

WESTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

August 6, 2024

Western Illinois University
Macomb, Illinois
University Union, Capitol Room

The meeting of the Board of Trustees of Western Illinois University convened at 8am on August 6, 2024 in the Western Illinois University Union, Capitol Room Carin Stutz presided.

August 6, 2024 – Western Illinois University Union, Capitol Room

Trustee moved to convene to open session at 8am.

Motion: Trustee Wise

Second: Trustee Lowe Mullins

Roll Call

Trustee Kirk Dillard	Yes
Trustee Erika Lowe Mullins	Yes
Trustee Doug Shaw	Yes
Trustee Carin Stutz	Yes
Trustee Polly Radosh	Yes
Trustee Cody Cornell	Yes
Trustee Derek Wise	Yes
Trustee Kisha Lang	NA

The following Trustee was on-line:

Trustee Kisha Lang

Motion to allow Trustee Lang to appear remotely pursuant to Open Meetings Act, 5 ILCS 120/7(ii)

Motion: Trustee Dillard

Second: Trustee Cornell

Roll Call

Trustee Erika Lowe Mullins	Yes
Trustee Doug Shaw	Yes
Trustee Carin Stutz	Yes
Trustee Polly Radosh	Yes
Trustee Cody Cornell	Yes
Trustee Derek Wise	Yes
Trustee Kisha Lang	Yes
Trustee Kirk Dillard	Yes

Motion approved

Also present for the meeting of the Board of Trustees:

Interim President, Kristi Mindrup

Interim University Legal Counsel, Victoria Smith

Senior Executive Assistant to the President, Athena Brooks

Public Comments

1. Eldon Brown
 - President of Alumni Council from Washington State
 - We must take action
 - 100 year milestone and time to work together
 - Decisions today will be heartbreaking but we must have a vision and take action
 - Gratitude for those who serve WIU and those who are making the hard decision
 - Turn this moment of crisis into lasting success

2. Merrill Cole
 - Vote no
 - We are losing students
 - Turn this around

3. John Nichols
 - Grad student and a long family history at WIU
 - History of wife's Grandfather
 - Personal history at WIU and importance of faculty
 - Please think about what you are going to do
 - Many ways to balance the budget not just layoffs

4. John Hallwas
 - Former faculty member
 - Value of civil service and library employees
 - Caution against randomly cutting civil service employees
 - The Library Archives is a deeply important regional center
 - Less staff now than years ago
 - The civil service workers and student interns in the archives are paid by the state and should remain working
 - They are needed to get items processed, keep items preserved and make them available
 - Current staff struggle to keep up and storage areas are jammed

5. Richard O. Musser
 - Thank you for navigating this challenging financial period
 - In Biological Sciences Department there were two layoffs this summer and an upcoming retirement in Spring 2025, down to 9 faculty for 200 students
 - Concerns with proposed layoffs
 - Challenge with retention
 - Losing faculty members that make students excited in class will have a negative impact

6. David Wade
 - Here to represent WIU Donors
 - Cutting programs, this is not a new problem
 - I have ideas and will be here to help WIU rebuild

7. Paul Edwards
 - Here for two reasons – First to listen, I still support WIU and thank my team
 - Second to thank my staff, Ketra, Renea, Greg, Mary Kay, Bobbie, John and Cassandra for their support and the good work we did

8. Julia Albarracin
 - Will come back to her

9. Larry T. Balsamo
 - Spent 40 years as a faculty member
 - Wife was here 36 years
 - This will be a hard and long day
 - 2 Suggestion – 1) National searches here have been unsuccessful. I recommend keeping the current Acting President and Acting Provost if their work is satisfactory. We need stability in leadership.
 - 2) Create a Blue-Ribbon panel of 12 people – To address attraction of students, academic standards, image, and place in higher ed. They need to act quickly and report to the board.

10. Edward Woell
 - Faculty Senate member – At the meeting the Interim President and Interim Provost justified the rollout to fire faculty as a staff reduction
 - One statement – It doesn't do any good to look at the past I want to look forward.
 - This is what plagues governance and this condemns the board to make mistakes
 - Overlooking shared governance is reflected in this proposal
 - Dwindling faculty and bloated administration are not equitable
 - This decision will be devastating
 - This strategy has already been tried and failed at WIU, it renews a dismal pattern

11. David Zerolla
 - A Leatherneck for 27 years
 - I received a letter and was notified that 3 days later I would be laid off
 - Decisions being made to “save the University” are eliminating people that were committed to spending their entire careers invested in our students
 - A friend questioned the decline in education level with the layoffs
 - Layoffs do not strengthen the University; it sends the message that classroom experience is not a priority
 - You will lose people that invest in students that you hope to someday call Alumni

12. Richard Filipink
 - Been here before
 - Laying off faculty and support staff lead to more layoffs of civil service, tech workers and building service workers

- We do this, students stop coming
- We are stabilizing the university and making hard decisions every time
- we make the same mistakes and have the same outcomes
- I ask that the board, instead of breaking this University build it up and vote no

Written Comments

1. Craig Tollini

- A year ago, the overall message from administrators including the president was there would be no layoffs. The raise has obviously increased the deficit.
- The University community was not directly informed about the unit B layoffs
- Interim Provost and President did not directly address the faculty layoffs until the July 25th Faculty Senate meeting. At that meeting, the Interim Provost claimed something he intended to be an exercise was misunderstood as the actual decision-making process causing continuing communication issues
- Why should we trust the Interim Provost and President when they say the proposed layoffs will follow the contract and right-size WIU.
- A full commitment to complete open and honest communication is needed to rebuild trust and thereby unite us
- I hope the Trustees have either already informed themselves about the topics relevant to today's meeting or don't vote until they get information.
- WIU deserves Trustees who do their jobs well just as it deserves administrators and faculty who do their jobs well

In-Person Comment - Julia Albarracin

- I'm in support of the layoffs
- I'm not convinced 6,000 students is the magic number where we will stabilize unless we seriously question our enrollment strategies, and that includes recruitment and retention
- Laying off faculty for next year does not address the deficit we have this year
- I don't support the layoff, so I ask you to vote against it

2. John Carlson

- Cuts have to be made, but fully funding programs to increase international student enrollment is essential
- International students provide a better overall education to all students
- International students pay more
- WIU should focus on increasing international student programs, such as the Western English as a Second Language (WESL)
- Increase income while also improving the educational experience
- International students improve our education system and our financial balance; they are an investment

3. Patti Jones

- Former WESL Director and board member of Phi Beta Delta
- The international population is the second largest minority population on campus
- This population provides financial support for the university at the rate of 1.75 times the regular student population

- WIU has seen growth in international students in the past five years, at the same time a decline in the services provided to those students.
 - WIU has drawn largely from English-speaking countries due to the fact that a WESL (Western's English as a Second Language) Program no longer exists
 - WESL program supported the International Programs Office with 2 out of every 3 dollars spent. It also provided the campus and community with diversity of linguistic individuals and their backgrounds.
 - Phi Beta Delta has tried to fill the need for these students but a volunteer organization does not have access to the funding and campus resources that a full-time staff assigned to programming would have.
 - The most successful recruitment of students is by positive word of mouth. Without support services on campus we cannot sustain the same level of international student enrollment.
 - Request that WIU A) Reinstate an ESL program to encourage diversity in offerings to those for whom English is not their first language B) Create a program director and infuse funding for students to establish cultural experiences with the campus and the community. C) Centralize the International Office to create better communication with programming, recruitment, and support activities.
4. Tom Blackford
- Hard to believe laying off 150 faculty in less than a year will lead to growth of a university.
 - This means the elimination of programs, which means students won't come.
 - If less students is going to be the new normal, this should have been explained a long time ago.
 - Concerned about the lack of transparency and openness about this process
 - What is the overall plan?
5. Terri Hare
- I don't want to see ANY employees lose their jobs, but it's time to make cuts in the academic areas based on our current student population.
 - We need to keep faculty and boost enrollment in more popular/celebrated programs (ag, nursing, music, LEJA, biology, etc.).
 - WIU must be run like a business. Let's focus on our strengths.

Chairperson's Remarks

Mrs. Carin Stutz, Chair

- A lot of concern expressed about what will happen here today. We truly appreciate the depth of concern that you feel for your jobs and the jobs of your colleagues and the future of WIU
- Our highest priority is moving WIU into a sustainable future
- The Board's charge is oversight not management; the primary responsibility is to hire the president and then work with him or her in a strictly oversight capacity
- Over the last few years we have strongly pushed for action including personnel changes; we have been advocating for bold decisive action for the last three
- In the past, University has been able to tap into restricted funds to bridge gaps and those funds have now been exhausted; we have a cash flow issue
- Some have suggested that the Foundation should bail out the University. Thank you so

much to the Foundation for stepping up but even with that help it doesn't solve the problem of structural deficits.

- Administration has been working for months to find a way through this without layoffs and program cuts, but they've exhausted all measures that could be taken to cut costs. There're still not enough resources to address the operational needs of the University, cuts are necessary

President's Remarks

Interim President Kristi Mindrup

- I want to acknowledge everybody who's taken time to be here today; your presence is a demonstration of the sense of community that we have
- What we have in common is the care for the University, and also want to acknowledge the people who took the time to stand up and speak. We may have differences on the path forward but we share a commitment to Western Illinois University
- Today is heavy and has been weighing on our entire community's hearts and minds for a long time
- Western Illinois University has been riding waves of changes in higher education happening across the country. Enrollment declines, changes in funding and a misguided narrative that higher education is not worth the investment
- Year after year, Western's focus was about returning WIU to its glory days of 15,000 students, but certainly we could settle for 10,000
- This strategy was grounded in good intentions and pride in Western Illinois University
- Our University community focused on themes like; we just need to recruit more, we just need to tell our story, we just need more advertising because we believe in what we do
- Over the past few years our institution has engaged in short-term fixes and patches to our finances based on the promise of more students
- These strategies were not sustainable and overall enrollment continued to decline
- We find ourselves today at a pivotal moment where we must make decisions that ensure our short-term and long-term stability and success
- 80% of Western's budget comprises personnel. In order to address financial stability, we must do two things; 1) Acknowledge the reality of our anticipated enrollment at the lowest point of this enrollment cliff. 2) Recognize that our institution-like many others across the country-must be the right size and the right shape
- Necessary changes will not come without heartache and personal sacrifice at every level of the organization
- We are tasked with the significant challenge of balancing a \$22 million deficit and identifying strategies to resolve cash flow stability in short time
- The decisions leadership make when fast action is necessary look different compared to when there's a longer runway to plan, engage in thorough dialogue and slowly implement changes
- The focus of all decisions has been to ensure students have access to quality academic programs and engaging experiences on our campus
- Another focus has been on reduction of administration and administrative costs. Identifying operational efficiencies, reorganization, savings and reductions in spending
- This Administration has also voluntarily contributed to an overall 15% pay decrease compared to our predecessors last year and also reduce the size of the administration by two vice presidents, temporarily one vice president, one assistant vice president, and an

Institutional Research Director, total Savings of close to 3/4 million.

- I want to acknowledge the gravity of these decisions and the profound impact they will have on our dedicated faculty, staff, and communities
- It is heartbreaking to come to this point in our institution's path where we have no choice but to make a significant financial shift for the ultimate sustainability of Western
- The future of Western Illinois University is one dependent upon a financially stable foundation this is the difficult year
- This is the day that we make the conscious decision to not pass the buck to future students, current and future faculty, staff, and administration; with all other options exhausted, this is the work that has been handed to us
- I empower everyone to share revenue generation and cost savings ideas with your supervisor, your vice president and my office.
- WIU will be positioned to fulfill our mission to empower students, faculty, and staff; to lead dynamic and diverse communities through student centered programs
- We will be positioned to strengthen our focus on student retention and the transfer experience while expanding our market. We will innovate in new ways that attract adult online learners
- Align with Thrive Illinois initiatives that foster equity and access for first generation and traditionally underrepresented students to address workforce education and development, mental health and health care
- We will serve rural West Central Illinois Workforce Development needs through innovative partnerships and student experiences before, during, and after college
- We are the right community at the right time; we will find our way through this
- soon we will welcome a new class of students to WIU along with students returning this fall semester healing will begin to happen
- I am grateful for each and every one of you and for this great institution, together we will continue to be Leatherneck strong

Verbal Report and Discussion Item

Budget and Financial Report - (Administrator in charge of Finance and Administration, John Smith and Executive Director of Financial Affairs, Ketra Roselieb)

Ketra Roselieb

- Review of historical financial performance and cash balances
- Beginning in fiscal year 2022, expenses have exceeded revenues
- This information has been presented and discussed at length for the last four years. Every September board meeting we present the prior year financials and the All Funds Budget. Year after year the board has reminded administration and the campus community of the importance and expectation of aligning expenses and revenues
- If we overspend in our income fund, the deficit would come from the cash balance that we hold in the income fund
- Once that cash balance is exhausted, we begin to utilize other unrestricted cash balances
- Our first year of a fiscal deficit in fiscal year 2022 that income fund cash went negative and we became consistently reliant on the cash and other unrestricted funds
- With deficit spending in fiscal year 2023 and 2024, the cash balances at the University

have declined to critical levels, forcing the magnitude and urgency of the decisions that need to be made

- The cash balances put us on a timeline of how quickly this needs to happen
- We must focus on positioning ourselves with balanced revenues and expenses in the future fiscal years
- I'm confident of two things today 1) The numbers before you and 2) That everyone in this room wants Western to thrive

Continued discussion by the board, administration and individuals in the audience

Resolutions and Action Items

Action

Resolution No. 24.8/1

Action

Staff Reduction Authorization

(Interim Provost and Academic Vice President, Mark Mossman)

Motion: Trustee Lowe Mullins

Second: Trustee Dillard

Discussion regarding layoffs and the effect, the timeline, and how we will prevent the disproportionate laying off of women and other traditionally underrepresented groups. Review of how Student Success, Facilities and Athletics is cutting cost and working effectively.

Roll Call

Trustee Doug Shaw	Yes
Trustee Carin Stutz	Yes
Trustee Polly Radosh	Yes
Trustee Cody Cornell	Yes
Trustee Derek Wise	Yes
Trustee Kisha Lang	Yes
Trustee Kirk Dillard	Yes
Trustee Erika Lowe Mullins	Yes

Motion approved

Resolution No. 24.8/2

Action

Authorizing Steps Necessary for the Sale of Surplus Real Estate

(Administrator in charge of Finance and Administration, John Smith)

Motion: Trustee Shaw

Second: Trustee Lowe Mullins

Request for more information from Trustees

Roll Call

Trustee Polly Radosh	Yes
Trustee Cody Cornell	No

Trustee Derek Wise	Yes
Trustee Kisha Lang	No
Trustee Kirk Dillard	No
Trustee Erika Lowe Mullins	No
Trustee Doug Shaw	No
Trustee Carin Stutz	Yes

Motion did not carry

Old Business

New Business

Change September BOT Meeting to the Macomb Campus

Motion: Trustee Lowe Mullins

Second: Trustee Wise

Roll Call

Trustee Cody Cornell	Yes
Trustee Derek Wise	Yes
Trustee Kisha Lang	Yes
Trustee Kirk Dillard	Yes
Trustee Erika Lowe Mullins	Yes
Trustee Doug Shaw	Yes
Trustee Carin Stutz	Yes
Trustee Polly Radosh	Yes

Motion approved

Next Meeting

September 26, 2024 Closed Session – Macomb

September 27, 2024 Open Session – Macomb

December 6, 2024 Open and Closed – Macomb

ADJOURN ACTION

Trustee moved to adjourn the meeting of the Board of Trustees at 12:47pm.

Motion: Trustee Wise

Second: Trustee Lang

Roll Call

Trustee Derek Wise	Yes
Trustee Kisha Lang	Yes

Trustee Kirk Dillard	Yes
Trustee Erika Lowe Mullins	Yes
Trustee Doug Shaw	Yes
Trustee Carin Stutz	Yes
Trustee Polly Radosh	Yes
Trustee Cody Cornell	Yes

Motion approved

Carin Stutz, Chair
Senior Executive Assistant to the President, Athena Brooks