Faculty Senate:

Plans and Strategies for the Coming Year

Richard A. Gershon, Ph.D.
President, WMU Faculty Senate
Shared Governance

- The principle of shared governance is the cornerstone for all that we do as a Faculty Senate. Shared governance is a partnership between the University and the Faculty.
- Tonight, you’ll get a big picture overview from a number of different speakers.
- One of my goals for this evening is to tell you about some of our goals for the coming year and why.
School of Choice

- President Montgomery has on several occasions put forward the idea that he wants to make WMU a School of Choice.
  - What does that mean in practical terms?
  - And secondly, how do we leverage the people and resources of the Faculty Senate to achieve that goal?
- This summer, I made it a point to try and meet with the Senior Leadership of the University as well as the Deans of the various Colleges to better understand their academic priorities and to use some of that information in helping to shape the Faculty Senate Council Charges for the coming year.
Some of the most important work of the Faculty Senate lies in its 7 councils as well as its many committees and taskforces, including:

- Academic and Information Technology Council (AITC)
- Campus Planning and Finance Council (CPFC)
- Extended University Programs Council (EUPC)
- Graduate Studies Council (GSC)
- International Education Council (IEC)
- Research Policies Council (RPC)
- Undergraduate Studies Council (USC)

Special committees include, but are not limited to:

- Professional Concerns Committee (PCC)
- WMU Essential Studies Executive Advisory Committee
- Committee on University Strategic Planning (CUSP)
- Centers and Institutes Committee

Tonight, I’d like to share with you 5 Faculty Senate initiatives that I think show tremendous promise.
So let’s begin with something you’re somewhat familiar with; specifically, WMU Essential studies.

In revising the original general education requirement, the Ad Hoc General Education Design Committee had to ask the question: What does it mean to be a well educated WMU student in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century?

Today’s WMU student needs to be more than just his/her major. The 21\textsuperscript{st} century WMU student should be equally conversant whether its understanding the challenges associated with climate change, or exploring intellectual property rights in the digital age, or understanding the political and social challenges associated with U.S. immigration policy.
Hence, we the WMU Faculty Senate and the University at large, have committed ourselves in the next two years to reinventing general education now to be called WMU Essential Studies.

We have now entered into the third phase of the WMU Essential Studies project where the focus is on implementation. We’re now building the operating systems to make that happen.

- 1) electronic submission forms
- 2) the instructions that go with it for those departments and educators
- 3) building the review teams that will review such proposals
- 4) working with the registrar’s office in terms of course listings, rollout and timeframe

Mervyn Elliott from Aviation was just recently named as the new Director of WMU Essential Studies. He is joined by Sarah Summy who serves as Chair for the WMU Essential Studies Executive Advisory Committee. In addition, we have Decker Hains who heads up the actual course review committee structure and process.
• It is my hope (our hope) that when faculty design and redesign their courses that they challenge themselves to really understand the larger significance of their efforts in keeping with the liberal arts and sciences tradition.

• WMU Essential Studies belongs to all of us. It is our curriculum.

• If we do this right, WMU Essential Studies will help to define us in becoming a school of choice.
Internationalizing the Curriculum

- International Education Council (IEC)
- Academic and Information Technology Council (AITC)

Very often when we think about internationalizing the curriculum, we frame the conversation in terms of study abroad. I’d like us to consider internationalizing the curriculum from an altogether different vantage point; specifically, the global classroom.

Let’s start with the idea that many of us have global partners at different universities in our respective professional areas.

One of IEC and AITC’s charges is to find ways to use technology to create joint video classroom presentations and classroom exercises between WMU and other universities around the world. Specifically, the goal is to make the process of joint video classrooms a simple and straightforward set-up proposition.
The University Campus Tour and Enrollment Management

- **Campus Planning and Finance Council**
  - As part of its regular recruiting efforts, the Office of Admissions under the direction of Enrollment Management, regularly conducts campus tours of the University for prospective students and their families. The WMU campus tour is one of the most important recruiting tools used by the University. In general, an estimated 20,000 visitors, including students, families and their guests visit the campus each year.
  - The University campus tour often figures prominently in a student’s decision to attend Western Michigan University. Starting in April 2016, a project team from across the University was formed to rethink the student/family experience when visiting the campus for the first time. They were asked to consider all aspects of the campus tour experience for students and their families. Their charge was to find the best ways to tell Western Michigan University’s story.
One of the important takeaways from that report is that faculty often make the difference in a student’s decision to attend Western Michigan University as well as helping them decide on a future major.

One of the charges for CPFC is to consider best practices in optimizing the University campus tour, including the role of faculty in the recruitment process.

Speaking of enrollment management, I am very excited about some of the new entering freshmen I saw walking the WMU campus the other day…
It’s a great day to be a Bronco

The College of Engineering and Applied Sciences
Class of 2022
GPA Revision Policy
(or my Dad wanted me to be an engineer)

- **Professional Concerns Committee**
  - **This initiative is about second chances.** Imagine you’re the student who thought he/she wanted to be an engineer; took one or two semesters worth of classes only to discover that it really wasn’t what you thought it would be. In the process, the student got absolutely hammered in terms of his/her grades.
  - The student now decides to change majors in another college. What if WMU was to give that student a chance to start over by discounting a maximum of 3 courses so that he/she doesn’t have to feel the full weight of an earlier decision and a less than stellar GPA.
  - There are a lot of ways to help advance student success. In our view, this is one proposed strategy that shows a lot of promise.
Interdisciplinary Education

- Undergraduate Studies Council
- Graduate Studies Council

The field of higher education is under enormous pressure to create value for its students in terms of its course offerings and on-campus student experiences, while at the same time needing to be cost effective and ensuring high academic standards.

As we look to the future, it is my belief that we are reaching a point in higher education where departments can no longer afford to go it alone. Rather, the value of reaching out within colleges and across the University at large becomes important in ensuring that various kinds of core knowledge areas and skill sets are made available to our students.
One of USC and GSC’s charges for the coming year, and by extension the Faculty Senate as a whole, is to look at the future of interdisciplinary education.

- Helping to Identify Leading Edge Programs and Ideas
- The Role of Advisory Groups
- Cluster Hires to Support to New Program Initiatives

From Environment and Sustainability Studies to Product Design and Innovation, some of the most innovative program ideas are those that can see across the University by being able to draw upon people, resources and expertise located in different academic disciplines. The long-term success of any academic program will ultimately depend on the proper blending of one’s core strengths with a view towards the future in terms of innovative curriculum design.
We have a unique and special obligation to prepare our students for the future world of work. This will do a lot to help advance the principle of school of choice.

We are Western Michigan University.

Thank you