

## **Report from Faculty Senate Brandon Dupont**

October 13, 2023

Dear Trustees,

Since my last update at the August meeting in Poulsbo, we have been busy preparing for the new academic year. The Senate has several important issues to deal with this year and while we have only just begun, I am pleased with our progress thus far.

At our first Faculty Senate meeting on October 2, we approved a motion from the Senate Executive Council (“Exec”) to create a new ad hoc committee that is charged with reviewing and updating the Faculty Handbook. The committee charge and membership, as approved by the Senate, is as follows:

*The Ad Hoc Committee on Revising the WWU Faculty Handbook is charged with conducting a comprehensive review of the Faculty Handbook, including the appendices, and drafting proposed revisions. The committee is expected to conduct most of its work during the Fall and Winter quarters of AY 2023-24 and make its report and recommendations to the Faculty Senate during the Spring 2024 quarter. It is expected that once approved by the Senate, the revised draft of the handbook will be presented to the Board of Trustees for final approval by the end of the 2023-24 academic year.*

*The committee will be comprised of the following Faculty Senate-approved voting members:*

- *Faculty Senate President*
- *1 Faculty Senate Representative (appointed by the Faculty Senate)*
- *1 UFWW Representative (appointed by the UFWW Executive Board)*
- *3 At-Large Members of WWU Faculty (2 Tenured or Tenure Track plus 1 NTT, appointed by the Faculty Senate)*
- *1 Board of Trustees Representative (appointed by the Board of Trustees)*

Since the Faculty Senate can only effectively participate in governance at the university if its standing committees are fully staffed and functioning, I have been working with colleagues across campus to rebuild previously dormant committees including the Senate Library Committee, and the Senate Outreach and Continuing Education (OCE) Committee. The college faculty governance committees appoint most of the members to these committees, so I have been working with them to ensure this happens quickly. We have a nearly fully staffed Senate Library Committee which I expect to have its first meeting within a couple of weeks. We have been slower to staff the OCE committee, but several faculty members have agreed to serve on it, and we are working on filling the other vacancies.

We have also been discussing ways to more effectively participate in university resource and budget conversations. Historically, this has been done through the University Planning and Resources Council (UPRC), a Faculty Senate standing committee. However, with the creation of the University Budget Committee in 2022, we now have two budget committees with similar charges, so the UPRC has struggled to understand its role. We have therefore recently discussed a possible restructuring of UPRC. While this has not yet come before the Senate for action, we

have had discussions in both Senate Exec and the first full Senate meeting about the possibility of eliminating UPRC and replacing it with a budget liaison who would serve on Exec and the University Budget Committee. Ideally, this person would represent faculty interests in budget-related discussions and regularly update the Senate. As long as the faculty do not lose any of the three seats held by faculty members on the University Budget Committee, this may be a way to streamline the process while keeping faculty engaged and informed about the critical issues that impact our work here at Western. There was a robust discussion of the budget situation at our first Senate meeting on October 2 in which it was made clear that we need better communication with the faculty about the complex budget issues. While I intend to provide opportunities for senators to ask more questions and provide feedback to the administration at upcoming Senate meetings, having a designated member of the Senate who can help lead those discussions would be valuable.

I have also been focused on improving the Faculty Senate's communication with the broader campus. In part, this can be done through our new website, which went live in mid-September. But there are other tools at our disposal including the Faculty Senate President's blog that I recently revived after several years of inactivity. I have also asked Senators to make sure that they are sharing pertinent information about Senate actions and discussions with their constituents. Starting this fall, I will be attending a Council of Deans on a quarterly basis to help further build effective and clear communication between the faculty and the administrative leadership of the colleges. I also appreciate the ongoing "talk times" with President Randhawa and Provost Johnson, which I think is a valuable communication channel outside of the formal Senate meetings.

In the weeks ahead, we plan to hear from Chief Diversity Officer Jacqueline Hughes about DEI efforts on campus. Jacqueline and I have had several conversations about ways to communicate important issues to the faculty and we agreed that a short presentation followed by Q&A at Faculty Senate is one way to do that. Given the concerns among faculty about enrollment patterns, I have also asked Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management Shelli Soto to update the Senate and answer questions that Senators or their constituents may have. We will also hear from Provost Johnson and Vice Provost for Outreach and Continuing Education Robert Squires about the various off-campus programs that are now underway. I am committed to ensuring that the faculty have a way to provide input on these important initiatives. While our effort to revive the OCE Committee is an important way to do that, I also think that discussions at the full Senate will be valuable.

As I noted in my August update, the Senate has struggled with staffing issues for several months. A search committee that we put together in the spring recently reviewed applications and started interviewing candidates for a new Faculty Senate Specialist position. We hope to complete the interviews and make an offer no later than the end of October. We are also in the process of updating the Shared Governance Operations Manager position before trying to hire for that currently vacant position.

Finally, I want to express my gratitude to Elissa Hicks for stepping in to help us out in the fall quarter. Elissa will be assisting me in completing the efforts to fill vacancies on our committees and with setting up agendas and meetings while we work to hire staff. I also want to thank Jamie Lawson who has done (and continues to do) great work on our new website, and for making our new web-based agendas and meeting materials available ahead of our meetings. These and other

wonderful colleagues here at Western have been invaluable in helping me navigate the staffing challenges that could otherwise have seriously disrupted the Senate's operations.