

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, MerrC(il)-15.6 (E Tcebu, )TJ0.002 TcRI2d( w 9.77 (ee,)2)-15.6-n

I. New Business

- A. Conversation with Interim President Mindrup, Interim Provost Mossman, and Interim Vice President Smith About the Budget About the Budget. 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 effo

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 r

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

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. Rosely gav ad yie ak ai h t t conf A ( 7 ) 6 - 4 ( 6 i ) - 4 ( 6 ) - 2 ( 3 ) 6 ( 3 ) ( 4 ) 9 . 2 6 ( s ) - 2 ( 3 - 4 ( 6 ) 1 0 (



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 from 1983 to 1996. The enrollment was 19,700 in 1983, 19,300 in 1986, 19,700 in 1989, 19,300 in 1992, and 19,000 in 1996.





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, adte (ng)10.10 ( adt3 (duc)-1h (ng)10.a6 (e)-1.7 (s)-2.3 ( )109 (ni)-4.d (un)10.8 (i)-4v3 ( )109 (ni)-4

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.

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