
WMU Essential Studies Executive Advisory Committee

Minutes of 14 March 2023

Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Western Michigan University Faculty Senate Essential Studies Executive Advisory Board was called to order at 1:33 pm on 14 March 2023, via Webex video conferencing, by Brian Tripp, chair.

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

Members Absent: Jessica Parker

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

Ex Officio: Lisa DeChano-Cook

Guest(s): Randy Ott, Senior Director, Academic Collaboration, 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 Wagner, to approve the 10 January 2023 and 14 February 2023 minutes as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

Lemon joined the meeting at 1:48 p.m.

Witschi left the meeting at 1:50 p.m.

Reports of Officers

Chair Tripp reported on some issues with the WMU Essential Studies Course Review and Approval Committee (CRAC) course approval process, based on his three-year experience with a microbiology course offered by the Department of Biological Sciences. He questioned if WMU Essential Studies needs to revisit the student learning outcomes (SLO) and assessment criteria, including the personal wellness SLO. A second issue is that the new Curriculog software does not provide a mechanism for faculty who submit course proposals to communicate directly with reviewers or the WMU Essential Studies CRAC subcommittee; instead, they must send emails to individuals on the committee. Bush reported that the SLO will be reviewed in the fourth-year review. Ex Officio DeChano-Cook commented that if a course demonstrates meeting the SLO, the course should be approved by WMU Essential Studies CRAC, a subcommittee that is overseen by the WMU Essential Studies Executive Advisory (EA) Committee.

Ex Officio DeChano-Cook reported that council elections are coming up next year, and the WMU Essential Studies EA Committee will need to vote on nominations at the next April meeting for the 2023-24 academic year.

Reports of University Representatives

Bush announced that there is an event scheduled on 21 April 2023 for members of the WMU Essential Studies EA Committee, WMU Essential Studies CRAC, and other representatives from the Faculty Senate and administration to discuss the WMU Essential Studies governance structure. The goal of this meeting is to bring together all relevant WMU Essential Studies members to “set the stage”, *i.e.*, discuss

responsibilities and develop processes for the fourth-year review of the WMU Essential Studies program. Next year, the primary role of the WMU Essential Studies EA Committee is to plan the process and criteria for the four-year review. The group will discuss a framework for this at the meeting. Bush and Ott recently gave a presentation of the WMU Essential Studies program at a University Assessment Steering Committee conference. Bush reported that WMU Essential Studies CRAC is working through cyclic reviews in an advisory capacity. Bush reported that they are developing a WMU Essential Studies “Make WMU Essential Studies work for you” search tool for students and parents to search for courses in a non-academic (non-major/minor specific) capacity, using descriptive terms such as “extrovert”, “work with animals”, “get dirty outdoor activities”, etc. This could be a powerful recruitment tool to enable potential students to see how WMU Essential Studies is different than the previous General Education (Gen Ed) program and is more catered to student interests. Bush sent a reminder to the deans, to be shared with chairs and faculty instructors, that there is only one cyclic review per WMU Essential Studies course.

Ott reported that WMU is in the middle of admissions recruitment and has events planned in Detroit, Chicago, and Grand Rapids. Ott is representing WMU Essential Studies at these events. WMUx and Ed Martini are also working on a WMU Essential Studies database to present course data by semester, college, modality, time, or day. Ott shared an update from Brian Carnell, WMUx, that SLO data from Elearning is being reconfigured into a better format, and gave a demonstration of a WMU Essential Studies Dashboard webpage under development. Ott reported that WMU has improved relationships with Kalamazoo Valley Community College (KVCC) and Kellogg Community College (KCC) to align transfer credits, and WMU Essential Studies is part of those transfer agreements, which involve 25-30 programs per community college. By the end of spring 2023, WMU will have articulation agreements with several programs. Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC) is also on the list for future agreements. KVCC and GRCC have the largest number of students who transfer to WMU.

Unfinished Business

Bush reported that he is continuing work on the WMU Essential Studies handbook. Ott added an update about WMUx representation and will request Brian Carnell.

New Business

Hains discussed reviewing the design of the WMU Essential Studies program and SLO, including rubric adjustments, for the fourth-year review. The first step in this review involves designing a plan, and the second phase involves execution of the plan, including the WMU Essential Studies handbook, and evaluating how many WMU Essential Studies courses are offered, student enrollment in these courses, and when a course was last offered. Items to consider include the program design and SLO performance. A question was raised on student satisfaction with the WMU Essential Studies program. There are currently 17 SLOs, and what SLOs are popular with students. Rubrics used to evaluate SLOs could be revised.

Announcements

Lemon reported that she was able to assist new faculty in her department who were unaware of WMU Essential Studies SLO procedures.

Adjournment

[MOTION] It was moved by DeChano Cook, seconded by Tripp, to adjourn the meeting at 2:10 pm. The motion carried unanimously. The WMU Essential Studies Executive Advisory Committee will meet next on 11 April 2023 at 1:30 pm via Webex.

Approval

Submitted by Lindsay Jeffers, Secretary

Minutes approved on 11 April 2023.