

**WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
FACULTY SENATE
UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES COUNCIL
Minutes of 10 November 2020**

Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Western Michigan University Faculty Senate Undergraduate Studies Council was called to order at 3:09 pm on 10 November 2020, via Webex virtual video conferencing by Clifton Ealy, chair.

Roll Call

Members in Attendance: Jessica Birnbaum, Deanna Bush, Carrie Cumming, Michael Duffy, Clifton Ealy, Steven Eberth, Bruce Ferrin, Kate LaLonde, Eli Lantz (Western Student Association), Irma Lopez, Colin MacCreery, Dianna Sachs, Daniela Schroeter, Nicolas Witschi

Members Absent: Elijah Lewis (Western Student Association)

Academic Advising Liaison in Attendance: Betsy Drummer

Advisory Member in Attendance: Edwin Martini

Ex Officio in Attendance: Matthew Mingus

Quorum

A quorum was present.

Agenda

It was moved by Ferrin, seconded by LaLonde, to accept the agenda as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

Minutes

It was moved by Schroeter, seconded by LaLonde, to approve the minutes of 13 October 2020. With one abstention the motion carried.

Reports of Officers

Chair Ealy expressed appreciation to council members Ferrin and Martini for providing information about the Excellence in Undergraduate Advising program. It was requested that they report to the council about this program during spring 2021. Ealy reported that council member Bruce Ferrin had attended the November Faculty Senate meeting as his substitute and will be doing so again at the December meeting. Introductions were made of two new members to USC:

- Matthew Mingus, Executive Board Representative
- Elijah Lewis, Western Student Association

Ferrin reported that there was no significant information related to undergraduate curriculum discussed at the November Faculty Senate meeting.

Ex Officio Mingus noted that the council's charge related to civility is a priority for the Executive Board. More information regarding this charge will be provided at an upcoming meeting.

Witschi did not provide a report.

Reports of Council Subcommittees

Duffy provided the report on the Intellectual Skills Program Advisory Committee 19 October meeting. The subcommittee has yet to elect a chair.

A report of the Service Learning Course Approval Subcommittee was not provided.

The report of the Transfer of Credit Subcommittee was postponed to the next meeting.

Unfinished Business

Witschi reported on Charge #3: *Research policies and best practices, and recommend established guidelines, to determine if a newly created degree is a Bachelor of Arts or a Bachelor of Science degree*, that there are variations among universities as to how BA and BS are defined differently. The Association of American Colleges and Universities also does not make a clear distinction. One common element is that at many universities a BA may be

perceived to be more similar to a traditional “liberal arts” degree, and that it may require fewer credit hours taken within the major, thereby allowing for more elective credits and/or greater ability to complete minors or additional majors. In comparison, a BS degree may be more focused on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics fields. Some other bachelor degrees, such as BFA, BM, and BB among others, are more professionally focused. Another common factor that some institutions consider is which degree is perceived as more “marketable” for graduates from the program. Cumming noted that in the past at WMU, the choice of BA or BS has been typically determined by the department proposing a new major and then been accepted by the Registrar’s office. Mingus will seek clarification regarding this charge from the Executive Board. The topic was postponed to the next meeting.

New Business

It was moved by Ferrin, seconded by Schroeter, to postpone curriculum proposal CAS 20-80 to the next meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

Martini joined the meeting at 4 p.m.
Lopez joined the meeting at 4:02 p.m.

Discussion was held regarding charges and how to best allocate them across the academic year. Ferrin noted that in response to Charge #1, the council has the authority to review all aspects of undergraduate curriculum, except for WMU Essential Studies. Mingus reminded the council that the Role Statement supports that. He also noted that for charges that require collaboration with other councils, it is common to form an ad hoc workgroup including a few representatives from each council to bring recommendations to their respective councils.

Chair Ealy asked Cumming and Ferrin to provide a report on the status of University certificates, identifying any concerns or issues with current policies at the next meeting.

Chair Ealy asked Mingus to seek clarification from the Executive Board on charges #5 and #6.

Chair Ealy asked Duffy to contact the chairs of the International Education Council and the Graduate Studies Council to establish coordination between councils to address charge #4.

Announcements

Lantz noted that the Western Student Association is concerned that WMU is not extending students the option to elect to complete a course under a credit/no credit for spring 2021, as was allowed for fall 2020. Recognizing that this policy is beyond the purview of USC, Lantz asked council member for their perspectives. Some council members noted that the emergency nature of the COVID-19 pandemic response was the impetus for allowing a credit/no credit option previously, but that enough planning has gone into the spring 2021 semester that the option should be less necessary. Lantz noted that some students are withdrawing from the spring 2021 semester, and that this change in policy may be a contributing factor. Witschi noted that progress toward degree and financial aid can be negatively affected by students changing to credit/no credit during the semester.

Adjournment

It was moved by Duffy, seconded by Ferrin, to adjourn the meeting at 4:56 p.m. The motion carried unanimously.

The Undergraduate Studies Council will meet next on 8 December 2020, in a Webex virtual meeting at 3 p.m.

Approval

Submitted by Dianna E. Sachs, Secretary

Minutes approved this eighth day of December 2020.