

WESTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY FACULTY SENATE

28 May 2024, 4:00 p.m.

Via Zoom

ACTION MINUTES

SENATORS PRESENT: J. Albarracin, D. Atherton, B. Bellott, D. Brown, G. Cabedo-Timmons, C. Chadwell, H. Elbe, D. Gravitt, E. Hamner, A. Lewis, K. Perone, Y. Tang, L. Wipperling

SENATORS ABSENT: S. Bailey, A.

way this occurred is that previous administrations have approached these problems as a problem with student credit hour (SCH), headcount, and programs which could be rectified with a program cut or something of that nature. He suspects efforts to address the problem through increasing SCH numbers has led to an increase in General Education to the point where almost half of the Gen Ed courses offered at WIU do not actually count toward the state Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI) requirements. Interim Provost Mossman hopes that by getting more courses off the schedule, it will increase faculty capacity and encourage a robust enrollment in 100- and 200-level courses, which will in turn generate clear revenue and improve the overall health of the institution.

Interim Provost Mossman recognizes that enacting the proposed change will be “messy” on multiple levels and promises to use “maximum flexibility” when moving forward. He anticipates the change will lead to increases in faculty efficiency, the number of changes of majors, retention, and overall transfer accessibility for WIU. He believes there will be numerous benefits to this change.

Chair Albarracin stated that even though everyone may think that WIU’s General Education requires some revision, it is her position that these revisions should be done through working with the Faculty Senate and the councils that the Senate has for this purpose, including the Council on General Education (CGE), the Council on International Education (CIE), and the Council on Admissions, Graduation, and Academic Standards (CAGAS). She related that despite multiple conversations, Faculty Senate has been unable to convince Interim Provost Mossman that this would be the best course of action.

Senator Hamner thinks it is important to make a distinction today between the process involved regarding what has happened and the substance of the decision making. He believes the process was

terms of cost savings will be determined after the changes have been implemented for a semester; while he cannot provide an actual dollar amount, he believes that what is being done will normalize

ago, but it reinforces his point that things do not happen quickly at WIU.

Multicultural category of General Education and its replacement with a university-wide requirement through departments. She pointed out that IAI requirements require that at least one course be tagged with a D, or Diverse, designation, so if the idea is to actually abide by IAI, the university will still need something like that. She noted that a lot of the WIU Gen Ed courses that are not currently in IAI are in the Multicultural category and asked what the fate of those will be in light of the new university-wide requirement. Interim Provost Mossman thinks the D designation can be handled in a variety of ways and will go over that with Linda Prosis, Administrative Assistant to the Provost, in regard to the elimination of the Multicultural category and FLGI requirement. He said the idea is that multicultural perspectives will be expanded into and across the disciplines so that it is not just one particular Gen Ed category, which adheres with the Higher Values in Higher Education strategic plan, with Thriving Illinois, and with what the administration wants to do with the institution. He stressed that while it is the elimination of a category, it is also an expansion of multicultural perspectives by making it a major requirement of the university. Dr. Carr stressed that IAI expects one course to have the diversity tag, so if this decision is being made in the name of IAI that would be an inconsistency.

Art and Design professor Keith Holz, who serves on CIE and formerly chaired CGE, remarked that if this decision was made in mid-March, there was an interim president who came to the university after the interim provost made this decision, which is in the process of being consolidated. He asked when the Board of Trustees was apprised of this change and at what meeting that occurred. He wonders if it was reviewed and discussed by them and what their response was to the proposal. Interim Provost Mossman replied there has been no Board of Trustees meeting where this has been discussed at all. Interim Provost Mossman stated that his being an interim makes this an even harder decision to make, but it is in his opinion the right decision and what the university has to do. Dr. Holz related he was asked by another colleague to pose the question since both Dr. Mossman and Dr. Mindrup are interim and not voted in by the Faculty Senate, which he believes is, at some level, what is usually done for permanent provosts and presidents. Dr. Holz is struck by this and feels like the administration is skating on thin ice.

Dr. Filipink asked if Interim Provost Mossman can explain the process whereby he believes that the elimination of non-IAI-articulated General Education courses will automatically lead to increased enrollment in IAI-articulated Gen Ed courses. Interim Provost Mossman explained that each General Education category included non-IAI courses that WIU gives Gen Ed credit for. He believes that when these courses are not given Gen Ed credit, more students will go into the IAI courses. He thinks the effect will be fewer classes on the schedule and more robust enrollment in those IAI courses. Dr. Filipink is not sure this is a one-to-one process. He stated that since WIU will entirely have IAI-articulated Gen Ed courses, he suspects it is just as likely as Interim Provost Mossman's scenario that students will take these courses at community colleges, something they cannot do for a non-IAI-articulated WIU course which would guarantee the students' enrollment in the courses at Western. He does not believe that just getting rid of non-IAI-articulated courses automatically means that students are going to enroll in IAI-articulated courses at WIU. Interim Provost Mossman agrees this is a good and interesting point, but his perspective is that first-year students who have seen their advisors will be looking for Gen Ed courses in order to fill in their freshmen schedules. He thinks a very small percentage of those students will opt out and take those courses at a community college. Dr. Filipink pointed out that, by and large, non-IAI-articulated courses are not 100-level. Interim Provost Mossman pointed out that freshmen also take 200-level courses as they are looking to fulfill their Gen Ed requirements. Dr. Filipink said he is not sure the logic follows for this assumption. He is also not sure the logic follows that reducing the number of course offerings while asking every department to increase the number of courses taught by their faculty actually makes mathematical sense.

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Mossman said in his initial statement that these committees in the past have failed, in his perspective, but Mr. Zanolta thinks the charges to the review committee in the past were very vague and abstract and were more of a request to just “tell us what you think.” He asked if Interim Provost Mossman has looked into any other public universities in Illinois and their Gen Ed programs, whether any of them have followed the model of eliminating all Gen Ed courses except for those required by IAI, what that looks like compared to other state universities in Illinois that have not done that, and how that is going for both options. Interim Provost Mossman replied his position is that the entire institution needs to act, to make a decision, and to move forward on it. He does not believe WIU has another five years to debate the theory of General Education or another 25 years to talk about Gen Ed in Arts and Sciences. He stressed that the university needs to be more efficient in its scheduling of courses and its delivery of programs, which was a key part of his decision to move forward on this. He believes that this is shared governance, although as he told the Executive Committee and Chair Albarracin multiple times he wishes that he had reached out at some point in the process. Interim Provost Mossman believes that was an error, but he does not in any way regret the decision. He pointed out that if it proves to be a bad decision, he is an interim. He stressed that he is trying to do the right thing for the institution and move it forward to a better, brighter future.

Management are working on this process. He added that they are working on “pathways” more than 2+2 agreements. His position is that there needs to be more summits with individual community colleges and more faculty and advisors meeting with them. He added that the School of Agriculture does a really great job of working with community colleges to get transfer students into WIU. Interim Provost Mossman thinks this needs to be a university-wide initiative, adding that the new Interim Vice President for Student Success agrees with this and will move forward in that way.

Kathy Artis, Admissions and Records Coordinator for the General Studies program, said she works with articulation for General Studies and is worried about how the proposed changes will affect students from outside of Illinois who do not come into Western with an AA or AS degree. She said that because they are out of state, these students are totally unaware of the Illinois Articulation Initiative coursework, and the likelihood of matching up these students’ prior coursework is slim. She thinks the WIU-specific General Education courses allow for a little more freedom of articulation; for instance, she might be able to assign an elective for one of the out-of-state students’ courses within that Gen Ed category. Ms. Artis understands, however, that there is no option for anything like that with IAI. She wonders how this will affect WIU student-athletes who come from California, Texas, and many other states. Interim Provost Mossman replied he holds the opposite position because he thinks this change will make transfers easier for student-athletes and others. He recognizes that everyone will need to use substitutions where possible, adding that when he was department chair that was one of the tools in his toolbox, particularly when students would transfer from DePaul University, which had a very different Gen Ed program and early major requirements in English. He said substitutions were able to be determined by looking at students’ syllabi and other things. He hopes that because WIU will no longer have extra hours attached to General Education, it will be easier to align those things, and if it is not then there will need to be extra work done on it.

Parliamentarian Robinett said he spends a lot of time working with WIU student-athletes in his role as NCAA Faculty Representative. He thinks one thing that will make this transition an adventure is that until it is known exactly how the extra six hours will be treated, it will be difficult to say how that will work. He noted that departments have not had time to figure out what they will do with those extra six hours – if they will be open electives, which some programs current do not have – and there will be a period of time when it is unknown how this will affect student-athletes as far as recruiting and bringing them in because it will largely depend on the number of hours in their majors and how it affects electives.

[**Note:** Linda Prosis asked that this response to Parliamentarian Robinett’s question be added to the minutes: “I am in the process of analyzing the degree programs in CBT, COEHS, and COFAC to

