
WMU Essential Studies Executive Advisory Committee
Minutes of 11 October 2022**Call to Order**

The regular meeting of the Western Michigan University Faculty Senate WMU Essential Studies Executive Advisory Board was called to order at 1 p.m. on 11 October 2022 via Webex video conferencing by Brian Tripp, chair.

Members in Attendance: Elissa Allen, Elizabeth Isidro, Lindsay Jeffers, Lois Lemon, Brian Tripp, Kathryn Wagner

Members Absent: Decker Hains

Advisory Members Present: Jonathan Bush, Nicolas Witschi

Advisory Members Absent: Carrie Cumming

Ex Officio: Lisa DeChano-Cook

Guest(s): Randy Ott, Director for Academic Collaboration

Quorum

A quorum was present.

Acceptance of Agenda

[MOTION] It was moved by DeChano-Cook, seconded by Wagner, to accept the agenda as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

Minutes

[MOTION] It was moved by DeChano-Cook, seconded by Wagner, to approve the 13 September 2022 minutes as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

Election of Officers

[MOTION] It was moved by DeChano-Cook, seconded by Bush, to elect Jeffers as secretary. The motion carried unanimously.

Lemon joined the meeting at 1:15 p.m.

Allen joined the meeting at 1:35 p.m.

Reports of Officers

Chair Tripp reported that many WMU Essential Studies courses have been approved, but it was questioned if the Strategic Resource Management (SRM) budget model would support the WMU Essential Studies program. The WMU Essential Studies Executive Advisory Committee needs to work towards completion of an online guidebook for the WMU Essential Studies program. Many documents for this guidebook have been prepared but need further editing and organization into a single reference guide. These files can be accessed online via a link to a set of shared files in Teams. Chair Tripp confirmed that the WMU Essential Studies Course Review and Approval Committee is obligated to report to the WMU Essential Studies Executive Advisory Committee regularly.

Ex Officio DeChano-Cook reported that there is a need for online options for nontraditional students, especially in level 3 WMU Essential Studies courses, and noted that data could help to better serve students in all areas. She charged the committee to discuss and make decisions about how many classes are ideal in each area of the WMU Essential Studies program.

Reports of University Representatives

Witschi provided a report that included information about the new Curriculog online curriculum management system and the cyclic review process for WMU Essential Studies courses. Curriculog has proven useful and is being used for cyclic course review, which occurs every four years for each WMU Essential Studies course. A total of 43 courses are currently in the process as new courses or modifications to current courses. Curriculog is currently being adapted to allow the ability to import data from the WMU online course catalog and Banner. The Banner system is used to schedule courses and track faculty teaching assignments.

Bush reported that the cyclic course review process for WMU Essential Studies courses is beginning for this academic year. It initially had a deadline of 31 October 2022, but that has been extended to 18 November 2022. This review process is intended as a re-evaluation for each course and not as a performative review. Three things are expected to occur for a course to remain in the WMU Essential Studies program:

1. It should be offered regularly, at least once a year
2. The course instructor(s) need to complete the e-learning assessment every semester
3. The course needs to be submitted for the WMU Essential System cyclic course review

Ott and Bush are providing presentations about WMU Essential Studies to department chairs, the provost, and deans. The presentations provide a descriptive guide about WMU Essential Studies. There are currently 388 approved WMU Essential Studies courses, 81 in level 1, 209 in level 2, and 98 in level 3, which accounts for 43% of the total undergraduate student credit hours at WMU (77,458 WMU Essential Studies/181,900 total student credit hours). Many junior and senior students are still completing their undergraduate degree programs using general education courses listed in previous catalogs. Departments are encouraged to consider courses without prerequisites, especially in the 3-level options.

Ott gave an update on the ongoing WMU Essential Studies assessment process. The assessment data includes student learning objectives (SLOs) and WMU Essential Studies offerings and course information. Each department will receive a report in the fall semester.

Bush, Witschi, and Ott left the meeting at 1:40 p.m.

The annual fall semester WMU Essential Studies Assessment Day event is scheduled for Friday, 9 December 2022, in room 4010 in the College of Health and Human Services Building. All members of the committee should plan to attend to review data and SLOs and learn more about Elearning and assessment.

An overview of the WMU Essential Studies program's governance included the following points:

1. The WMU Essential Studies program is overseen by the Faculty Senate Executive Board
2. The WMU Essential Studies program is housed in the Merze Tate College
3. The WMU Essential Studies Course Review and Approval Committee is a standing committee of the WMU Essential Studies Executive Advisory Committee

It was suggested that Brian Carnell, WMUx Associate Director, Educational Technology, be invited to one or more future meetings of the WMU Essential Studies Executive Advisory Committee to give an overview of the information technology aspects of how Elearning connects to the WMU Essential Studies program SLOs.

A discussion was held regarding the total number of WMU Essential Studies courses versus the total number of all undergraduate courses, the rationale for promoting the WMU Essential Studies program to students, and student demand versus the number of available WMU Essential Studies courses. It was noted that only three courses with the same prefix are allowed as part of a student's WMU Essential Studies curriculum. Parker attended an advisor's directors meeting and indicated that WMU Essential Studies level 3 courses, in-person and online, are in high demand by transfer students at WMU. Data mining for course enrollment versus course demand would be useful for undergraduate advisors. There appears to be a disconnect between student demand and the WMU Essential Studies courses that are available. This data suggests that there are opportunities for growth in this area, which could be addressed by opening more sections for current courses or the creation of new course offerings.

Adjournment

Chair Tripp adjourned the meeting at 1:55 p.m. The WMU Essential Studies Executive Advisory Committee will meet next on 8 November 2022 at 1 p.m. virtually via Webex.

Approval

Submitted by Lindsay Jeffers, Secretary

Minutes approved on 8 November 2022.