Remarks by Rick Gershon, WMU Faculty Senate President

- Gershon reported that MOA-18/09: Creation of Service Learning Course Approval Procedures and MOA-18/11: Revision to Undergraduate Catalog-Course Grade Appeals Student’s Deadline have been signed and returned by the Administration.

Remarks by Edward Montgomery, WMU President

- **Commencement:** There are only three weeks until several thousand Broncos cross the stage at Miller Auditorium for commencement. Thanks was expressed to faculty for the vital role they play in helping students reach this key moment in their college careers and in their lives.

- **Enrollment:** A look back to where WMU has come over the past year as well as to look to the horizon as to what lays ahead. WMU finds itself in a familiar and yet unfamiliar spot. Looking to next year, WMU will face a difficult financial period as an institution. Early data suggests a decline in enrollment this fall, possibly greater than previously experienced. Some of this reflects the continuing decline in the number of high school graduates within the state.

  Last year 11 of the 15 public universities (including Grand Valley State University) experienced dropping enrollments with Central Michigan University and Eastern Michigan University facing enrollment declines in excess of 7%. The uncertainty over WMU enrollment levels makes budgeting a challenge in the coming year; compounded by the presence of new legislators in Lansing and the high degree of uncertainty over the State budget. Earlier this month, the newly-elected governor, Gretchen Whitmer, released her recommendations for Fiscal Year 2020 Executive Budget. That proposal calls for a 3% increase over the current fiscal year, but an increase that comes with several provisos including tuition restraint. And we have yet to see formal proposals from either the State House or the Senate which may not pass a budget until September.

- **Moving Forward:** While WMU operates in a time of unparalleled competition among universities and a period in which the pool of prospective students is shrinking, the University has begun the process of taking hold of its own destiny – by going on the offense, so to speak. WMU is more than up for this task and there is a desire by the Senior leadership and campus community to make the strategic investments and tough decisions that will position the University for the future.

- **Openness and Transparency:** One of the core values that will continue to guide WMU is the commitment to shared governance. That is and will remain a central tenant of this University. As a result, expect transparency. Faculty can and should expect collaboration across campus. Expect openness about challenges and have the opportunity for input as strategies and solutions. What WMU shouldn’t expect is a miracle or easy solutions. Everyone at WMU
is working together, and is being asked to continue to join in that collaborative spirit.

- **Strategic Investments that Advance**: The bottom line is WMU has miles to go before it can rest. There will be growing pains, and the results won't be immediate because there is no magic bullet or easy fix, but there is a shared commitment to go on the offensive taking a holistic and comprehensive approach. The good news is that WMU has already started this process. There are efforts underway with curricula, physical space, student life, recruitment methods, financial aid, and organizational structure designed to advance the enterprise. All of this is being done despite facing the considerable headwinds outlined.

Remarks by Jennifer Bott, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

- WMU is building momentum in the face of big challenges. It is a tidal wave of strategic and coordinated efforts to meet and surmount those challenges. There are forces that WMU cannot control, but WMU can control how to respond. It is absolutely the responsibility of the University to respond with relentless action.

- **Western Essential Studies**: It does not need to be explained the importance and transformational nature of WMU Essential Studies. WMU is completely overhauling the curriculum. It is hard work, focused on preparing students for a changing world, and any list of important, hard work would be woefully incomplete without it.

- **Think Big Initiative**: This major undertaking has been an unequivocal success thus far, and that's because of campus-wide involvement. There were 141 ideas developed during the town hall sessions, and those ideas have been distilled down to a select number by a design committee of faculty, students, alumni, donors, and more. Phase 3 begins 11 April, with the kickoff of a series of five design workshops over several days. At the workshops feedback is needed. The workshops will be offered in evening and day sessions at various venues on campus. There is more information at www.wmich.edu/thinkbig.

- **Enrollment and Recruitment**: WMU has expanded its enrollment search practices. Practices are being developed to connect with high-school students prior to their junior year, earlier in their K-12 career than has ever been done before. Engagement with these potential Broncos focuses on the value of college in general and the high-quality education WMU has to offer them in particular.

- **Financial Aid**: WMU is a university that believes strongly about access. It takes pride in being a Carnegie designated research institution, but also a university of opportunity, by making the most of its strategic resource and exercising sensitivity to students' financial circumstances. WMU is better customizing financial-aid packages to address needs while maximizing dollars. It is creating efficiencies in admissions, including speeding up the admittance process.

- **Strategic Resource Management Budget Model**: A few weeks ago, there was an excellent town hall gathering on the SRM budget model. The meeting was well attended with a lot of Q&A. The meeting represents an integral part
of WMU future directions because it helps everyone understand how WMU will be investing its resources and what the yield will be for those investments. SRM is not a decision, but rather a tool to help make informed financial decisions.

- **Physical Infrastructure**: For this institution to be a credible University of Choice, the physical infrastructure matters. There are a number of buildings that are at the end of their lifecycle. WMU needs to provide facilities that are necessary to offer the kind of education and holistic campus-life experience that students today want and need.
  - **South Neighborhood**: The long-term vision for the South Neighborhood project and the related sub-campus master plan is to create an area combining housing, retail, office, academic, recreation, and athletic spaces; the kind of environment that not only attracts students to campus but also gives them more reason to stay. The new and/or improved infrastructure on the horizon include new housing rising along Stadium Drive and a new dining hall and student center. It also includes renovations at Dunbar Hall and the College of Aviation.

- **Comprehensive Campaign**: WMU is currently underway in the planning of a long overdue comprehensive capital campaign under the direction of Kristen DeVries, Vice President for Development and Alumni Relations. It has been stated that WMU must increase alumni giving rate in order to bring in the contributions that are necessary to advance the mission. WMU has many friends who believe in it and it must reconnect with them, tell them about, and give them an exciting vision in which to invest.

- **Aon Market Salary Recalibration**: Last year, WMU partnered with national consulting firm Aon to conduct a market-based review of the Staff Compensation System. There were town hall meetings about that initiative in October. Aon, Human Resources, and University leadership have been working to assess how WMU's compensation compares with the national average. New developments have continued to be updated on the project website, and next month there will be a campus wide report-out meeting.

- **Enterprise Risk Management**: Last fall, the previously formed Collaborative Risk/Opportunity Management (CROM) Action Teams were asked to pause their efforts as the President’s Cabinet re-evaluated WMU’s risk management strategy. A new approach has been developed. This new strategy will help WMU leaders know where there is a low appetite for risk, like in regulations and legal, and a higher appetite for risk like in innovation and building the WMU brand.

Shared Gold Initiative and WMU Community Engagement Geomap – Brian Gogan, Team Chair

- Associate Professor Gogan provided a PowerPoint presentation that provided highlights of the project including the initiative to apply for a Community Engagement re-designation with the Carnegie Foundation. The project initiative is a community engagement plan with the city of Kalamazoo.
WMU Essential Studies Update – Sarah Summy, Chair, WMU Essential Studies Executive Advisory Committee

- The WMU Essential Studies Course Review and Approval Committee has now completed three of its four scheduled retreats to review the courses submitted for the new program. The last retreat is tomorrow. The committee has had regularly scheduled bi-monthly two-hour meetings throughout the academic year scheduled through April.
- By the end of the semester, all 333 courses that were initiated will have been reviewed.
- The committee will then begin to review courses that were resubmitted after an initial denial.
- Courses which require some revision have been sent back to the originators. Faculty initiators are strongly encouraged to resubmit since review will continue for resubmissions through October.
- The committee offers the five most frequent reasons for course denial are:
  1. Student Learning Outcomes are not in the syllabus.
  2. Syllabi have not been updated with level and category as part of WMU Essential Studies (some syllabi still mention General Education Areas).
  3. Assessment plans too ambitious and unmanageable.
  4. Inconsistent course numbering or credit hours.
  5. Syllabus and/or assessment plan missing.
- Chairs and directors can login to Banner workflow and do a course status search to see where their courses are in the system. Contact WMU Essential Studies Director Mervyn Elliott for assistance.
- Courses that have been approved by the committee have been forwarded within the Banner workflow to the curriculum manager, Dave Reinhold, and are now pending an overall program review which will be completed by the WMU Essential Studies Executive Advisory Committee on 10 May.
- Summer plans for the WMU Essential Studies Executive Advisory Committee include:
  - presenting the initial curriculum to the administration and advisors
  - previewing the curriculum with community colleges
  - establishing pilot courses for fall that will complete the proposed assessment of student learning outcomes in eLearning
  - establishing a course review cycle
  - backward curriculum mapping that will map the old General Education curriculum to the new WMU Essential Studies curriculum
  - develop student and faculty marketing materials

Western Student Association Update – Joe Sanchez, President and Jessica Poling, Vice President

- Sanchez provided a PowerPoint presentation regarding the value of participating in an open textbooks program in order to alleviate costs for students.
- Poling provided a PowerPoint highlighting accomplishments of WSA for the academic year. Sanchez introduced Lauren Smith, President-Elect and Taylor West, Vice President-Elect.
Graduate Student Association Update – Craig Morris, President-Elect
  • Morris stated the GSA mission is to support the interests of graduate students through leadership and opportunity and to enhance student success. GSA is intentional in what it does and how it is done. GSA partners with faculty champions, the Graduate College, and the administration. One example is a program to fund graduate students to present their thesis at the National Association of Graduate Students conference in the U.S. capital. GSA encourages faculty to support graduate students by providing mentorship.

Virtual Labs Presentation – Kevin Abbott, Interactive Media Specialist, Office of Information Technology
  • Abbott provided a PowerPoint presentation that highlighted some of the projects faculty and students have created in the Virtual Technology Laboratory.

https://wmich.edu/sites/default/files/attachments/u370/2019/WSA-FacultySenate.4-4-19.pdf

https://wmich.edu/sites/default/files/attachments/u370/2019/VR Labs Presentation.4-4-19.pdf