

October 26, 2020

From: Dr. Amy Carr, Western Illinois University; Public University Caucus Chair of the IBHE Faculty Advisory Council (FAC)

To: The IBHE Board

Re: Written Notes for Public Comment

Below are notes I made in preparation for making public comment today, edited for clarity and added to in light of the presentation today on the strategic plan. I am leaving them in a note format, but can write up a more formal text if that would be helpful.

I serve as FAC public university caucus chair, and as a member of the FAC dual credit working group. I am not speaking on behalf of WIU, but out of the rich conversations, work, and worries of FAC over recent years.

I want to share a faculty hope for the emerging state strategic plan for higher education. While it is tempting to focus only on still-to-be-achieved goals (like equity in student access and completion, or increasing the percentage of Illinois residents with higher ed credentials), those goals may be best achieved when the IBHE Board also names what higher education *is* and how to sustain it. Otherwise, aiming for the other goals may undermine the heart of higher education itself.

Specifically, I hope that the IBHE Board will include in its measurable goals for the strategic plan the **importance of scholarship and research, in a variety of fields and disciplines**, as core to the meaning of higher education in service of the common good.

This may seem obvious to mention, but by taking it for granted, we are in danger of losing many fields and disciplines, especially in smaller liberal arts and sciences programs and in professional fields where some are pushing for alternative measures of competency (e.g., for K-12 teacher training).

TWO THREATS TO SCHOLARSHIP/RESEARCH that are relevant to the work of the IBHE:

1. **Use of the IBHE “low-producing” program report**

--state law mandates that universities report regularly about low-producing programs, along with justifications for their preservation or plans for their elimination

--but the IBHE Board set the number of majors a program needed to have to avoid being reported as “low-enrolling” or “low-producing” first at 25 majors, then at 40 majors

--except where administrators chose to defend smaller departments and programs, this report has been used at some public universities to justify eliminating small liberal arts majors.

One example from WIU: the elimination of African American Studies. A few years ago, WIU administration used the “#40” rule to eliminate majors in African American Studies, women’s studies, philosophy, and religious studies. (Other small programs, like physics, were defended.) The aim was to preserve the minors, but the departments were eliminated and philosophy was

placed in the mathematics department, while the faculty remaining from the other programs were placed in a new “Liberal Arts & Sciences” department. Lay-offs ensued, especially during the state budget impasse, and the African American Studies program was reduced from four faculty members to one tenured faculty member. Through his teaching and leading of a large gospel choir, that one remaining tenured AAS faculty member had been an important figure for many black students on campus. But he felt so little support from the past administration that he took another job out of state. The current interim president wants to revive the major in some form, and at protests this fall, the WIU Black Students Association presented a list of demands, including the reinstatement of the AAS major and the requirement that all WIU students take two AAS courses.

2. Dual credit courses taught by high school teachers, and other alternative ways of securing course credit that don't involve faculty members who teach (and do scholarship or research) at 2 or 4 year institutions

There is a direct line from dramatic cuts in funding of public universities in past two decades, corresponding rises in tuition, and the emergence of dual credit as a more affordable option, especially when taught by high school (HS) teachers.

FAC has a dual credit position paper near completion, and ICCB's FAC has already seen and liked our draft. Our emerging position paper highlights many faculty concerns, including loss of academic freedom for community college faculty who teach on HS campuses, community college faculty being fired from a particular HS-located dual credit course for talking about subjects HS students or their parents don't like (like evolution or LGBT issues), and resistance to letting a community college assess instruction by HS teachers. Some of these concerns can perhaps be addressed by better accountability for community college faculty members who offer dual credit courses.

But there is a specific worry the IBHE Board might address in its strategic plan: **outsourcing faculty labor to high school teachers.**

--**increasing the numbers of high school teachers offering dual credit courses means eliminating full-time positions for faculty at 2 and 4 year schools**, especially in the liberal arts & sciences courses that feed into Gen Ed requirements via the IAI (Illinois Articulation Agreement).

--A recent ILACEP (Illinois Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships) dual credit report focuses on policies and proposed legislation that encourages more high school teachers to develop credentials to offer courses for college credit as the path to equity for students.
<https://www.ilacep.com/illinois-dual-credit-report>

--Why doesn't the ILACEP report focus on ways that full-time faculty members at 2- and 4-year institutions might offer dual credit/dual enrollment courses in and for high schools—if early college is such an urgent aim?

POLICY QUESTION FOR THE IBHE BOARD:

Is it important to higher education to continue to have historians, philosophers, geologists, physicists, literary scholars, foreign language scholars, anthropologists, African American studies scholars and

scholars in many other fields who teach in smaller degree programs (including the **fine arts** like music, art, and theater) but historically have served many students through Gen Ed distribution courses?

Is it important to the state to support scholarship and research in these fields—something high school teachers rarely have the time, training, or resources to contribute to?

Is it important for students to have the ability to access the breadth of Gen Ed offerings they can have when they are on an actual college campus?

If the IBHE doesn't support scholarship and research in the liberal arts and sciences, and in all professional fields where alternative competency is arising—**it's not clear what state board agency would do so.**

DIFFERENT NARRATIVES OF EQUITY

1. One narrative is about early and seemingly cheaper access to early college in high school, through dual credit courses taught by high school teachers with often minimal credentials
2. A different narrative about equity emphasizes having a robust K-12 education that allows students to hit the ground running when they arrive on college, with access to college courses taught by faculty members with terminal degrees in their fields, who actively engage in scholarship in those fields

Here equity also means students having time to develop their interests, rather than feeling pressured to pick a narrow pathway before even knowing very much about their options

If students earn their college credits in high school, how likely are they to take courses in African American studies, philosophy, anthropology, art history, or many other fields not usually offered at high school?

Is this loss of breadth equitable?

FACULTY-TAUGHT GEN ED COURSES ARE KEY SUPPORTS FOR SCHOLARSHIP AND RESEARCH

A 4-year degree is not just a collection of major and minor degree programs.

As WIU College of Arts & Sciences dean and philosopher Sue Martinelli-Fernandez argues, **majors form a student's short-term investment;**

the four year degree as a whole—with a liberal arts and sciences foundation—provides the **long-term investment.** It's the grounding for a lifetime of likely career changes.

Gen Ed and wider distribution requirements aren't legacy luxuries, or annoying requirements to knock out of the way; the expectation that all with four year degrees have a foundation in the liberal arts and sciences is key to the meaning for students of higher education as a long-term investment.

And student credit-hour production in small liberal arts programs has depended upon not only majors and minors, but also upon Gen Ed distribution requirements.

Give Gen Ed courses to high school teachers, and you will guarantee the loss of scholarship and research in many fields.

*Side note: I was going to mention the importance of higher education as being not only about workforce development, but also about fostering the ability to be a **global citizen**, and to participate in all of life with more tools for reflection and for **understanding ourselves and the world around us**. But I was glad to see this was already covered in the draft of a vision statement.*

PROPOSAL:

- 1. INCLUDE METRICS FOR A COMMITMENT TO SCHOLARSHIP AND RESEARCH**, including in small fields in the liberal arts and sciences.
- 2. SET LIMITS on how many dual credit courses can transfer to a 2 or 4 year institution** under most circumstances.
- 3. ENCOURAGE FULL-TIME FACULTY at 2 and 4 year institutions to teach dual credit courses**, rather than high school teachers.
- 4. Track unintended consequences** of the rise in high school teacher-taught dual credit courses, including the effects on numbers of full-time faculty at 2 and 4 year institutions in fields covered by dual credit courses.

The Board might study our FAC position papers at <http://www.facibhe.org/>, including two from 2019:

- 1) [Liberal Arts and Size of Programs](#)
- 2) [Program Prioritization and Consolidation](#)

Side note: the state supports independent scholars in many European countries. That may be an alternative “disruptive” route to supporting scholarship and research in fields where the teaching labor is being shifted to high school teachers (although it is hard to imagine US states subsidizing independent scholars). But often researchers/scholars work in teams on projects that are selected by the government, so they lack the opportunity for independent imagination and flexibility that scholars have experienced in a country like the US. Moreover, when the state supports independent scholarship or research directly, students don’t have direct contact with scholars and researchers in the fields they are studying.