



FACULTY SENATE MEETING Minutes of 2 April 2026

Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Western Michigan University Faculty Senate was called to order at 5:05 p.m. on 2 April 2026, in the Student Center, ballroom A, by Amy Naugle, Faculty Senate President.

Roll Call: There were 57 members and substitutes present, and three guests.

Members Present: Bryan Abendschein, Communications; Elissa Allen, Nursing; Diane Anderson, Presidential Appointee, 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; William Cimbalik, Physician Assistant; 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; Matthew Dumican, Speech Language and Hearing Sciences; Kieran Fogarty, Executive Board Director; Matthew Fries, Music; Kimberly Ganzevoort, Occupational Therapy; Peter Gustafson, Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering; LuMarie Guth, Chair, Campus Planning and Finance Council; Wanda Hadley, Representative-at-Large; Janet Hahn, Interdisciplinary Health Programs; Decker Hains, Parliamentarian; Patrick Hanlin, Sindecuse; Trey Harris, Music; Britt Hartenberger, Intercultural and Anthropological Studies; Bidyut Hazarika, Business Information Systems; Daniela Hernandez, Mathematics; David Huffman (substitute for Andre Venter), Chemistry; Antonio Isea, Spanish; Brian Jansen, Aviation; John Jellies, Emeriti; Vyascheslav Karpov, Sociology; Jean Kimmel, Economics; Mary Lagerwey, Emeriti; Doug Lepisto, Management; Ramona Lewis (substitute for Eric Archer), Education, Leadership Research and Technology; Geoffrey Lindenberg, Aviation; Thayma Lutz, Mathematics; Robert Makin, Computer Science; Mustafa Mirzeler, Representative-at-Large; Amy Naugle, Faculty Senate President; Troy Place, Industrial and Entrepreneurial Engineering; Amanda Remo, Accountancy; Diane Riggs, Religions and Cultures; David Rudge, Biological Sciences; Daniela Schroeter, Public Affairs and Administration; Remzi Seker, Presidential Appointee; Larry Simon, History; C. Dennis Simpson, Faculty Senate Vice President; Scott Slawinski, English; Julia Stachofsky, Business Information Systems; Marianne Swierenga, Libraries; Laura Teichert, Special Education and Literacy Studies; Janet Van Der Kley, Presidential Appointee; Yuan-kang Wang, Political Science; Lester Wright, Emeriti;

Members Absent: Osama Abudayyeh, Representative-at-Large; Pnina Ari-Gur, Representative-at-Large; Onur Arugaslan, Finance and Commercial Law; Todd Barkman, Biological Sciences; Clement Burns, Physics; Jessica Cataldo, Chair, Academic and Information Technology Council; Mine Dogan Diker, Geological and Environmental Sciences; Lofton Durham, Chair, Research and Creative Activities Council; Marcia Feters, Teaching, Learning and Educational Studies; Katharine Gross, Nursing; Dean Johnson, Electrical and Computer Engineering; Jeffrey Jones, Teaching Learning and Educational Studies; Richard Katrovas, English; Russ Kavalhuna, WMU President; Hexu Liu, Civil and Construction Engineering; James Martin, Philosophy; Michael Miller, Human Performance and Health Education; Joshua Naranjo, Statistics; Alexandra Pekarovicova, Chemical and Paper Engineering; Sam Ramrattan, Engineering Design Manufacturing and Management Systems; Viviane Ruellot, World Languages and Literature; Thomas Scannell, Marketing; Wayne Stitt, Education Leadership Research and Technology; Kathryn Thomsen, Theatre; Patricia Villalobos Echeverria, Art; Bret Wagner, Chair, Undergraduate Studies Council; Robert Wall Emerson, Blindness and Low Vision; Daren Webb, Physical Therapy; Andrew Wyman, Representative-at-Large; Marcellis Zondag, Chair, Graduate Studies Council

Guests: Julie Garrison, Dean, University Libraries; Keith Hahn, General Counsel; Luke Kritzman, President, Western Student Association

Faculty Senate Staff Present: Sue Brodasky, Faculty Senate Administrator

Quorum

A quorum was reached with 57 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 Lagerwey, to approve the 5 March 2026 minutes as

provided. The motion carried.

Report of Officer

Faculty Senate President Amy Naugle

Acknowledgment of the Senators terms expiring on April 30, 2026:

- Amanda Remo, Accountancy
- Brian Jansen, Aviation
- Julia Stachofsky, Business Information Systems
- Alexandra Pekarovicova, Chemical and Paper Engineering
- Dean Johnson, Electrical and Computer Engineering
- Sam Ramrattan, Engineering Design and Manufacturing
- Scott Slawinski, English
- Lisa DeChano-Cook, Environment, Geography and Sustainability
- Jou-Chen Chen, Family and Consumer Sciences
- Larry Simon, History
- Michael Miller, Human Performance and Health Education
- Troy Place, Industrial and Entrepreneurial Engineering and Engineering Management
- Thomas Scannell, Marketing
- Matthew Fries, Music
- Kathryn Thomsen, Theatre and Dance

Newly elected and re-elected Senators will be introduced at the next Faculty Senate meeting on April 30.

There are still openings on the Faculty Senate councils and committees if you or a colleague are interested in serving. Please contact the Faculty Senate office for specifics.

Reports of Ex Officiis

Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Christopher Cheatham

Interim Provost Cheatham provided remarks on [academic excellence](#), which included:

- Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) emphasized as integral to the academic mission; focus on equitable access and student success.
- Digital accessibility initiative underway across Academic Affairs to meet WCAG 2.1 Level AA standards by April 24 (federal mandate); goal is removal of barriers to learning.
- Broader inclusion efforts include course design, curriculum development, and student support practices.
- Functional Course Design Endorsement Program highlighted:
 - Integrates universal design for learning and accessible syllabus practices.
 - Six instructors across three colleges completed a 10-week program.
- Teaching and Learning team providing ongoing resources to support inclusive instruction.
- Continued analysis of retention and completion gaps; emphasis on aligning advising, instruction, and student support.
- Enrollment Update
 - Summer I: 4.5% decline overall, primarily in graduate enrollment (not driven by international enrollment).
 - Summer II: Undergraduate enrollment increased; graduate enrollment down 4.4%.
 - Fall: Early data; priority registration recently completed.
 - Recruitment/Yield: Slightly below target; increased outreach through events and digital marketing.
- Student Success & Engagement
 - “Into the Neural Verse” initiative: faculty-student research partnership focused on neurodivergent-inclusive learning environments.
 - Hosted Michigan Science Olympiad 750 students; strong student engagement as volunteers/judges.
 - WMU selected to host State Science Olympiad (2027) (3,000 participants expected).
- Faculty & Alumni Recognition
 - Ashlyn Kuersten: 2026 MAC Outstanding Faculty Award for Student Success.
 - Frostic School of Art represented internationally in Munich exhibition.
 - CHHS alum advancing healthcare innovation through medical device development.

Discussion included:

- It was asked whether summer census enrollment differences may be influenced by variations in course offerings between academic years.
- Interim Provost Cheatham indicated that variations in course offerings can influence summer census numbers. Further noted that year-to-year comparisons are complicated by changes to the academic calendar, which can affect alignment of reporting periods. While data are scaled relative to “days from census” to improve comparability, calendar differences still introduce limitations in direct comparisons.

University Strategic Plan – Academic Excellence

President Naugle stated that the [University Strategic Plan Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) goal states “*We actively create and continuously invest in building an inclusive and equitable environment where every member of our community feels like they belong and has access to the resources they need to thrive.*”

There are two objectives of this goal that I will be highlighting as they are relevant to the charges of the Faculty Senate Councils that emphasize this goal. The first objective related to this goal is “*Retain and graduate a diverse student body while steadily eliminating disparities in graduate rates.*” The Faculty Senate addresses the objective in a charge that encompasses three Faculty Senate Councils, the Graduate Studies Council, the International Education Council, and the Undergraduate Studies Council. Each council is charged to collaborate together on how to best support faculty in the area of global learning, including global classrooms, virtual study abroad, and internationalized curriculum. In addition, the IEC is charged to develop and recommend best practices for ensuring that international students at WMU are made to feel welcome and directly connected with U.S. based students in real and meaningful ways.

The second Strategic Plan objective is “*Diversity curriculum and co-curricular touchpoints are widespread and easily accessible for all students throughout their years at WMU,*” which is addressed as a portion of the role statement for both the Graduate Studies Council and the Undergraduate Studies Council. The GSC role statement includes “*...development of graduate curricula and approval of graduate programs...*” The USC role statement reads “*...consider any issues it believes directly affects the undergraduate curricula and programs of the University.*”

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-25/10: Establish Minimum Undergraduate Credits in a Major or Minor Earned at WMU](#). The Undergraduate Studies Council and the International Education Council recommend the creation of a policy that establishes a minimum number of undergraduate credit hours a student must earn at WMU toward a major(s) and/or minor(s). Creation of this policy allows students to count some transfer and study abroad credits toward their major and/or minor, but could not complete their major and/or minor without some courses at WMU.

[MOTION] It was moved by Fogarty, seconded by Hadley, to approve MOA-25/10 as presented.

Questions included:

- President Naugle noted that a request for clarification was received prior to the meeting which questioned proposed language and its application to students with multiple majors, specifically, whether the requirement applies to a student’s primary major only or to all declared majors. It was noted that the proposal lacks clarity on this point. The primary substantive concern is whether the requirement should apply universally across all majors or be limited to a single (primary) major. She suggested that the MOA be returned to the Undergraduate Studies Council for further review and clarification of language.
- A question was raised regarding the rationale for selecting a minimum of nine credits, with concern that nine credits may appear insufficient relative to the total number of credits in a degree (e.g., 120 credits). In addition it was questioned if there had been any benchmarking against peer institutions to determine the nine credits.
 - DeChano-Cook clarified that the nine-credit requirement applies specifically to the major or minor, not the full 120-credit degree. The threshold was informed by existing policy within the College of Arts and Sciences, which maintains a similar minimum standard. Benchmarking across other institutions revealed a wide range of requirements, from no minimum to up to half of credits

completed at the home institution. The selected standard represents a baseline requirement, allowing individual departments to adopt more stringent expectations if desired.

[MOTION] It was moved by Simpson, seconded by Rudge, to postpone the vote on MOA-25/10 to the next Faculty Senate 30 April meeting agenda. The motion carried.

DeChano-Cook, Curriculum Manager, introduced [MOA-26/05](#): *Establish Equivalency Level Acceptance of American Council of Education Military Credit Policy* on behalf of the Transfer of Credit Committee and the Undergraduate Studies Council. The Transfer of Credit Committee of the Undergraduate Studies Council recommends the creation of a policy that establishes how military credits that have been evaluated by the American Council of Education transfer into Western Michigan University curriculum.

[MOTION] It was moved by Rudge, seconded by Simpson, to approve MOA-26/05 as presented. With two abstentions, the motion carried.

Discussion included:

- DeChano-Cook clarified evaluation of military training for academic credit is conducted by the American Council on Education, which assesses whether the content aligns with lower-division or upper-division coursework at a postsecondary institution. Currently, WMU accepts only lower-division credit recommendations from ACE evaluations, limiting the applicability of upper-division recommendations within institutional transfer policies.
- When asked DeChano-Cook further stated that this process is distinct from Prior Learning Assessment (PLA). While individuals may pursue PLA for certain programs where applicable, this represents a separate evaluative pathway and is not inherently linked to ACE-reviewed military training. Discussion acknowledged that individuals could theoretically pursue both ACE credit recognition and PLA; however, these processes operate independently. Concerns regarding consistency and academic rigor were addressed by noting that ACE evaluations are conducted by trained faculty panels, with a minimum of three evaluators required to reach consensus on credit recommendations.

Faculty Senate Council Reports

Elissa Allen, Chair, [WMU Essential Studies Executive Advisory Committee](#) provided the committee activity report, that committee membership, WMU Essential Studies Course Review and Approval Committee membership, WMU Essential Studies Executive Advisory Committee 2025-26 charges, and future priorities.

Questions included:

- Does WMU Essential Studies encourage students to take courses outside their major?
 - The goal of it is to let students explore interests beyond their major. However, in credit-heavy programs, students may have limited flexibility. Data is being considered to better understand this.
- Are multiple assessment scores required per Student Learning Outcomes (SLO)?
 - Efforts are being made to simplify this. Most courses now use one or two assignments to assess multiple outcomes, improving consistency.
- Are assessment results used to change courses?
 - Results are used at a general level, and faculty decide how to apply them. They are not used to evaluate or penalize instructors.
- Why do some SLOs have multiple options?
 - They were designed to allow flexibility across disciplines. Work is underway to make them more consistent.
- Can faculty review new assessment rubrics?
 - Yes, feedback opportunities will be provided.

University Reports

Keith Hahn, General Counsel, provided the annual Email Access report. He stated there was one request during the reporting period to access email accounts belonging to two former employees in response to a subpoena received by Western Michigan University. However, no email review was ultimately conducted. The underlying legal matter was resolved prior to the need for access, eliminating the requirement to proceed with the request.

Luke Kritzman, President, [Western Student Association](#) provided an update on the WSA activities, which included the WSA mission and vision, WSA structure, events and projects, legislation and committees, free legal aid, and future leadership of WSA.

Professional and Academic Concerns

Questions included:

- Concerns were raised regarding unintended consequences of the transfer equivalency system, including students “shopping” for online courses at other institutions to replace courses offered at Western Michigan University. This behavior may undermine course enrollment and departmental planning. How might this impact academic programs?
 - The practice may reduce enrollment in institutional courses, particularly summer offerings, potentially leading to course cancellations. This could negatively affect both departmental financial stability and students who rely on those courses being available.
- Are students using transfer equivalencies to avoid certain courses?
 - In some cases, students appear to seek external courses for convenience or to replace previously failed courses, raising concerns about academic integrity and program rigor, especially at the upper-division level.
- Can exceptions be made for individual student circumstances?
 - Currently, the system prioritizes equity and consistency, limiting the ability to grant one-time exceptions for individual cases. This creates challenges in addressing unique student needs.
- What actions were recommended?
 - It was suggested that governance bodies, such as the Undergraduate Studies Council, review the issue and consider policy guidance, including potential credit minimums or other safeguards.
- What was the administrative response?
 - Interim Provost Cheatham acknowledged the concerns as valid but noted that similar issues are occurring across institutions. While the system improves transparency and supports transfer students, additional strategies may be needed to mitigate negative impacts without eliminating its benefits.

Adjournment

President Naugle adjourned the meeting at 6:07 p.m. The next Faculty Senate meeting will be 30 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.