
AAUP Bulletin

To the Members of the WMU-AAUP:

Following the May 11 Senate meeting in which Provost Delene announced the results of the Graduate Program Review and stipulated that there would be no appeals process, the WMU-AAUP leadership informed the administration that this was unacceptable. During the following week, Chapter Officers supported many departments whose programs were affected and called for a Chapter Meeting on May 18 to address the crisis in shared governance. President Bailey came to that meeting to announce that she had instituted an appeals process. After her announcement, the Chapter passed the following resolutions:

1. Resolution on Censure and No Confidence Vote on Provost Delene

That the faculty are outraged at the autocratic and unilateral process used to evaluate graduate education at Western Michigan University. That Provost Delene be censured for her conduct of the entire graduate review process. That the faculty authorize the WMU-AAUP to conduct a vote of no confidence in the ability of the Provost (a) to successfully determine the course of graduate education at WMU, and (b) to provide the necessary leadership to Academic Affairs at WMU. PASSED.

2. Resolution on Graduate Program Review Process

That the changes proposed by the Provost to graduate education programs at Western Michigan University will be removed from the Agenda of the July 14 Board of Trustees meeting. That any and all changes in graduate programs and academic units will be reviewed through the Faculty Senate's officially established procedures for curricular review and for the re-organization of academic units. That President Bailey will notify the WMU-AAUP and publicly announce to the faculty, no later than 4:00 p.m. on Friday, May 26, 2006, that the graduate program plan item has been removed from the July 14 Agenda. That President Bailey will maintain the commitment she made at the May 11th Senate meeting to have all proposed changes be subject to the established review process. PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

On May 19, 2006, the day after the Chapter meeting, Provost Delene resigned, to be followed over the next several days by Vice Provost Ronald Davis and Extended University Programs Dean Nicholas Andreadis. President Bailey named Janet Pisaneschi, retiring Dean of the College of Health and Human Services, as the new Provost through June 2007. President Bailey also announced that all of the other aspects of the graduate programs plan will go through the regular curriculum review process, and proceeded with her plans for the Appeals Committee.

On Friday, June 2, as a follow up to the Chapter's Resolution on Graduate Program Review Process, the WMU-AAUP Executive Committee approved the following letter to President Bailey, and had it sent to her that evening. The letter discusses the concerns raised at the May 18 Chapter Meeting, as well as some that have arisen since, and reiterates the intent of the

resolution to have all changes from the graduate programs plan removed from the agenda of the July 14 Board of Trustees meeting.

Here, for your information, is the text of the letter to President Bailey.

Dear President Bailey,

In accordance with a Resolution of the WMU-AAUP membership at a Chapter meeting on May 18, and a motion of the WMU-AAUP Executive Committee on May 19, I have been directed to write to you about issues related to the Graduate Program plans.

The Executive Committee thanks you for initiating an appeals procedure. It may reduce the growing dissatisfaction about the graduate review process which, as you are well aware, many faculty found difficult to fathom and which aroused campus-wide concern about the faculty role in shared governance.

There were significant concerns at both meetings about the deadline of July 14. Although there was a bit of dissent on the Resolution to censure the Provost, the same assembly gave unanimous assent to the Resolution about July 14, as did the Executive Committee. Our specific request, thus, is this:

Please do not take any part of the Graduate Programs plan to the Board of Trustees on July 14, 2006.

There were three main points to the discussion at the Chapter Meeting: The first has to do with the potential impact on Western's position in the state as a provider of graduate and professional education. The plan has disaster written all over it. Thus the decision about this plan is of unprecedented importance for our Trustees. The consensus was that this will most certainly be the most important decision that any of these Board of Trustees members participate in during their entire tenure. There must be adequate time set aside to assess the impact of the plan.

The second main point was that it would be best to set aside whole process and start again; I understand your wish, expressed at the Chapter meeting, not to delay for the amount of time that it would take to do the entire review again. This was discussed after you left, and the Chapter membership respectfully disagree. Although there were many points raised, the members have a fundamental concern that if budget issues are driving the decisions, it was not only unfair for them to have to go through a review process in which that criterion significantly, in the end, outweighed all others, but that if they had been charged with coming up with ways to help alleviate the Academic Affairs budget constraints, they could have made much more productive contributions to a joint and shared process. My prediction is that there will be lingering distress about this for a long time to come, and that the process for the undergraduate reviews must take on a whole new orientation compared to what was implemented for the graduate programs.

The third main point brought us to the specific resolution on the July 14 date, about which there was a completely clear consensus: The July 14 deadline does not allow enough time for the programs designated for closure to prepare their appeals. If the whole Graduate Programs plan is not to be set aside, then at least a September date for completing the appeals would be somewhat more fair.

There are other issues that have arisen, both out of the discussions at the two meetings, and in relation to the details of the appeals procedure.

First, faculty in some departments are troubled that the appeals must be carried forward by their Deans and Chairs, with only a few hand-picked faculty involved. Their concerns have several aspects. First is the perception that during the review process, they had relatively little involvement, whether through neglect or intent. Second is the perception that their local

administrators had views about their programs that were in conflict with the faculty's. Third is the perception that administrators may have participated in decisions with Provost Delene about which programs could be enhanced in return for cutting other programs. A concrete step that could alleviate these concerns is to allow the faculty in a program to initiate an appeal on their own.

Second, the description of the appeals process includes, in the Nature of Recommendations and Reports, "assessment of the impact of the recommendation on the overall fiscal balance achieved in the original set of recommendations." This, in effect, constitutes an additional criterion that programs must take into account (i.e., their cost) as they compose their appeal. However, the published plan includes no specific information about the fiscal balance that it would achieve. Faculty are raising questions about how they can take account of the cost factor, and how the Appeals Committee can take account of the cost factor, when the specific information has not yet been released. Perhaps that information could be provided in your June 6-9 phase re. materials generated at the provost's level, but that leads directly to the third concern.

Third, although the details of the appeals procedure specify the criteria that programs are to address, there is a distress that remains unabated: Because programs were evaluated negatively, the people working in those programs (which include, of course, some chairs) feel they must have access to the basis for the decision to cut them. If they do not know this, their fear is that the same decision could be made again, on the same basis, because they will not have been able to ferret out for themselves, and address with all due diligence, those specific issues. There are programs whose faculty are still waiting to appeal, but they are already feeling dismay because they are afraid that they will be fumbling in the dark.

Fourth, there is a logistical issue re. the published schedule for the appeals that bears directly on this third point. Here are the relevant dates copied from your email and your web site:

May 30-June 6. Programs wanting to appeal must notify committee chair John Jellies by close of business.

June 6-9. Provide programs with material generated by GPR process at the provost's level.

June 12-23. Committee will review materials and hear appeals.

Faculty have interpreted these dates to mean the following:

Step 1. They must provide notification of their intent to appeal no later than Tuesday, June 6, 2006.

Step 2. They will receive the materials from former Provost Delene's review during the June 6-9 interval.

Step 3. They will have some time during June 6-12 to compose their 5 page appeal.

Step 4. They will turn in their appeal document at some time on June 12.

Step 5. They will have their hearing some time during the June 13-23 interval.

Step 2 means that their starting point in Step 3 is vague, but the concluding point, specified in Step 4 is definite. Different programs may have different starting points depending on when they receive materials from former Provost Delene's review. But they all must complete their work on the same day. In any case, to have only 5-6 days to prepare an appeal on which the survival of their program depends seems an exceptionally daunting task.

Unfortunately, the email of Wednesday, May 31, 2006, actually exacerbated the cluster of anxieties about the appeals. At the end of the email you say, "A reminder is in order as well. The appeals, which must be submitted to John Jellies by the end of the business day Tuesday, June 6 ..."

I understand that this point has now been corrected, but I must tell you that there are faculty who felt the bottoms drop out of their stomachs when they read this - because they thought that they must complete Step 3 before Step 2 occurs, that they must write their appeals before they received any information about former Provost Delene's review. I prefer not passing on some of the descriptors that came to me about this. The correction that was issued did not really make them feel better about the constraints they still face. The time frame for getting information that may be relevant to an appeal is forbiddingly limited, especially when it comes to responding to financial analysis.

Taken together, this cluster of four issues does suggest to me that the logistics of the appeals process are less and less manageable re. getting done by July 14. The Chapter's additional concerns about the importance of the decision and the necessity of having the opportunity to assess its impact make the case even more compelling. Honoring the Chapter's resolution regarding the July 14 date could be presented to the Board first in terms of how very important the decision is for them, and second as a necessary step in mending fences with the faculty by allowing a reasonable amount of time for faculty input on the consequences of the plan. Taking this step would help to improve morale on campus so that we can move forward with all appropriate efficiency to complete the graduate program planning in a manner that rebuilds commitment to Western, and sets a whole new tone for working together on the undergraduate reviews.

Please, in the spirit of cooperation and recognition of the need to restore faith in shared governance here at Western Michigan University, do not take the Graduate Programs plan to the Board of Trustees on July 14, 2006.

Yours respectfully,

Paul T. Wilson, President
WMU-AAUP