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**WMU Essential Studies Executive Advisory Committee**

Minutes of 12 March 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 p.m. on 12 March 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:** Lois Lemon, Kathryn Wagner

**Advisory Members Present:** Jonathan Bush, Lisa DeChano-Cook, Randy Ott

**Advisory Member Absent:** Carrie Cumming

**Ex Officio Present:** Decker Hains

**Guest:** Brian Carnell, Director of Educational Technology, Online Education; Carol Weideman, Chair, WMU Essential Studies Course Review and Approval Committee

**Quorum**

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

**Agenda**

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

**Minutes**

**[MOTION]** It was moved by Allen, seconded by Meng, to approve the 13 February 2024 minutes as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

**Reports of Officers**

Chair Tripp reported on 23 February 2024 to the Faculty Senate Executive Board to discuss the plan for the WMU Essential Studies Program fourth-year review. An email message was sent to the College of Arts and Sciences associate deans, Dr. Nicolas Witschi and Dr. Stephanie Peterson, to request nominations for faculty to participate in the WMU Essential Studies fourth-year program review.

Ex Officio Hains reported that significant accomplishments were made regarding planning for the fourth-year review process for the WMU Essential Studies Program at the Faculty Senate Executive Board meeting with Tripp and Bush on 23 February 2024.

**Reports of University Representatives**

Bush reported that the cyclic review is underway, and about a third has been completed. Bush is working with WMU Bronson School of Nursing faculty on the integration of WMU Essential Studies courses in the new R.N. to B.S.N. Program. Bush is also working with faculty members who are revising courses returned by the WMU Essential Studies Course Review and Approval Committee. Bush has met with all colleges to discuss course review procedures and changes. The course review committee is hoping to fill spots before the end of the semester, so materials will be ready in the fall.

Ott and Carnell reported on an analysis of WMU Essential Studies Program courses that have not been offered since the start of the program, fall 2020 through spring 2024, and courses that were not offered in the last two years, spring 2022 through spring 2024. Due to a change of curriculum database systems from Banner Workflow to Cognos, there was some difficulty in tracking all classes. This analysis indicated that there are only 11 approved courses that have never been offered since the start of the program in 2020, and only 13 approved courses that have not been offered between 2022 and 2024; two of these

courses were originally scheduled but were cancelled due to low enrollment. Some of the courses identified are scheduled to be offered in fall 2024.

Weideman addressed concerns about classes trying to fit into a category and noted that faculty who are knowledgeable about the areas they evaluate in the fourth-year review are needed. Bush also noted that the course connection to the student learning outcomes will be an essential aspect of the review. Hains recommended that updating the rubrics will help with assessing the student learning outcomes. Tripp noted that the rubrics could be more consistent.

DeChano-Cook reported that there should be fewer courses accepted for WMU Essential Studies credit that are not vetted by the WMU Essential Studies Course Review and Approval Committee. DeChano-Cook also noted a problem with unrestricted seats in some categories, especially in the Level III category of local and national perspectives. Bush added that there is a strong need for Level III courses that are not restricted by prerequisites, and there is no modality requirement for WMU Essential Studies courses, so they can be offered in an online format as well as in-person. Adding a Level III class that does not require prerequisites is a good idea for increasing enrollment. Parker added that online modality courses are also needed in local and national perspectives. Parker also recommended that departments use the waitlist option to see how many students might have enrolled over the cap for a course.

### **Unfinished Business**

Weideman noted that there are several vacancies on the WMU Essential Studies Course Review and Approval Committee. Bush will contact the relevant departments and the Lee Honors College regarding the WMU Essential Studies Program status of their unoffered courses.

### **New Business**

Chair Tripp discussed the [2023-24 charge seven](#), which included the specific objective "...to find opportunities for additional courses, including courses for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and Planetary Sustainability student learning outcomes." Ott reported that a number of new courses in these categories are being added to the program. Further analysis will be required to provide detailed numbers of courses in these categories.

Chair Tripp reported that nominations are needed for the fourth-year review. Bush affirmed there is a list and is hoping to ask those faculty members to chair a committee. Ott encouraged everyone to look at the list and add more people. [Please see the list at this link:](#)

### **Announcements**

None.

### **Adjournment**

Chair Tripp adjourned the meeting at 1:55 p.m. The WMU Essential Studies Executive Advisory Committee will meet next on 9 April 2024 via Webex.

### **Approval**

Submitted by Lindsay Jeffers, Secretary

Minutes approved on 9 April 2024.