
**FACULTY SENATE MEETING
Minutes of 5 March 2026**

Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Western Michigan University Faculty Senate was called to order at 5 p.m. on 5 March 2026, in room the Student Center, ballroom A, by Amy Naugle, president.

Roll Call: There were 58 members and substitutes present, and 11 guests.

Members Present: Bryan Abendschein, Communications; Diane Anderson, Presidential Appointee, Pnina Ari-Gur, Representative-at-Large; Onur Arugaslan, Finance and Commercial Law; Johnson Asumadu (substitute for Dean Johnson), Electrical and Computer Engineering; Patrick Bennett, Representative-at-Large; Jacob Berglin, Music; Stephanie Burns, Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology; Chris Cheatham, Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs; Jou-Chen Chen, Family and Consumer Sciences; Scott Cowley, Marketing; William Davis, Art; Lisa DeChano-Cook, Environment, Geography, and Sustainability; Anthony DeFulio, Psychology; Bradford Dennis, Chair, International Education Council; Mioara Diaconu, Social Work; Mine Dogan Diker, Geological and Environmental Sciences; Marcia Feters, Teaching, Learning and Educational Studies; Kieran Fogarty, Executive Board Director; Kimberly Ganzevoort, Occupational Therapy; Peter Gustafson, Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering; Britt Hartenberger, Intercultural and Anthropological Studies; Daniela Hernandez, Mathematics; David Huffman (substitute for Andre Venter), Chemistry; Antonio Isea, Spanish; John Jellies, Emeriti; Vyascheslav Karpov, Sociology; Richard Katrovas, English; Jean Kimmel, Economics; Mary Lagerwey, Emeriti; Kwangmin Lee (substitute for Laura Teichert), Special Education and Literacy Studies; Doug Lepisto, Management; Ramona Lewis (substitute for Eric Archer), Education, Leadership Research and Technology; Geoffrey Lindenberg, Aviation; Hexu Liu, Civil and Construction Engineering; Thayma Lutz, Mathematics; Robert Makin, Computer Science; James Martin, Philosophy; Michael Miller, Human Performance and Health Education; Amy Naugle, Faculty Senate President; Paul Pancella (substitute for Clement Burns), Physics; James Penner (substitute for Amanda Remo), Accountancy; Troy Place, Industrial and Entrepreneurial Engineering; Sam Ramrattan, Engineering Design Manufacturing and Management Systems; Diane Riggs, Religions and Cultures; David Rudge, Biological Sciences; Daniela Schroeter, Public Affairs and Administration; Larry Simon, History; C. Dennis Simpson, Faculty Senate Vice President; Scott Slawinski, English; Julia Stachofsky, Business Information Systems; Danielle Standish (substitute for Patrick Hanlin), Sindecuse; Marianne Swierenga, Libraries; Janet Van Der Kley, Presidential Appointee; Patricia Villalobos Echeverria, Art; Bret Wagner, Chair, Undergraduate Studies Council; Robert Wall Emerson, Blindness and Low Vision; Yuan-kang Wang, Political Science; Daren Webb, Physical Therapy; Lester Wright, Emeriti; Marcellis Zondag, Chair, Graduate Studies Council

Members Absent: Osama Abudayyeh, Representative-at-Large; Elissa Allen, Nursing; Todd Barkman, Biological Sciences; Kimberly Buchholz, Executive Board Director; Jessica Cataldo, Chair, Academic and Information Technology Council; William Cimbalik, Physician Assistant; Matthew Dumican, Speech Language and Hearing Sciences; Lofton Durham, Chair, Research and Creative Activities Council; Matthew Fries, Music; Katharine Gross, Nursing; LuMarie Guth, Chair, Campus Planning and Finance Council; Wanda Hadley, Representative-at-Large; Janet Hahn, Interdisciplinary Health Programs; Decker Hains, Parliamentarian; Trey Harris, Music; Bidyut Hazarika, Business Information Systems; Brian Jansen, Aviation; Jeffrey Jones, Teaching Learning and Educational Studies; Russ Kavalhuna, WMU President; Mustafa Mirzeler, Representative-at-Large; Joshua Naranjo, Statistics; Alexandra Pekarovicova, Chemical and Paper Engineering; Viviane Ruellot, World Languages and Literature; Thomas Scannell, Marketing; Remzi Seker, Presidential Appointee; Wayne Stitt, Education Leadership Research and Technology; Kathryn Thomsen, Theatre; Andrew Wyman, Representative-at-Large;

Guests: Gary Bischof, Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology; Cara Junghans, Instructional Design and Development; David Karowe, Biology; Alyssa Moon, Instructional Design and Development; Sara Nelson, Provost Office; Olivia Ngadjui, Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology; Jennifer Schullo, Special Education and Literacy Studies; Ashleigh Stauffer, Special Education and Literacy Studies; Wendy Swalla, Instructional Design and Development; Luchara Wallace, Dean, Merze Tate College

Faculty Senate Staff Present: Sue Brodasky, Faculty Senate Administrator

Quorum

A quorum was reached with 58 Senators and substitutes in attendance, of the 48 needed to establish quorum.

Agenda

[**MOTION**] It was moved by Slawinski, seconded by Rudge, to accept the agenda as provided. The motion carried.

Minutes

[**MOTION**] It was moved by Rudge, seconded by DeChano-Cook, to approve the 5 February 2026 minutes as provided. The motion carried.

Report of Officer

Faculty Senate President Amy Naugle

President Naugle announced that Janet Hahn and David Rudge were successful in the election as Faculty Senate President and Vice President, respectively. Currently all of the elected Senators, Representatives-at-Large, Council, and Committee member are in the process of being individually notified of their election results. Newly elected Senators will be announced at the meeting on 2 April. There are still openings on various Faculty Senate councils and committees. If faculty are interested in serving, please contact the Faculty Senate office for specifics.

As a reminder, the basic duties of all senators are to:

1. Attend Faculty Senate monthly meetings.
2. Provide a summary of the meetings to their unit in a timely manner.
3. Disseminate information, including the content of upcoming Memorandum of Action.
4. Represent their unit by voting and by voicing concerns to the relevant parties via the appropriate mechanisms.

The 2026 Presidential Scholars Convocation will be held in the Student Center ballroom at 4 p.m. on Friday, 20 March. Jointly sponsored with the President's office, this annual event recognizes and honors the most outstanding undergraduate students in academic departments. The Presidential Scholars are chosen by the faculty on the basis of academic and/or artistic excellence in their major program, as well as their overall promise of success.

President Naugle provided updates from the Senate's councils and committees:

- The Academic and Information Technology Council will soon submit a report to the Executive Board on faculty use of, and preferences for virtual meeting platforms, and is exploring other initiatives related to artificial intelligence and cybersecurity.
- The Graduate Studies Council has established a sub-committee that, in consultation with other councils, will formulate guidelines and recommendations for practical policy documents on the use of Artificial Intelligence in graduate education and research. The council members agree that this is more of an opportunity than a threat for graduate education and that, as an institution, WMU will be better served by taking a practical and preemptive approach.
- The Professional Concerns Committee is reporting that some faculty members are addressing and sanctioning incidents of student academic dishonesty independently rather than submitting the formal Academic Dishonesty Charge Form available through goWMU. This practice raises institutional concerns and can create inequities for students, as similar violations may receive different responses across courses or departments. From a faculty perspective, relying on informal resolution may also leave instructors without institutional documentation or support if a decision is later challenged. At the institutional level, inconsistent reporting weakens the University's capacity to monitor patterns of misconduct, evaluate the effectiveness of academic integrity policies, and demonstrate compliance with established standards. The Committee is emphasizing the consistent use of the formal reporting process to protect faculty, ensure equitable treatment of students, and maintain the integrity of the University's academic policies.
- The WMU Essential Studies Executive Advisory Committee has recently created a review process to increase efficiency for advisors to approve WMU Essential Studies equivalencies for transfer students.

Reports of Ex Officiis

Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Christopher Cheatham

Interim Provost Cheatham provided remarks on academic excellence. He emphasized that faculty teaching, mentorship, research, and creative activity form the foundation of academic excellence at the University. He highlighted the importance of clearly communicating the strengths and value of academic programs to prospective students and noted that Enrollment Management has surveyed colleges to identify distinctive program features that can support recruitment efforts.

Interim Provost Cheatham discussed the Navigator Network and encouraged faculty to submit first-work and midterm grades to assist advisors in identifying and supporting students who may need assistance. He reviewed institutional data on graduation rates, noting that Western's six-year graduation rate has improved but remains below several peer institutions. He emphasized the need to improve four-year graduation outcomes and announced that beginning next year students and advisors will be able to view course offerings up to two years in advance to support better academic planning.

Interim Provost Cheatham reaffirmed the university's commitment to Experience-Driven Learning (EDL) as a central strategy for academic excellence and thanked Faculty Senate leadership and the EDL committee for their collaboration.

Enrollment update indicates undergraduate applications are up 3.7%, while freshman confirmations are currently below last year's levels. Academic Affairs has reduced its web pages by 44% to improve clarity and search visibility.

Additional topics included standardizing the Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) process, and developing automatic admission agreements with regional community colleges. Cheatham concluded by highlighting recent [faculty and student achievements](#) in research, teacher education, and engineering innovation.

Discussion included:

- It was asked if publishing course schedules two years in advance will create challenges, such as earlier textbook deadlines, reduced flexibility for course innovation, or complications from faculty retirements, new hires, and the lengthy new-course approval process.
 - Cheatham stated that textbook timelines will not change. The two-year schedule will be clearly labeled as tentative, and departments will retain the ability to modify schedules through Banner using the same timelines currently in place. While schedules may not be perfect, providing a preliminary two-year outlook will help advisors and students plan more effectively. Advising staff identified course scheduling as a significant barrier to improving four-year graduation rates, and the initiative is intended to address that challenge.
- How will the new financial aid eligibility guidance affect students who take elective courses?
 - Cheatham explained that the change is required for federal compliance. Financial aid can be applied to any course that counts toward the credits required for graduation, including electives that contribute to the total credit requirement. However, financial aid cannot be used for courses taken after a student has already completed all required credits for their degree.
- Will the two-year scheduling initiative also include graduate-level courses?
 - Cheatham confirmed that the expanded schedule visibility will apply to both undergraduate and graduate courses.

Interim Vice President for Advancement Kahler Schuemann

Interim Vice President Schuemann provided the annual [advancement report](#) which included donor investment institutional impact, campaign overview, advancement 2025-26 goals, 2026-27 campaign phase, fiscal year 2026 total donors and dollars by functional area, campaign priorities, campaign progress and results, advancement divisions, donor and faculty relationships, alumni engagement, campaign counsel, annual giving, and March 25, 2026 Giving Day.

Discussion included:

- It was asked if there is an opportunity to engage WMU Emeriti Council members more intentionally by sharing their stories with faculty, alumni, and the university community?
 - Schuemann replied that University leadership agreed that emeriti faculty represent an important resource for strengthening relationships and institutional storytelling. It was announced that the WMU Emeriti Council will now be formally connected with Office of Advancement. This partnership is intended to increase engagement with emeriti faculty, support stewardship and fundraising efforts, and highlight emeriti contributions to the University. University Advancement staff will work directly with the council to develop programming, including upcoming activities designed to increase participation and celebrate emeriti service.
- Why did the fundraising data that you shared show donor totals only from July through December of fiscal year 2026 rather than a full-year comparison that includes Giving Day?

- Schuemann indicated this was likely an oversight in how the data were selected and agreed that a full-year view would provide a more complete picture of annual fundraising activity. The figures will be reviewed and clarified.

University Strategic Plan – Academic Excellence

President Naugle stated that the [University Strategic Plan Academic Excellence goal](#) states “*We empower one another to develop the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in life and make a positive difference in the world by leveraging our institution’s academic strengths.*” There are two objectives of this goal that were highlighted as they are relevant to the charges of the Faculty Senate Undergraduate Studies Council that emphasize this objective. The first objective related to this Strategic Plan goal is to “*Engage every student in experiential education to foster lifelong learning, deepen their understanding through application, increase connections between WMU and the broader community, and prepare for meaningful, long-lasting careers.*” The Undergraduate Studies Council is charged to consider how to continue to comprehensively and effectively integrate Service-Learning and Experiential Learning approaches at WMU. Further the USC has established a subcommittee charged with updating WMU’s definitions of experiential learning and experience driven learning if necessary. The new committee should make recommendations regarding whether, and how to, assess both experiential learning and experience driven learning. This committee has been convened as of last month and is expected to be highlighted in the USC annual report next academic year. The second objective “*Cultivate creative, interdisciplinary and collaborative approaches to develop and disseminate new knowledge that positively impacts current and future generations*” is addressed in a charge set forth to three of the Senate’s councils; the Graduate Studies Council, the Research and Creative Scholarship Council, and the Undergraduate Studies Council. These councils have been charged to explore opportunities, threats, and challenges with respect to Artificial Intelligence as it relates to each council’s area of focus. In addition, the International Education Council, the Graduate Studies Council, and the Undergraduate Studies Council are all charged to collaborate to provide recommendations on how to best support faculty in the area of global learning. These shared commitments underscore the central role the Faculty Senate and its councils plays in advancing the academic goals of the University’s strategic plan.

Action Items

Lisa DeChano-Cook, Curriculum Manager on behalf of the Undergraduate Studies Council introduced [MOA-26/04: Revise the Undergraduate Catalog Graduation Requirements General Requirements for Earning a Bachelor’s Degree](#). The Undergraduate Studies Council recommends revising the Undergraduate Catalog, Graduation Requirements, General Requirements for Earning a Bachelor’s Degree such that “Any curriculum leading to a bachelor’s degree consists of at least 122 hours of credit” be revised to “Any curriculum leading to a bachelor’s degree consists of at least 120 hours of credit.” The requirement has remained unchanged for the last 53 years. With an expected student course load of 15 credit hours per semester over eight semesters equaling 120 credit hours, the minimum credit hour requirement of 122-24 has included physical education requirements. However, considering WMU’s current general education program WMU Essential Studies includes a requirement of Level II Personal Wellness, the requirement of 122 hours is outdated. In addition, the University of Michigan, Michigan State University, Grand Valley State University and Central Michigan University each require a minimum of 120 credit hours. This recommended change is expected to be implemented as of fall 2026 semester.

[MOTION] It was moved by Pancella, seconded by Riggs, to approve MOA-26/04 as presented. The motion carried.

Faculty Senate Council Reports

David Karowe, Vice Chair, [Undergraduate Studies Council](#) provided the council report, that included actions taken on 2025-26 USC charges, the creation of the Experiential Learning subcommittee and its membership.

Marcellis Zondag, Chair, [Graduate Studies Council](#) provided the council report, that included the GSC in shared governance, curriculum review, key outcomes, advancing the strategic priority, and future focused academic stewardship.

University Reports

Alyssa Moon, Director of Instructional Design and Development and Wendy Swalla, Instructional Designer Senior provided an update on [Experience Driven Learning initiatives](#) that included early initiative activities, recent experience driven learning activities, 2025 Venture Grants, upcoming activities, planning session objectives and participants.

Questions included:

- It was asked how students are included in the EDL committee discussions and decision-making processes?
 - It was noted that student participation can be limited when only one student representative is included on a committee. It was suggested that inviting multiple students may encourage greater engagement and participation, as students may feel more comfortable contributing when peers are present. The observation emphasized that increasing the number of student representatives could help ensure student perspectives are more actively expressed during discussions.

Tomika Griffin-Brown, Assistant Dean of Academic Advising, Merze Tate College provided the [Advising's Contribution to Student Success](#), which included details of the academic advising strategic plan and its objectives.

Questions included:

- It was asked if student success metrics are available on the advising website, and are there resources faculty can access?
 - Griffin-Brown clarified that the student metric referenced is not currently posted on the advising website. However, the Student Success Plan is introduced to students during new student orientation and continues to be used throughout their time at the University.
 - Faculty seeking information or advising resources were directed to the advising website at wmich.edu/advice, which includes materials that may be useful for faculty supporting student success initiatives.

Gary Bischof as chair of the [Faculty Athletics Representative](#) provided its annual report which included 2025-26 priorities, fall 2025 GPA performance, championships, scholar athlete recognition, and revision of the Faculty Athletic Board manual.

Professional and Academic Concerns

No concerns were expressed.

Adjournment

President Naugle adjourned the meeting at 6:47 p.m. The next Faculty Senate meeting will be 2 April 2026 in ballroom A of the Student Center at 5 p.m. and streamed live on Mediasite.

Approval

Submitted by Sue Brodasky, Faculty Senate Administrator.

Minutes approved on _____ 2025.