

WESTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

FACULTY SENATE

Regular Meeting, 12 September 2023, 4:00 p.m.

Via Zoom

ACTION MINUTES

**SENATORS PRESENT:** J. Albarracin, D. Atherton, S. Bailey, B. Bellott, D. Brown, G. Cabedo-Timmons, C. Chadwell, L. Ebert Wallace, H. Elbe, D. Gravitt, E. Hamner, D. Hunter, S. Ko, J. Land, A. Lewis, K. Perone, B. Petrocovic, Y. Tang, S. Turkelli, K. Wiseley, L. Wipperling

**Ex-officio:** Jeremy Robinett, Parliamentarian; Provost Manoochehr Zoghi

**SENATORS ABSENT:** D. Barr, J. Sarra, M. Shamsuddoha

**GUESTS:** Tom Blackford, Amy Burke, Dennis DeVolder, Triston Eddlemon, Carl Ervin, Miguel Huertes, Rick Kurasz, Sarah Lawson, Patrick McGinty, Kristi Mindrup, Mark Mossman, Lorette Oden, Renee Polubinsky, Linda Prorise, Justin Schuch, Rashmi Sharma, Eric Sheffield

I. Consideration of Minutes

A. August 29, 2023

**APPROVED AS DISTRIBUTED**

II. Announcements

A. Provost's Report

Provost Zoghi related he has heard a lot of positive remarks from various colleagues so far this semester and he hopes positive momentum is being built up for this academic year. The Executive Committee decided to wait until after tenth-day reports to bring guests to discuss those numbers and updates. The Provost accordingly invited Associate Provost Mark Mossman to talk about the new model for advising; Executive Director of Retention Initiatives Justin Schuch to provide an update on student retention numbers; and the new Director of First Year Advising, Miguel Huerta. Provost Zoghi said he has a lot of thoughts about student success because, moving forward, this will be the university's biggest challenge and its biggest opportunity.

Associate Provost Mossman informed senators that a transition in how advising is done occurred over the summer, when the Enrollment Management division was dissolved. He stated that at that time Advising was moved under Academic Affairs and, simultaneously, the model of how advising was done was shifted. He stressed the intention is to increase and strongly support the way the university is approaching advising. Associate Provost Mossman related this involves multiple connections and engagements with students, both nationally and at WIU, because this translates into increased retention numbers.

Associate Provost Mossman related that this fall all Reach students, Hope scholars, and undecided freshmen continued to be advised by the First-Year Advising Center team. The shift is that regularly admitted freshmen who have declared majors now go back to the departmental advisors in their major field of study. Associate Provost Mossman praised Miguel Huerta, his first-year advising team, and the college advisors for an incredibly smooth transition. Associate Provost Mossman had been anticipating chaos, but instead the process was 99 percent smooth. He said everyone embraced the

process, there was a good team effort, and it was a good example of successful advising. He thinks advising can work better if treated as a systemwide approach rather than a one-size-fits-all or a silo model, and this year's systemwide effort was very successful. Associate Provost Mossman and Dr. Huerta are beginning to work on a number of student learning objectives that they would like to attach to advising that would help measure student engagements with both the First-Year Advising Center team and with the college-level advisors and see how these are working as the university moves into the following year.

Dr. Huerta said he also was expecting a worst-case scenario for the summer transition considering

nontraditional, and transfer students, as well as focusing on family support. Mr. Schuch reminded senators there was formerly an office which specifically addressed the needs of families, and he is happy that Dr. Janisz's energy is able to be refocused in this direction, particularly because the university has a high concentration of first-generation students. Dr. Janisz also has two graduate students to help her in this area.

Mr. Schuch told senators there are some retention initiatives that he hopes they will be hearing a lot about, including the Connections Mapping program. This allows the Retention Initiatives office to look at the decisions made by students during the first five weeks of the semester in order to help them identify which students the office may need to be concerned about when moving into the fall semester. Mr. Schuch said this program has been used over the past six years to look at such data as meal plan use, whether students are using resources such as Leatherneck Link and Getting Involved, whether students are interacting with their academic advisors,

questions include asking what time the Rec Center opens or how to contact resources across the university. He said Edsights also engages in some proactive reaching out to students to ask them how everything is going based on four specific areas: academic, general wellness, financial, and social engagement. Mr. Schuch said the responses help staff obtain information to follow up on with students. He told senators 93 percent of WIU chose to opt-in with the program last year, which is a very high rate and is a good tool for the Retentions Initiatives office. Mr. Schuch wanted Faculty Senate to know that if a student tells them they received a text from a random number, if it is from Rocky it is legitimate. He said Rocky will never ask students for personal information such as their credit card or student ID number, but Rocky might ask for some types of personal information, such as whether a student feels homesick. Mr. Schuch said Rockybot is a very real and important program for his office and one of the larger scale university initiatives his office is working with.

Provost Zoghi asked if the Retention Initiatives Office had a chance to also verify the attendance of these students. He thinks it might be beneficial to compare the attendance within the three targeted groups with control groups to possibly determine if attendance was a factor. Mr. Schuch responded that attendance was not a factor in determining how students should be grouped last fall because it was the first time Connections Mapping had been used and they did not have that data, but they can

Mr. Eddlemon remarked that two of the three groups of students had GPAs below 2.0 at the end of the semester. He asked why the university is waiting until after these students fall below this threshold to be very concerned about their performance. Mr. Schuch responded that they are not, which is the purpose of the Connections Mapping program. He explained that students are broken into these groups at the end of Week 5, weeks before academic data is received, which enables his office to make interventions as early as possible and try to use whatever data is available to predict some of these problems and correct them. Mr. Schuch related that two years ago his office tried to see what four weeks of data would look like if the timeline were moved up, but there was not enough to work with. His office also tried collecting data through the sixth week and starting interventions at Week 7, but they have settled on a happy medium of five weeks of data collection.

Senator Petrocovič remarked he is glad the strategy of tracking matches what the outcomes were, but he thinks the focus should be on an intervention strategy. He agrees it is good to know where students stand at the beginning of the semester, but he does not know what the intervention strategy is for each of the three categories. He wonders if there is one strategy for all three groups or if there is a separate strategy for each category, how these students are reached, and how they are assisted to get back on track. Mr. Schuch replied the strategy has changed as the program has grown because his office went from one person to now a second person working with Connections Mapping. He hopes that by continuing to grow the program and educate more groups, such as Faculty Senate, and share the data, it will be more used. He noted that with the highly concerned group of students, his office wants to have some sort of conversation. He explained that because there is only a small number of people in his office, the data is shared with deans to help with the work. He hopes to come up with a focused

sometimes tell him they wished they had known these processes earlier in their college careers because just learning priority management – staying on top of things and not waiting until the last minute – would have helped them so much. He believes just understanding that someone cares about them makes a big difference to students and is very impactful for student success.

Senator Hamner asked how many of the predictive analytics that Mr. Schuch is relying on will be applicable to students who are online only or non-residential. Mr. Schuch responded they are highly applicable, and his offices recognizes that Quad Cities students have access to different resources than students on the Macomb campus. He noted, for example, that the frequency of login to WesternOnline and the distance between logins is a good indicator. He said some of the things now being considered were not used as indicators prior to Covid, but the pandemic made his office think in different ways. Mr. Schuch realizes the model for online students is not as strong, but he anticipates that it will grow as more resources become available. He noted that another good indicator for students on both campuses is use of Handshake, the career development platform which allows students to look for employment opportunities. He said some universities, particularly those with branch campuses, use sale of parking permits as an indicator, but the Retention Initiatives office does not use this yet because they do not have access to the data. His office will continue to look for indicators for students who are not on the residential campus.

Mr. Eddleson asked if Mr. Schuch has information about what is being done to keep the 32 percent of students in the highly concerned group who came back to campus this fall continuing to remain at WIU. He also would like to know if those returning students are climbing out of the highly concerned group or continuing to sit there. Mr. Eddleson thinks this is the perfect focus group to see if the Connections Mapping program works and if the students in the highly concerned group have an opportunity to get out of that group. Associate Provost Mossman thinks the key indicator is if students

Dr. Huerta believes the way the university talks about academic support needs to change slightly. He hears students being offered tutoring if they are struggling with their classes, but he wants the message to be that tutoring is being offered to support and enrich what they are learning in their classes. He has talked to students who are reluctant to engage in tutoring but suggests that they do their math homework, for example, at the same time as math tutoring is occurring; then if they get stuck they can jump online and get that support. Dr. Huerta has found some success with stressing that academic support is meant to enrich and support what they are already learning when they are reluctant to try tutoring to begin with. Provost Zoghi remarked that if students have not previously been exposed to something they do not know that it is going to work for them. Dr. Huerta related he shared his school transcripts to students to show he has had semesters with F grades, some with As and Bs, and some with minuses. He lets himself be very vulnerable to students and share that there are ups and down on the academic journey because then students see him as a real person and can realize that the academic journey is not one-size-fits all. He lets students see that they can struggle but that these struggles can be overcome.

Senator Hunter asked Dr. Huerta to pass along kudos to his advisors who worked hard to schedule the study halls with many conflicting classes among the Reach students. Dr. Huerta said his office is working hard to create partnerships in order to expose students to the different areas on campus. He does not think devoting four hours a week is hard for students; getting them to actually do it is important, and his office is exploring even more options.

B. Student Government Association (SGA) Report  
(Triston Eddlemon, SGA Vice President for External Affairs)

Mr. Eddlemon reported that SGA has not yet had its first formal meeting (general assembly) to get started; they do not yet have a quorum of senators but are working on getting those seats filled. Mr. Eddlemon is working with SGA President Kyle Rumlow to find student representatives for various

Mr. Ervin stated the Anti-Racism Task Force today shared the results of the campus climate survey at the town hall for faculty. He said a lot was learned from the campus climate survey,



Mr. Ervin said the JIDE office is participating in a number of grant proposals and serving on search committees with the goal of making sure they are communicating what they are doing for the WIU community and what changes can be made to make sure people feel like they belong. He wants people to feel that there is a sense of justice, inclusion, diversity, and equity at WIU. He thinks the new JIDE office has done a lot of great things already but can do even more with everyone's help. He encourages everyone to stop into the JIDE office, which is located in the University Union, to see what they are doing to serve students, faculty, and staff.

Chair Albarracin asked if Mr. Ervin could provide senators with some results or highlights from the campus climate survey. Mr. Ervin noted that the sense of belong across campus seems to be strong in all groups, but there has been some change in the sense of racial discrimination and sexual harassment. He said this is broken down mostly by gender as to who thinks the existence of this is strong and who does not. Mr. Ervin recognizes there are still a lot of survey results to break apart and analyze, such as breaking apart the responses by campus. He said there are plans to do a town hall meeting on the Quad Cities campus as well with their faculty, staff, and students. Mr. Ervin said the results of the survey will be useful in working to address the concerns that were raised.

2. Elections

- a. Budget Transparency Committee – Business and Technology senator

**Motion:** To nominate Dan Atherton (Atherton). There were no other nominations, and Senator Atherton was declared elected.

- b. Committee on Provost and Presidential Performance – one senator

**Motion:** To nominate Heidi Elbe (Elbe). There were no other nominations, and Senator Elbe was declared elected. Chair Albarracin welcomed Senator Elbe, who was recently elected to the vacant Macomb Senator At-Large seat.

III. Reports of Committees and Councils

- A. Senate Nominating Committee (SNC)  
(Katherine Perone, Chair)

1. Nominations to Fill Vacancies

**UNIVERSITY COUNCILS AND COMMITTEES:**

CITR Advisory Committee

Munia Cabal-Jimenez, For Lang & Lit replacing Patricia Eathington 2024 A&S  
tee

