

# FACULTY SENATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Special Meeting

Monday, 22 July 2024

3:30 p.m. – Via Zoom

## ACTION MINUTES

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Julia Albarracin, Chair; Everett Hampe, Vice Chair; Denise Gravitt, Secretary  
**ALSO PRESENT:** Mark Mossman, Interim Provost; Jeremy Robinett, Parliamentarian; Annette Hamm, Faculty Senate Office Manager  
**GUESTS:** Interim President Kristi Mindrup; Ben Brewer, LEJA; Jeff Hancks, WIUQC Library

Chair Albarracin announced she called the meeting to hear updates of some of the things occurring at WIU. Interim President Mindrup related that one of the major developments since the last special Faculty Senate meeting of July 10 is that the Leadership Team met today with Martin Torres, Illinois Deputy Governor for Education. She said this meeting provided an opportunity to share with First Assistant Deputy Governor Teresa Ramoş and Illinois Board of Higher Education Executive Director Ginger Ostro the financial picture that was shared with Faculty Senate two weeks ago, including what the institution needs to do to balance the budget and ensure WIU's cash flow through the year. She said the information shared was intended to emphasize that WIU as an institution does have a plan; when Interim Provost Mossman and Interim President Mindrup previously met with Deputy Governor Torres in late March, WIU did not have a plan forward, so that was a very difficult conversation. Interim President Mindrup noted that this time the WIU representatives were able to show more than \$13 million in cost reductions and were able to state with confidence that around \$10 million needs to be identified for further cost reductions. She said the Leadership Team told her that while they have been able to identify many variables in this planning process and have developed planning strategies, they not be able to harness time. Interim President Mindrup noted that things the administration might be able to do in a short time to address the deficit are different than things they would do if they had three years to turn things around. She said the

Interim President Mindrup thinks, however, that there appears to be an understanding of Western's financial situation by alumni and community members that was not present before, so there might be an inclination by a donor to contribute to the case. She knows that the university's plan moving forward is sustainable, but this is the critical year, and it would be great if there was a donor or donors who were willing to help WIU turn things around. She stated that while Ms. Thompson keeps this on her radar and tries to tap into external funding, there might be the chance to reach into some capital project monies for the short term until the university can reach a balanced budget in preparation for FY 26.

Interim President Mindrup thinks today's meeting was a significant milestone and resulted in better understanding of WIU's situation. She did not expect the Governor's Office to bail the university out, but she does have a sense that the university community understands what needs to be done at this moment. She also thinks they understand that the current Leadership Team was handed this situation and in short order has really made significant progress since April 1 when they began to plan.

Interim Provost Mossman reemphasized that while the university is not receiving a bailout, there was an acknowledgement from the Deputy Governor that excellent work has been done in a short period of time. He said the current Leadership Team is trying to fix what took years to make, and the Springfield representatives seem to be very committed to trying to fix WIU's issues as well and perhaps they give the institution a partial bandaid. He thinks the fact that they want to meet again represents a radical difference from the previous one or two meetings with the Deputy Governor because at that time there was no plan in place but now a lot of work has been done.

Chair Albarracin asked if the meeting was prescheduled or whether WIU officials scheduled it in light of WIU's situation. Interim President Mindrup replied it was a follow-up because the university's financial situation has been able to be pinpointed since Ms. Roselieb and Interim Vice President for Finance and Administration John Smith have come on board. She said the administration now realizes it needs to move forward, particularly in regards to cash flow, so they wanted to get on the calendar with Springfield representatives sooner.

Parliamentarian Robertt asked what the Phase 2 is that Interim President Mindrup referred to. (d 12.9 ( r)-22 (.))22.8 ( )

budgets. He said these were to generate ideas about how to ~~make up~~ with the needed cost savings with the



stands and to build from that, react to it, adjust to it, and consider things that are beyond the black and white on paper, such as what Senator Gravitt brought up. She respects that individuals work through stakeholder groups, the administration has met with all of them at least once and in some cases multiple times. Interim President Mindrup said she supports responsible transparency but asks that everyone work together internally on these issues as much as possible so that as much as can be shared face-to-face and so that external audiences, such as students, are not unnecessarily agitated. She does not want this work to deter students from coming to WIU because that makes the work harder and the cuts deeper. She really wants WIU employees to encourage and reach out to each other because no one likes the university's financial picture or wants to make these difficult decisions. She thinks that the more everyone communicates, the better the stage can be set for morale because it will be really hard to improve morale while. She stressed that what can be done is to support and respect each other and hold onto the vision that the institution will get to the other side of this challenge. She recognizes that WIU will look different, and its challenges will have impact on people that we care about and work with, but the institution will make it to the other side of this.

Senator Hamner likes the phrase "responsible transparency." He asked if it is safe to say that the messages that went out from chairs to their departments that said this is happening was not responsible transparency and was not a message that was supposed to go out to faculty. Interim President Mindrup responded that

Parliamentarian Robinett said he is thankful for the very open levels of communication and being able to reach out as everyone goes through some of this. He asked if the administration is planning to put out anything to counter some of the misinformation or to provide faculty with helpful points. Interim President Mindrup said this is a great suggestion, and she will take it to Alisha Looney, Interim Associate Vice President for Communication, Marketing, and Media Relations. She said that while a couple of general statements have been made to the media, her approach with the recent articles has been to clearly articulate the administration's strategy and what needs to be done, although she did not quantify anything. She does not want to position her message in a way that is adversarial to anyone who might be commenting. She stated that while her remarks are not canned because they are genuine and true, they are a general type of response because she has learned the value of engaging and

and for the future there would just be selection-replacement of retirements. Interim Provost Mossman stated that, unfortunately, WIU is part of the wider problem with higher education in the United States, which includes the enrollment cliff so the focus will be on enrollment management and retention. He thinks that the understanding that WIU is a small institution is a big step forward as the institution moves forward. He cannot continue to be thinking that in a couple of years WIU will reach 10,000 students again because that is not realistic. Interim President Mindrup said the goal is to normalize so that those decisions the moment they are in; if there is a vacancy for an area that has an urgent need to fill that spot, then the decision will be made accordingly or if it is an area that is determined to be one that is not sustainable or not at maximum efficiency, then a decision might be considered at that moment to phase something out. She thinks the work that has been done to optimize the schedule will provide a tool to make that decision as objective as possible moving forward.

Chair Albarracín asked how much the administration is considering the impact on enrollment will be from the layoffs. She stated that in many of these calculations about what to do in future scenarios it is