

Call to Order – 4:00p

1. Approval of March 2025 meeting minutes - **Approved**

2. Announcements

- May 14<sup>th</sup> meeting is canceled and will be replaced by a summary email with committee reports
- President's reception invitations are forthcoming
- Thank you to former Senate President Saylor Breckenridge

3. Old business

- None

4. Current business

- Address to Senate by President Susan Wentz
  - The role of the university in society and WFU's specific role – there's never been a more important time to consider these questions
  - Stay true to our mission, values, and teaching and research work
  - Confident in where we are and what we need to do as we look to the future
  - Rebuilding public trust in universities and institutions – education as a public good
  - Scale and stakes for higher education have never been higher, so we'll find new approaches for how we'll meet challenges
  - Committed to finding the best way to respond based on all the information that we have on hand, even as situations and information change
  - Embracing our community as strength in our response
  - Continual improvement
    - Build on 4 recommendations of AAR report – cabinet members have been tasked with working through these recommendations
    - [outreach.wfu.edu/after-action-review/](https://outreach.wfu.edu/after-action-review/)
  - Four Topics
    - Executive Orders and Federal Actions
      - Continue to monitor changes in policy
      - Ongoing litigation makes current status on various policies unclear
      - Faculty concerns are being heard and leadership team is committed to safeguarding our work
    - Four steps
      - Establish transparent process for evaluating actions
        - Strategy Steering Committee created to evaluate options, coordinate activity, and provide information and updates
        - Reaching out to specific community members based on circumstances
        - Give updates to the broader campus community as needed
        - Website updates at [govaffairs.wfu.edu/updates/](https://govaffairs.wfu.edu/updates/)
      - Communicate in thoughtful, tailored ways based on impacts
      - Partnering with peers and organizations to meet challenges
        - Learn from other universities' and other groups' experiences
        - Strong collective voice is necessary
        - Networks and organizations are sharing strategies and generating ideas for shared action across higher education
        - Working with state peers to advocate with state congressional delegation

- Actively advocating for need-based aid in North Carolina
- Ensuring we uphold our values and commitments
  - Champion our mission and our students, faculty, and staff
  - Advance our understanding of academic freedom and free expression as vital commitments for both university life and civil society
  - Draft Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression statement and a process for feedback and revision
    - Statement will be presented to the Board of Trustees at the next meeting
  - Generating new knowledge must be free of political influence
  - Embrace all people; education for all and research for all
  - Supporting alumni: OPCD has worked with alums following government layoffs
  - Continuing to serve the broader community in which we live and work
- Research funding changes
  - Canceled grants and funding
  - Slowed processes for funding
    - We are aware of impacts at WFU in the first two categories
  - Limiting access to force compliance
    - Substance of federal mandates extend beyond initially stated goal of combating antisemitism with much greater reach into admissions and other areas
    - WFU has not appeared on a list of targeted universities, but this list could expand
- Remain committed to our values and mission and find creative ways to continue to uphold that commitment – it will be hard
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
  - WFU follows all anti-discrimination laws
  - Remain committed to being an inclusive community
  - Our work matters
  - ISS office is closely monitoring possible changes to visa statuses or challenges around travel
  - WFU has, as of yet, no community members impacted by visa and immigration issues
  - Ask that we continue to show up for one another
- Department of Education
  - Working with policymakers and other higher education groups for communicate the necessity of maintaining critical functions for the DoE, especially uninterrupted access to student financial aid
  - Continue to analyze new information, take care of our people, and make decisions that align with our values
  - “Why I Still Believe” blog post forthcoming to elaborate on our university’s commitments
- Athletics
  - Complex changes happening in athletics
  - Thank you to Senate and faculty members who have worked on and provided feedback on these changes and challenges
  - A new Faculty Athletics Representative will be appointed this year to serve in a 3 year term to represent WFU to the ACC and NCAA
  - Lawsuits have changed model through which student-athletes are recruited and retained (including House case, NIL rulings, etc. [see

- previous Senate athletics committee reports])
  - ACC has regained stability in ways that are good for WFU
  - ACC remains a strong home for WFU both athletically and in terms of academic strength of our conference peers
  - Athletics is an important part of our institutional identity
  - More changes and realignment are likely to come
  - This is an area in which there may be a need for federal legislation (e.g. antitrust) for long-term stability
  - Stay at the table to maintain options for the university for whatever comes next
  - Revised operating model for athletics to meet financial changes
- University Finances
  - We are in a good place financially
  - Gratitude to Provost Gillespie and EVP/CFO Travisano for chairing budget process
  - Monitor, assess, and develop contingency plans for different financial situations
  - We are, however, in a stable situation relative to other institutions
  - We are less reliant on federal funding and endowment returns (because we are tuition reliant), so we are somewhat insulated from certain financial challenges
  - 5 principles
    - Excellence in all that we do
    - Provide competitive merit pools and benefits
    - Maintain Financial Aid and reduce tuition increases
    - Deeper investments in academics vis-à-vis strategic framework plans
    - Build contingencies to ensure future stability
  - Long-term planning on enrollment instead of being simply reactionary or opportunistic
    - Where do we want and need to be over the next 10 years?
    - Other questions about opportunities and challenges around enrollment growth before beginning planning.
    - Goals have to align in a variety of ways from logistical to matters of principle
- Instead of being paralyzed by uncertainty, approach is to move forward with strategy
  - There is good news and positive momentum and we should not lose sight of that
  - Investments in academic resources and reputation
  - Ongoing investments in space, including Bicentennial Campus Space Planning
  - Near-term space improvements, including transition of Alumni Hall into academic space
  - [spaceplanning.wfu.edu](http://spaceplanning.wfu.edu)
  - Please participate in the feedback process for space planning
  - The BoT wants to know that the space planning process has been informed by faculty and student input
  - Investments in our community
    - Progress on projects around Joel Coliseum, Upper Silas Creek
    - Development of the Grounds, including a new office space
    - [www.visitthegrounds.com](http://www.visitthegrounds.com)
  - Ribbon cutting on new medical campus this summer in Charlotte
  - Over \$120 million raised for scholarships

## - Comments and Discussion

### - Questions for the President:

#### - What is WFU's role as a public leader in the midst of these challenges?

- We're communicating in some ways (e.g. President's blog posts), and looking for other opportunities to communicate our values, but we are being very intentional and careful about when and how.

#### - Teaching and mentoring students is perhaps more challenging than ever and our current circumstances are making this work more challenging. What can we say to our colleagues materially to address this complex situation so that they feel supported and resourced?

- Please share what you've heard and our university strategy. We can't share individual stories about how we've helped individuals

#### - Have there been discussions about impacts to the tenure process with changes to funding, travel etc.?

- Yes, discussions are happening. We know impacts to tenure clocks will be downstream of changes, but they may be different for different people. Administration is aware and will work with faculty to address these challenges. Please reassure colleagues and ask them to reach out to administration with challenges

#### - How do universities and university leadership know when it's best to step forward more publicly in alignment with some of our professional organizations?

- Looking for opportunities to be strategic and to protect vulnerable members of our community. Larger organizations of which we are a part may provide those occasions for more public communication.

#### - Is the threat of losing tax-exempt status a meaningful threat?

- This is not something that appears legally possible by presidential order alone.

#### - Dean of the Medical School recently announced some financial responses chilling activity. What was the process for determining that?

- President has yet to see that particular statement, but position of the medical school as part of a larger hospital and healthcare system is more complex and may have other inputs.
- Medical School is a separate budgetary entity.
- Messaging from Medical School leadership caused significant anxiety among faculty and staff

## 5. New Business

### - Adjourn – by 5:30p

## End notes

### Executive Committee Membership:

- Saylor Breckenridge (College/Sociology) - President
- Steve Virgil (Law) - Vice President
- Ryan Shirey (College/English/Writing Program) - Secretary
- Angie Edwards (Medicine) - Member-at-large
- Raja Chatterjee (Medicine) – Past President
- Mike Cartwright (Medicine) – Chair, Medical School Senators
- Amanda Kaufman (Library) – Chair, University Integration
- Ellen Kirkman (College/Mathematics) – Chair, Fringe Benefits
- Sarah Morath (Law) – Chair, Committee on Academic Freedom and Responsibility (CAFR)
- Jason Parsley (College/Mathematics) - Chair, College Senators
- Lauren Reid (Business) - Chair, Capital Planning
- Katherine Shaner (Divinity) - Chair, Salaries
- Michelle Steward (Business) – Chair, Ad Hoc Committee on the Faculty Handbook
- John Sumanth (Business) - Chair, Athletics