

University Council
Minutes
March 12, 2021 | 8:30-10:30am

Members Present: Michael Baltzley, Chelle Batchelor, Gabbi Boyle, Kathy Cassity, Bryan Dutton, Breeann Flesch, Tina Fuchs, Rex Fuller, Mark Girod, Leigh Graziano, Ryan Hagemann, Bill Kernan, Kristin Latham-Scott, Randi Lydum, Dave McDonald, Erin McDonough, Sue Monahan, Jenna Otto, Tad Shannon, Michael Smith, Jackson Stalley, Judy Vanderburg, LouAnn Vickers (Ex-Officio), Niki Weight, Rob Winningham

Members Absent: Gary Dukes, Hillary Fouts, NJ Johnson, Ana Karaman, Abdus Shahid

Others in Attendance: Marion Barnes, Maria Bonifacio, Samantha Cameron, Max Chartier, Amy Clark, Michael Ellis, Olivia Flores, Julie Grammer, Cara Groshong, Trisha Guy, Chloe Hays, Travis Heide, Melissa Hinzman, Kelly Jaskowski, Richard Kavanagh, Leslie Lloyd, Kristin Mauro, Jessica Olson, Kelly Rush, Sharyne Ryals, Katherine Schmidt, Adrian Venegas Trujillo, Ariel Zimmer Suel

President Fuller called the meeting called to order at 8:30am.

Commencement update | Amy Clark

The agenda was adjusted to provide Registrar Amy Clark the opportunity to present the Commencement update first.

Amy acknowledged the Commencement Committee has worked hard to be thoughtful in planning for commencement 2021; recognizing that, due to the pandemic, WOU would not be able to host a traditional ceremony in the stadium.

A survey was distributed in January to eligible 2021 graduates. Three celebration options were provided and participants were asked to rank them in the order of their preference. The options included a graduation parade, a graduation week, and a drive-through ceremony.

The parade would entail a continuous flow of cars on a specific route whereas a drive-through ceremony would add the component of each graduate being able to walk across a stage to receive their diploma. In both of these instances, graduates and their families would participate via their vehicles and faculty and staff would be able to celebrate with them, following physically distanced protocols. A graduation week would include small cohort gatherings over the course of a week, hosted outdoors, and following safety protocols such as masks and physical distancing.

A graduation week led the rankings for everyone's first choice, the drive-through ceremony was the leader for the second choice, and the parade was the top third choice. The leading factors that would impact the graduates' decision to participate with in-person interaction were crowd size limits for Polk County, the number of COVID-19 cases in Polk County, and the mask requirements in Polk County.

Using the data collected from the survey, Amy created word clouds. These clearly indicated the features of a commencement ceremony graduates have been looking forward to most were celebrating with family and friends, walking across a stage, hearing their name read, and receiving their diploma cover.

Because the unpredictable metrics for Polk County would greatly impact smaller gatherings, the commencement committee will proceed to plan a drive-through ceremony staged in the stadium parking lot. This will allow each graduate the opportunity to walk across the stage while their name is read and family members can join them to take photos. Faculty and staff would be invited to safely participate and celebrate with their students.

A virtual ceremony will be available in addition to the drive-through ceremony. The committee will meet on March 17 to continue planning and an announcement will be made on the first day of spring term (March 29). Additionally, Amy, President Fuller, and others will host a town hall on April 7 to provide more information and answer questions.

Amy also confirmed that while only the 2021 graduates were surveyed, the 2020 graduates will be invited to participate in the celebration event(s).

The presentation slides may be viewed [here](#).

Campus advisory committee reports

1. UBAC | Tad Shannon, co-chair

The committee has continued to lead monthly campus conversations on a variety of topics. The next training will cover the tuition setting process. Tad noted that slides from the recent SSCM presentation are available on the [UBAC website](#). Going forward, an audio recording of the trainings will also be available on the website.

2. UDIAC | Gabbi Boyle, co-chair

The committee distributed a survey to campus to gather information on the seven areas identified by the Board of Trustees' statement on diversity, inclusion, equity, and accessibility. Based on the feedback received, the committee will develop a Diversity Action Plan which will align with the Board's statement and the Strategic Plan. As of March 9, 2021, 73 survey responses have been received.

Initial observations of the data collected have indicated a desire for a diversity office as well as training opportunities for all of campus. Training topics include cultural competency, search advocacy, and equity lens/pedagogy.

Gabbi highlighted several trainings currently taking place on campus and in the Monmouth/Independence community. A training on "Racial Understanding & Healing Training" is being offered to Monmouth/Independence employees, nine one-hour SafeZone trainings were hosted during winter term, and a proposal was submitted to the

University of Oregon for WOU faculty/staff to provide diversity-related trainings on their campus.

Gabbi noted a collection of [Instagram](#) posts where students, faculty, and staff anonymously share stories of discrimination and bias on campus. The Council discussed and acknowledged the importance of continuing efforts to create a positive and inclusive campus climate for our students, faculty, and staff.

President Fuller mentioned that the “Racial Understanding & Healing Training” being offered to the communities is grant funded and other grant opportunities are being explored to expand this work. Opportunities are also being explored to provide WOU employees access to this training.

The presentation slides may be viewed [here](#).

3. UTAC | Chelle Batchelor

Chelle shared the committee’s progress on the 2020-2021 goals.

The Reporting Subcommittee distributed a “Needs and Tools Survey” to campus in February and are analyzing those results.

The Technology Plan Subcommittee is continuing to work on the Technology Plan and will also develop a technology needs survey as they finalize the plan. This will allow the survey to be reflective of the Technology Plan.

In an effort to increase campus communication, UTAC sends out meeting notes and posts the minutes to the website.

Progress continues on several technology implementations:

- Canvas is currently 50% implemented and will 100% by summer;
- WOU Mobile App implementation is complete;
- Wise E-proctoring has been implemented for a small number of courses with specific needs for e-proctoring support during remote learning;
- TurnItIn is a plagiarism checker that replaced Unicheck
- CircleIn study app was launched with the aid of the Federal CARES Act funding
- Migration from Cognos 10 to Cognos 11

UTAC reviewed a revised LMS policy draft that was also reviewed by the Faculty Senate Executive Committee.

The presentation slides may be viewed [here](#).

Updates, progress reports and discussion items

4. Retention and Graduation Rates | Sue Monahan, Michael Baltzley

Michael shared that the reporting structure of the Institutional Research Office has recently been moved to the Academic Affairs division and is reporting to him. He provided an overview of the [Institutional Research website](#) and the resources available, noting that the recently identified peer institutions have been added to the website. Michael suggested it would be good to review and update peer institutions on a regular basis, perhaps every five years.

Sue provided an overview of six-year graduation rates for first-time full-time students, between 2004-2014. Noting the rates were very cyclical (between 39-45%), she explored further to consider if student success, as measured by these rates, is equitably distributed. The data identifies that under-represented minorities (URM) aren't graduating at the same rate as other students, which could be greatly influenced by the cost of college.

She noted that of the students who didn't complete a bachelor's degree at WOU within six years of enrolling, about 50% might be attributed to not retaining the students between their first and second year.

Considering the four-year graduation rate for first-time full-time students of the 2016 cohort, she noted the overall graduation rate was 29.80% and also referenced the specific breakdown showing which students were successfully completing their degree within four years.

Comparing the 2006-2008 and 2014-2016 cohorts, improvements in four-year graduation rates were noted for all students. Through discussion, the council identified several things that have likely impacted these improvements: the new Gen Ed program, the change in the math requirement, removing the minor requirement, registration nudges, and overall affordability progress (i.e., remission dollars, lower tuition rates).

Michael noted that the four-year and six-year graduation rates are correlated. As the four-year rates improve, the six-year rates will also continue to improve.

Looking to the future, we will need to have continued focus on equitable gains, take a look at transfer graduation rates, and benchmarking against our peer comparators.

The presentation slides may be viewed [here](#).

5. Legislative Update | Dave McDonald

Dave provided an overview of legislative session, which is currently in the long session – 150 days. Due to COVID-19, no in-person meetings or lobbying are permitted in the Capitol. This led WOU to create and submit nine 3-5-minute videos as lobbying tools. The video topics included Bilingual Teacher Scholars, Becoming an HSI, Capital Construction Projects, Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Education Partnerships, Salem Center, Sports Lottery, Student Success Programs, and Transfer Student Success.

The TRU “virtual” lobby days are currently set aside for May 17 and May 20.

The statewide themes and priorities for this session include COVID-19, wildfire recovery and prevention, social justice and equity, continued K-12 Student Success Act implementation, workforce development, homelessness, climate change, and transparency.

Dave covered an overview of WOU’s priorities in this session. The universities are collectively seeking \$900M in order to hold steady in the next biennium. Western specifically is seeking approval for the DPT program (SB 230) which is scheduled for the Senate floor vote March 17 and has also submitted three buildings for renovation (Student Success Center, Health Sciences Building, and New PE building).

Western continues to build awareness and prepare for the future in areas such as becoming an HSI and leader in diversity, inclusion, and equity. Our Bilingual Teacher Scholars and the Criminal Justice department moving toward social justice and restorative justice, as well as our work with Polk County on contact tracing, help support these efforts.

He noted the specific legislative bills that are of interest to WOU and higher education overall and also provided key dates for the remainder of the session.

The presentation slides may be viewed [here](#).

6. Reopening Plans | Commencement 2021 | Amy Clark

This topic was moved to the beginning of the meeting.

7. Presidential Search | Ryan Hagemann

Ryan shared that Board of Trustees Chair Komp would be hosting a town hall at 11am specifically focused on the interim presidential search. He provided an overview of the [Presidential Vacancy website](#) which will be a resource through the interim and regular presidential searches.

He noted the Board of Trustees approved a Board Statement on Presidential Vacancies at their February 17 meeting. This statement is the overarching policy for presidential vacancies. The board also created and approved guidelines for both the interim and regular search.

Ryan explained that the interim search and the regular search are fundamentally different. Though not required, Chair Komp elected to have an advisory committee of nine members for the interim search. Ryan emphasized that this is not a search committee but a sounding board to support Chair Komp.

The Interim President will be appointed at the April board meeting but a special board meeting can be called, if necessary. By contrast, the regular search will be a very robust

process and will include a 21-member search committee. WOU will contract with a search firm for this process and will launch the search in fall 2021.

8. Wrap-up and updates

President Fuller noted the dates for the spring term meetings and the meeting was adjourned at 10:27am.

Upcoming meetings:

- **Spring 2021:** April 16, May 21