FACULTY SENATE MEETING

Minutes of 1 October 2026

Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Western Michigan University Faculty Senate was called to order at 5:04 p.m. on 2 April 2026, in the Sangren Hall, room 1910, by Janet Hahn, Faculty Senate President.

Roll Call: There were 66 members and substitutes present, and four guests.

Members Present: Bryan Abendschein, Communications; Osama Abudayyeh, Representative-at-Large; Elissa Allen, Nursing; Diane Anderson, Presidential Appointee, Pnina Ari-Gur, Representative-at-Large; Onur Arugaslan, Finance and Commercial Law; Todd Barkman, Biological Sciences; Patrick Bennett, Representative-at-Large; Jacob Berglin, Music; Clement Burns, Physics; Stephanie Burns, Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology; Christopher Cheatham, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs; William Cimbalik, Physician Assistant; Aisha Coulson-Walters, (substitute for Mioara Diaconu), Social Work; Steven Covell (substitute for Diane Riggs), Religions and Cultures; Scott Cowley, Marketing; Anthony DeFulio, Psychology; Matthew Dumican, Speech Language and Hearing Sciences; Lofton Durham, Theatre and Dance; Marcia Fetters, Teaching, Learning and Educational Studies; Katharine Gross, Nursing; Wanda Hadley, Representative-at-Large; Janet Hahn, Faculty Senate President; Decker Hains, Representative-at-Large (Parliamentarian); Patrick Hanlin, Sindecuse; Trey Harris, Music; Britt Hartenberger, Intercultural and Anthropological Studies; Bidyut Hazarika, Business Information Systems; Daniela Hernandez, Mathematics; Antonio Isea, Spanish; Vyascheslav Karpov, Sociology; Russ Kavalhuna, WMU President; Jean Kimmel, Economics; Peter Krawutschke (substitute for Mary Lagerwey), Emeriti; Sandun Kuruppu, Electrical and Computer Engineering; Evan Kutzler, History; Geoffrey Lindenberg, Aviation; Doug Lepisto, Management; Ramona Lewis, Education, Leadership Research and Technology; Geoffrey Lindenberg, Aviation; Nathan Lisak, Representative-at-Large; Hexu Liu, Civil and Construction Engineering; Jes Lopez, Representative-at-Large; Thayma Lutz, Mathematics; Robert Makin, Computer Science; James Martin, Philosophy; John

Miller, (substitute for Andre Venter), Chemistry; Joshua Naranjo, Statistics; Amy Naugle, Immediate Past President; Benjamin Ofori-Amoah, Environment, Geography, and Sustainability; Rhea Olivacce, Music; Amanda Remo, Accountancy; Nicholas Rowe, Aviation; David Rudge, Biological Sciences; Daniela Schroeter, Executive Board; Remzi Seker, Presidential Appointee; Priyanka Sharma, Chemical and Paper Engineering; Wayne Stitt, Education Leadership Research and Technology; Michelle Suarez, Occupational Therapy; Marianne Swierenga, Libraries; David Szabla, Executive Board; Laura Teichert, Special Education and Literacy Studies; Janet Van Der Kley, Presidential Appointee; Robert Wall Emerson, Blindness and Low Vision; Yuan-kang Wang, Political Science; Carol Weideman, Human Performance and Health Education; Bob White, Industrial and Entrepreneurial Engineering; Meghan Wilkinson, Family and Consumer Sciences

Members Absent: Amy Bocko, Research and Creative Scholarship Council; Jessica Cataldo, Undergraduate Studies Council; Mine Dogan Diker, Geological and Environmental Sciences; Lori Gray, Interdisciplinary Health Programs; Peter Gustafson, Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering; Michael Harnar, Graduate Studies Council; John Jellies, Emeriti; Jeffrey Jones, Teaching Learning and Educational Studies; Richard Katrovas, English; Cara Masselink, Academic and Information Technology Council; Mustafa Mirzeler, Representative-at-Large; Anna Popkova, International Education Council; Jorge Rodriquez, Engineering Design Manufacturing and Management Systems; Viviane Ruellot, World Languages and Literature; Jiahe Song, Business Information Systems; Patricia Villalobos Echeverria, Art; Bret Wagner, Marketing; Daren Webb, Physical Therapy; Lester Wright, Emeriti

Guests: Gwen Bostic, Office of Information Technology; Christine Byrd-Jacobs, Dean, Graduate College; Carla Koretsky, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences; Raymond Thompson, Dean, College of Aviation Sciences

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

Quorum

A quorum was reached with 66 Senators and substitutes in attendance, of the 47 needed to establish quorum.

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Agenda

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

Minutes

[***MOTION***] It was moved by Hains, seconded by Schroeter, to approve the 30 April 2026 minutes as provided. The motion carried.

Report of Officer

Faculty Senate President Janet Hahn

President Hahn expressed appreciation to the Faculty Senate Executive Board, WMU Board of Trustees, WMU President Kavalhuna, Provost and Executive Vice President Cheatham, the Western Student Association, and the Graduate Student Association, for their continued support and work in shared governance.

President Hahn provided a guide to the Faculty Senate structure and Senators' responsibilities in shared governance.

She reported that the Executive Board approved MOA-26/10, *Revision of the Graduate Catalog Accelerated Graduate Degree Program*, to clarify the application of graduate coursework toward bachelor's degrees and degree-conferral requirements.

The Executive Board established the Ad Hoc Academic Innovation and Foresight Committee to provide faculty leadership in anticipating changes affecting WMU's academic future. Initial priorities include Experience-Driven Learning, artificial intelligence in undergraduate education, and reduced-credit bachelor's degree models.

President Hahn reported that 2026-27 council and committee charges include consultation on Administrative Redesign; academic assessment integrity related to changing technology and online education; the impact of nonresident tuition on graduate recruitment and assistantships; and potential revisions to the WMU grading scale.

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She concluded by encouraging participation in the annual voluntary faculty fee campaign, noting that contributions support Faculty Senate shared governance activities and could assist in moving the Senate toward greater financial self-sufficiency.

Questions included:

- When asked President Hahn responded that Faculty Senate councils and committees include representation from each college, the Office of the Provost, and other appropriate administrative areas. Representatives are responsible for communicating relevant issues back to their respective constituencies and bringing feedback forward as part of the shared governance process.
- President Hahn clarified that Memoranda of Action may be considered and approved during the summer when the Senate is not in session, although the Executive Board limits this practice. Summer action is generally reserved for matters in which there is a timing concern and the appropriate parties have been consulted and are supportive of moving the matter forward rather than waiting.

Reports of Ex Officios

WMU President Russ Kavalhuna

President Kavalhuna provided an update on the administrative redesign and academic priorities. He thanked Faculty Senate President Hahn and immediate past president Amy Naugle for their collaboration and noted the establishment of a new commencement tradition in which the Faculty Senate president serves as emcee. He described the practice as representative of collaboration and shared governance at Western Michigan University. President Kavalhuna recognized retiring senior leaders Jan Van Der Kley and Diane Anderson for their service to WMU and ongoing work prior to retirement. He also introduced Carlos Rodriguez, who began October 1 as WMU's new senior vice president and chief financial officer, highlighting his experience in government and higher education. President Kavalhuna announced Alex Gary as WMU's new athletic director, noting his commitment to student-athlete academic and athletic success and his distinction as the first African American to lead the department. He also recognized Christopher Cheatham's appointment as executive vice president and provost, a new executive designation at WMU.

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President Kavalhuna discussed the administrative redesign initiative, which is a response to concerns about inefficient processes, financial challenges, and the need to better align resources with WMU's mission while avoiding layoffs. Five areas are being reviewed: financial and administrative operations, space utilization, strategic sourcing and non-personnel expenditures, information technology organizational design, and marketing and communications. Recent town halls provided opportunities for campus feedback. He outlined three priorities guiding WMU's academic direction: offering distinctive academic programs that provide clear value and differentiate WMU from other institutions; providing an unparalleled student experience with the support necessary for students to succeed; and strengthening WMU's R1 research identity by connecting undergraduate education with research opportunities and preparing students to apply their knowledge and skills to future challenges.

President Kavalhuna stated that the University will collaboratively review academic programs and coursework to ensure continued value to students. Provost and Executive Vice President Cheatham is establishing a steering committee with representation from the Faculty Senate, WMU-AAUP, and academic colleges. Kavalhuna emphasized collaboration as essential to both academic and administrative changes, citing the recent WMU-AAUP negotiations as an example of successfully working through differing perspectives.

Questions included:

- It was asked how graduate students and graduate education fit within WMU's R1 research priorities, particularly given the emphasis on undergraduate research?
    - President Kavalhuna agreed that a robust graduate program is essential to achieving and sustaining R1 status. He explained that graduate education remains fundamental to the University's research mission, while expanding undergraduate participation in research can further distinguish WMU.

Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs Christopher Cheatham

Academic Affairs updates were provided on enrollment, strategic priorities, academic initiatives, and student success. Fall enrollment decreased 3.7% in headcount and 2.8% in student credit hours, although credit hours exceeded the University's budget target. New transfer enrollment increased 6.2% and new beginning graduate enrollment increased 22.8%, while international enrollment declined significantly. The four-year graduation rate increased 6.5 percentage points

to its highest recorded level. The University will examine factors contributing to the improvement. Cheatham reported positive early indicators for fall 2027 recruitment, with undergraduate applications increasing significantly following recruitment efforts and increased University visibility. Undergraduate applications will remain free through 1 December 2026.

A faculty-centered steering committee is being established to develop a future-focused review of undergraduate academic programs. Cheatham clarified that this initiative is separate from the existing five-year academic program review. The University will use lessons from the undergraduate process to develop an appropriate review process for graduate programs.

Cheatham highlighted Experience-Driven Learning in the School of Theatre and Dance, expansion of the Bronco Bound community college transfer program to Grand Rapids Community College, and graduate student research with the City of Kalamazoo supporting recycling and zero-waste initiatives.

Questions included:

- How are transfer students included in the six-year graduation rate?
    - Cheatham responded that the measure tracks first-time, full-time freshmen and does not include transfer students. WMU separately tracks transfer student time to degree.
- How will the new academic review differ from previous program reviews, and how will graduate programs be addressed?
    - Cheatham clarified that the initiative is a separate, future-focused review and does not replace WMU's regular five-year academic program review. It will begin with undergraduate programs, with a separate approach subsequently developed for graduate programs.

Faculty Senate Council Reports

The Academic and Information Technology Council (AITC) provided an overview of its 2026-27 charges. AITC will serve as a consultative body for the information technology component of Administrative Redesign, representing technology needs related to teaching, research, and student services. The council will address artificial intelligence policies and practices; instructional technologies and licensing; academic assessment integrity in collaboration with the

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Graduate Studies, Undergraduate Studies, and Professional Concerns councils; cybersecurity policies; and continuity of technology access for instructors, graduate students, teaching assistants, and others whose teaching or research responsibilities may continue between semesters.

Questions included:

- An example was provided regarding potential religious objections to the use of artificial intelligence in coursework and the need to distinguish among different forms of AI technology.
    - Members were encouraged to bring emerging faculty and student concerns to their AITC representatives, and student representation on the council was noted.
- A question was raised regarding technology access for graduate students who continue research during the summer but are not enrolled.
    - It was confirmed that graduate students and others with continuing teaching or research responsibilities will be considered as part of AITC's review of technology access between semesters.

University Reports

Gwen Bostic, senior specialist for accessibility compliance in the Office of Information Technology, provided an update on WMU's preparations for the April 2027 ADA Title II digital accessibility compliance deadline. She highlighted resources available through the Digital Accessibility website, including Faculty Champions, the ReadReady PDF remediation tool, *Siteimprove* website reports, and Ally accessibility scores in Elearning. Faculty were encouraged to review and remediate digital content, use available support resources, and ensure new digital products and technologies undergo accessibility and security review. Bostic emphasized that digital accessibility is a University-wide responsibility that supports an inclusive student experience.

Questions included:

- It was asked how accessibility requirements will apply to specialized software or products when vendors cannot meet all accessibility standards?
    - Bostic responded that specialized products may present accessibility challenges and that vendors continue to make improvements. When full accessibility is not

possible, WMU can consider alternative access options that provide students with an equivalent experience.

- How will accessibility requirements be addressed in disciplines such as mathematics, where equations, graphs, and specialized symbols may not work correctly with accessibility tools?
    - Bostic acknowledged that highly technical content remains challenging and that solutions continue to develop. Faculty should demonstrate good-faith efforts toward accessibility and provide alternative access when necessary.

Vice President for Information Technology and Chief Information Officer Andrew Holmes provided an update on the Information Technology Administrative Redesign, which will proceed through discovery, implementation, and optimization phases. Current listening sessions are identifying technology needs and challenges across University units, with implementation expected to begin in May 2027 and transition continuing through June 2028. Priorities include a unified point of contact for technology support, consistent service expectations while accommodating specialized needs, improved documentation and training, technology governance, and more consistent equipment replacement. Holmes emphasized addressing underlying processes before implementing new technologies and encouraged continued faculty participation and feedback.

Questions included:

- It was asked if technology support will remain available within individual colleges and units?
    - Holmes stated that centralized coordination does not necessarily mean relocating technology staff, and local expertise will remain important.
- Will standardized technology mean everyone receives the same equipment?
    - Holmes responded that equipment should meet individual teaching, research, and operational needs rather than follow a one-size-fits-all model.
- How will specialized technology needs be addressed?
    - Holmes stated that service-level agreements will document specialized requirements while University-wide standards provide a common level of service.
- How will faculty participate in technology decision-making?

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- Holmes stated that shared governance and advisory groups will provide input on priorities and resource decisions, and faculty are encouraged to provide feedback throughout the process.

Provost Office Senior Director of Business Operations Erica Martinez provided an overview of the new hybrid academic affairs budget model implemented July 1. The model combines historical base budgets with opportunities for performance-based incentives, replacing the Strategic Resource Management model. Tuition revenue is collected centrally, while colleges are no longer charged for space or a University participation assessment. College enrollment targets are based on a two-year average of student credit-hour production and tuition revenue and are applied to the University's enrollment forecast. If the overall tuition target is exceeded it will create opportunities to reward colleges that demonstrate growth or exceed their individual targets. The model also provides flexibility to recognize differences among colleges, including enrollment potential and circumstances outside their control. If an overall shortfall occurs, responsibility may be shared among colleges with consideration given to individual performance and circumstances.

Questions included:

- How will factors outside a college's control, such as federal policies affecting enrollment, be considered?
  - It was stated that the model provides flexibility to consider circumstances affecting individual colleges when addressing performance and any shortfall.
- Will the model reward improvements such as increased student retention?
  - Improved retention and enrollment performance can help colleges exceed their targets and position them to receive incentive funding.
- Can a college that performs well still be recognized if the overall tuition target is not met?
  - It was indicated that individual college performance can be considered when resources and any shared shortfall are distributed.
- How will the model encourage responsible use of resources now that colleges are no longer directly charged for space and certain expenses?
  - The importance of continued awareness and responsible use of University resources was acknowledged.
- How will shared research infrastructure needed to support R1 goals be funded?

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- It was noted that research infrastructure is supported through the Office of Research and Innovation's base budget and broader University funding decisions.

Professional and Academic Concerns

Questions included:

- It was noted that the Experience-Driven Learning (EDL) venture grants were recently announced. Faculty may receive a $500 honorarium, with up to two awards, for submitting examples of existing curricular EDL activities to help develop a University-wide inventory. Innovation grants are also available to support projects that expand EDL, with emphasis on broad student impact and sustainability beyond the grant period. Faculty were encouraged to apply.
- How will WMU respond to recent federal guidance affecting international programs and students?
  - Provost and Executive Vice President Cheatham reported that Haenicke Institute for Global Education leadership has been working with deans, particularly those most affected, to develop a response consistent with federal guidance while minimizing negative impacts.
- How will WMU address academic integrity and AI use in asynchronous online courses while also considering enrollment pressures?
  - President Hahn emphasized the importance of authentic assessment and referred faculty to the Office of Faculty Development for guidance. She noted that academic assessment and emerging technologies are charges assigned to Faculty Senate councils for examination.

Adjournment

President Janet Hahn adjourned the meeting at 7:18 p.m. The next Faculty Senate meeting will be held 5 November 2026 in ballroom A of the Student Center at 5 p.m. and streamed live on Mediasite.

Approval

Submitted by Sue Brodasky, Faculty Senate Administrator.

Minutes approved on _____ 2026.

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