

Undergraduate Studies Council

Minutes of 9 January 2024

Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Western Michigan University Faculty Senate Undergraduate Studies Council was called to order at 3:02 p.m. on 9 January 2024 via Webex video conferencing by Diane Riggs, chair.

Members in Attendance: Jessica Birnbaum, Carrie Cumming, Lisa DeChano-Cook, Lori Gray, Tomika Griffin-Brown, Dave Karowe, Irma Lopez, Dawn Mason, Susan Piazza, Diane Riggs, Jill Rowe, Abdus Salam, Scott Slawinski, Sue Steuer, Yuanling Sun

Members Absent: Jordan Dunn, Leah Latumaerissa

Advisory Member in Attendance: Colleen Stano

Ex Officio in Attendance: Bret Wagner

Guests: Jonathan Bush, WMU Essential Studies Faculty Director

Quorum

A quorum was present with 16 members in attendance, of the 10 needed to establish quorum.

Agenda

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

Minutes

[MOTION] It was moved by DeChano-Cook, seconded by Karowe, to approve the 14 November 2023 minutes as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

Slawinski joined the meeting at 3:06 p.m.

Reports of Officers

Chair Riggs announced the upcoming election of USC new officers in April and encouraged members to consider serving in one of these positions. Ex Officio Wagner will facilitate the election process.

Ex Officio Wagner did not provide a report.

Reports of University Representatives

Bush reported on the following:

1. WMU Essential Studies courses quality control efforts across WMU.
2. Review process includes: 1) originator, 2) department committees and chairs; 3) college curriculum committees; 4) WMU Essential Studies Course Review and Approval Committee; and 5) WMU Essential Studies Executive Advisory Board. The proposal then goes into administrative review before it can be entered in the catalog for the following year. There are over 400 WMU Essential Studies courses.
3. Many proposals were rejected at the WMU Essential Studies Course Review and Approval Committee level, working to improve communication with the colleges and departments. Up until this year all reviews have been processed in October by WMU Essential Studies Course Review and Approval Committee. There is a proposal to change the system of review: WMU Essential Studies Course Review and Approval Committee will review proposals in April in addition to the usual October review. This will result in a more efficient turnaround for proposals that need revision.
4. If the Faculty Senate executive board agrees, there will be two tracks for proposals, one for new WMU Essential Studies courses and one for revised courses. WMU Essential Studies Course Review and Approval Committee will have the opportunity to “hold and contact,” which means departments are able to make minor revisions. Three core questions that WMU Essential Studies Course Review and Approval Committee uses to examine all WMU Essential Studies courses during a review are:
 - a. Does the course maintain the integrity of the stated Student Learning Outcomes (SLO)?

- b. Is the course at the right level?
- c. Does the course have an appropriate and well-articulated assessment plan?

The WES Executive Advisory Board will also review. These plans are intended to improve WMU Essential Studies approval rates. Bush also discussed cyclical reviews. These are only intended to evaluate the course's assessment plan and SLOs. They are not evaluative but rather a benchmark to ensure everyone is keeping track of WMU Essential Studies goals through assessment plans and SLOs.

Irma Lopez joined the meeting at 3:48 p.m.

Jonathan Bush left the meeting at 3:54 p.m.

DeChano-Cook reported that 30 or 40 proposals were approved last time, with concentrations changed to majors.

Griffin-Brown reported that 3,644 alerts were created, and 91% were completed in the fall. Griffin-Brown shared additional statistics on alerts created in December before the break, and most were remedy before classes began in January. 88% of undergraduate students at WMU have a degree works plan. FTIAC retention is 92.5%, which is up from last year.

Rowe left the meeting at 4:16 p.m.

Unfinished Business

None.

New Business

The Undergraduate Studies Council (USC) and Graduate Studies Council (GSC) have been charged with defining and identifying guidelines for cross-level courses with the goal of developing a Memorandum of Action to guide this practice at WMU. A cross-level course listing is defined as a course offered to both upper level undergraduate and graduate students with the same meeting time, course content, and course title, but different assessments outlined in separate syllabi. At WMU cross-level courses are offered in several colleges but there is no single definition or a set of procedures to guide the practice. A handout was distributed to USC that outlines definitions and procedures at other institutions like WMU. Members of USC who have taught a cross-level course at WMU shared their experiences. Issues raised were:

1. Difficulty of teaching cross level language classes.
2. Advantage of being able to offer courses at the 4000 and 6000 level at the same time with the same instructor which provides graduate students with more course options and helps with course enrollment. Topics and lectures are the same but complete different assignments/projects.
3. 4000/6000 split classes such as for small departments, mentoring/internships, and other reasons.
4. Could each college create its own guidelines?
5. Higher Learning Commission (HLC) might have guidelines for this decision. Graduate faculty status is a consideration in this policy.
6. How does this affect tuition costs for students, ensuring that undergraduates pay one rate, and graduate students pay the higher rates?

Slawinski left the meeting at 4:43 p.m.

[MOTION] It was moved by Karowe, seconded by Lopez, to consider the proposal to delete the Secondary Education Major. The motion carried unanimously.

Announcements

None.

Adjournment

[MOTION] It was moved by Piazza, seconded by Steuer, to adjourn the meeting at 4:55 p.m. The motion

carried unanimously. The Undergraduate Studies Council will meet next on 13 February 2024 at 3 p.m. via Webex.

Approval

Submitted by Susan Piazza, Secretary

Minutes approved on 13 February 2024.