
WMU Essential Studies Executive Advisory Committee

Minutes of 10 January 2023

Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Western Michigan University Faculty Senate WMU Essential Studies Executive Advisory Board was called to order at 1:03 p.m. on 10 January 2023, via Webex video conferencing, by Brian Tripp, chair.

Members in Attendance: Elissa Allen, Elizabeth Isidro, Lindsay Jeffers, Jessica Parker, Brian Tripp, Kathryn Wagner

Members Absent: Decker Hains, Lois Lemon

Advisory Members Present: Jonathan Bush, Carrie Cumming, Nicolas Witschi

Ex Officio: Lisa DeChano-Cook

Guest: Randy Ott, Senior Director, Merze Tate College

Quorum

A quorum was present.

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 Allen, to approve the 11 October 2022 and 8 November 2022 minutes as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

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

Reports of Officers

Witschi reported that the deadline for inclusion in the 2023 fall semester catalog was 31 October 2022. The deadline for inclusion in the fall 2024 catalog is 31 October 2023.

Bush reported that the WMU Essential Studies Data Spotlight event was well attended and received feedback regarding the need for more communication. Next steps include developing faculty guidelines for defining Student Learning Outcomes (SLO), how to submit a course for inclusion in WMU Essential Studies, and an overview of the WMU Essential Studies course four-year cyclic review process. Specific procedures need to be developed for rejection of a WMU Essential Studies course during the cyclic review process, which has an estimated 15-20% rejection rate. According to feedback from faculty, SLO data parsed for individual courses should be available; this is a goal for next year. It was noted that Memorandum of Action (MOA)-20/04: Establishment of WMU Essential Studies Data Governance Policy indicates that this type of data cannot be used for any personnel decisions involving faculty tenure and promotion. The number of new WMU Essential Studies course curriculum proposals is much lower than in previous years. Bush indicated a need for closer interaction between the WMU Essential Studies Executive Advisory Committee and the WMU Essential Studies Course Review and Approval Committee, and the need to address variances in the courses rejected versus accepted for the WMU Essential Studies program.

Reports of University Representatives

Ott reported that 45 faculty participated in the WMU Essential Studies Data Spotlight event, which was twice the attendance of the previous year. The entire list of WMU Essential Studies courses was recently updated on 9 January 2023 for use by academic advisors and students. A "WMU Essential Studies Welcome to the semester message" and virtual hours for the WMU Instructional Tech Center (ITC) are

[available to faculty](#). There will be eight sessions throughout the semester to help instructors. Ott stated that an updated list of WMU Essential Studies approved courses is available at this [link](#).

Cumming discussed that a WMU Essential Studies component for new instructor orientation should be considered.

Unfinished Business

Chair Tripp discussed the WMU Essential Studies handbook, which has been a goal for the committee. Ott added additional information about the history and progress of the online handbook. The WMU Essential Studies handbook is envisioned as a complete set of online documents, which will include a “how to” guide and historical documentation about the development of the WMU Essential Studies program. A staff person will be made available to prepare the web-based handbook. There was discussion of access to existing documents on the WMU Microsoft Teams server that were prepared for use in the WMU Essential Studies handbook.

New Business

Ott discussed a possible plan for an annual Data Spotlight for WMU Essential Studies each fall and a virtual or in-person Help with WMU Essential Studies Day each spring semester. Options include separate small sessions versus one large session, in-person versus virtual, and providing breakfast for participants. Parker suggested that faculty could send in questions before the session. The end of the semester may be a busy time for faculty, and Jeffers suggested the alternative of offering a session at the start of the semester. Isidro suggested the option of different sessions for those who are new to WMU Essential Studies versus those who have experience. Witschi mentioned that new and part-time instructors are often teaching WMU Essential Studies courses online and may appreciate virtual help sessions. Allen indicated that she has an informal role as the WMU Essential Studies expert for Nursing, and shares resources with other faculty in the program, such as web links for assessment guidelines and a rubric video. Ott announced that there are faculty help requests for the WMU Essential Studies Course Review and Approval Committee process to get courses approved for WMU Essential Studies. DeChano-Cook suggested an informational session about good assessment methods for WMU Essential Studies courses; possible issues include too many assessment “pieces” or “too complicated” assessment plans.

Witschi left the meeting at 1:47 p.m.

Announcements

Chair Tripp announced that the WMU Essential Studies Executive Advisory Committee will meet starting at 1:30 p.m. for the remainder of the spring semester.

Adjournment

[MOTION] It was moved by DeChano Cook, seconded by Isidro, to adjourn the meeting at 1:58 p.m. The motion carried unanimously. The WMU Essential Studies Executive Advisory Committee will meet next on 14 February 2023 at 1:30 p.m. via Webex.

Approval

Submitted by Lindsay Jeffers, Secretary

Minutes approved on 14 March 2023.