

Washburn University
Meeting of the Faculty Senate
October 27th, 2025, at 3 pm
Meeting in Forum Room Hosted by FS Executive Committee

Present: Abebayo, Buck, Burdick, Camarda, Cook, Copeland, Dahl, Davies, Dickinson, Emry, Francis, Fritch, Gonzalez-Abellas, Graves, Hartman, Holt, Hu, Tucker Jones, Leisinger, Ostrom, Perret, Rivera, Schmidt, Schnoebelen, Smith, Williams, Yapple

Absent: Bender, Brooks, Harnowo, Chris Jones, Lambing, Mosier, Ricklefs, White

Guests: Wade, Holthaus, Broxterman, Worsley

I. Call to Order at 3:01 pm

II. Approve minutes of the September 22 meeting – Moved to approve by Cook, seconded by Gonzalez-Abellas.

- There were some typos noted in the minutes: ‘Gonzalez-Abellas’ was misspelled in one instance of the name being mentioned and ‘waivers’ is misspelled on p. 5. These typos will be corrected and the modified minutes uploaded to the website.
- Motion passes unanimously.

III. President’s Opening Remarks – Jim Schnoebelen

- Since our last meeting, we have had a great deal of information shared across campus on a number of subjects—especially enrollment numbers:
 - 5.8% FTE growth on the main campus, 15.5% increase at Tech, and the largest Law School L1 class in 15 years.
 - I hope some of you were able to attend the Town Halls last week regarding campus updates, Town Halls that President Mazachek led. I thought they were very informative and helped de-mystify all that’s going on—because it is a lot. Even though we are very busy, I recommend attending them when they occur to reduce rumors from developing, and I recommend that you just be frank and ask questions. We can also then inform our colleagues who, for whatever reason, cannot attend.
- Some of the key highlights from that meeting:
 - WU is doing very well on behalf of our students, with 95.6% employed or pursuing further study after graduation.

- While we still have some work to do to improve our retention rates, we're still performing 10% better than other similar open access institutions.
 - Our financial health is rivaling KU and ahead of all other KBOR institutions, which makes me feel very comfortable during uncertain times, and I hope it does the same for you. I will admit freely that I am not a numbers/budget person, but I know President Mazachek is, and if she's happy and excited about them, then so am I.
- Please plan on taking part in Accessibility Week in whatever ways you can. Ju-Yu Chang will be talking about this later, but please remember that compliance with the ADA is not optional, and this compliance does not apply only to hybrid and online classes. If you use a D2L shell, and we all should, so that we can use the gradebook, as we are all bound to do as faculty, then we will need training and/or improvements in our accessibility on D2L.
- We will also be hearing a brief update on an AI working group headed up by the Provost's office later in this meeting. I want to thank Melanie Worsley for keeping me constantly in the loop and asking for insights from the faculty's perspective. The group has a small but very qualified membership, and I have complete confidence that they are on the right track for helping Washburn address the new challenges posed by AI in the campus environment.
- Reminder: The next Senate meeting in the Kansas Room is on November 10th; please get Ian Smith any agenda items by Monday, the 3rd.
- Reminder: The next Gen Fac Meeting is coming up on 11/19, 3:30-5 pm, in the BTAC Convocation Hall.

IV. VPAA Update – Dr. John Fritch

- Our enrollment continues to look good. The efforts of faculty are a large part of that. The way faculty function in the recruitment process is great. For example, inviting students to campus helps them to get in contact with faculty and that can lead to enrollment for those students. Almost 50% of students who go to STEM camp at WU enroll at WU. Examples of student visits include Women in Science Day, Art Day, Health Professionals Day, totaling 1400 students visiting our campus.
- WU's retention rate is 69.8%, and our goal was 70%, so we are just short of that. Our goal will be to continue to increase retention rates and graduation rates, with the goal of 56% for the latter. The President is going to form a committee that will focus on graduation and retention.

- Dialogue Coffee House has opened a new location in town, this time at Washburn University. This business relationship is a new relationship for Washburn to engage in. From the press release of the opening: “the coffee shop blends its mission of providing employment to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities with Washburn’s values of creating positive impact on campus and in the community.” If you have a chance to support Dialogue Coffee House, please do so.
- Stephen Angel passed away. Professor Emeritus Angel was a long time Chair of the Department of Chemistry. One of his lasting legacies is that he helped start Apeiron.
- Some of our students getting a degree in education went to Liaoning Normal University in China to study and some of our faculty went there to guest teach. This is a great recruiting opportunity for us. It will also provide us with future opportunities for our faculty and students to visit the resort city in which this university is located.
- The President talked to us at the Town Hall about our goals to become a more financially sustainable campus and a more transparent campus. Part of our goal is to get data relevant to university governance out to the community. We want to be better at sharing information. This is not about bringing Small Program Review back; rather, it is about sharing information that can help us to be a better campus. And the goal is also not to eliminate faculty. We want this sharing of information to also help us to be more financially sustainable. We will have a SharePoint site for this initiative.
- I wanted to share a couple of quick things: We moved the last day to withdraw and the last day to change a course status from graded to A/Pass/Fail or vice versa to December 1 rather than the Friday during Thanksgiving week. We did this for advising purposes.
- KUBOR is exploring 90-hour 4-year degrees. A couple of Regents institutions want this. Some leaders from some community colleges said: we have never heard an employer say that we would need fewer soft skills. My thought is that perhaps there could be some degrees that could be a 90-hour degree, but those degrees shouldn’t be called bachelor’s degrees.
- We are going to form our HLC oversight committee in the next few days. This won’t include faculty right now, unless faculty want to be involved. At this stage, it doesn’t make much sense to include faculty anyway because of the administrative technical expertise involved in this stage of oversight.

- Question from Williams: What are the reasons why any institution would want to pursue 90-degree bachelor's degree?
- Answer from Fritch: The answers offered are reducing costs to students, efficiency, and speed to graduation.
- Question from Gonzalez-Abellas: What are the two institutions that want 90-hour degrees?
- Answer from Fritch: I'd rather not comment on that.
- Question from Adebayo: what is the data showing for the reasons to go to a 90-hour degree? Is the data coming from employers, or who, exactly?
- Answer from Fritch: good question. The data comes from employer desire for more 4-year degrees. But some leaders from some community colleges raised the point that a 90-degree bachelor's degree would not prepare a student for graduate school.
- Dickinson commented: this choice of pursuing a 90-degree credit hour bachelor's degree is out of step with complaints we are seeing from people on the job market who claim they need a master's just to get in the door. Someone should create a data set that examines hiring rates of those with a bachelor's vs. masters, which would give us a data-driven hint that this move is a really bad choice if employers aren't even considering people with a traditional bachelor's degree.

V. WUBOR/KBOR Update – Jim Schnoebelen

- WUBOR:
 - WUBOR mentioned at their meeting on 10/16 that they worked with Dr. Mazachek on shared governance and discussed their view about the importance of it at Washburn.
 - There were several topics; highlights included:
 - Health insurance premiums are not changing for the year—please note that the costs did increase a bit; the Board chose to absorb the cost so they didn't have to pass on the increases to faculty and staff.
 - They announced fantastic information about how Washburn PR rates against our peers/other Division 2 schools. Apparently, we are 8th nationally for “positive media perceptions”, and our Instagram account is rated 1st among all Division 2 schools. I'm not sure exactly what this means, but I know it was good news and that Juli Mazachek and the board were ecstatic, and I know that it took a great deal of very

hard work on the part of Lori Hutchinson and her team to result in these rankings, so it's awesome!

- The next meeting of WUBOR will be on December 4th.
- KBOR: KBOR's Council of FS presidents met on the 15th to discuss International Baccalaureate programs, of which we do not have one, so the meeting wasn't relevant to us. The next KBOR meeting will be on November 19th.

VI. Consent Agenda – Moved to approve by Schmidt, seconded by Adebayo.

- University Committee Reports –
 - Faculty Handbook Committee Minutes (August 28, 2025)
 - General Education Committee Minutes (April 27, 2025)
 - Question from Camarda: Where can we find agendas for these committees?
 - Answer from Broxterman, Schmidt, and Schnoebelen: The agendas are not public, but action items that these committees consider that are supposed to come to the Senate will indeed come to the Senate. Schnoebelen added that the minutes for all these committees are also funneled through Senate, so while it may be inconvenient, it is possible to reconstruct the agendas of these committees that way.
- Motion passes unanimously.

VII. Old Business – None.

VIII. New Business – None.

IX. Information Items –

- Update from AI Working Group (Melanie Worsley)
 - Worsley attended the American Association of Colleges and Universities AI Workgroup. Part of their work involves putting together an action plan. WU members are Burdick, Kay, Kendall-Morwick, Rubenstein, and Worsley. The purpose is to coordinate research and build capacity efforts to address generative AI issues affecting the learning environment.
 - Projects include the following: communication with campus community, communicating expectations to students. With regard to the latter, communication about policy examination and ethical considerations were discussed—what is the appropriate way for faculty to use AI in the classroom?

- Building capacity: AI literacy, AI proficiency, AI fluency—viewing our understanding of AI in these three capacities. For example, with respect to literacy, what is the implicit bias in AI tools? How does AI affect our students in terms of cognitive offloading? If we are using AI, how do we use AI well? With respect to fluency, how might we use AI for specific fields? We are looking at measures to help build fluency.
- Research: Common AI Tools—What are the legal ramifications in terms of using AI? Who is responsible when something goes wrong with AI? There has been talk amongst other universities in terms of how we should use AI. What are their approaches? What is a rubric that we can use to figure out what approaches would be useful?
- Research: Governance and infrastructure—how do other universities govern AI use?
- Please feel free to reach out to Worsley with any questions.

- Question from Williams: are we working toward a training module for students for what using AI involves; also, are we working toward policy that is relevant to plagiarism?
- Answer: the group is going to work on the latter. Regarding the former, we haven't talked about teaching students, but perhaps we should do so.
- Question from Adebayo: how are we defining common AI tools?
- Answer: Needing to make it clear that we are on the same page in terms of what AI software we should use is one option.
 - Follow up comment from Adebayo: there are some good answers for some tools, other answers for others.
- Question from Buck: what is sole AI versus open AI and how is that going to impact students?
- Answer: Kendall-Morwick is going to investigate issues like this.
 - Follow up comment from Buck: there is quite a fight going on between what will remain open AI and what will not and how that will affect our students.
- Accessibility Week (Ju-Yu Chang)
 - In April of 2026, the new law regarding accessibility comes into effect. What we need to do is to make sure that our content in D2L, for example, is accessible. The most important thing to do is to make sure that our documents (PDFs, Word documents) are accessible, meaning readable by a screen reader. The students can miss information without this. Headings are important as well. The headings are useful for the screen reader and the

students. Another issue to think about is contrast in PowerPoint presentations.

- This brings us to the purpose for which I am here. The accessibility requirements are no longer optional. They will be required by law. To this end, please make sure to attend a workshop on this. In the next two weeks, we will have workshops for becoming compliant. Camarda will host a session on LaTeX, an alternative to Microsoft Word, for example. We will also have drop-in help sessions. There will also be a self-paced module in D2L for those who cannot attend the workshops. This module will focus on how accessibility will be helpful for student learning by helping faculty make their documents accessible. Accessibility is also important for retention of our students. Faculty like Adebayo have piloted these initiatives and will be available at some of the workshops. CTCL will send an email about Accessibility Week workshops tomorrow morning.

- We also have a summer Accessibility Cohort. By the end of this training, every one of the faculty involved was able to make their documents accessible. YuJa Panorama will help with this process.

The focus now will be on spring 2026 courses—make sure to have these accessible.

- Comment from Wade: We are very thankful to Ju-Yu for all the work that she has put in to have a vision to see this coming and to put together the programming for this compliance. Sue Taylor-Owens has also been very helpful.

- Question from Williams: is the module accessible to adjuncts?

Answer: Yes, it is.

- Question from Holt: how will it be determined in terms of which faculty are compliant?

- Answer from Schnoebelen: we need to make a good faith effort. This has been communicated to me by Dean Erby.

- Question from Dickinson: how is a student dropping a class due to accessibility issues? How does this happen?

- Answer from Schnoebelen, Chang, and Wade: If scanning is done incorrectly, this can happen. Schnoebelen followed up by saying that we need to aim for 70% compliance. Wade followed up by saying that the concern could be a complaint that can go to Michelle Godinet and then she will have to see if there was a good faith effort to make our courses accessible in any investigation that may ensue. There won't be "accessibility police" per say, but this investigation concern is real.

- Question from Gonzalez-Abellas: what if we don't want subtitles on a video due to modern language learning purposes?
- Answer from Schnoebelen: is the accessibility in question compromising the stated goals of education? If so, then the accessibility need not be done.
- Question from Perret: how do we deal with student submitted work? Does that have to be compliant?
- Answer from Chang: it is not so important that student submitted work is compliant.

X. Discussion Items – None.

XI. Presentation by Sarah Cook on Math Pathways Advising – Slides from the presentation were provided in the agenda for this meeting.

- Question from Williams: one concern is that if we have a lot of online students, would they have to meet a higher math requirement?
- Answer: 090 or 095 should be taken by online students in the spring of 2026.

XII. Announcements

- Buck: This Wednesday (10/29), the orchestra will be performing the Halloween concert.
- Wade: academic sabbatical applications are due to your Dean this Friday (10/31).
- Williams: Tomorrow (10/28) from 12 to 1pm we will host our student presentation about domestic violence in the Kansas Room. Then from 2 to 4 pm is the open house in our new space for Family and Human Services in SAS.
- Adebayo: We have our student brown bag on Thursday (10/30) from noon to 1 pm, our only student brown bag! It will be held in the Lincoln Room. There is a virtual option.
- Smith: the annual Russ Jacobs Lecture is tomorrow night (10/28) in the BTAC at 7 pm. The speaker is Philip Kitcher who will be discussing the divorce of ethics and politics.

XIII. Adjournment of Meeting at 4:20