

**Western Washington University Board of Trustees
Item Submitted to the
Board of Trustees**

TO: Members of the Board of Trustees
FROM: Erika McPhee-Shaw, Faculty Senate President
DATE: **April 10, 2026**
PURPOSE: Information
SUBJECT: **Faculty Senate Report**

Purpose of Submittal

Faculty Senate President Erika McPhee-Shaw will present brief reflections on faculty issues of interest to the Board.

Attachment

Faculty Senate Report

Thank you for the opportunity to provide an update on the work of the Faculty Senate and its Committees since my last report in February.

Presidential Strategic Enrollment Growth Initiative

Concerns raised at Faculty Senate regarding SMNR first-year courses were considered by Administration and played a role in the decision to stay the course while first-year courses are reimagined. Faculty are committed to sharing their knowledge with University Administration to build first-year academic offerings that will bolster student retention and success.

To that end, the April 6 Faculty Senate agenda is devoted to the Presidential Strategic Enrollment Growth Initiative. It includes a discussion with faculty experts who will share research on and best practices for retention, as well as an update from Becca Kenna-Shenk, Chief of Staff to the President, and a presentation by Vice Provost for Student Affairs Sislana Ledbetter on student support and engagement.

Curriculum Review Process

The Academic Coordinating Commission (ACC) recently wrapped up its most intense curriculum review quarter, and I want to acknowledge the dedication of Chair Melissa D'Eloia and all committee members for their stewardship of and service to curricular excellence.

By the end of Winter Quarter, ACC had approved a total of 817 curricular proposals, a high number but slightly down from last year's approval number of 908 proposals. Faculty remain innovative, creating 160 new courses, compared to 64 the previous year. Also notable is the fact that faculty have worked to optimize efficiency and ensure curricular alignment with accreditation standards and state requirements, with ACC approving a higher-than-usual number of new moratorium requests and course cancellations. Additional details follow.

Total number of curricular approvals (including memorandums): 817

Total number of unique proposal approvals: 734

Course proposals (including memo): 613

Program proposals: 175

Other proposals (including memo): 29

- New courses: 160
- New programs: 11 (6 undergraduate, 2 graduate, 3 certificate; the average is between 10 and 16 new programs annually)
- Cancelled courses: 96
- Total modality approvals: 119 (78 online, 24 online summer only, 17 hybrid)
- Program moratoriums: 25 (nearly half due to impacts to new programs and/or changes in state requirements)
- New departments: 3 (Finance and Marketing split into two separate departments; Journalism changed name to Journalism, Multimedia and Public Relations)

AI and WWU

In February, the Senate Academic Technology Committee and full Senate engaged with Academic Technology and User Services (ATUS) regarding whether new Canvas/IgniteAI tools – Discussion Summaries, Smart Search, and Translations – should be enabled University-wide. At the March 9 Senate meeting, senators discussed their questions and concerns as well as constituent feedback, which was overwhelmingly opposed to the tools. At that meeting, the [Senate unanimously approved a motion stating that the Canvas/Ignite AI should remain disabled unless the Senate votes otherwise in the future.](#)

Senators also expressed continued concerns about making AI-related decisions on a case-by-case basis and the amount of time that the Faculty Senate has spent discussing AI this academic year. It was recommended that the Senate create a faculty-led workgroup/task force/ad-hoc committee to consider these issues through the lens of “how does this AI affect academic integrity.” The hope is that software and ideas can be assessed via this lens by faculty, sometimes individually or perhaps at the department level, for example, rather than requiring larger decision-making bodies each time something new arrives. The [Senate passed a motion instructing the Senate Executive Council to develop a charge for this group.](#) Senate Executive Council is working on the draft charge, which will be brought to the full Senate in Spring Quarter for discussion and approval.

At the committee level, the Senate Library Committee in February had the first in a series of conversations about AI and Western Libraries. The Dean of Libraries and staff provided updates on current initiatives and internal discussions, and faculty and student committee members shared initial feedback on how Libraries might engage and support their needs related to generative AI. There is a shared commitment to continuing this dialogue.

STF Initiative Grants

The Senate’s Academic Technology Committee (ATC) plays an important role in allocating the annual Tech Initiatives grant portion of the Student Technology Fee. This decision-making process involves faculty, student, and university shared governance.

In March, Committee members led by Chair George Zhao toured several past grantee sites. These annual field trips are a fantastic opportunity for ATC members to learn more about technology usage across campus and in various contexts and to see firsthand how STF Tech Initiative grants are being implemented to benefit the campus community.

In April, ATC members will review and discuss this year’s applications – ten proposals totaling \$234,049 in requests. Final funding recommendations will be forwarded to the STF Tech Initiatives Committee as the next step in approving the final grant awards.

Three-Year Baccalaureate Programs

At the request of the Senate Executive Council, Provost Johnson on March 9 [gave a presentation](#) to the full Senate on the history and status of Three-Year Baccalaureate programs in Washington. Beyond Senate Exec, this issue recently was a topic of conversation at a virtual meeting of faculty senate leaders from across Washington. This broader discussion helped to inform questions and key points at the Senate meeting.

Key themes that arose included whether three-year baccalaureate degrees would devalue the liberal arts mission of a university such as Western, whether there is evidence showing that these degrees meet workforce needs and result in post-graduate employment opportunities, and how students who enter into universities with most or all of their general education credits met through existing admissions pipelines would be impacted academically.

The Faculty Senate will continue to engage with colleagues at other institutions, particularly CWU, regarding their experiences and with University Administration on this critically important issue. These kinds of conversations about how universities work are an example of constructive shared governance.