

FACULTY SENATE MEETING

Minutes of 30 April 2026

Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Western Michigan University Faculty Senate was called to order at 5:01 p.m. on 2 April 2026, in the Student Center, ballroom A, by C. Dennis Simpson, Faculty Senate Vice President.

Roll Call: There were 54 members and substitutes present, and six guests.

Members Present: Bryan Abendschein, Communications; Diane Anderson, Presidential Appointee, Patrick Bennett, Representative-at-Large; Jacob Berglin, Music; Stephanie Burns, Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology; Christopher Cho (substitute for Peter Gustafson), Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering; William Cimbalik, Physician Assistant; Scott Cowley, Marketing; William Davis, Art; Anthony DeFulio, Psychology; Bradford Dennis, Chair, International Education Council; Matthew Dumican, Speech Language and Hearing Sciences; Kieran Fogarty, Executive Board Director; Matthew Fries, Music; Kimberly Ganzevoort, Occupational Therapy; LuMarie Guth, Chair, Campus Planning and Finance Council; Wanda Hadley, Representative-at-Large; Janet Hahn, Interdisciplinary Health Programs; Decker Hains, Parliamentarian; Patrick Hanlin, Sindecuse; Trey Harris, Music; Daniela Hernandez, Mathematics; Antonio Isea, Spanish; Brian Jansen, Aviation; John Jellies, Emeriti; Vyascheslav Karpov, Sociology; Richard Katrovas, English; Russ Kavalhuna, WMU President; Jean Kimmel, Economics; Geoffrey Lindenberg, Aviation; Hexu Liu, Civil and Construction Engineering; Robert Makin, Computer Science; Gary Marquardt (substitute for Britt Hartenberger), Intercultural and Anthropological Studies; James Martin, Philosophy; Mustafa Mirzeler, Representative-at-Large; Joshua Naranjo, Statistics; Troy Place, Industrial and Entrepreneurial Engineering; Amanda Remo, Accountancy; Diane Riggs, Religions and Cultures; Shrabanti Roy (substitute for Pnina Ari-Gur), Representative-at-Large; David Rudge, Biological Sciences; Daniela Schroeter, Public Affairs and Administration; Remzi Seker, Presidential Appointee; Utkarsh Shrivastava (substitute for Bidyut Hazarika), Business Information Systems; C. Dennis Simpson, Faculty Senate Vice President; Scott Slawinski, English; Wayne Stitt, Education Leadership Research and Technology; Marianne Swierenga, Libraries; Laura Teichert, Special Education and Literacy Studies; Kathryn Thomsen, Theatre;

Bret Wagner, Chair, Undergraduate Studies Council; Robert Wall Emerson, Blindness and Low Vision; Yuan-kang Wang, Political Science; Daren Webb, Physical Therapy; Lester Wright, Emeriti

Members Absent: Osama Abudayyeh, Representative-at-Large; Elissa Allen, Nursing; Eric Archer, Education, Leadership Research and Technology; Onur Arugaslan, Finance and Commercial Law; Todd Barkman, Biological Sciences; Clement Burns, Physics; Jessica Cataldo, Chair, Academic and Information Technology Council; Chris Cheatham, Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs; Jou-Chen Chen, Family and Consumer Sciences; Lisa DeChano-Cook, Environment, Geography, and Sustainability; Mioara Diaconu, Social Work; Mine Dogan Diker, Geological and Environmental Sciences; Lofton Durham, Chair, Research and Creative Activities Council; Marcia Fetters, Teaching, Learning and Educational Studies; Katharine Gross, Nursing; Dean Johnson, Electrical and Computer Engineering; Jeffrey Jones, Teaching Learning and Educational Studies; Mary Lagerwey, Emeriti; Doug Lepisto, Management; Thayma Lutz, Mathematics; Michael Miller, Human Performance and Health Education; Amy Naugle, Faculty Senate President; Alexandra Pekarovicova, Chemical and Paper Engineering; Sam Ramrattan, Engineering Design Manufacturing and Management Systems; Viviane Ruellot, World Languages and Literature; Thomas Scannell, Marketing; Larry Simon, History; Julia Stachofsky, Business Information Systems; Janet Van Der Kley, Presidential Appointee; Andre Venter, Chemistry; Patricia Villalobos Echeverria, Art; Andrew Wyman, Representative-at-Large; Marcellis Zondag, Chair, Graduate Studies Council

Guests: Jeff Breneman, Vice President, Government Relations; Christine Byrd-Jacobs, Dean, Graduate College; Carla Koretsky, Dean, Arts and Sciences; Evan Kutzler, History; Jeff Spoelstra, Director, Sustainability; Meghan Wilkinson, Family and Consumers Sciences

Faculty Senate Staff Present: Sue Brodasky, Faculty Senate Administrator; Melisa Cloud, Administrative Assistant II

Quorum

A quorum was reached with 54 Senators and substitutes in attendance, of the 48 needed to establish quorum.

Agenda

[**MOTION**] It was moved by Jellies, seconded by Katrovas, to accept the agenda as provided. The motion carried.

Minutes

[**MOTION**] It was moved by Slawinski, seconded by Riggs, to approve the 2 April 2026 minutes as provided. The motion carried.

Report of Officer

Faculty Senate Vice President C. Dennis Simpson

The administration has returned as approved these Memoranda of Action:

- MOA-25/11: Revise Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs Course Delivery Definitions
- MOA-25/12: Establish Cross-Listed Course Policy
- MOA-25/13: Revise Academic Appeals Review Process to Include Student Deadlines
- MOA-25/14: Revision of WMU Syllabus Requirements to Include AI Statement
- MOA-26/01 and MOA-26/03: Revise Faculty-driven Prior Learning Assessment Opportunities for Undergraduate and Graduate Programs
- MOA-26/04: Revise Undergraduate Catalog Graduation Requirements

The 2026-27 meeting schedules for the Senate and its councils and committees will be determined over the summer and distributed to committee members in late August, as well as posted to the Faculty Senate website.

New Senate staff member Melisa Cloud was introduced. Acknowledgment was expressed to Faculty Senate Immediate Past President Amy Naugle; the 2024-26 Executive Board members; council and committee leadership; council and committee members; and senate staff.

Reports of Ex Officios

WMU President Russ Kavalhuna

President Kavalhuna opened his report by congratulating incoming Faculty Senate leadership, including President-elect Janet Hahn and Vice President-elect David Rudge. He expressed enthusiasm for continued collaboration and emphasized the importance of maintaining open communication, constructive feedback, and shared governance as foundational practices. Appreciation was also extended to Vice President Simpson for his service and for ongoing institutional contributions. In the absence of Amy Naugle, President Kavalhuna formally recognized her leadership. He highlighted her diligence, integrity, and substantial contributions,

including coordination of the institutional listening tour. Her work was characterized as instrumental in shaping administrative insight and future planning.

The administration continues its engagement with Huron Consulting Group to evaluate institutional structures, budget models, and operational efficiencies. Preliminary findings indicate systemic challenges, including siloed operations and incentive structures that may unintentionally foster internal competition. A full report is anticipated in the coming weeks.

President Kavalhuna acknowledged ongoing enrollment pressures while emphasizing the University's commitment to access and student success. He shared illustrative student success narratives demonstrating the transformative impact of a WMU education. Additionally, new and expanded transfer partnerships with regional institutions, including Kalamazoo Valley Community College, were announced to strengthen enrollment pipelines and improve accessibility. The President addressed broader challenges facing higher education, including increasing public skepticism regarding its value. He emphasized the need for a proactive, collective response that articulates the societal and economic importance of higher education. Faculty engagement was identified as central to this effort. President Kavalhuna reaffirmed administrative commitment to investing in faculty-driven initiatives that enhance recruitment and retention. Examples included outreach programs targeting high school students and innovative instructional models. He underscored that, despite fiscal challenges, strategic investment in faculty-led efforts remains a priority.

The President concluded by reiterating his commitment to collaboration, transparency, and shared governance. He encouraged continued faculty engagement and welcomed ongoing dialogue.

Vice Provost and Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs Sara Nelson

Vice Provost Nelson opened her [report](#) by emphasizing the institutional importance of sustainability, noting that environmental responsibility is a critical priority for students. She indicated that students increasingly expect universities to engage in solution-driven, sustainability-focused initiatives across academic affairs. The University continues to expand student-led sustainability initiatives supported through sustainability fees and targeted funding. Key programs include the Bicycle Resource Hub, Living Wood Shop, Sustainable Fashion

Swaps, and the Bronco Challenge for Sustainable Impact. Additional initiatives, such as the Student Sustainability Grant and Eco Essentials program, provide experiential learning opportunities that translate sustainability theory into applied practice. Sustainability is increasingly embedded within academic programming. Recent Experience-Driven Learning (EDL) Venture Grants have supported sustainability-focused projects, including a forthcoming practicum in partnership with the City of Kalamazoo. Future initiatives under consideration include campus composting systems and the development of a main campus garden, signaling long-term institutional commitment. Vice Provost Nelson reported that graduate students are leading the University's third Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, and Rating System (STARS) report. This framework evaluates institutional sustainability performance and aligns efforts with strategic planning priorities in collaboration with the President's Office. The Climate Change Working Group continues to advance initiatives, including development of the next Climate Action Plan and tracking greenhouse gas emissions.

An enrollment report acknowledged current challenges, including a slower-than-expected incoming class and a significant decline in international applications. These trends reflect broader systemic pressures within higher education. Efforts to address these challenges include expanded digital marketing, community engagement, and strengthened recruitment partnerships. Vice Provost Nelson emphasized the critical role of faculty in student recruitment and retention, encouraging participation in yield events and continued engagement with prospective students. Faculty presence was identified as a decisive factor in student enrollment decisions.

The Vice Provost concluded by inviting faculty participation in upcoming commencement ceremonies, underscoring their importance in recognizing student achievement and fostering institutional community.

University Strategic Plan – Sustainability

Faculty Senate Vice President C. Dennis Simpson

The University Strategic Plan Sustainability goal states *“We integrate sustainability into all aspects of university functions and invest in this commitment at the highest level of institutional decision-making.”*

The objective of this goal that I will be highlighting as it is relevant to the charges of the Faculty Senate and its Councils is *“Build a campus-wide culture of prioritizing sustainability that is consistently communicated by University leadership.”*

The Faculty Senate Campus Planning and Finance Council, as part of its role statement, reviews major plans for the University’s facilities, transportation and infrastructure, and how they impact safety, security, aesthetics, finance, and the surrounding environment. To that effort the CPFC recently convened a standing committee of Sustainability. The committee is charged with developing sustainability metrics related to the objectives in the University Strategic Plan and Master Plan and providing a framework that campus agencies may use as benchmarks in making sustainable planning decisions.

Additionally, in 2024 the Faculty Senate adopted a Climate Change Resolution which states *“Universities have a special moral imperative to ensure a sustainable future for their students and to serve as examples to their communities in addressing climate change, which is increasingly recognized as the greatest threat to human civilization and life on earth.”*

These shared commitments underscore the central role the Faculty Senate and its councils play in advancing the academic goals of the University’s strategic plan.

Action Items

Bret Wagner, chair of the Undergraduate Studies Council opened MOA-25/10: *Establish Minimum Undergraduate Credits in a Major or Minor Earned at WMU* that was introduced at the last meeting. It returns today with highlighted amendments noted. The Undergraduate Studies Council and the International Education Council recommend the creation of a policy that establishes a minimum number of undergraduate credit hours a student must earn at WMU toward a major(s) and/or minor(s). Creation of this policy allows students to count some transfer and study abroad credits toward their major and/or minor, but could not complete their major and/or minor without some courses at WMU. The language that has been added since last month clarifies that transfer, study-abroad and Prior Learning Assessment credits do not count toward the required minimum credit hours of none for a major and six for a minor that must be taken at WMU. In addition, there is a notation that departments may choose a higher number of credit hours than those established in the MOA.

[MOTION] It was moved by Fogarty, seconded by Hadley, to approve MOA-25/10 as amended. The motion carried.

Bret Wagner and Michael Harnar, vice chair of the Graduate Studies Council introduced MOA-26/06: *Revision of Undergraduate Catalog and Addition to Graduate Catalog Extension of Drop/Withdrawal Period*. The Undergraduate Studies Council and the Graduate Studies Council recommend extending the current timeframe within a given semester or session during which a student may initiate a withdrawal from one or more courses without academic penalty. The extension moves withdrawal through the Monday of the twelfth week in fall and spring and the sixth week in summer I and II. While the withdrawal policy has been in place since 2011 it does not currently appear in the Graduate Catalog. MOA-26/06 will add the existing policy with the newly defined extensions but also specifically define that graduate assistantship tuition benefits only apply to completed courses.

Comments included:

- Opposition was expressed to extending academic deadlines, emphasizing the importance of fostering student responsibility and timely decision-making. The senator noted that prolonged enrollment in unproductive courses may create opportunity costs, including wasted time, diminished focus, and potential negative impacts on mental well-being. It was also raised that extended deadlines may encourage procrastination and hinder students' ability to plan effectively for future terms, potentially causing them to miss key enrollment opportunities. While acknowledging financial considerations, they maintained that developing accountability is a critical educational objective. The senator concluded by stating an intention to vote against the MOA.

[MOTION] It was moved by Guth, seconded by Fogarty, to approve MOA-26/06 as presented. With 10 opposed, the motion carried.

Bret Wagner, chair of the Undergraduate Studies Council introduced MOA-26/07: *Revision of Undergraduate GPA Revision Policy*. The Undergraduate Studies Council recommends revision of the Ungraduated GPA Revision Policy to a) increase the allowable number of GPA revisions from three to five courses; b) to treat multiple attempts of the same course as a single revision; and c) to replace the current time limitation of the first three semesters with a threshold of the

first 55 attempted credit hours.

[MOTION] It was moved by DeFulio, seconded by Slawinski, to approve MOA-26/07 as presented. With four opposed and four abstentions, the motion carried.

Chair Wagner introduced MOA-26/08: *Revision of Credit/No Credit Policy to Allow Major/Minor Credit*. The Undergraduate Studies Council recommends revising the Undergraduate Catalog, Academic Regulations, Credit/No Credit policy and the Study Abroad Course Pre-Approval Form to permit credits earned through an international institution as part of a pre-approved program to be applied toward major and minor requirements.

[MOTION] It was moved by Fogarty, seconded by Rudge, to approve MOA-26/08 as presented. With two opposed and six abstentions, the motion carried.

Chair Wagner introduced MOA-26/09: *Revision of Service-Learning Course Approval Procedures*. The Undergraduate Studies Council recommends revision of the formal procedures for approving service-learning courses, including revision of the Course Designation Request Form. The purpose of this revision is to provide greater clarity regarding the role of the Office of Service Learning within the updated framework that formally categorizes service-learning within Experiential Learning, alongside Experience-Driven Learning and Study Abroad programs.

[MOTION] It was moved by Jellies, seconded by Slawinski, to approve MOA-26/09 as presented. With two abstentions, the motion carried.

Faculty Senate Council Reports

LuMarie Guth, chair of the Campus Planning and Finance Council, to provide details of the [council's academic year activities](#), which included the council's attention to campus planning; reflection on existing practices; input on the Kalamazoo Event Center construction; review of the five-year capital outlay plan, construction and renovation projects, and the office space task force; implementation of the sustainability committee; WMU budget review; and the council's future planning.

Steven Bertman, chair of the Campus Planning and Finance Council standing Sustainability Committee, provided a presentation about how the Faculty Senate can help [sustainability and climate action](#) at WMU. Reminder of the climate crisis as a threat multiplier; sustainability as one of the five core values in the WMU strategic plan; the Faculty Senate climate change resolution

of 2024; decisions of today having long-term consequences; reported on WMU's combustion and electricity targets; percentages of emissions at WMU; measuring peer institutions; important initiatives already in place at WMU; the recently implemented sustainability committee; roadmap to carbon neutrality; how the Faculty Senate can support sustainability.

University Reports

Jeff Breneman, Vice President for Government Relations provided the [annual legislative update](#), which included the history of State funding; state funding stagnation, tuition restraint, University budget cuts; advocacy results; projects that benefit students, faculty, campus operations, and community; current priorities; current standing of the Governor, State, and House budget recommendations; next steps; and urgent need for grassroots advocacy.

Faculty Senate Leadership Transition Reports

Faculty Senate President-elect Janet Hahn expressed appreciation to the re-elected Senators:

- Onur Arugaslan, Finance and Commercial Law
- Todd Barkman, Biological Sciences
- Stephanie Burns, Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology
- Anthony DeFulio, Psychology
- Wanda Hadley, Representative-at-Large
- Decker Hains, Representative-at-Large
- James Martin, Philosophy
- Mustafa Mirzeler, Representative-at-Large
- Marianne Swierenga, Libraries
- Andre Venter, Chemistry
- Patricia Villalobos, Art

Also, welcomed newly elected Senators:

- Ikhlas Abdel-Qader, Electrical and Computer Engineering
- Lofton Durham, Theatre and Dance
- Evan Kutzler, History
- Nathan Lisak, Representative-at-Large
- Jes Lopez, Representative-at-Large

- Benjamin Ofori-Amoah, Environment, Geography and Sustainability
- Rhea Olivacce, Music
- Jorge Rodriguez, Engineering Design and Manufacturing
- Nicholas Rowe, Aviation
- Priyanka Sharma, Chemical and Paper Engineering
- Sunday Speer, Accountancy
- Jiahe Song, Business Information Systems
- Bret Wagner, Marketing
- Carol Weideman, Human Performance and Health Education
- Bob White, Industrial and Entrepreneurial Engineering and Engineering Management
- Meghan Wilkinson, Family and Consumer Sciences

In keeping with Senate practice, the following people have been nominated to the Executive Board for two-year terms each, as returning Directors:

- Decker Hains, Business
- Wanda Hadley, Education and Human Development
- Laura Teichert, Education and Human Development

And the following new Directors have been nominated:

- Lofton Durham, Fine Arts
- Matthew Dumican, Health and Human Services
- Daniela Schroeter, Arts and Sciences
- David Szabla, Education and Human Development
- Andre Venter, Arts and Sciences

In a vote of affirmation, the slate of nominees for the Executive Board were approved.

President-elect Hahn acknowledged and thanked immediate past president Amy Naugle as she concludes her 2024-26 term. Dr. Naugle provided tremendous service as president of the Faculty Senate and under her leadership we saw enhanced communication of Memoranda of Action procedures; development and implementation of an annual Senator orientation; distribution of an Ad Hoc artificial intelligence committee report; creation of the Undergraduate Studies Council Experiential Learning committee and the Campus Planning and Finance Sustainability committee; the first shared governance partner retreat; and the showcasing of

WMU's strategic plan initiatives at each of the Senate monthly meetings. Amy has worked tirelessly on these initiatives and was a model of leadership to the Senate and University. On behalf of the Faculty Senate Dr. Naugle is awarded the gavel plaque which will be provided to her at a later date.

Professional and Academic Concerns

Questions included:

- There was an inquiry whether a hiring freeze is preventing departments from posting or filling long-awaited administrative positions and asked if there are pathways for advancing these hires.
 - President Kavalhuna clarified that there is no formal hiring freeze in place. However, due to recent enrollment declines, impacting approximately 70% of general fund revenue, the University implemented a more structured hiring review process approximately six to seven months ago. Positions meeting certain criteria, such as higher salary levels, extended vacancy duration, or newly created roles, require additional review. In these cases, the responsible vice president must submit a justification outlining the necessity and timing of the hire. This request is reviewed by the President's Cabinet to ensure transparency and alignment across divisions. Most hiring decisions are reached collaboratively; however, in cases of disagreement, the final determination rests with the President. Faculty and staff are encouraged to consult with their respective vice presidents or contact the President directly for further clarification regarding specific positions.

Adjournment

Vice President C. Dennis Simpson adjourned the meeting at 6:42 p.m.

Approval

Submitted by Sue Brodasky, Faculty Senate
Administrator.

Minutes approved on _____ 2025.