

WESTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY FACULTY SENATE

Special Informational Meeting

10 July 2024, 4:00 p.m.

Union Capitol Rooms and Via Zoom

ACTION MINUTES

SENATORS PRESENT: J. Albarracin, D. Brown, H. Elbe, D. Gravitt, E. Hamner, D. Hunter

SENATORS ABSENT: D. Atherton, S. Bailey, D. Barr, B. Bellott, G. Cabedo-Timmons, C. Chadwell, S. Ko, J. Land, A. Lewis, K. Perone, B. Petracovici, J. Sarra, M. Shamsuddoha, Y. Tang, S. Turkelli, L. Wipperling, K. Wiseley

EX-OFFICIO PRESENT: Jeremy Robinett, Parliamentarian; Interim Provost Mark Mossman

GUESTS: Tawnya Adkins-Covert, Andrea Alveshere, Jobu Babin, P.K. Babu, Dan Barclay, Jill Bisbee, Tom Blackford, Ben Brewer, Julie Brines, Hanna Brisler, Amy Carr, Merrill Cole, Ranessa Cooper, Rich Filipink, Patty Eathington, Leigh Ann Fidler, Jennifer Grimm, Jamie Johnson, Pete Jorgensen, Yuki Hasebe, Joe Henning, Jennifer Howard, Andrea Hyde, Randy Hyllegard, Lorri Kanauss, Byoung Lee, Mike Lukkarinen, Dan Malachuk, Angela McClanahan-Simmons, Blair McDonald, Patrick McGinty, Heather McIlvaine-Newsad, Jim McQuillan, Mary Mhago, Kristi Mindrup, Rich Musser, Miguel Narvaez, Holly Nikels, Lorette Oden, Betsy Perabo, Linda Prosize, Tim Roberts, Ketra Roselieb, Karen Sears, Rashmi Sharma, Mike Sharp, Amanda Silberer, Curt Simonson, Susan Stewart, Sebastian Szyjka, Michelle Simmons, Craig Tollini, Jett Walker, Oswald Warner, Beate Wilson, Rong Zhang

I. New Business

A. Conversation with Interim President Mindrup, Interim Provost Mossman, and Interim Vice President Smith About the Budget Deficit and Recent Unit B Non-Renewals

Parliamentarian Robinett opened the meeting until Chair Albarracin could arrive. He stated that the floor would be opened to Interim President Mindrup followed by questions from senators and others.

Interim President Mindrup thanked Chair Albarracin and Parliamentarian Robinett for the opportunity to connect with Faculty Senate. She said the goal of the President's Cabinet is to stay connected and up-to-date and to share information as they have it. Interim President Mindrup expressed her intention to recap her priorities since taking office on April 1, many of which were presented in her initial remarks to Faculty Senate on April 10, followed by a snapshot of where the institution stands currently. She remarked a lot has happened since that time because the end of spring semester is always a time to celebrate WIU's students and all the things the institution does to provide a high quality academic experience for them, including experiences in and out of the classroom.

Interim President Mindrup reiterated her priorities are, first and foremost, making sure WIU is welcoming and inclusive on both of its campuses. She said this refers to welcoming diverse perspectives, backgrounds, identities and experiences for students, faculty, staff, and community members. Interim President Mindrup thinks this is the foundation for everything WIU does. She said the next priority, which will be discussed in more detail at the University Assembly in August, is excellence and innovation in program and student development that aligns with what students, industries, and communities are asking of WIU. Interim President Mindrup said focusing attention on identifying the growth areas of the university, with particular attention on retention of students, will be part of this effort. She pointed out that the opportunity to retain students is the right thing to do, and it is less expensive to retain an existing student than to recruit a new one, even though both are important priorities. She promised the university will continue to look for new markets, for adult learners, and for opportunities to connect academic programs to workforce development opportunities. Interim President Mindrup suspects individuals may have an idea that workforce

development has a certain very technical aspect to it, but there are ways to connect all of WIU's academic programs to workforce development, whether they are in the liberal arts or in other disciplines that have a more focused nature on a particular career.

Interim President Mindrup stressed the financial stability of the university is a very focused priority; in addition to having a welcoming and inclusive community, it is the foundation for WIU's stability and sustainability as an institution. She related that over the past few months, the President's Cabinet and Leadership Team, in conjunction with stakeholder groups, have worked together to develop and understand a firm picture of the university's financial position. She said part of that work has included advocacy at the state level for adequate funding for higher education; WIU officials made their case for the amount of money the institution would need for a balanced budget for the year, then waited to hear what the state appropriation would be (which she said was a 2.5 increase in the state appropriation).

Interim President Mindrup pointed out that WIU has been running with a deficit for several years consecutively, and that will eventually cause an individual or institution to run out of money. She recognizes that different strategies have been explored over the years with good intentions, some of which made sense at the time. She noted that one strategy to address the population shift across the country has been to try to recruit harder, with more intentionality and advertising, and increasing the geography for that recruitment. She noted, though, that Western's efforts to increase its market share were also being simultaneously followed by other universities. Interim President Mindrup believes that this strategy – employed while WIU was experiencing a demographic change, enrollment change, and student priority and behavior change over time – has not pointed the institution toward financial stability.

Interim President Mindrup related another strategy has been to look for different sources of funding that the university could tap into to ensure financial stability, perhaps through different cycles and the ebbs and flows of the cash flow throughout the year. Another strategy has been for WIU to borrow from itself, from different “pockets” at the university, which has been effective to a point, but since it is also contingent on student enrollment also did not lead to financial stability. Interim President Mindrup believes that rather than continue to reflect on and set the context for where the university has been in the past, the best approach is to look at the matter at hand and develop strategies so that WIU is once again financially stable.

Interim President Mindrup told senators and guests that WIU currently has a \$20 to \$22 million deficit for the FY 2025 fiscal year. She said this is “true money,” which means that WIU is starting July 1 with minus-\$22 million. Interim President Mindrup is trying to be upfront and transparent because sometimes employees and offices think that when their new budgets are loaded on July 1 they can begin spending money. She wants everyone to understand why the administration needs to look at certain strategies in order to stabilize the institution.

Interim President Mindrup announced that WIU's leadership has identified ways to address \$12.6 million of the deficit so far. She stressed it is important to realize that 80 percent of the institution's expenses come from personnel; when talking about changing the institution and its financial situation, it is impossible to ignore the fact that 80 percent of its finances are dedicated to faculty and staff. She said the recent non-renewal of Unit B faculty contracts was one strategy to address overall cash flow, and it is important to know that this work is ongoing. Interim President Mindrup told those present that other strategies the administration is looking at include not filling vacancies and retirements and erasing those budget lines. She noted that some retirements are effective almost immediately, and irrevocable election to retire (IER) submissions will affect the outgoing cash for the coming year. Interim President Mindrup also announced the administration has to adjust student employment and graduate assistant lines this year in order to address cash flow. She added that the leadership teams have also looked at ways to save money within the administration.

Interim President Mindrup reminded senators that when she first came on board, she and Interim Provost Mossman worked on the consolidation of the Quad Cities campus under Academic Affairs and were thus able to eliminate her former position on that campus, which is not a position she will

go back to. Interim President Mindrup added this is not to imply anything about her future; she is just saying this vice-presidential line is now eliminated. She noted another opportunity occurred when Academic Affairs and the President's area merged two functions – an associate provost and an institutional research position – resulting in administrative savings for the Director of Institutional Research position of over \$100,000. She added that the Student Success vice presidential area has consolidated various areas within that division resulting in the opportunity to align some duties and save the salary line from an assistant vice-presidential position. Interim President Mindrup said these three administrative changes alone have saved close to half a million dollars, and she hopes this answers the common question of where the administration is taking a cut. She added there are other administrative cuts and consolidations as well which were shared with the Council of Administrative Personnel (COAP) panel that the administration hosted last spring. Interim President Mindrup recognizes there are some individuals who took on extra duties, and those positions were reevaluated; there were some adjustments made for certain current employees so that they were not taken advantage of, but it still resulted in a significant cost savings.

Interim President Mindrup summarized that these strategies have resulted in 62 percent of the \$12.6 million in savings identified so far; the other 38 percent includes adjustments to operations. She listed some of these strategies, which include changing the criteria for student aid with the Western Commitment Scholarship; looking at vice presidential area operating budgets for such items as institutional memberships, which can quickly add up for personnel and staff time; and adjustment of departmental needs, hours, and services. She warned individuals may notice some changes to the Rec Center, for example, and in delivery of services in regards to facilities.

Interim President Mindrup stressed that the work the vice presidents are doing is not done yet. She promised the administration will communicate with stakeholder leaders and groups to make sure they are involved and updated as things progress. She reiterated that because 80 percent of WIU's budget is personnel, there is still work to do in that area and more difficult decisions to be made. She believes that the university can do this hard work, which has been delayed for some time, and get to the other side of it; the leadership team is committed to doing this work, and the people at this meeting have an impact on the administration's ability to get through this week and to the other side of this year.

Interim President Mindrup noted that after this year, there are a number of retirements and other changes that may help the university's situation. She is hopeful, but not reliant, on increased state support, such as initiatives to look at a more equitable funding model for state institutions. She hopes these can be built into future plans but recognizes that this will be WIU's tough year. She recognizes that the term "interim" can have certain interpretations, but the individuals in interim positions at WIU currently have, in many cases, been at the institution over 20 years and are people who have seen many strategies in the past, some which worked and others which didn't. She stressed these individuals are dedicated to our university, our communities, and, especially, to our students. Interim President Mindrup hopes everyone knows that these efforts are intended to turn the university around to finally achieve stability so that this conversation does not have to be held year after year; this is the work that has been handed to the administration to do in order to ensure that Western continues.

Chair Albarracin asked for an explanation of the \$20 to \$22 million deficit and whether it is money owed from last year or is a projection of what needs to be paid. Ketra Roselieb, Executive Director of Financial Affairs, explained that when looking at expenditures from an income fund perspective (what was spent on state appropriations as well as what was received from tuition), there was around \$115 million spent in Fiscal Year 2024. She said that looking at projections based on enrollment, and taking into account the slight increase in state appropriations, means that the institution will need to get its expenses in line to address the \$22 million deficit for Fiscal Year 2025. Chair Albarracin remarked this sounds like it is not as if WIU has an overdraft at the bank but that the institution is not going to have enough money to continue throughout the year. Parliamentarian Robinett asked if those faculty positions that have gone unfilled in recent years have already been removed from this projection or are still included. Interim Provost Mossman replied that those have not totally been applied to these projections. He added that the issue with vacancies is the difference between budget and cash flow; WIU has a large number of vacancies which will apply toward balancing the budget, but cash flow refers to if a person was employed this past year and has left the university, such as the

former position of Gretchen Sullivan, Assistant Director of the School of Graduate Studies, who retired several months ago. Parliamentarian Robinett asked if this position has already been removed when talking about the \$22 million deficit or is still on the books for next fiscal year. Ms. Roselieb replied it is part of the \$12.6 million that has already been identified as savings.

Senator Hunter asked how long it is predicted before the university can get back to a balanced budget. Interim President Mindrup replied that the \$22 million covers this year, so if the administration can account for \$22 million, the budget can be balanced this year. She stressed that she should not say “if” but “when” the administration can account for that amount because this is something that needs to be done this year. She explained it impacts the university’s cash flow; it is not just a matter of making sure the spreadsheets do not have any red on them. She believes these reductions need to be made in order to positively impact WIU having enough cash flow to get through the fiscal year; the administration needs to make goals for payroll and ensuring continuity of operation throughout the year, and that \$22 million is what will get them to that.

Ben Brewer, incoming senator and Law Enforcement and Justice Administration professor, asked if the graduate assistant changes will affect what has already been decided for this fall. Interim Provost Mossman replied that it will because some of that has already been identified by deans, who will continue to go through that process. Interim President Mindrup added that since the administration has only reached a portion of where it needs to be, they are in a “leave no stone unturned” mindset in order to identify those opportunities. She said at the center of everything, though, is ensuring that there is minimal disruption to what is offered for the student experience.

Chair Albarracin asked if the university is being strategic; she recognizes that it is very painful that the university is losing faculty lines but wonders if other positions that help the university grow, such as those in Admissions, will be cut, too. Interim President Mindrup responded that it is a balancing act because cash flow is the top priority, but the administration does not want to make decisions that have a long-term negative impact on the bottom line. She stated that continuing to make sure the university provides access points for students is a priority, so every area is looking at what are the most critical positions for students because the administration does not want to negatively impact enrollment. She thinks everyone needs to look for opportunities they might have for efficiencies in staffing, operations, and the way the university does business. Interim President Mindrup observed that there are strategies universities employ when they have less time to respond as opposed to if they have three years to plan, and that is part of the university’s considerations as well. She assured Chair Albarracin that balancing those priorities and ensuring that WIU’s core functions remain intact is a priority, and Admissions would certainly be part of that consideration.

Pete Jorgensen, School of Communication and Media Director, recognizes that when organizations are faced with the types of financial challenges that WIU is faced with, there are two things that can be done: cut costs and increase revenue. He is afraid that right now the university is taking too much of an angle on desperately cutting costs without realizing what the lost revenue is for these positions. He has communicated to Interim President Mindrup and Interim Provost Mossman that in the case of Communication, the loss of four Unit B faculty members is going to cost the university half a million dollars in net revenue every year, beyond their salaries. He believes that when the university is as financially crunched as it is, perhaps more thought needs to be given to some of the decisions being made in order to make sure that revenue is being maximized as well and student tuition dollars are not lost to other institutions as a result of these cuts. Interim President Mindrup replied this is an excellent point. She stated that with the recent Unit B contract non-renewals, the Provost’s office looked very specifically at full contracts and ensuring that each department utilizes its faculty as efficiently as possible. She believes these decisions, along with the recent changes to Gen Ed, needed to be made. She looks at these decisions as opportunities to ensure that the university is running academics as efficiently as possible.

Interim President Mindrup stated that a lot of the questions she is asked involve how much money the university has and how much it needs. She stated that while conversations tend to zero in on finances and less on those areas where revenue can come from, retention efforts are a significant part of addressing the revenue situation at the institution. She is very grateful for the recent grant with a

focus on retention; there are also other efforts and initiatives looking at keeping students and ensuring they have access to services. She noted, for example, that Chicago students are on the Macomb campus this summer experiencing WIU for the first time and setting expectations early on. Interim President Mindrup said there are a number of really great initiatives intended for revenue generation as well as philanthropic efforts; Clare Thompson, Vice President for Advancement, Alumni Relations, and Athletics, is involved in finding opportunities that support and enhance WIU's academic programs, making them even more appealing to students through spaces, programming, scholarships, and other sources of funding. She noted that the administration continues to advocate at the state level, which continues even after the budget has been set in order to generate support and awareness by state legislators of Western's financial situation as well as the opportunities for alignment with state priorities. She said some of these possible alignments include Thrive Illinois, addressing the teacher shortage, looking at mental health, and a number of workforce development and other initiatives that allows WIU to show its value to the region, the state, and beyond through partnerships that generate additional support for the institution.

Interim Provost Mossman remarked that when WIU gets to the other side of its current situation, it needs to be in a position of growth. He stressed that when thinking about enrollment, the demographic cliff, and smaller freshman classes, the university has to increase its retention rate. He thinks the work that Chair Albarracin started with the grant she recently received really needs to be an institution-wide initiative. He pointed out that WIU's retention rate is in the 50th percentile, so an increase of even a few percentage points would help, and it really needs to be much higher. He explained this will put money directly into the income fund, help improve the university's fiscal situation, and provide momentum and a foundation on which to grow. Chair Albarracin asked the faculty present at the meeting to really try hard with their new students to connect with them early on because that is one of the best ways to make sure they are retained.

Senator Gravitt asked what things are being considered to reach the \$21 million goal. She asked if there are more potential layoffs this year and, if so, in what areas. Interim President Mindrup replied that, for full transparency, the administration is looking at the same initiatives that led to the \$12.6 million in savings; that includes looking at personnel, contracts, vacancies, early retirements, additional consolidation for efficiencies, and operations spending behaviors. She stated that while the administration had an initial target, they have identified the need to increase that based on new numbers. She added that the administration will continue to look at these avenues to address the remaining \$10 million while leaving no stone unturned for possibilities.

Senator Hamner remarked that Interim President Mindrup said earlier that WIU received a 2.5 percent increase from the state but all he had previously heard was a 2 percent increase. Ms. Roselieb confirmed the increase was 2 percent.

Chair Albarracin asked why this all has to be done this year. She asked what was done last year when there was a \$12 million deficit – if it included borrowing money, bank overdrafts, or defaulting on debts – and why the deficit has to be reduced in one year rather than over three or four years. Chair Albarracin compared trying to address WIU's entire deficit in one year to shock therapy. Interim President Mindrup agrees it is a big change. She explained that the university used to be able to borrow money from itself, but those sources have simultaneously suffered from the continuous enrollment declines because of changing demographics and are no longer available to use. She said this means it really comes down to cash flow and WIU's ability month after month to be able to pay its obligations to faculty, staff, contracts, and the operational necessities of the university.

Interim President Mindrup pointed out the other difference from previous years which affects WIU's operations is the student population decline. She said the anticipation is that fall enrollment will be 5,750, and the institution has not adapted over the years to these declines. Interim President Mindrup has been at WIU long enough to remember enrollments of 10,000 before the population changes that many predicted, but while the institution has made some slight adjustments, the thinking in the past was how to get by for the current year until it could be figured out how to grow enrollments. She believes that strategy of relying on enrollment growth has not turned out to be one that led to

sustainability and that the institution cannot continue to run continuous years in a deficit and expect to have a positive financial balance.

Parliamentarian Robinett observed that over the past four months the deficit number has changed pretty dramatically; at times the Senate has heard \$12 million, \$7 million, and \$20 million. He asked how confident the administration is in the number senators are hearing now and what leads to that confidence. Interim President Mindrup replied that is a complicated answer, but the administration thinks it has the right expertise in place now to have confidence in that number. Interim President Mindrup is very grateful to have Ms. Roselieb and Interim Vice President for Finance and Administration John Smith on board, adding that Ms. Roselieb has looked at this information over the course of a long time. She stated that the administration was waiting to know exactly what the state would give WIU; they also hoped that other opportunities would arise that did not, despite their best efforts. She said before the administration nailed down the deficit number, they wanted to be really confident with it, and they are confident with \$22 million, although it did take some time. Interim President Mindrup admitted she was surprised that there was previously not such a known number, but she now understands more of the variables at play and is very appreciative of the direct connection to Ms. Roselieb and Interim Vice President Smith's expertise to be able to have confidence in that number. She also now feels confident about the ways the university identifies savings and whether they are true savings; a budget line which has been empty for ten years, which would not have been built into the budget previously, for example, would not equate to true savings. She said the administration has had to work through and refine some of this, keeping in mind that WIU has a system dated from 1984, so it is sometimes not as agile in pulling together needed information. Interim President Mindrup added that even though agility is a factor, she commends the team for their thoroughness because it is important to assure everyone that the administration has confidence in the number and that they are making adjustments that are reasonable and balanced without overreacting. She stressed the administration does not want to cut just to cut but in order to minimize, especially the human impact. She said that is why they want to ensure, over time, that they do have confidence in the numbers and that they understand the complexity and impact of operationalizing any plans moving forward.

Mr. Brewer remarked he would not want to be in Interim President Mindrup's shoes trying to figure out where these cuts will come from, so he appreciates that. He asked what the process was to determine which departments would lose the Unit B faculty and whether the decision was seniority or salary based, for example. Interim Provost Mossman replied that, per the contract, the decision is seniority based, and the administration really worked on analyzing faculty capacity. He said deans were asked to submit ACE sheets early, then the Provost's office combed the schedule to try to accurately assess faculty capacity.

Senator Gravitt asked what the consultant firm recommended and whether their full report has been submitted yet. Interim President Mindrup replied the toolkit that EAB shared with the administration was one that helped their institutional understanding of what building efficiency into program offerings looks like. She said the process described by Interim Provost Mossman was informed by EAB – what they learned from WIU, how they looked at the data, and how they interpreted it as an opportunity. She said the other aspects of the EAB report that have been received focused on growth opportunities, alignment, and workforce development. Interim Provost Mossman added there were specific discussions about faculty capacity with deans and chairs, and a number of workshops were offered, one of which Chair Albarracin attended. He related that EAB submitted a preliminary report, and the administration requested a number of revisions because some of the data was a little “off”; for example, EAB was looking at SAT scores of high school students to predict marketable degrees for the future, and most WIU students do not take the SAT. Interim President Mindrup thinks the EAB report provided the administration with an excellent toolkit, but they are exploring exiting the contract. She said they think the services EAB provided have been helpful to date, but they hope to be able to exit if possible within the university's contractual obligations. In response to Senator Gravitt's question about whether the administration has the full report yet, Interim Provost Mossman responded that they have received a preliminary report.

Amy Carr, professor in the Department of Race, Religion, Gender, and Multidisciplinary Studies, asked if the university can advertise the low student-faculty ratio even if there are efforts underway to change that ratio. She noted that WIU students are taught by faculty more often than by graduate students, which is also something that could be advertised in student recruitment. Interim Provost Mossman expressed his agreement. He said the most recent Ed Insights survey shared with him by Justin Schuch, Interim Vice President for Student Success, shows that students, over and over, express positive comments about Western's faculty and, most importantly, that the courses they take at Western are really valued. He noted that, simultaneously, WIU does not have the budgeting model of a large liberal arts college and does not have a large endowment to draw from, so WIU cannot continue to have a 11.3:1 student-teacher ratio. Interim Provost Mossman thinks the university has been effective in obtaining positive indications as long as he has been at WIU; the NSSE survey is another example. He thinks there are dozens of ways where students recognize the value of having faculty in the classrooms, but it must be made affordable within WIU's budget.

Interim President Mindrup added that through the university's discovery events, the activities and efforts of various departments that are following up with students, the Admissions office, and marketing messages, the idea of accessible faculty is already being promoted. She thinks promotions that indicate that students who come to WIU can engage with faculty their first year rather than interacting with teaching assistants are another way of saying "small class size."

Dr. Jorgensen asked if the Academic Program Elimination Review (APER) Committee will be reconstituted this year. Interim Provost Mossman replied that no stone will be left unturned, but as the administration works through this process they will have to cross those bridges as they come to them.

History Chair Tim Roberts expressed his thanks for convening this meeting. He said it is a hard question to ask, but he wonders what the impact of faculty salary increases are on the cost savings plan. He wonders if the Union and the administration can work together better in the next negotiation concerning salary adjustments because it might help avoid a recurrence of this situation. He added that history shows that reduced faculty reduces students. Interim President Mindrup asked if Ms. Roselieb could speak numerically about the impact; Ms. Roselieb asked to get back to the Senate on the specific numbers but thinks the overall increases were close to \$4 million. She said this has been built into the projection of what the university needs to save in future years. She thinks there needs to be a balance between WIU's ability to invest in its faculty and staff with the reductions that the administration is also trying to achieve. She believes the administration will continue to work together to leave no stone unturned, but she also thinks it is important to be cognizant of investing in the university's human capital, which is WIU's most important investment.

UPI President Merrill Cole remarked that in the negotiations regarding what will happen with the faculty whose contracts are not renewed, it was made clear to him that any sort of salary reopener would not change that situation. He stated that if, in future, the administration identifies a need for salary readjustment, he will need a full proposal that he can present to the UPI membership because it is not a decision that he or anyone in leadership can make alone; it is a member decision, but the university is not there right now.

Senator Hunter related he was a student at WIU in the 1980s and came back as a faculty member in the late 1990s. He recalled that small class size was basically WIU's brand during that period and was touted on every document that went out. He thinks what is being alluded to by others is that the university needs to start pushing this again because this was a big selling point in the past, and the ratio back then was 19:1.

Chair Albarracin asked if there is a possibility for retraining faculty affected by the non-renewals, for instance to retrain as an academic advisor or admissions counselor. She wonders if, when these opportunities become available, the affected faculty could be given the opportunity first to see if they can do those jobs. Interim Provost Mossman replied that this is part of the contract and is a part of every meeting with UPI representatives. He said the administration has requested the resumes of the faculty members whose contracts were not renewed, and they are trying their best to accommodate this. Dr. Cole added he has encouraged every affected faculty member to have an exit interview with

the Provost and to bring their CVs to the interview. He said UPI wants to provide non-union faculty with every opportunity that they can, including helping with their future plans even if they are not here. Craig Tollini, professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, said he had a similar question to Dr. Roberts in terms of potentially reopening the current contract. Dr. Cole reiterated that if he receives a proposal from the administration to do that he will open a conversation with the UPI membership and they will vote. He added this is the same procedure as with a new contract.

Chair Albarracin asked if Faculty Senate can see the report from the consultants. Interim Provost Mossman replied he is happy to share it with everyone. Chair Albarracin recalled one early chart she saw in a report showed that WIU's declining enrollment was much more significant than the decline among high school graduates. Interim Provost Mossman confirmed this is correct, adding that it lines up with the larger trend. He explained the big trend is that there are fewer people because of the declining population, but the trend underneath that is that fewer high school graduates are enrolling in any kind of postsecondary school, including community colleges. He said this means WIU is in a perfect storm of a lot of challenges; the university has lost 53 percent of its enrollment since 2012, which is a significant number.

Parliamentarian Robinett asked if the administration has any projections on how the removal of 35 non-renewals will affect overall ACE load, overload, and those types of things. Interim Provost Mossman responded he cannot tell by specific department, but those non-renewals were based on faculty capacity inside the departments, so he is sure chairs or teams are working hard to figure out how to retool their schedules to make sure that everything can be delivered that needs to be. Parliamentarian Robinett thinks a projection would be beneficial. He noted that Dr. Jorgensen projects that within his department there will be an overall loss of income based on who was removed from the courses that will be offered. Parliamentarian Robinett thinks it would be beneficial, as the university moves forward, to be able to look at that from an entire institutional perspective as departments are cutting classes. He understands that in some ways the university is being very reactive right now, but in order to plan how to be proactive, having usable data, such as monitoring and tracking this process, would be fantastic. Interim Provost Mossman agreed and said this is already happening.

Senator Hunter asked if there is an ideal size for faculty given the projections. Interim Provost Mossman replied that if the ratio was 19:1 when Senator Hunter was a student, that would be a very good ratio to get to because right now the university is sitting well below that. He thinks the way the university is most successful is with Gen Ed courses that are robust with higher enrollments, and as students work their way into their major courses those are lower enrolled. He noted that for years WIU has only thought about enrollments and not about the way the schedule actually works; the focus has been on what the major counts are and what the SCH is coming out of the departments. Interim Provost Mossman thinks that by trying to nuance the schedule so that there are larger courses for Gen Ed offerings, then if there are only six or seven students in an Engineering Technology course, for example, there will not be so much pressure on the departmental director to combine that section with another one. He remarked that for at least the past ten years the institution has been in an environment where everyone only thought about enrollment, which is only natural as the university's enrollment has collapsed. He thinks the vision for the future of the university, however, is an environment where courses are delivered in many different ways and the university is at capacity.

Senator Hunter asked if the university is still following implementation of the new ERP system; the administrators present replied that we are. He asked if that will help the university see some of these efficiencies; Interim Provost Mossman replied that he hopes that it will.

Senator Hamner said this is a difficult question that may not be completely answerable in this setting, but he wonders what priorities the administration sees as critical for making it through the year and going into the fall, assuming the university is where it stands currently. He wonders what can, as Interim Provost Mossman put it, give the university a place to grow on the other side if the strategies being implemented succeed and the university endures the \$22 million in cuts. He wonders what the things are that WIU must hold onto, such as Interim President Mindrup's priorities about a welcoming space for inclusivity, excellence of program development, and underlying financial

stability. He recognizes the administration cannot speak bluntly about individuals who are no longer at the university, but WIU's leadership has changed a lot in the past year, and Senator Hamner would like the current administration to identify ways it wants the institution to function differently than it has been, such as changes in communication habits and organizational structure consideration. Interim Provost Mossman replied the short-term and most pressing issue is the budget and what is needed to really stabilize the institution's cash flow; the big issue is committing and working as an entire institution toward retention efforts; and another initiative is closing equity gaps, which he thinks is important for the higher good and, arguably, what the institution has been about since its founding in 1899. Interim Provost Mossman stated that if this could be achieved, he would envision a much better place, more like a community which is developing and expanding while working on workforce development and aligning programs. He envisions getting students to retain from Year 1 to Year 2; then getting them into their majors, where they can succeed; then getting them to envision how they want to move forward and actually complete their degrees, which is another thing the university needs to work on.

Interim Provost Mossman observed that communication at WIU has been a tricky thing, especially on paper, since he started at the university in 2001. He said the Higher Learning Commission thinks WIU has an excellent shared governance model and lots of communication, but in practice it is sometimes a ritual exercise with everyone getting to "pop off" about what they want to "pop off" about. He pointed out that this summer meeting between faculty and the administration did not have to occur, but the administration is trying to talk through these issues and do its best to communicate to the community so that everyone can try to figure things out together. He believes that fiscal issues, retaining students, the defunding of higher education, and other issues are ones that everyone needs to work on together. Interim Provost Mossman thought it was a good moment when Associate Provost Holly Nikels lobbied together in Springfield with Dr. Cole and other UPI representatives because it is important to recognize that the two groups have shared interests and should not be antagonistic to one another but should rather work together to solve the university's problems.

Interim President Mindrup added that many of the initiatives include centering a focus on retention, something Senator Hamner has been a vocal advocate for, including equity opportunities by reducing equity gaps. She also likes an idea Dr. Cole shared with her about bringing people together around the idea of making WIU a great place to work again. She is excited about this idea and welcomes everyone's input about how to best get groups together across disciplines and divisions to strategically wrap their heads around how to do this as an institution. She would like to see a task force or some similar group explore how to address the good things already happening with retention and add to that by zeroing in on equity, as one example, to make an impact on retention in areas that are challenged by that. She thinks there is currently a great opportunity to create space for this through groups such as Faculty Senate, the Civil Service Employees' Council, COAP, UPI, and others who just have an interest in participating in this and expertise to contribute to these sorts of things. She thinks it would be really great to start to conceptualize how to zero in on these types of things. Interim President Mindrup asked everyone to keep some of these ideas in mind as the university works through the time-sensitive planning. She hopes everyone can connect again and keep these ideas on the radar, too, so that there is something to look forward to. She believes the university will turn the corner and will need things that can help everyone work through conversations and think creatively about how to differentiate WIU from other institutions and get that word out via current students, messaging, and partnerships about what a great place Western is because of the opportunities and upward mobility it offers to students who come here.

Amanda Silberer, Chair of the Department of Speech Pathology and Audiology, asked what is involved in the estimated 5,750 fall enrollment number and how that number is comprised. She added that when looking at the numbers on the Registrar's site, it is terrifying, even taking into account that the university is having some problems with its financial packages. Interim President Mindrup responded she can get Dr. Silberer a breakdown of those projections. She said the 5,750 estimate is based on projections from Institutional Research and Planning, Admissions, Graduate Studies, International Programs, and others. She stated that although the projection is on the lower side, the administration wants to plan safely, and this is the safe number at this point in time.

Senator Gravitt asked if the administration has looked at other universities with higher retention numbers to see how WIU differs and what it might do differently. Interim Provost Mossman responded affirmatively, adding the administration has looked at everything from the Georgia State success story to peer institutions. He said WIU is part of a nationwide trend that involves the demographic cliff, the enrollment reduction of high school graduates, and the fact that some college students do not make progress during their first semester. He noted there are 39 million adult learners who have some college education, which is the new market that every institution is now trying to target. Interim Provost Mossman stated that while he is not an expert in enrollment dynamics like Interim Vice President Schuch and his team are, it is at best a murky picture on how enrollments are going to work for the next ten to 15 years.

Dr. Roberts asked if Western could take this moment to articulate a different plan for the Quad Cities campus, such as hosting more of the university's excellent pre- and postgraduate professional programs. He wonders if EAB could be asked to advise on that question if it is still under contract. Interim President Mindrup said this is a great question. She thinks this was part of the inspiration for consolidating the Quad Cities campus under Academic Affairs so that there is a more direct connection with initiatives within that division. Interim President Mindrup said the administration is waiting on a report from the Illinois Board of Higher Education called Thrive Quad Cities; they did a higher ed need analysis for the Quad Cities, and the administration is waiting to respond to it. She said the Quad Cities offers opportunities for outreach, workforce development, and aligning with new markets, such as adult learners, online learners, and different types of professional development experiences, such as individuals with degrees who want to work toward certifications. She thinks these are avenues to work toward through departmental initiatives – looking at the needs of the Quad Cities region, and then aligning what WIU does to respond to that. Interim President Mindrup believes the Quad Cities location is a great opportunity for the institution in its entirety to connect with a different population of students; some programs based in Macomb have gone to the Quad Cities for recruitment, so there are opportunities for that as well. She stated that looking at the future of the Quad Cities campus is absolutely one of the things the administration will be doing as part of the planning process.

Senator Gravitt asked if the university retention number changed after Covid, which might indicate that new freshmen are hopefully getting closer to normal and better prepared again for college. Interim Provost Mossman thinks that learning loss during and in the years immediately after Covid impacted retention for WIU. He referenced an article in *The New York Times* a couple of days ago which theorized the learning loss from Covid will be a generational-level issue since it affected children currently in middle school, high school, and those getting ready to go into college, and every university will have to deal with this as those children move forward. Interim President Mindrup explained it will be like a wave moving through as the group of students who were in kindergarten through grade 12 during the pandemic moves through the educational system, perhaps levelling out through intentional interventions that might be applied for some students, and this will take awhile. Interim President Mindrup pointed out that, in addition to learning loss, there is a change in perception following Covid about the ways higher education is accessed and also whether to access it at all. She added this is a complicated issue related to many variables, but she thinks Covid is one of those that has affected students' perception of whether they want to go to college.

Chair Albarracin asked Dr. Cole what everyone can do to support those faculty who were affected by the contract non-renewals. Dr. Cole responded it is very important just to show support and let those faculty know that you care, that they matter, and that their service is appreciated. He said the second thing is to recognize that different people have very different needs; some faculty are retiring while others are looking for new employment, for instance, and UPI is in the process of helping them find ways to do that. He said this planning is not completed yet, but he will provide more details when those plans have been established. Dr. Cole thinks it would be helpful to ask the affected individuals in what way you can be helpful to them; some individuals do not yet know what they plan to do, so it is important to be there for them in whatever you can do. He suggested that some individuals might have connections in an industry or nonprofit, for example, that might be of assistance to one of the affected faculty members. Chair Albarracin asked if there is any way to centralize this information. She stated that of the 36 people whose contracts were not renewed, she only knows of three names.

Dr. Cole said UPI plans to reserve a computer lab because there are many things people may need help with, including applying for unemployment and things related to job searching, such as updating their resumes. He noted that a lot of WIU faculty have skills in these job-related areas, including perhaps unemployment insurance, which he knows can be a nightmare. He recognizes that some of the faculty whose contracts were not renewed do not want anything to do with WIU any more while others may feel like the decision is made and they now need to move on to the next step of their lives. He recognizes that a lot of people are going through a lot right now, and when this workshop is announced he hopes that anyone here comes in order to see if their particular skills might be useful for those who attend.

Senator Hunter pointed out that the Quad Cities campus might be able to take advantage of the recent layoffs at John Deere in regards to workforce development. Interim Provost Mossman said that is being worked on; he has been emailing with Brian Urby, Chair of the Quad Cities Chamber of Commerce, to try to figure out if any of the laid off employees would like to go back to school. Interim President Mindrup added it's a situation that affects hundreds of people; for the first time in 11 years, the layoffs are affecting employees in different categories of work at John Deere. She noted that John Deere often has cyclical layoffs based on work production, but some of these layoffs affected office positions and other areas, so it is a different scenario than in the past. Interim President Mindrup observed the John Deere area is well connected with the Quad Cities Chamber, while WIU has worked in the past with the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs for a more local situation (Bushnell hammer factory). Senator Hunter asked if the university has contacts with John Deere's union representative. Interim Provost Mossman replied he does not know but is sure the Quad Cities Chamber, who he has been working through, has those contacts.

Senator Gravitt remarked she has heard Quincy Schools will hire anyone with a bachelor's degree to provide some extra training because they need teachers badly.

Sociology and Anthropology professor Beate Wilson asked what WIU's commitment to the 20 percent or more international students looks like and what strategies are being implemented to retain and recruit them. Interim Provost Mossman replied that he speaks to Associate Vice President for Global Studies Randy Glean once a day since Dr. Glean frequently travels. He related that in terms of recruitment strategies, WIU has had a lot of recent success in the Caribbean, which is where Dr. Glean has been concentrating much of his work because even if there is a change in the political climate of the United States, students from the Caribbean will have easier access into the country. Interim Provost Mossman said the university is still dealing with visa issues for students, such as for those from Bangladesh, but Dr. Glean is very resourceful in figuring out ways to get students from various areas into a cohort to try to get into the institution. Regarding retention, Interim President Mindrup said she was so impressed last semester with faculty and staff initiatives to bring international students together as a group to support and celebrate each other. She has also been impressed by the level of engagement that international students take advantage of on campus by being part of student organizations and other initiatives. She added there is a small cohort of international students in the Engineering program on the Quad Cities campus, so she has seen this on both campuses, as well as observing outstanding faculty involvement with international students. She thinks Dr. Glean does a great job of pointing students toward the types of experiences and resources that they should seek out as students at WIU. She thinks the university is doing a great job with creating those spaces and opportunities for international students, but there is more intentionality that can still be applied while continuing to evolve. Interim President Mindrup pointed out that WIU has students from around the globe, and when that type of diversity is present, even among international students, there are ways to connect with them uniquely as well. She thinks WIU's student-centered culture and individualized attention with students in and out of the classroom really sets the stage for success and for international student retention, but that could also be delved into more to explore new opportunities as well as identifying areas that could present barriers or other factors that individuals can work together to address and create space for success.

Chair Albarracin expressed her appreciation to the administrators for being present and bringing transparency to this difficult moment for everyone. She also expressed her thanks to everyone who attended. She asked Parliamentarian Robinett, who will be Senate Chair beginning with the fall

Faculty Assembly, if he had anything to add. Parliamentarian Robinett said he echoes the comments about the increased need, especially during difficult times, for people to be knowledgeable about what is happening. He believes the more that opportunities can be increased for people from all areas – not just faculty but also COAP, Civil Service, and other areas – to understand what is happening and what is coming, the better so that people can make more informed decisions about what they are doing. He thinks this is especially important for departments who are getting ready to navigate people leaving and people who are already gone. He recognizes that it is really hard to coordinate a strategic plan for what is to be done when it is unknown who is going to be where. Parliamentarian Robinett believes the more everyone can commit to honest, open, and transparent communication, the better this all will work.

Interim President Mindrup thanked Parliamentarian Robinett for his remarks and the Senate for the opportunity to speak. She added that summer can be a challenging time because people are engaged in different things and not running into each other on the campuses, so she appreciates this space to be able to provide information and answer questions. She has a meeting with Civil Service tomorrow, has a scheduled meeting with COAP, and is in continued conversations with stakeholders. She noted that sometimes this is a “heads up” conversation because things develop quickly, but she will continue those avenues as well as trying to be available any time that Faculty Senate invites her to talk. She also offered to reach out if the administration thinks it would be good to get the Senate together outside of their regular schedule. She will try to keep those avenues open because she is committed to sharing information and action and hearing feedback and input. She believes everyone around the table and on the zoom call are giving their all, and while they try to think of everything, there is always room for improvement. Interim President Mindrup stressed the administration is open to hearing feedback of all kinds, especially creative ideas that will carry the university through this and on to a bright future as everyone navigates their way through these times.

Motion: To adjourn (Hunter)

The Faculty Senate adjourned at 5:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Annette Hamm, Faculty Senate Recording Secretary