Proposed Meeting Minutes

March 18, 2021

The Western Michigan University Board of Trustees (BOT) Formal Session was called to order by Vice Chair Chen-Zhang at 11:03AM on March 18, 2021. The meeting was conducted, amidst the continued global pandemic, in an online modality with participants engaging through Zoom, a virtual platform. The engagement was streamed live through the BOT website. Prior marketing encouraged the public to engage and those interested in providing comment were asked to notify Board Secretary Schuemann by 5PM Wednesday, March 17th. Presiding were Chair Chen-Zhang, Vice Chair Johnston and Trustees Edgerton, Kitchens, Penn, Rinvelt, Trevan, and Turfe.

A motion to accept the March 18, 2021 BOT agenda was made by Trustee Kitchens, with a second from Vice Chair Johnston. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion to accept the minutes as exhibited from the January 21, 2021 BOT Meeting was made by Trustee Rinvelt, with a second by Trustee Edgerton. The motion passed unanimously.

Remarks were provided by Vice Chair Chen-Zhang – Attachment A, followed by remarks from President Montgomery – Attachment B.

Faculty Senate President M. Kritzman, Western Student Association (WSA) Vice President T. West, and Graduate Student Association (GSA) President C. Morris provided comments regarding their respective areas and their ongoing activities and initiatives relating to shared governance, promoting student involvement, and academic enrichment. See Attachment C for remarks by Faculty Senate President M. Kritzman.

Vice President for Student Affairs D. Anderson presented Celebrating WMU’s Frontline Healthcare Workers.

There was no indicated public interest in providing commentary regarding any Action Items.

As Action Items, the Board considered the Consent Items. A motion to approve the Consent Item was made by Trustee Rinvelt, with a second from Trustee Penn. The BOT unanimously approved the following Consent Items as exhibited: Board of Trustees Meeting Dates 2022, Curriculum Proposals, Personnel Report, Annuity and Life Income Funds Performance Report, and Operating Cash Investment Performance Report.

Commentary was provided during General Public Comments by K. Plier, S. Zegree, J. Wright, and J. Ivey.
The BOT meeting ended at 12:15PM following a motion to adjourn by Trustee Penn, a second by Trustee Edgerton, and unanimous approval.

Respectfully submitted,

Kahler B. Schuemann
Secretary to the Board of Trustees
Western Michigan University
Good Morning. It is my pleasure to welcome everyone to our March board meeting. Our board has already finished a productive informal session. We heard from Athletic Director Kathy Beauregard on many aspects of the athletic department and intercollegiate athletics. We also appreciated hearing from Provost Jennifer Bott and Vice President Terri Kinzy on the impact of interdisciplinarity through academics and research at Western.

I am looking forward to the presentation today from Vice President Diane Anderson about the critical work that Western’s frontline health care workers have taken on throughout the course of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Like their peers across the country and around the world, these dedicated professionals have worked tirelessly to care for the campus community and we are in their debt. To Dr. Gayle Ruggiero, her entire staff, and everyone who is contributing to this effort, thank you all for the very important work that you do.

We are fortunate at Western to have employees across our campus who have gone above and beyond throughout the pandemic. From the custodial staff that keeps every corner of the University clean, to the facilities crews that keep everything running, to the dining services teams, the list goes on, and so does our gratitude for their work. Thank you all.

Before I preview what's on our agenda for today, I want to take a moment to address a more sobering topic. Since early on in the COVID-19 pandemic when we learned about cases of the virus in China, there have been reports of discrimination against individuals of Asian descent across the country and the world.

During the past year, we've even heard accounts of violence. That's not tolerable here or anywhere else. We stand united in our rejection of discrimination and harassment of any kind targeting any people. We can do better as a society to fight racism in all its forms, and we must do better. Thank you.
Good morning and thank you for that introduction, Chair Chen-Zhang.

As Chair Chen-Zhang noted, we’ll be hearing from Vice President Diane Anderson as part of today’s meeting. She’ll be sharing an overview of the work that our frontline health care workers have been carrying out over the last year. I join with the Board of Trustees and the Western Michigan University community in extending our gratitude and admiration for the dedication that these individuals have demonstrated throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. From their work to set up and carry out rapid-response testing, to implementing the use of telehealth care for members of our community, our Medical Director Dr. Gayle Ruggiero and the entire team have responded to the need to protect the health of our faculty, staff and students. And they have done this while continuing to provide primary care and counseling services to our student body. Thank you to all for your ongoing efforts.

I would also like to recognize Western’s COVID-19 Response team. Led by Kara Wood, associate vice president for community partnerships—and a FEMA-certified emergency manager—Dr. Ruggiero and Lt. Andrew Bachman of the WMU Department of Public Safety. This team hit the ground running last year by collaborating with public health leaders at the state and county levels, monitoring state protocols and executive orders, developing plans to enable our campus to maintain essential services and sharing those updates through the entire community. Their work is not complete, but they are nonetheless deserving of our appreciation.

In addition to recognizing COVID response efforts, I recently had the opportunity to visit the Kalamazoo County Health and Community Services Department’s vaccination site at the Expo Center with Michigan’s Lieutenant Governor Garlin Gilchrist. I spoke with him about our ongoing efforts and challenges related to the pandemic, our pride in the work of our frontline health care professionals, and at that location, to note with pride, that our Bronson College of Nursing students are part of the team that is providing administrative support, giving vaccinations and also monitoring individual’s post-vaccination.

Western Michigan University public health students gained valuable real-world research experience recently by participating in a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study on mask use. The Mask Adherence Surveillance at Colleges and Universities Project, or MASCUP, included 60 colleges and universities across the country. It was intended to determine the percentage of individuals on each campus wearing masks, and the percentage who were wearing masks correctly—meaning fully covering the nose and mouth. The work yielded some very positive insights for our campus. According to the study’s latest observational results, there was a 99% compliance rate with mask use on Western’s campus, with 94% observed using masks correctly.
I wanted to share a brief update on a couple of University efforts that are underway. Western Michigan University is serious about removing barriers to greater diversity and addressing systemic racism. In response, we established two institution-level endeavors: the Mountaintop Initiatives and the Racial Justice Advisory Committee. The Racial Justice Advisory Committee comprises a cross section of faculty, staff, students, administrators and alumni that are working to identify some of our greatest challenges and areas of need and build a framework for addressing them.

At the same time, the $2 million Mountaintop funds are being used to advance work that addresses diversity, equity and inclusion across our campus. A portion of the funds are supporting the Professional Development Institute, a faculty and staff training program focused on enhancing intercultural communication, and another portion will help develop a Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation center on campus. As I noted when I announced both of these initiatives, we are committed to building a campus where everyone will flourish. It will take time and it will take effort, but we will not be deterred from moving forward with it.

Provost Bott recently hosted a virtual Spring Celebration of Scholarship and Teaching. During this event, she presented the 2019 and 2020 Distinguished Teaching Awards to two very deserving faculty members. Dr. Leah Omillon (Oh-million)-Hodges, the 2019 recipient, is an associate professor of communication in the School of Communication. The 2020 honoree is Dr. Jeffrey Angles, professor of Japanese in the Department of World Language and Literatures. This is the highest honor given by the University to those who are not just exceptional educators, but who also motivate and challenge their students, while inspiring within them a pursuit of lifelong learning. Both of these faculty members excel in this arena and I’m pleased to join the chorus in congratulating them on this honor.

We were pleased to learn that the WMU Department of Public Safety has earned full accreditation status from the Michigan Law Enforcement Accreditation Commission. Completing the rigorous accreditation required the department to comply with 105 standards, participate in an on-site assessment and commit to ongoing compliance reporting. The department is one of 34 units—out of nearly 600 agencies in the state—that has earned accreditation through Michigan Association of Chiefs of Police, the commission’s governing body.

In less than a month we’ll complete our 10-year comprehensive evaluation process through the Higher Learning Commission. The final step in the process is a modified site visit, which will take place April 12 and 13. Maintaining HLC accreditation is an important part of our ongoing work to ensure that we are striving toward providing a high-quality educational experience for our students. Completing the comprehensive evaluation is a major undertaking that requires campus wide participation. I would especially like to thank the core team that manages this effort.
Andrew Holmes, our director of university accreditation, Adriana Cardoso Reyes, assistant director of institutional accreditation and Amanda Geer, WMUx copywriter, have done exceptional work in guiding us through the entire effort, but especially the final steps that have taken place during the pandemic. Thanks to each of you.

With that I’ll conclude my remarks today. Thank you.
ATTACHMENT C

WMU Board of Trustees
President Marilyn S. Kritzman Remarks March 18, 2021

Good morning Chair Cheng-Zhang, members of the Board, President Montgomery and valued colleagues. On behalf of the Faculty Senate, I thank you for this opportunity to share comments this morning.

Just one year ago, the world as we knew it, took a turn as the World Health Organization declared a then little-known virus, dubbed Covid-19, a global pandemic. Here on campus, our three week pause from in-person instruction stretched to a year-long, and still evolving adventure in education. Classroom instruction flipped on a dime, and our classes and work meetings switched to Zoom and WebEx. Our dining rooms, kitchens and bedrooms became offices. Pets joined meetings, small children, albeit unintentional, streaked classes and the great toilet paper shortage of 2020 made the news. We collectively watched family, friends, students and colleagues battle Covid-19. Some prevailed and we celebrated. Some did not and we mourned. Science raced to find a shot that would curb the impact of the devastation of the last twelve months.

When faced with the impossible, campus leaders came together to make the best possible decisions, based on what we knew at the time. There were successes. There were mid-course corrections. But regardless of what happened on any given day... we, as Broncos, persisted. As we move toward a revised normal on campus, may we never forget the lessons learned, the leadership given and the grace extended during these past twelve months. On behalf of the Faculty Senate Executive Board, I extend our collective appreciation and thanks to our colleagues for their herculean efforts.

Our country provides us the unapparelled opportunity for free speech. Higher education further provides faculty and scholars academic freedom in their class rooms and in their content area of expertise. Freedom of expression is one of the hallmarks of shared governance. The WMU Faculty Senate, as the designated partner in shared governance, is dedicated to fostering productive, vigorous, and meaningful dialogue and debate in an environment of civil discourse that respects various points of view. To guide our efforts and appreciate the meaning and practical applications of that discourse as we strive to advance the Academy, the Faculty Senate approved an aspirational civility statement in 2016 that remains relevant today. It reads...

Western Michigan University is committed to creating and sustaining an environment that honors the inherent dignity and worth of all members of the WMU community. Respectful behavior expressed verbally, textually, visually, and physically should be the norm in all University communications and venues including classrooms, meetings, offices, workplaces, forums, events, social media, and residential communities. As an institution of higher education, we welcome a diverse range of perspectives and opinions and uphold the importance of civil debate. We fully support the free exchange of ideas and beliefs, as well as the expression of provocative or unpopular ideas. It is through this process that we generate knowledge and deepen our understanding of humanity. Freedom of thought and expression may create conflict, strong emotions, and divergent ideological positions.
While these effects are expected and welcomed, all members of the community have a responsibility to behave in a manner that does not harm others nor creates a hostile environment. Behavior that attacks, humiliates, belittles, or conveys hatred towards others diminishes our thriving and safe university environment. Each member of our academic community is encouraged to be thoughtful and sensitive in their choice of words and behaviors. We should be aware of how our behavior affects others. Furthermore, we carry a responsibility to challenge those who communicate intolerance, hatred, and bigotry. Words and actions matter. Everyone is asked to do their part in creating a healthy and positive university community and a culture that truly values each member’s uniqueness, experiences, and perspectives.

The Senate Executive Board affirms this statement. Civility must be woven into the fabric of the University’s culture. We shared this at our most recent Senate meeting, are sharing it at Council meetings and are asking our colleagues to share this classes and in departments.

The Faculty Senate Executive Board agreed to support our Academic and Information Technology Council’s recommendation from the Office of Information Technology to require two factor authentications for all WMU employees.

The Executive Board accepted the Last Lecture Series implementation plan at our most recent meeting. The Last Lecture Series is a collaborative effort between the Faculty Senate, the President’s Office, the Provost’s Office, Marketing and Strategic Communication, and University Advancement. This newly created and on-going initiative will provide retiring faculty an opportunity to share career-closing thoughts with colleagues, students, alumni, family, and friends as well as providing recognition for the faculty from the University, students, and colleagues. A dedicated website where faculty will complete an online form to register to provide their last lecture is nearly ready to launch.

The 2021 WMU Faculty Senate Appraisal of the Provost has concluded. The response rate was 33.3% or 279 out of 840 eligible faculty and academic administrators. A copy of the numerical results was provided to Board Chair Chen-Zhang.

The Graduate Studies Council reviewed content and discussed its charge related to the development of a process to designate service-learning status for graduate courses while the International Education Council is working with the University College to incorporate global content into the programs of students with undetermined majors.

As my comments end, I extend thanks and appreciation to the members of our Councils and Committees for their time, effort and hard work. I also want to thank Senate Vice President Sarah Summy and members of the Senate Executive Board for their endless hours of meetings, collaboration, and problem-solving. Together we have achieved much. We have met nearly every week for the past year. The work of the Faculty Senate is true service to Western Michigan University as it comes on top of our normal workload. I am blessed and honored to have these fine men and women on my team and representing the faculty at Western Michigan University as the designated partner in shared governance.

Thank-you, Chair Chen-Zhang, for this opportunity to address the Board.