

Undergraduate Studies Council

Minutes of 8 April 2025

Call to Order

A meeting of the Western Michigan University Faculty Senate Undergraduate Studies Council was called to order at 3:01 p.m. on 8 April 2025 via Webex video conferencing by Diane Riggs, chair.

Members in Attendance: Carrie Cumming, Lisa DeChano-Cook, Dave Karowe, Irma Lopez, Dylan McGlothlin, Diane Riggs, Priyanka Sharma, Scott Slawinski, Katherine Suender, Yuanling Sun, Bret Wagner

Members Absent: Jessica Birnbaum, Lucy Clark

Advisory Member in Attendance: Colleen Stano

Advisory Member Absent: Tomika Griffin-Brown

Ex Officio: David Rudge

Quorum

A quorum was present with 12 members in attendance, of the 10 needed to establish a quorum.

Agenda

Amendments were made to the agenda to add a discussion on MOA-25/03: Experiential Learning Definition, as requested by the Faculty Senate, and a report from Chair Riggs on the Service-Learning Subcommittee.

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

Minutes

[MOTION] It was moved by Slawinski, seconded by Rudge, to approve the 11 March 2025 minutes as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

Reports of Officers

Chair Riggs reported that Memorandum of Action (MOA) 25/03 will be discussed, and elections for the 2025–26 Undergraduate Studies Council chair, vice chair, and secretary will be held at this meeting.

Ex Officio Rudge did not provide a report.

Reports of University Representatives

Stano reported that the Point-in-Time Retention report looks positive. Advising offices are identifying students who are not yet registered for a future term and reaching out to ensure they have what they need to register. This includes helping students remove holds, connect with financial aid if needed, or open additional sections of courses that are currently full. The numbers are close to this time last year, and advising still has four more months to further increase the numbers.

Unfinished Business

Chair Riggs noted that MOA-25/03 was created to define experiential learning in the undergraduate catalog and reflect WMU's current and past practices. The goal was to realign the glossary of terms. Initially, MOA-25/03 was meant to *augment* MOA 14/05 and MOA 18/09, but the Faculty Senate Executive Board recommended changing the wording to *supersede*, so MOA-25/03 would replace the earlier MOAs. MOA-25/03 was passed at the 13 March Faculty Senate meeting. Before the vote, Brian Gogan, English, proposed 3 changes:

1. Align terminology with the Carnegie Foundation framework.
2. Revise the service-learning definition to include a respectful, reciprocal, and "asset-based" approach.
3. Simplify the three Experience-Driven Learning (EDL) components to statements and not descriptions.

These were addressed during the Faculty Senate meeting, and MOA-25/03 was passed, although not unanimously. Afterward, Gogan continued to raise concerns in meetings and numerous emails to the Faculty Senate and Chair Riggs. At the 3 April Faculty Senate meeting, one Executive Board member

suggested returning MOA-25/03 to the USC for revision. After further communication with the Executive Board and Gogan, two points were identified for USC discussion:

1. Keep the definitions and categories from MOA-14/05 and MOA-18/09 for service learning, co-curricular learning, and volunteerism, rather than supersede them.
2. Add co-curricular learning as one of the options listed in the description of experiential learning in MOA-25/03.

The following were discussed:

1. The terms used in MOA-14/05 and MOA-18/09 are still necessary and should not be superseded. However, USC cannot modify a previously approved MOA and keep it the same number. Any changes must be made by creating a new MOA that reflects additions to the original content of an earlier MOA, so the amended MOA-25/03 can reflect additions to the original content of those MOAs.
2. Experiential learning vs. EDL: Ex Officio Rudge noted that Marketing and Strategic Communications created a working group on EDL and has used the concept in campaigns for the past two years to help recruit undergraduates. This started before any faculty were involved and was tied to WMU's strategic plan. A USC subcommittee later joined, collaborated with the EDL group, and developed MOA-25/03. It was approved by USC and passed by the Faculty Senate in March. However, due to some objections, the Senate asked USC to amend the MOA at its April meeting. Ex Officio Rudge also pointed out that the Marketing and Strategic Communications team views EDL as a specific type of experiential learning and wants to promote it as unique to WMU. The Marketing and Strategic Communications team acknowledged that experiential learning is a broader category.
3. Prospective students and parents may not see a clear difference between "experience-driven learning" and "experiential learning," especially since the listed activities (e.g., internships, undergraduate research, project-based learning) are widely offered. If the Marketing and Strategic Communications team has already branded WMU's approach as EDL, the term can be used—but only if it reflects something truly distinctive.
4. Based on meetings with the Marketing and Strategic Communications team, WMUx, and faculty involved in experiential learning, it was noted that not everything involving experience qualifies as EDL. In fact, even some service-learning activities do not count as EDL. Emphasizing experiences at WMU has been used for recruitment purposes, but EDL is not intended to be a requirement tool.
5. The reason a working definition of experiential learning exists is partly due to the grant process. However, collecting information about experiential learning at WMU for the Higher Learning Commission report is a prominent part of WMU's strategic plan. At present, only certain activities identified as unique to WMU are being tracked, rather than all experiential learning activities.
6. Chair Riggs shared Douglas Lepisto's concerns about MOA-25/03—namely, overgeneralization, widespread subjectivity, impractical assessment, and institutional layering—as well as his recommendation to avoid pursuing a universal definition.
7. USC discussed the value of adopting a broad and inclusive definition of experiential learning that encompasses classroom-based experiential learning. The next phase will involve defining subcategories and establishing clearer criteria for data collection.
8. Karowe suggested an editorial change to MOA-25/03—to add the word "learning" at the end of the paragraph beginning with "Experience-Driven Learning (EDL)" on page 3—and raised a concern about listing global learning and service learning under both EDL and experiential learning.

[MOTION] It was moved by Slawinski, seconded by Rudge, to amend MOA-25/03: Revise the Undergraduate Catalog – Academic Policies – Glossary of Terms: Experiential Learning Definition, by changing the word 'supersedes' to 'augments' and adding 'co-curricular' to the list of options under Experiential Learning. The motion carried unanimously.

Suender joined the meeting at 3:20 p.m.

New Business

DeChano-Cook presented the MOA-25/08: Establish Minimum Credits in an Undergraduate Major for a Minor Not to be Required Policy. Currently, students must complete majors with 30 credits and 40 credit

hours within WMU Essential Studies, leaving 52 credit hours toward graduation—typically enough to complete a minor, which usually requires 15 credit hours. However, majors without a minor requirement typically range from 54 to 116 credit hours. For majors requiring 70 or more credit hours, students may not have enough remaining credits to complete a minor. This policy establishes a minimum number of credit hours for a major at which a minor is no longer required for graduation. Discussions addressed how the new policy may affect the value of students exploring course options, the limitation that financial aid will only cover minor courses required for the degree, and the potential for improving the policy in the coming year. A few editorial suggestions were made to the MOA, including changing ‘Thus, leaving’ to ‘these leaves,’ adding an ‘e’ to ‘therefor’ in the third paragraph, and revising the Proposed Policy to: ‘A minor is not required for undergraduate majors consisting of 70 credit hours or more. Any undergraduate major under 70 credit hours that does not currently require a minor will have to either begin requiring a minor or add courses to reach 70 credit hours.’

[MOTION] It was moved by Rudge, seconded by DeChano-Cook, to approve MOA-25/08: Establish Minimum Credits in an Undergraduate Major for a Minor Not to be Required Policy, as amended. With one opposed, the motion passed.

Chair Riggs reported that the Service-Learning Course Approval Committee, a USC subcommittee, stopped meeting during COVID. Director Shawn Tenney has been further developing the Service-Learning program, making this a good time to restart the subcommittee. The first step is to appoint a faculty liaison and identify faculty members to serve. Chair Riggs will continue working with Tenney and will include recommendations in the year-end report.

Ex Officio Rudge conducted the elections for the Undergraduate Studies Council's chair, vice chair, and secretary positions for the 2025–26 academic year. Wagner and McGlothlin each self-nominated for the roles of chair and secretary, respectively.

[MOTION] It was moved by Slawinski, seconded by Riggs, to elect Wagner for chair and McGlothlin as secretary. The motion passed.

An election for the vice chair position will be held in the fall of 2025.

Chair Riggs conducted a vote on the meeting format for the Undergraduate Studies Council for the 2025–26 academic year. The council unanimously approved holding meetings online via Webex.

Chair Riggs will draft the year-end report and send it to USC members for suggestions and input.

Stano left the meeting at 4:23 p.m.

Announcement

None.

Adjournment

[MOTION] It was moved by Slawinski, seconded by DeChano-Cook, to adjourn the meeting at 4:41 p.m. The motion carried unanimously. The Undergraduate Studies Council's next meeting will be on 13 May 2025 at 3 p.m. via Webex.

Approval

Submitted by Yuanliang Sun, Secretary

Minutes approved on 9 September 2025.