
WMU Essential Studies Executive Advisory Committee

Minutes of 3 March 2026

Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Western Michigan University Faculty Senate WMU Essential Studies Executive Advisory Committee was called to order at 1:02 p.m. on 3 March 2026, via Webex video conferencing by Elissa Allen, chair.

Members in Attendance: Elissa Allen, Beth Ernst, Dana Hammond, Elizabeth Isidro, Jessica Parker, Brian Tripp

Member Absent: Luchara Wallace, Lindsay Jeffers

Advisory Members Present: Lisa DeChano-Cook, Carrie Cumming

Advisory Members Absent: Jonathan Bush

Ex Officio: Janet Hahn

Guest: Anthony Helms, Lee Honors College; Bonnie Pfungst, Marketing Specialist, Merze Tate College

Quorum

A quorum was present with seven members in attendance of the six required for a quorum.

Agenda

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

Minutes

[MOTION] It was moved by Ernst, seconded by Tripp, to approve the 2 February 2026 minutes as provided. The motion carried unanimously.

Reports of Officers

Chair Allen provided brief updates on ongoing committee priorities, including continued work related to transfer course processes and Student Learning Outcome (SLO) rubric review. She noted the importance of maintaining momentum on both items, given their impact on curriculum consistency and program transparency

Ex Officio Hahn did not present a report.

Reports of University Representatives

Due to his absence, WMU Essential Studies Faculty Director Bush did not provide a report.

WMU Curriculum Manager DeChano-Cook did not provide a report.

Unfinished Business

The committee identified several priority areas of the SLO outcome rubrics requiring early revision to improve clarity and usability.

- Science with Lab – needs clearer differentiation from Science & Technology.
- Societies & Cultures – only area without a required SLO.
- Rubrics lacking clear definitions or performance distinctions.

Science with Lab rubrics require lab-specific expectations such as hands-on work, equipment use, and/or analysis. Online or alternative labs should be explicitly supported. No retroactive resubmissions will be required from previously approved WMU Essential Studies courses, which should help limit faculty

burden. It was noted that broader rubric issues involve missing definitions and vague proficiency descriptions. Cross-disciplinary subcommittees will draft revisions.

- Science with Lab will be co-led by DeChano-Cook and Tripp
- Societies and Cultures will be led by Chair Allen, who will recruit faculty that teach in the category for assistance.
- Drafts are targeted for the April committee meeting.

Chair Allen introduced a discussion of approval of recent transfer courses previously reviewed by a subcommittee but not formally brought forward for approval. DeChano-Cook explained that five courses had been evaluated and recommended for approval, noting alignment with WMU Essential Studies criteria. Chair Allen proposed approving the courses based on prior review, while raising concerns about this approach. Helms and Ernst expressed support for moving the courses forward to support timely student credit evaluation.

[MOTION] It was moved by Ernst, seconded by Tripp, to approve the transfer courses as presented and listed below for incorporation into WMU Essential Studies. The motion carried unanimously.

- Rochester Community and Technology College
 - ESCI1004 – Earthquakes and Volcanoes
 - WMU Essential Studies designation of Science and Technology
- Macomb Community College
 - ESCI1210 – Earth Sciences
 - WMU Essential Studies designation of Scientific Literacy with Lab
- Eckerd College
 - MA131M – Calculus
 - WMU Essential Studies designation of Quantitative Literacy
- University of Utah
 - KINES2600 – Sport-American Society
 - WMU Essential Studies designation of Societies and Cultures
- Southwestern Michigan College
 - HUMA210 – Intro to Non-Western Civilizations
 - WMU Essential Studies designation of Societies and Cultures

New Business

Ernts and Pflingst present a new WMU Essential Studies faculty-facing website that they developed. The site is intended to serve as a centralized communication and resource hub for faculty teaching WMU Essential Studies courses. Key features include access to SLOs, rubrics, guidance documents, and other instructional resources. Discussion included suggestions for ongoing updates, usability, and strategies for promoting faculty engagement with the resource. Committee members were asked to submit feedback before the April meeting.

Announcements

Chair Allen indicated she will circulate the draft Year-end Report before the next meeting for review.

Adjournment

[MOTION] It was moved by Tripp, seconded by Isidro, to adjourn the meeting at 2:26 p.m. The motion carried. The next WMU Essential Studies Executive Advisory Committee meeting will be held on 14 April 2026 via Webex.

Approval

Submitted by Elissa Allen, Chair

Minutes approved on 14 April 2026.