
**WMU Essential Studies Executive Advisory Committee
Minutes of 10 September 2024**

Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Western Michigan University Faculty Senate WMU Essential Studies Executive Advisory Committee was called to order at 1:03 p.m. on 10 September 2024, via Webex video conferencing, by Brian Tripp, chair.

Members in Attendance: Elissa Allen, Elizabeth Isidro, Lindsay Jeffers, Lei Meng, Jessica Parker, Brenda Srof, Brian Tripp

Member Absent: Kathryn Wagner, Lois Lemon,

Advisory Members Present: Jonathan Bush, Lisa DeChano-Cook, Carrie Cumming

Ex Officio Present: Decker Hains

Guest: Amy Naugle, WMU Faculty Senate President

Quorum

A quorum was present with eight members in attendance, of the six needed to establish a quorum.

Agenda

[MOTION] It was moved by Allen, seconded by Jeffers, to accept the agenda as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

Reports of Officers

President Naugle presented the 2024-25 WMU Essential Studies Executive Advisory Committee charges. These charges include:

1. Participate in the comprehensive review,
2. Continue to improve and update the online WMU Essential Studies manual and other resources,
3. Review and update the WMU Essential Studies handbook,
4. Improve documentation and provide examples of what makes a good assessment plan for a WMU Essential Studies course.
5. Collaborate with departments and colleges to increase online offerings,
6. Improve and streamline the process of transferring credits for WMU Essential Studies,
7. Consult with the WMU Essential Studies director and review the WMU Essential Studies portfolio in terms of enrollment and objectives,
8. Review the 2022-23 continuous improvement date, noting significant findings for year four of the program review,
9. WMU Essential Studies Course Review and Approval Committee: recruit faculty and staff representatives, develop and deliver charges, coordinate, and include a summary of results and best practices.

Chair Tripp reported that the WMU Essential Studies Course Review and Approval Committee will need a new chair, vice chair, and secretary beginning fall 2025, due to the three-year term limits on Faculty Senate committee leadership positions. Chair Tripp reported that Randy Ott, Merz Tate College, will no longer be part of the WMU Essential Studies Executive Advisory Committee, due to his new administrative position that is focused on community college relations and transfer student pathways within Enrollment Management.

Ex Officio Hains discussed the leadership of the WMU Essential Studies Executive Advisory Committee in the four-year comprehensive review as an important part of continuous improvement.

Minutes

[MOTION] It was moved by Isidro, seconded by Parker, to approve the 9 April 2024 minutes as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

Reports of University Representatives

Bush reported that the fourth-year review is intended for continuous improvement. The assessments should help improve the program. This year, there are no cyclic reviews. The WMU Essential Studies Course Review and Approval Committee will continue to look at new and revised courses for approval. These processes take place in Curriculum, the online WMU curriculum management system (formerly Curriculog).

Bush discussed the following:

1. WMU Essential Studies Executive Advisory Committee needs one liaison for each of the three WMU Essential Studies fourth-year program review committees: the WMU Essential Studies Course Review Committee, the WMU Essential Studies Systems and Structure Review Committee, and the WMU Essential Studies Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) Performance Review Committee.
2. Seeking four to five more members for the WMU Essential Studies Course Review Committee.
3. Add a subcommittee to address a review of the rubrics for Student Learning Outcomes, along with a subcommittee to build a best practice document of a good assessment plan as a model for faculty who propose new classes. DeChano-Cook noted that the form for faculty may also need to change.

DeChano-Cook has created new templates in Curriculum (Curriculog) for adding classes to the WMU Essential Studies Program.

DeChano-Cook reported that the exceptions being made for transfer students are often made as department credit, which compromises the integrity of the SLO. A resolution is needed. Advisors need guidance on how to assist transfer students with WMU Essential Studies credits. Parker agreed that we need a better process for incoming credits so that advisors are not forced to make decisions about WMU Essential Studies credits. DeChano-Cook reported that transfer credits are a focus for the university this year.

Unfinished Business

[MOTION] It was moved by Srof, seconded by Allen, to accept the fourth-year review committees, their membership, and their co-chairs. The motion was carried unanimously.

New Business

Chair Tripp requested a liaison from the WMU Essential Studies Executive Advisory Committee for each of the three fourth-year program review committees. Isidro volunteered to be a liaison for the Student Learning Outcomes Performance Review committee. Allen will serve as liaison for the Course Review Committee.

[MOTION] It was moved by Tripp, seconded by Meng, to approve liaisons Isidro and Allen for the fourth-year review committees. The motion was carried unanimously.

Bush will email Dr. Luchara Wallace to request a member from the Merze Tate College to serve on the WMU Essential Studies Executive Advisory Committee.

Hains shared a draft version of a Best Practices for Advisors document with a set of guidelines making course substitutions for WMU Essential Studies courses. Hains noted that the difference between the previous WMU General Education Program and the current WMU Essential Studies Program is that the current program is based on assessment of specific learning outcomes, not just areas of study. Therefore, a review of learning outcomes is needed to make decisions regarding WMU Essential Studies

credits. A system needs to be developed to evaluate possible transfer courses for Level I and II WMU Essential Studies courses. The following were discussed:

1. A decision tree for advisors,
2. A note was made that faculty must make decisions about transfer credits, instead of leaving that to advisors.
3. Students should not be penalized by being extremely selective, which can result to losing students. A solution is needed to find a good balance between being true to the integrity of the WMU Essential Studies course and also making the process easier so that incoming transfer students will not be lost while a decision is being made.
4. Preparation of a database of WMU Essential Studies courses that have already been approved for advisors. It was noted that from an equity standpoint, it will be important to standardize the procedure.

Srof volunteered to be part of a subcommittee to create a model assessment plan.

Jeffers volunteered to be part of a subcommittee to review rubrics for SLO.

Announcements

None.

Adjournment

Chair Tripp adjourned the meeting at 2:21 p.m. The WMU Essential Studies Executive Advisory Committee will meet next on 8 October 2024 at 1 p.m. via Webex.

Approval

Submitted by Lindsay Jeffers, Secretary

Minutes approved on 8 October 2024.