy-in to the university's current situation and reality. She thinks the trajectory looks better and that the university is becoming more in line to have its revenues and expenses match than a little over a year ago today; the university is beginning to catch up from multiple years of not adjusting, which unfortunately put WIU into a very difficult cash situation.

Vice President Roselieb discussed Historical and Projected Tuition Income with senators from FY 14 to the present. She pointed out that in FY 14, the university had \$70 million just in tuition income driven directly by enrollment. Vice President Roselieb projects \$38 million in tuition income for FY 26, falling to \$35 million by FY 29. She noted that expenses needed to be adjusted for this type of change, and the university unfortunately had to accomplish this in a very short period of time. She pointed out that the projections are based upon current enrollment with similar retention rates to what has been seen over the past two to three years, taking into account that the institution is graduating some larger classes.

Vice President Roselieb showed senators a graph of the university's Cash Flow Pressures using year-end balances from June 2015 to June 2025. She pointed out that the amount of cash in the Income Fund has been negative since the end of FY 23. The graph also shows Other Unrestricted Dollars, including cash from fees, ICR dollars, and other money set aside for a specific purpose; Vice President Roselieb pointed out that, unlike auxiliary or Foundation dollars, this is not restricted, from a cash perspective, to another entity. She pointed out the line showing what the university can use on a day-to-day basis to meet its financial obligations and make the payments that the university is obligated to, adding that this line is watched very closely. She noted that the budget impasse was truly the start of the concerning situations that all institutions were in, but it definitely hurt WIU because prior to that the university had a total cash balance in both of these fund sources over \$40 million. She noted that although the university had a year with very minimal appropriations, WIU could not change its operations to reflect that, which resulted in a significant hit to the institution's cash. She pointed out that this is reflected in the Income Fund, which reflects the multiple years of financial deficits and has resulted in June 2025 still ending in a negative cash position.

Vice President Roselieb stated that the combined Income Fund and Other Unrestricted total, from which all of the university's individual payments are made, was \$3.6 million on June 30, 2024 but had fallen to just over \$1.6 million by June 30, 2025. She noted that it is no secret that the university has had to utilize different strategies to be able to meet all of its obligations.

In December, she plans to take a resolution to the Board of Trustees that would authorize WIU to take a \$2 million loan out from the University Foundation; it is not allowable for the university to take out a loan without having granting authority from the state, but a bill passed this past summer and which will take effect in January will allow for this very low-interest loan. She stated that while this will be of assistance, cash continues to be of concern and something that is monitored daily, forcing the administration to limit spending to essential items only and make some difficult decisions, such as when things will be paid for.

Chair Robinett remarked that in the past, Vice President Roselieb talked about some of the assumptions that went into building these projections, such as enrollment. He asked her to speak about some of the assumptions used to build this model. Vice President Roselieb responded that although she did not bring this information with her, she has worked closely with Vice President for Student Success Justin Schuch to talk about average retention and to look at what both incoming and transfer classes might be. She stated that although she does not have these numbers, they assume a slight increase in the costs to students and some contractual increases on the expense side, such as for utilities increases and inflationary costs. She said another aspect that was considered is the university's scholarship model and changes to that, including the levels of the Western Commitment scholarships, how the university discounts to students, and what their actual net tuition revenue payable to the institution will be. She stated that while significant changes have been made to these in the past few years, students have also been locked into their entering criteria; if a student entered WIU in Fall 2022, they might have been eligible for a \$10,000 Western Commitment scholarship, which is locked in for four years even though this scholarship level is not offered any more. She added the projections also assume level funding from the state.

Senator Chakravorti observed that Vice President Roselieb has said the goal is to bring expenses and revenue to balance, but the projections show a large deficit for FY 26, so either expenditures need to be brought down or revenue must go up. He asked how revenues can go up if tuition income remains flat or what expenditures will need to be brought down to accomplish this. Vice President Roselieb responded that what is indicated currently shows approximately a \$10 million deficit across all fund sources, so what each fund source does to try to adjust for that will look very different. She noted that cost containment will obviously be the first, foremost, and most important thing the university will need to do. She noted that on the auxiliary side, housing and dining operations are working on consolidation of services to try to reduce their expenses.

Vice President Roselieb remarked there will always be a little bit of wiggle room in a budget projection, especially of expenses, because if the university exceeds the amount approved by the Board of Trustees the administration has to go back to the state to request additional approval of those expenses, which they do not want to have to do. She said that while there is not a lot of wiggle room, the expenses are inflated by a certain extent to hopefully allow for some flexibility should something pop up that needed to be added in as a contingency.

Vice President Roselieb said the administration plans to continue to seek additional funding from the state; the Governor's budget included an automatic 1 percent increase to university appropriations, but an additional 2 percent was held back at the Governor's discretion. She said if WIU was able to secure this additional funding, it would provide approximately \$700,000, which would certainly be helpful. She noted the administration is trying to look into more revenue-generating opportunities, whether from an academic standpoint or from just renting and leasing space; the Board of Trustees at its recent meeting approved two rental agreements to generate additional revenue for the university. She added that all of this shows the university is going to have to continue to triage its efforts to try to bring revenue and expenses in line.

Referring to the graph of Cash Flow Pressures, Senator Cole asked how the university got \$25 million in FY17 and whether that is replicable. He asked if it represented a state infusion. Vice President Roselieb responded that while it was not an infusion, there were additional

appropriations in FY17 to make up for the lack in FY16, although not enough to make the university whole.

Senator Woell recalled that a year ago at a Faculty Senate meeting, senators were told that last year's layoffs would help address the university's deficits. He observed that what Vice President Roselieb is now saying is that, in spite of the layoffs, the university is pretty much in the same situation as prior to them. Vice President Roselieb stressed she does not think the university is in the same situation, although it does still need to align revenue and expenses. She noted that the trajectory is different than last year because what she is anticipating the overall expenses to be this year has leveled off closer to where it was headed in prior fiscal years. Vice President Roselieb added that she is not saying the university is out of the woods, but it is closer than it was a year ago.

Senator Gravitt said she serves on the Senate's Budget Transparency Committee and recalls the forecast last year was that the university should be able to break even by the end of this year so that it could begin to regrow in 2027. She asked, since the university will not break even this year, if that means that growth plans now have to be put off until 2028. Vice President Roselieb noted that although the Tuition Income Projections graph shows tuition starting to level off in FY27, 28, and 29, a lot depends upon further investment from the state as well as the number of students WIU physically will have. She thinks the university absolutely needs to start to plan for growth because it cannot cut its way to success, but the institution cannot change its operations so significantly when the fiscal situation has been ignored for decades, nor can it be changed overnight. She does think the university will make significant headway by FY27.

Senator Gravitt asked if it was a mandate from the Board of Trustees that this had to occur and what their feelings are now that they are back to approving budgets that are grossly misaligned. Vice President Roselieb responded the Trustees have been complimentary of the work the university has accomplished with reducing expenses by \$19 million last year, and they are realistic about knowing there is only so much the institution can do. She pointed out that the Cash Flow Projection graph shows there is not a lot of wiggle room, so the Board will approve what is needed with the expectation that the administration will take the necessary measures to make things work to prevent running out of money. She said this includes taking out the loan from Foundations if that is necessary and seeking additional assistance for the implementation of the ERP. She suspects that Trustees may not be happy with her but thinks that they recognize the efforts to do everything possible and notice the institution is getting closer to fiscal alignment.

Senator Mason noted that discussions have included getting money from the state, and she knows that there have been some initiatives, but she wonders if there are people that faculty can reach out to in order to tell the story of WIU and what is needed here. Vice President Roselieb responded that anything that can be done to support the equitable funding formula needs to be highlighted because it would really look individually at each institution. She said it would consider student population, demographics, and needs; cost of providing instruction; and programs provided. She pointed out that not only does instruction cost more in different programs, but the costs of providing what students in different demographics need varies as well, not only from an instructional standpoint but also from a support standpoint. She said the equitable funding formula would also look at the deferred maintenance, the overall campus footprint, and the other resources that an institution has access to. She pointed out that WIU will never have the resources that the University of Illinois does or be able to play a football game that generates the amount of revenue they do, and the equitable funding formula would take this into account. Vice President Roselieb observed that for the past two decades no one at the state level has been able to explain the logic behind the appropriations universities received, and the equitable funding formula would finally take a look at that. She noted that as the funding formula stands today, WIU is the least funded of all the state public universities; depending on how the initiative is funded as the bill moves forward, the plan is that this

formula would put the most resources towards those universities that are the least adequately funded, which could be significant for WIU.

Vice President Roselieb has been impressed by some of the state legislators and what they have access to. She noted that WIU has received a \$500,000 Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity grant that will continue through this fiscal year and has helped offset some of the university's safety and security-related expenditures. She noted that the Capital Development Board just earlier this week agreed to pay for the chillers that have been sitting outside the library because some wires need to be placed underground; this was a \$54,000 expense that the university does not have to shoulder now due to the administration's transparency with state officials; it represents a willingness to help that WIU administrators have not seen in the past. She noted that any connections that people have are helpful as well as any grant dollars they are able to bring into the university to help offset day-to-day costs.

Senator Mason remarked that while it is good for legislators to see the quantitative pieces of WIU's situation, she thinks it is also important for them to be able to put faces and stories behind that, such as what happens to WIU students after they leave Western or what faculty are doing with state funding. She would like to know who to reach out to with stories that would put a face behind these things. Vice President Roselieb said she has been pleasantly surprised by the number of connections that WIU's faculty, staff, and students have in telling WIU's story and thinks that anytime someone can make those connections, they should

Chair Robinett pointed out that UPI gets very involved with the process of advocacy and tries to partner with other institutions across the state. He stated that while WIU is underfunded to the greatest extent, there are other regional institutions on that underfunding list, so a concerted effort among Illinois institutions of public higher education is important. He added that Zach Messersmith, WIU's Governmental Liaison, will occasionally communicate about initiatives and efforts faculty can take to support this.

Senator Wipperling related that in her Department of Theatre of Dance, students did not have their Financial Aid packages even by April and told faculty that while they would have loved to come to WIU, they felt like they had to go to a different school because of this. She said her department lost at least six students from several programs as a result of this. She wonders if the university would have recruited better this past year across the board if things had been different with Financial Aid in trying to transition through the old program. She asked how close the university is to having that new program and how that might help with recruitment and increase the amount of recruitment dollars that would come in for next year. Vice President Roselieb replied she is more confident about this now than she was at this time last year, when it was no secret that Financial Aid struggled to get aid out to current students, let alone offers for the next year. She noted that the Department of Education opened up FAFSA early for the year beginning Fall 2026, and Financial Aid has been operating in its current system for a little over a year, so she is confident the university will be able to hit its measurable timelines to get those award offers out. Vice President Roselieb recognizes that there is still some work to be done on the campus as a whole to make sure that students are provided with the *entire* award package. She noted that Financial Aid may not be aware of departmental awards that some students receive or certain Foundation scholarships; there is work to be done to align those efforts from a packaging and recruitment standpoint, but in regard to just getting the award offers out, Vice President Roselieb can say with a lot more confidence that the timeline will be met this year.

Vice President Roselieb pointed out that WIU is one of the only state institutions that saw a decline in freshmen enrollment; all of WIU's peers saw increases. She said that she will leave the enrollment reporting questions to someone else but thinks the university needs to look internally at what was done or not done that had this effect, and she is confident that Financial Aid is one of those factors. She noted that the new ERP has not been implemented yet from a financial aid standpoint, but that is scheduled for Spring 2026. She said this means that award letters will be put through the old system, but she thinks Financial Aid has learned enough this

past year and figured out some backup plans to be able to combat previous problems. She recognizes that they are trying to take responsibility for what happened and to fix it moving forward.

Chair Robinett remarked he would like it if Vice President Roselieb could follow up with him about the assumptions behind the projections because it is important for Faculty Senate to try to be able to track the progress of this as the university moves forward. He thinks it is very important for Faculty Senate to understand the thinking is that is building and guiding some of the things that have a great impact on WIU. He appreciates Vice President Roselieb's willingness to share that information with senators because it helps with communication.

IV. Old Business – None

V. New Business

A. Motion to Suspend Senate Bylaws Pertaining to Service Requirements

Whereas, the Faculty Senate Bylaws provides safeguards on faculty governance by setting limits on (a) consecutive terms of service, (b) concurrent service on multiple councils, and (c) restrictions on Senators serving on councils; and,

Whereas, recent faculty layoffs and retirements have created a significant number of vacancies on Faculty Senate councils and committees; and,

Whereas, circumstances such as significant reductions in faculty numbers may temporarily necessitate greater flexibility in order to staff Senate councils and committees effectively and for the duration of defined terms; and,

Whereas Article II "Suspension of Service Rules" of the Faculty Senate Bylaws permits the suspension of specific provisions by a two-thirds vote of the total membership of the Faculty Senate for a period not to exceed one academic year, and states that such a suspension shall apply only to the specific circumstances identified in the motion and shall not constitute a precedent for future cases;

***Be it resolved** that the Faculty Senate hereby authorizes the suspension of the provisions of its Bylaws governing (a) consecutive terms of service, (b) concurrent service on multiple councils, and (c) restrictions on Senators serving on councils and committees, in order to allow appointments to be made during the 2025-2026 academic year.*

Motion: To approve (Robinett/Melkumian)

Chair Robinett pointed out that this suspension of service requirements will require a two-thirds vote of the Senate membership for approval.

Senator Gravitt, who chairs the Senate Nominating Committee this year, said she was previously under the impression that this motion would fix all the problems with filling committees, but it will not. She noted that some committees still have their own rules that can limit who can do what, and if a faculty member wanted to fill a vacancy that is earmarked for a different college, that would still not be allowed. She asked if there is any way to add some more "whereases" in order to get rid of more problems or limitations. Chair Robinett replied the parliamentary answer would be that Senator Gravitt could offer amendments to the motion that would specify additional things that Faculty Senate might want to navigate in regard to this, but, as the originator of the resolution, Chair Robinett would not accept this as a "friendly amendment." He explained the reason is that Senate councils and committees have their membership set up to be representative; he thinks there would be questions across the campus if, for example, faculty from one college were to make all the decisions on a council without actually having faculty from the other three colleges serving on the council as well.

Senator Hoge asked if this motion is due to a decrease in faculty size and availability, or just a decrease in those willing to care. Senator Wipperling responded it is due to the former. Senator Hoge said he asked because prior to Covid, 20 percent of the faculty or students did 80 percent of the work, and post-Covid it seems to be 10 and 90. He sees this frequently in both clubs and classes. Senator Hoge observed that those present are at Faculty Senate because they care and want to serve, but he wonders if some faculty are actually covering for the driftwood who want to be counted but who do not want to serve, which is why he asked if this motion is, at its core, just because of reduced faculty size. Chair Robinett confirmed the motion is primarily a result in the reduction in faculty size. He pointed out that these rules were established during a very different time when the university had 450 to 500 faculty members. He noted at that time it was very important to provide a wealth of opportunities for faculty to serve, which is why the Bylaws restricted the number of positions a faculty member could serve in and required that there be an empty year between terms so that someone else had an opportunity to fill those spaces. He noted that some Senate councils and committees have not updated their bylaws since 2007. He stated that one function of the Rebuild is to look at efficiencies, including faculty governance, and the reality right now is that some Senate councils and committees struggle to make quorum because the people who want to serve on them are not able to because of the restrictions built into the Senate Bylaws. He added the intent of this proposal is to provide more opportunities for more individuals so that the ones Senator Hoge mentioned, who want to serve, are able to do so.

MOTION APPROVED 21 YES (17 in-person, 4 zoom) – 0 NO – 0 ABSTENTIONS

Chair Robinett explained that the passage of this motion means that for this year it is possible for the Senate Nominating Committee to bring forward names of individuals to fill vacancies that they would have been precluded from under the existing Bylaws.

III. Reports of Committees and Councils (Reordered)

A. Senate Nominating Committee (SNC)
(Denise Gravitt, Chair)

1. Faculty Nominations

SENATE COUNCILS AND COMMITTEES

Council on Admission, Graduation, and Academic Standards (CAGAS)

Brian Bellott, Chemistry	replacing	Maggie MacPherson	2027	A&S
--------------------------	-----------	-------------------	------	-----

Council on Curricular Programs and Instruction (CCPI)

Leesa Thompson, Nursing	replacing	Cindy Piletic	2026	AT-LARGE
-------------------------	-----------	---------------	------	----------

Council on Writing Instruction in the Disciplines (WID)

Eun Go, Comm/Media	replacing	Hong-Da Chin	2028	FA&C
Nathan Miczo, Comm/Media	replacing	Nathan Miczo	2028	FA&C

There were no further nominations, and the slate of candidates was appointed. Chair Robinett expressed thanks to Senator Gravitt and her committee for the incredible work they have been doing in reaching out and making personal connections with faculty. He also thanked Ms. Hamm for the one-on-one communications she has engaged in in order to make sure that faculty who want to serve are getting the opportunities to do so.

V. New Business (Continued)

B. For the Good of the Body – None

Motion: To adjourn (Gravitt)

The Faculty Senate adjourned at 5:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Annette Hamm
Faculty Senate Office Manager and Recording Secretary