

## FACULTY SENATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 16 April 2024  
4:00 p.m. – Via Zoom

### ACTION MINUTES

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Julia Albarracin, Chair; Everett Hamner, Vice Chair; Denise Gravitt, Secretary  
**ALSO PRESENT:** Holly Nikels, Senior Associate Provost for Budget, Personnel, and Research; Jeremy Robinett, Parliamentarian; Annette Hamm, Faculty Senate Office Manager  
**GUESTS:** Ben Brewer, Rich Filipink, Jeff Hancks, Kristi Mindrup, Eric Sheffield

Next year's Executive Committee members were invited to attend today's meeting. Jeremy Robinett, who serves as Parliamentarian this year, will serve as Senate Chair next year. Jeff Hancks will be Vice Chair next year, and Ben Brewer will serve as Senate Secretary.

#### 1. *COEHS Realignment*

Eric Sheffield related he took over the role of Interim Dean of the College of Education and Human Services in July 2023, and in August discussions turned to the College's leadership vacuums. He noted that currently three departments are headed by interim chairs, and two of those – Renee Polubinsky and Katrina Daytner – also serve as Associate and Assistant Dean, while Renee also works in the Provost's office. He told the Executive Committee that this situation is unsustainable. He has tried to get someone in those two departments to serve as chair, but that has not happened yet.

Dean Sheffield related that it was decided that the beginning of the reorganization process should not be run by the dean's office due to lingering negative perceptions from the previous reorganization that the dean's office has already decided what it wants to do and is just going through the motions; thus, the decision was made only to involve the dean's office at the very end. Christopher Merritt, Dean for Innovation and Economic Development, was invited to initiate the realignment conversation because he has experience helping rural communities to make decisions together. Dean Sheffield related the process started with a request to chairs and directors to identify two Unit A faculty members and one Unit B faculty member, if there were any in the unit, with the request, if possible, that one Unit A be professionally younger and the other have been in the unit a longer time. He said these 14 members comprised the realignment working group. He provided the Executive Committee with a 54-page document in which Dean Merritt shows the work throughout the process. Dean Sheffield said the working group was asked to consider program synergies, potential cost savings, and the possibility of finding new relationships among programs whereby people might come up with new minors and undergraduate or master's degrees. The faculty working group ended up with 17 different reorganization plans which they reduced to a slate of six ranked plans.

Dean Sheffield related the dean's office took those top six plans and, taking into account the administrative process, tweaked them at the program level and presented the College faculty with two plans. He said one of them would shrink the College by one department and would have an approximate cost savings of about \$25,000 per year. Dean Sheffield said Interim Provost Mossman asked if there was another plan that might save more money, so the dean's office put together a second plan with an approximate savings of \$70,000 in personnel. He said the savings come from having a chair or director no longer be needed in one area and that individual going from an 11-month to a 9-month contract. He said input was sought from everyone in the College on the two plans, including faculty, staff, advisors, individuals in the teacher education office, and anyone who might want to look at how best to reorganize or realign the College. He related there was a split as to which plan was preferred and tension in the comments between the value of cost savings versus the value of not creating a really large school that was terribly complicated. He added the programs in the larger version were quite disparate and it would probably have been a struggle to implement, so the dean's office chose the smaller version to propose.

Dean Sheffield related that after the dean's office chose a version to recommend, it was submitted for a vote to every unit except for Law Enforcement and Justice Administration, which was not included in the reorganization conversation because there are discussions about it becoming a separate college. He added that

none of the proposals on the table changed LEJA. Faculty voted on the proposal(s) that impacted them and not on the proposals affecting other areas; Education, for example, only voted on the PE Teacher Education program leaving Kinesiology and merging with them and voted 23-1 in favor of that change. Dean Sheffield said there was generally positive support for the reorganization plans except in one area: Social Work joining with Counselor Education and College Student Personnel (CSP), which he actually sees as the most exciting of all in terms of program synergy. He said the only suggestion for Recreation, Park, Tourism, and Hospitality was for the Sports Management program to be moved from Kinesiology to their area. He is not sure that taking in one new program constitutes a new department for RPTA and SOE, and he does not know that their department/school names will be changed at all.

Dean Sheffield asked if Faculty Senate approval is required for the reorganization to move forward. He stated that UPI has been involved throughout the process; UPI President Patrick McGinty joined in the town hall meeting and one or two of Dean Merritt's meetings as well. Dean Sheffield plans to meet with Counselor Education, CSP, and Social Work faculty tomorrow to obtain feedback and hear their concerns on the proposal to combine their areas. He said that if this merger is approved, the Department of Health Science and Social Work would be eliminated since the Public Health program would go under Kinesiology.

Parliamentarian Robinett observed that the administration making decisions about individual programs is normally treated differently than decisions affecting entire departments; the administration can make decisions about its own program as long as no faculty are ultimately affected. He said decisions that are only at the programmatic level do not require the full study that is required when merging departments. He noted, for example, that Sports Management is a program, which is not the same as the Department of Kinesiology so would not have to go through the same process. He added that Faculty Senate is responsible for changes that will affect pedagogy and curriculum in WIU's shared governance model.

Chair Albarracin was surprised to see different survey questions for each area and asked why the decision was made to poll faculty this way rather than asking everyone about all of the proposed changes. Dean Sheffield replied the dean's office thought it was important to give faculty the opportunity to speak directly and only to the ways they were impacted as opposed to asking them if they are in favor of the entire reorganization. He noted, for example, that moving PE Teacher Education to SOE does not affect everyone, and the decision was made to focus on the impact to each area. Dean Sheffield stated he is a huge proponent of shared governance and believes the decisions must be made together, which is why the College is working through a long process to make these decisions. He has seen many occasions in the seven years he has been at WIU when decisions were made without going through the process, which contributed to the College's administrative problems.

Chair Albarracin asked if the two possible reorganization plans that were proposed by the College were directly taken from the six plans the faculty working group brought forward. Dean Sheffield responded the dean's office took into account everything the faculty working group suggested, then they looked closely at the program level and produced their own plan out of the spirit of what had been presented to them. He said that, while not an exact match, there are bits and pieces of the faculty plans included in the final plan.

Senator Gravitt asked if there would be any moving of physical locations or into different buildings involved with this proposal. Dean Sheffield replied there will not unless faculty feel like they should. He pointed out that the one proposal which faculty are pushing back on somewhat is split between the two campuses anyway.

Mr. Brewer remarked that when his program was moved five years ago, he was not spoken to in advance about the move at all. He had left campus one day when he received a call informing him that the caller was to be his new chair and asking him to come to a meeting in half an hour. He has appreciated the process this time because he has been involved in emails and meetings along the way; even though the reorganization would not affect his department, he felt included and responded to the survey sent out by the dean's office. Dean Sheffield had a similar experience; he was in his first year as chair of the Department of Educational Studies when he was advised to attend a press conference at which the President and then-Provost announced that his department was being eliminated, and in its place was a School of Education (SOE). He said at that time there was no discussion with him, the faculty, or even the dean's office that this reorganization was being considered. He admitted that the SOE has been a great thing in hindsight; it has more students than any

unit on campus right now and is one of the few that is growing.

Senator Hamner asked if Dean Sheffield could provide a brief sense of the issues that are active and why there is such a split in the vote among Counselor Education, College Student Personnel, and Social Work. Dean Sheffield replied the issue seems to be between Counselor Ed and Social Work. He pointed out that Counselor Ed is a master's level program, and Social Work was recently granted permission to develop a master's program. He stated that while there is some overlap between what a social worker and a counselor does in a school, there is also quite a bit of difference, but he thinks the two groups are concerned about taking each other's students. Dean Sheffield, however, does not agree that this would occur; he can foresee them going on recruiting trips together, for example, and explaining how their programs differ and what they can each offer to students. He noted that there is a shortage of both school counselors and social workers, and Regional School Superintendent John Meixner has been asking for WIU to develop a master's in social work for years. Dean Sheffield noted that there is an amazing LGBTQ+ clinic in Moline, and he can see opportunities for internships and post-baccalaureate certificates for students in conjunction with this clinic, or perhaps establishing a similar clinic on the Macomb campus. He thinks there are some wonderful things that could come out of social workers and counselors working together.

Associate Provost Nikels told ExCo she has chaired the Department of Counselor Ed and College Student Personnel for many years and agrees with Dean Sheffield as to the perceived issues. She thinks the missing piece is that on a national level, social workers and counselors battle each other frequently for funding. She said the two groups think they can do each other's job, but they cannot because they are different. She thinks WIU should rise above this "national noise" and the two units should start to work together, and she thinks the two groups should do so at the national level as well. Dean Sheffield said he was not aware of this problem at the national level.

Parliamentarian Robinett said it is also important to understand the history of Social Work at WIU and that they have been in a department for quite some time which has not been an ideal pedagogical situation. He related that social science and epidemiological science were forced together into one department and required to treat curricular decisions as a whole instead of respecting the uniqueness of each of their different areas. He has seen, when serving on College of Education and Human Services curricular committees, how Social Work was unable to get proposals approved that were important for their accreditation because of the way the department was structured. He thinks the vote makes sense when looked at contextually through the history of this department. Dean Sheffield thinks that past administrative decisions about budgeting also contributed to Social Work's position. He thinks this proposed merger would address that problem as well as addressing an office support problem since the Department of Health Sciences and Social Work does not even have a shared office manager currently.

Dean Sheffield told ExCo that some staff have been concerned that the reorganization is a plan for the College to be able to lay off employees, but he has told them from the beginning that is not the intention. He told staff that the College would not present a plan that would leave them with one fewer office manager, and in fact the current proposal would allow for the hiring of one additional office manager.

Ms. Hamm asked if the proposals coming forward from the College to Faculty Senate would have the names and missions of the new departments filled in since they are currently blank. Dean Sheffield replied they would not because the faculty will be making those decisions, and he does not think they will have time to do so. ExCo discussed whether all three of the COEHS proposals need to go through Faculty Senate or only some of them. Dean Sheffield asked for the Executive Committee to give him clear directions on what he needs to submit to Faculty Senate and on what forms.

Senator Gravitt asked what the downside is for the College finishing the process in the fall and using the summer to get everything in place. Dean Sheffield responded the College had hoped to have the reorganization completed before the new fiscal year because of budget issues. He said they also hope to clean up their leadership vacuums sooner rather than later because it has become problematic. Senator Gravitt asked how that will be sped up by completing the reorganization sooner; she wonders if people have already been identified to step into those vacant leadership roles or if the College will need to petition for searches for new hires. Dean Sheffield replied the College would quickly conduct internal searches for leadership within the newly structured departments. He said they had hoped that the process would go quicker but also thought

it was important to provide everyone with a vote.

Ms. Hamm asked if there will be any creation of new schools; Dean Sheffield replied there are none in the plan that was chosen. He said what is involved is the elimination of a department and the realignment of some programs. Parliamentarian Robinett remarked that the College of Education and Human Services has a tradition of not immediately changing names when realignments occur. He noted that when the Dietetics program moved to Kinesiology and when Hospitality Management moved to RPTA in 2018, the names of the departments were not changed at that time, which gave them time to craft their own identities. He thinks what needs to be better articulated on the forms is what the mergers will facilitate happening. He thinks the content explaining the justification for the changes matters far more than the new department names.

## 2. *Interim President Kristi Mindrup*

Interim President Mindrup said she has now been in her new role more than two weeks and has had at least one chance to meet everyone present, at the Faculty Senate meeting, her presentation to the campus community, or otherwise across the campus. She has spent the last 16 days advocating for resources at the state level, actively planning with the leadership team, and putting together information toward collaborations with stakeholders throughout the university.

Interim President Mindrup related her “first remarks” to the university community laid out her initial priorities:

- ensuring WIU offers a welcoming and inclusive community in which faculty, staff, and students can thrive;
- financial stability with clear strategies, such as addressing the deficit, looking outside the institution for funding, making big “asks,” and looking for opportunities that are in alignment with what WIU students, the state, and the university’s communities are asking for;
- retention planning;
- excellence in innovation, programming, and student development that align with industry demand, workforce development, and student interests;
- focusing attention on building capacity across the university in areas that are already growing or are positioned to grow; and
- prioritizing new markets, new formats for program delivery, and zeroing in on the opportunities that transfer and retention provide for the institution.

Interim President Mindrup emphasized she is very much in the second week of discovery mode, trying to figure out where the institution stands with its finances, cash flow, and projections for next year so that the administration can make informed decisions and have good, collaborative conversations about how to best move WIU forward to be positioned for financial health in the future. Interim President Mindrup expressed her appreciation to be able to connect with the Executive Committee and said she was happy to answer any immediate questions as well as inviting the ongoing conversation.

Senator Gravitt has been hearing that faculty who have been teaching online or remote for the last few years will no longer have that option going forward. She noted that one program in her school is totally online and wonders if those faculty will still be able to teach from their homes or must come back to campus. She wonders if there will be special circumstances or if no one will be allowed to teach remote any more. Interim President Mindrup replied it is a universal call back. She said this is a way to position the university toward its primary area of focus, which is teaching and instruction on campus. She suspects there are some format variances that will need to be considered, but the move is intended to improve retention. She noted there are students living in the residence halls who are taking online classes. She thinks there is an opportunity to firmly define what WIU offers in its on-campus experience, whether in the Quad Cities or in Macomb. Interim President Mindrup stated that as the institution thinks about advancing in growth opportunities, including adult learners and online formats, there is the need to clearly define what is the Western experience – residence halls/on-campus and online.

Associate Provost Nikels said there is a desire to bring students back to campus and develop active learning communities. She said recognizing that some programs are online does not mean that faculty cannot be on the

campus. She told ExCo WIU has run into tax issues with faculty who live out of state or even out of the country. She said the Provost's office wants to make sure everyone is being good stewards of the university's dollars and using their money responsibly by giving students the right kind of experience. Associate Provost Nikels recognizes that not all classes will meet face-to-face and some faculty will continue to teach online, but WIU does not have a designation for remote faculty; some faculty have remote schedules, but they will still need to be on campus unless there are extenuating circumstances that need to be evaluated.

Senator Gravitt remarked that some faculty in her school live out of state and teach remotely but come to campus when needed. Associate Provost Nikes thinks the "when needed" must also take into account office hours. She said the administration has a meeting scheduled with UPI to discuss what this means. She added that chairs also need to be on notice that they may need to move things in the schedule.

Senator Gravitt asked if online courses will have to be transitioned back to face-to-face if the students taking the online course are on-campus. Associate Provost Nikels replied that could potentially be so, but she does not know if that decision has been made absolutely. She related the Board of Trustees expressed concern that students are showing up for classes on-campus, but their faculty member is out-of-state, and students are looking at a screen. She stressed this is not the kind of experience students sign up for or that the administration wants them to have.

Senator Gravitt asked if this change would be a staged implementation or if it will take place immediately in the fall. Associate Provost Nikels responded that the administration wants the change to be in place by fall as much as possible. She noted there are also concerns about overload: the university had \$1.4 million in overload last year, and some faculty are literally teaching two academic loads – 40-50 ACEs – which is a violation of the contract, is not good on people, and is not a good working environment. She said some of these things need to be adjusted, and the administration will do as much as they can for this fall, although some changes will take place in the spring. Associate Provost Nikels remarked that opportunities to grow adult learners could shift some online things around.

Interim President Mindrup agrees it is a process, but the callback is for this Fall 2024 so that the focus can be on the university's primary mission. She stated that, department by department, considerations of pedagogy and curriculum will be taken into account when determining the best format for courses. She noted that when faculty are hired to teach at WIU they are given a designation of Quad Cities or Macomb, not online, which is how the university is structured at this time. She suspects that as WIU thinks about the future and new markets there might be the chance to develop a different structure, but it would have to be done strategically and in a way that the infrastructure, processes, and policies are in alignment. Interim President Mindrup noted it is important not only to be accountable to the state but also to the needs of accreditation. She sees this as a chance to zero in on what WIU does, and she thinks there will be a positive ripple effect in a sense of community, student retention, the opportunity to interact face-to-face with faculty, and the development of a more vibrant university. She noted that as WIU is facing demographic and enrollment changes over time, these stakes become increasingly important when there is a smaller population spread over a broader geography. She believes this is a great opportunity to come back together again as a university community and thinks this applies to both locations and offers an opportunity to strengthen the connection between the campuses.

Interim President Midrup told ExCo she is happy to come back any time, and she expects that as time goes on there will be opportunities for more discussion, dialogue, and getting in-depth on planning to keep the university moving forward.

### 3. *Proposed freshman admissions change for Summer-Fall 2025*

CAGAS Chair Rich Filipink told ExCo that when the admissions request reached the council, they asked for some data regarding how many students the proposal would potentially impact and to support their idea that these students are not retaining at the university in any significant way so that this change would not affect enrollment. He said the data seems to indicate that students in the 2.0-2.49 range are not being retained, in large part because there is insufficient staff to work with them. He said last year when CAGAS was asked to expand the Reach program to students with a 2.75-2.99 GPA, CAGAS asked if the number of staff to support these additional Reach students would also be increased. He said CAGAS was told staff would be increased,

but subsequently it was not. Dr. Filipink said CAGAS was told the ideal number of Reach students is 180 for the number of staff WIU has to work with them, and raising the GPA for students who could be admitted to Reach will help keep the numbers within that parameter.

Chair Albarracin was surprised by the timing of the change because the recently received Rural Post-secondary and Economic Development Grant allows the university to hire one full-time and one half-time advisor and several ESLs to work with UNIV 100. She thinks that if admissions can bring in 200 more students, they should just hire another advisor. Dr. Filipink said this is what CAGAS advised them to do last year when the Reach program was expanded. He noted that there is more hope of retaining the students from 2.75-2.99 who have been added to the Reach program, so admissions wants to focus on the students they think they can retain. He said CAGAS approved the request because it appears to be an attempt to properly staff the Reach program, as the council has requested in the past. Senator Gravitt asked how long the RPED grant money will last; Chair Albarracin replied it will last four years.

Dr. Filipink pointed out that the data shows only 34 students with a 2.0-2.25 high school GPA enrolled in Fall 2020, 2021, and 2022 combined, so the proposal will not affect a lot of students. He also reminded ExCo that any student who is denied admission can appeal to CAGAS.

The admissions proposal will be on the April 23 agenda under Reports from Councils and Committees.

#### 4. *Status of UPC elections*

Ms. Hamm reported that two professors from the College of Business and Technology submitted petitions to serve on the University Personnel Committee for a three-year term beginning Fall 2023. Ballots will go out to Unit A faculty in the College on Monday to choose their representative.

No petitions were received from the College of Fine Arts and Communication and the College of Arts and Sciences to fill their vacancies, so Ms. Hamm asked if the deadline could be extended to see if anyone will volunteer. The Executive Committee agreed.

[**Note:** Following the meeting, Senator Bellott volunteered to represent the College of Arts and Sciences on UPC. Ms. Hamm will send out a notice to COFAC professors again in the fall.]

#### 5. *Proposed meeting dates for 2024-25*

The Executive Committee approved proposed meeting dates for ExCo and Faculty Senate for 2024-25. Ms. Hamm said she also set the dates for CCPI and for CGE based on these dates.

#### 6. *Additional discussion of COEHS reorganization and finalization of agenda*

The Executive Committee continued discussing the proposed COEHS realignment. They expressed concerns with rushing the documents through since Dean Sheffield had said he just prepared them yesterday and they do not seem to have as much data as similar proposals which have been submitted historically to Faculty Senate. ExCo members discussed how best to provide input to Dean Sheffield as to how to streamline and improve the proposals. Parliamentarian Robinett volunteered to work with Associate Provost Nikels and with Ms. Hamm to determine, based on university policies and what has been submitted in the past, which of the COEHS proposals should go through Faculty Senate.

Senator Hamner remarked that although there appears to have been a diligent, extensive effort to hear people out in the College, the materials that were submitted by Dean Sheffield appear to be very rushed. He thinks it makes a big difference whether this reorganization occurs now or a year from now, and he does not think the Executive Committee should stand in the way of the proposal if it has a chance to be improved enough to get a positive vote on Tuesday. He also thinks it should be conveyed to Dean Sheffield that senators are unlikely to approve the request as it was submitted and that there are things that need to be clarified in the proposal. Senator Hamner thinks the biggest concern is that the Counselor Ed/CSP/Social Work fusion does not have an overwhelming majority consensus. He hopes that Dean Sheffield can be successful in his efforts to bring people together, but the versions of the proposals that go forward to Faculty Senate need to be a lot better.

Parliamentarian Robinett observed that there are very disparate votes between some COEHS groups who overwhelmingly supported the changes and one proposal which would not have the votes to pass. He said that these are very different situations, and there is no data beyond the vote counts. Senator Gravitt asked what happens if some of the College's proposals pass but others do not because they seem to be interwoven. Parliamentarian Robinett said he does not know and would appreciate a little time to get answers to those kinds of questions. He thinks it is also important for ExCo to understand which proposals are for programs and which are for departments, and offered to work with Associate Provost Nikels to clear this up.

Dr. Filipink pointed out that if a majority of faculty do not support the merger of Counselor Ed, CSP, and Social Work, it cannot happen. He noted that when the College of Arts and Sciences wanted to reorganize three years ago, some departments voted against it, and the whole proposal failed and departments were not merged.

Parliamentarian Robinett volunteered to work with Associate Provost Nikels and Ms. Hamm to clarify the policies and procedures currently in place related to reorganizations, then to work with Dean Sheffield to iron out the details that are creating stumbling blocks before it comes to the Senate. He noted that he has worked closely with Dean Sheffield throughout the reorganization process, and he does not have a vote on ExCo or the Senate meeting as to whether the proposal passes. ExCo had no objections to Parliamentarian Robinett's suggestion and decided to wait until Friday, April 19 to decide whether to bring the COEHS proposals forward on April 23 or to call a special Senate meeting for April 30 to consider them.

[**Note:** The Executive Committee voted, at the request of Dean Sheffield, to hold a special Senate meeting on April 30 to consider the revised proposals.]

The Executive Committee finalized the rest of the agenda for the Faculty Senate meeting of April 23, and the ExCo meeting adjourned at 5:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Annette Hamm, Faculty Senate Office Manager  
and Recording Secretary