



Faculty Advisory Council Illinois Board of Higher Education

At Western Illinois University and via Zoom

April 23, 2023

Approved May 19, 2023

FAC members/alternates attending and their institutions

In person:

Angela Antonou	University of St. Francis
Paul Bialek	at-large (Trinity International University)
Cynthia Boyce	at-large (Lincoln Trail College)
Amy Carr	Western Illinois University
John Cooksey	Harry S. Truman College
Lane Crothers	Illinois State University
Marie Donovan	DePaul University
Dan Hrozencik	Chicago State University
James Marshall	Rockford University
Gay Miller	University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Linda Monge	Frontier Community College
Ken Nickels	at-large (Black Hawk Community College)
Linda Saborio	Northern Illinois University
Shawn Schumacher	at-large (DeVry University-Addison)
Peter Seely	Benedictine University
Melissa Stinnett	Western Illinois University (alternate)
Lichang Wang	Southern Illinois University-Carbondale
Sue Wiediger	Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville

On Zoom:

Chasity Gunn	Elgin Community College
Crystal Harris	Governors State University
Pratima Jindal	Waubensee Community College
Jim Kulich	Elmhurst College (alternate)
Stephen Miko	Sauk Valley Community College
Nataka Moore	at-large (Adler University)
Laura Murdaugh	Kishwaukee College
Farid Peiravian	University of Illinois at Chicago
Sasha Villagrana-Frost	National Louis University (alternate)
Dana Trunnell	Prairie State Community College
J. Matthew Ward	Quincy University

Larry White

Eastern Illinois University

IBHE Members and Staff

Jen Delaney (via Zoom), Public University Faculty Representative to the IBHE Board

Representatives/Institutions not present:

NO REPRESENTATIVE	University of Illinois-Springfield
Julie Clemens	at-large (Illinois Central College)
Gene Dunkley	Greenville University
Laura Laskowski-Ferrell	Saint Xavier University
Mike Phillips	at-large (Illinois Valley Community College)
Manny Rodriguez	Parkland Community College
Brian Vivona	Northeastern Illinois University

The meeting was called to order a little after 9 am by Shawn Schumacher.

Reports

Chair Report

Shawn introduced the day’s agenda. Working groups will need to remember to write a short summary (one-half page to a page) by Monday, May 15 so Shawn can use them for his annual report at the June IBHE meeting. Key for the business meeting will be the nominating committee’s work. Caucuses are asked to assure who will be serving as caucus chair for next year and who will be in the at-large positions for the privates and community colleges. Chairs of caucuses should also provide short summaries about caucus activities – give those too to Shawn by May 15.

Shawn met with Stephanie last week. Most of her staff will be with us in Springfield for our May meeting, when we will hear a guest presentation by Eric Lichtenberger (IBHE Deputy Director of Information Management and Research) and Meg Bates (Director of Illinois Workforce and Education Research Collaborative). They will share a new report not yet released on the outmigration of Illinois students. Marie said that Stephanie called out our work on the equity paper and resources and shared them at a Gateways early childhood conference yesterday. Mike Phillips is in Atlanta for a conference, but sent a summary of some of the bills we need to keep an eye on, such as SB 1488 (educator licensing) and SB 2288 (requirements for Illinois Articulation Initiative major core courses). Marie mentioned a bill that may be getting rid of edTPA tests. Shawn added that caucuses could also discuss which months might be better for our two Zoom meetings next year.

Vice Chair Report

Linda Saborio reported on logistics for May 19 in Springfield at the Illinois Association of School Boards. On Thursday, May 18 we’ll be eating dinner at Obed & Isaac’s. Also for May 18, Mike will set up brief meetings with legislators in Springfield. FAC members can join in for any part of the day. Linda also needs to hear from institutions willing to host an FAC meeting next year.

Secretary Report

Amy Carr reported that she'd received proofreading corrections from Dan on the March minutes.

Report by Jen Delaney, Public University Faculty Representative to the IBHE Board

Jen's book came out!¹ She and Gay Miller attended and made public comments at meetings of the [Illinois Commission on Equitable Public University Funding](#). Jen's general concerns remain. Participants seemed scattered at the last technical working group meetings. Jen highlighted six concerns. The developing proposal of the funding commission doesn't know what to do with differential university missions. If we continue down the path we're on, everything would be funded like a research university. The current proposed approach of the funding commission puts all students in one category, without aggregating the respective needs of undergraduate and graduate students. Jen also has concerns about equity adjustments; it is super important that equity is being forwarded, which signals the values of the state, but the commission lacks clarity about equity. It was just baked into the idea of adequacy; no one can point to which element is a measure of equity. Jen pushed the group to tie the equity measures to the goals of the state and to talk about some of the gaps we have (for Latinx, etc.) and link them to the metrics. For example, the commission could tie the metrics to a goal like reducing the gaps for African Americans 1% a year. On concerns for transfer students: our transfer system is hard to get to, so we are creaming off our [top?] students, rather than helping the rest. Because it is based on K-12 funding, the adequacy formula assumes a local property tax base at the K-12 level with the state filling in gaps; here student-paid tuition is seen as property tax. Jen talked about why that's not okay; the funding approaches are not comparable—tuition is more like consumption, a paid fee, and falls apart when we have voucher systems like Pell and MAP grants. This is concerning in a big category of the funding formula which is currently focused primarily on institutions; we could end up making higher ed in Illinois less affordable. Finally, the current proposed funding formula is still crazy and complex; it's not easy to communicate to educators and legislators. Yet this was the 13th technical working group meeting. Gay was there speaking about research institutions. And at a funding commission meeting, Gay added that they were not appropriately including research (a concern Jen shared with the commission), nor outreach and community engagement, nor the differences across institutions. There is no specificity in the commission's approach yet that accounts for institutional differences, and time is running out with regard to the information they are going to give. Jen is quite concerned about the success of this commission overall and the impact it will have. She is not hopeful.

Marie asked, "Where's the snag?" Is it the wrong people on the commission? The teacher in her wants to know how to educate them to be smarter. Gay said she thinks it's an extremely complicated problem, and they're trying to push it through an analytic model that will make things transparent perhaps, but not appropriate. They do have good people, but the ability to translate those points into the type of approach working with the analytic model—it's like developing EpiModels that end up being way off in potential predictions and then being way off about the unintended consequences. And a final report is **due** in July.

¹ <https://www.aera.net/Publications/Volatility-in-State-Spending-for-Higher-Education>

Dan said he wanted this question answered: what is the process for public review and input before it goes back to the legislature? Any public hearings? Jen said that is a good question, but she has heard nothing about anything public-facing. And she doesn't know if legislative committees *need* to do public review. As a state agency, the IBHE would be required to have it. Gay noted that in public comments you get 3 minutes and no feedback. Jen said the intent is that the commission's formula would become legislation, and feedback is built into that process; but this is very different from the process of going through an executive branch and state agency. Gay does think the commission thinks higher education is woefully underfunded. Then the question is whether we have the political will to step up and spend that level of money.

Guest Presentation by WIU Provost Manoochehr Zoghi

Amy introduced Manoochehr Zoghi as WIU's new Provost, who joined the university last July. He came to WIU after many years at Purdue University in Fort Wayne, where he served as Dean of the College of Engineering, Technology, and Computer Science. He once worked as a structural engineer.

Provost Zoghi asked how many were here at WIU for the first time, and noticed those present were given a [WIU Fact Sheet](#). Provost Zoghi said he enjoys reading FAC position papers. He thanked Amy and Brenda McConnell who meticulously prepared today's events. WIU has two campuses, the residential campus located in Macomb and the metropolitan campus in the Quad Cities. The strengths of the two campuses are quite different. WIU's main campus is general, broader; the QC campus is metropolitan and provides lots of great opportunities connecting with the local industry and community at large. It's the only public 4-year institution in that region, which WIU is trying to capitalize on and grow. The institution provides attributes of a research university but also the small-school feel. The faculty-student ratio is only 13-1. One of the exciting things on Macomb's campus is the construction of a \$120 million, 100,000 square foot performing arts building. The groundbreaking was last September. The building should have a positive impact for the community and university in the future. WIU is committed to shared governance on campus, and also to the vision of a *Thriving Illinois*. Provost Zoghi knows his WIU colleagues do a phenomenal job of realizing that vision, and he is proud to be part of that and to continue to collaborate.

Marie observed that a provost *is* a structural engineer. She was curious about the expansion of WIU's presence in the QC on early childhood. What can we learn about way you've done cross-state relationships with Iowa? Provost Zoghi said that as far as he knows, there are reciprocity agreements across state lines, plus a focus on the underrepresented populations in the QC, like the Hispanic population. The new location is phenomenal—large and accommodating. He added that he uses a student lifecycle flow model. Marie asked: How do you broker those relationships with another state and their higher education system? Melissa Stinnett (WIU's alternate representative to FAC, who teaches in the education program) said she doesn't know much about it. There have been state and federal grants that have helped to create more programs in the QC. The licensure stuff isn't all that different between Iowa and Illinois.

Ken added that Black Hawk is in the QC. It's very difficult; their tuition revenue goes into Scott County in Iowa. There are difficulties in working *with* as opposed to *against* a group. The eastern Iowa block is a

kind of barrier, but Black Hawk has a great relationship with St. Ambrose, which is always willing to work with Black Hawk on licensures. The dual credit side is one of the biggest issues. Iowa is so much more free and open with how they run their dual credit. Davenport is starting everyone in their freshman year of high school towards getting their high school diploma and associates degree at the same time.

Provost Zoghi said he would be happy to get Eric Sheffield (Assistant Dean of the College of Education and Human Services) or Lindsay Meeker (Director of the Center for Best Practices in Early Childhood Education) to connect with Marie about her questions.

Linda S. asked: What opportunities do WIU students have to collaborate with the community, besides the local tavern? Provost Zoghi responded that Chris Merrett will be elaborating on this in his presentation. Chris then noted some of those collaborative opportunities for students: VISTA; internships in local school districts for law enforcement; Future Farmers of America (FFA) creating connections between students at the high school and university levels; among many other entities across campus. Melissa mentioned a new [River Corps](#) educational initiative in rural America. Participants have to get a job and work in a rural school for a certain number of years to qualify. Provost Zoghi added that WIU is revamping its Honors College curriculum, and service-learning and engagement will be an integral part.

Dan pointed out that Illinois is 2nd in the country in the outmigration of high school students. Illinois is losing tuition and talented individuals to colleges out of state. With Provost Zoghi having come to WIU from Indiana, what does he think that Illinois needs to do? Is it just the funding issue? Provost Zoghi replied that at his former institution at Fort Wayne, enrollment folks really targeted Illinois. It is now heartbreaking for him—it didn't make sense. But they are just trying to eat our lunch in Illinois [where the population is much vaster]. We need to create that organic relationship with local K-12 and community colleges. That's what he has been all about. He formed a thinktank with local superintendents to create that synergy between WIU faculty and local parents and kids. He's done this successfully at other places. It's a long-term over short-term strategy.

Sue noticed that GradTrac is in WIU's Fact Facts, and asked what kind of effect it has. How many students are taking advantage of graduating in 4 years? Provost Zoghi (who is relatively new to WIU) is not familiar with GradTrac, but said that retention is the #1 priority for him, because WIU's student attrition has been relatively high over the years, with a couple of exceptions during the pandemic. An enrollment/demographic cliff is projected, so we really need to put extra attention and emphasis on low-hanging fruits: student success and retention. But he has been promoting this notion of student lifecycle flow and how WIU can improve it—now, not just waiting until next year.

Sue said she was curious if students committed to the no-fail contract in a particular course for a faculty member.

Provost Zoghi spoke of OKRs = objectives and key results, including how well they were being addressed over the short term, through conversation on what they are doing every 30 days. They have had three conversations this semester, working with academic college deans and respective faculty and staff. With regard to credit-taking behavior: if students sign up for a certain number of hours, how can we be sure they get to the finish line? Second, how can they improve online? A third OKR concerned graduate students. Sue said that's a really fast time track. Provost Zoghi replied, "Remember, I'm a structural engineer."

J. Matt asked what WIU's two doctoral programs were. The Provost replied that they are Environmental Science (at the QC mostly) and Educational Leadership (for superintendent or principal, Melissa added; an Ed.D.).

Guest Presentation by Dr. Chris Merrett, Executive Director of the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs (IIRA)

Dr. Chris Merrett is Dean for Innovation and Economic Development, as well as the Director of the [Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs](#).² He intended to introduce IIRA, discuss the connection between Illinois' demographic changes and rural economic development, and connect IIRA's work to the 2019 FAC position paper, "[Higher Education Benefits All of Us.](#)" The state and government are doing inadequate work regarding rural economic development (RED).

Chris described the geographic context for rural communities today: depopulation, youth outmigration, an aging population, a digital divide, a declining tax base, health care access issues (like losing access to a cardiologist and OB-GYN services), educational access issues, the loss of a "Main Street economy" and of anchor institutions, and rural and urban manufacturing and workforce development challenges. One slide showed a list of population peaks by county in Illinois. McDonough County (where WIU's Macomb campus is) peaked in 1980. Other counties around (lacking a public university) peaked over a century ago. Chris wonders: have our elected officials not seen this data before? **We've already had a demographic cliff in rural Illinois.** It's sad that there is an urban-biased perspective on the notion of an upcoming demographic cliff. The *Chronicle of Higher Ed* says, "Whoo! We're going to experience a demographic cliff!" But in downstate Illinois, that came a long time ago.

Chris noted that Paul Krugman wrote a *New York Times* article called "Getting real about rural America," with the subtitle, "Nobody knows how to reverse the heartland's decline." ("That's *my* job," Chris quipped). It is painful to read from a Nobel prize winning economist that no one knows what they're doing. Chris showed another article title from the *National Review*: "If Your Town Is Failing, Just Go." He said IIRA is trying to push back against this negative narrative. IIRA tries to identify the assets of rural communities—promote a glass half-full mentality. They **utilize Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)**. Rural populations can't rely on outside people to lift us out—so what are the assets we could recognize and use to a fuller capacity? **IIRA tries to help communities identify their assets. They are inspired by creativity and design models, rather than an underlying psychology of decline.**

How do you change the way that people think? That is the starting point in rural development. IIRA emerged in 1989 as an outgrowth of the farm crisis that was actually a rural development crisis. If you only helped the farmer, you'd miss out that 80% of farmers rely on off-farm income, especially when commodity prices are low. A healthy farming economy needs a healthy, rural, non-farming economy. IIRA has a statewide mandate and a staff of about 22 people. According to a Governor's Executive Order, IIRA is the "State's academic clearinghouse for rural development data and initiatives." Funded by a budget raised externally from various grants, they are a sort of social entrepreneurial entity.

² Slides for Chris Merrett's presentation should become available at <http://www.facibhe.org/documents.php>

IIRA has developed a strategic envisioning program for community development. It begins with strategic visioning in a community that asks itself: Where are we now? Where do we want to be? How do we get there? Once a community has consensus about some community economic development (CED) objectives, IIRA facilitates technical assistance (business planning, feasibility studies, GIS, labor market analysis, etc.), then offers a variety of resources (from workshops to personnel) to implement the community's plan. Through this process, IIRA has helped to get four rural grocery stores up and running. They have shown how rural transportation *can* rely on a demand-response approach rather than a bus coming by a certain time regularly. IIRA has two small business development centers (one on each WIU campus) and a Peace Corps Fellows (PCF) program. Peace Corps alumni may attend WIU to pursue a fully subsidized graduate degree, culminating in being sent out to a rural community for an 11-month, 40 hours a week internship. (IIRA also offers to anyone a Master degree in Community and Economic Development.)

It's almost always the case that community members haven't been asked: where do you want your community to go? IIRA facilitates gathering 100-150 community members to envision. It is easy to make a plan; it is usually painful to implement it—that's what the PCF helps to do. They rely on USDA and AmeriCorps funding, plus the community puts some money in the game—\$5,000-\$15,000. This often meets resistance on city council, but by the end of a PCF's internship, a community might find \$50,000 in the municipality's budget to hire the intern to keep them (e.g., in Mattoon).

IIRA works with a Community Life Cycle Model (growth, development, stagnation, retrenchment, and then either revitalization or stability or decline). They try to help a community re-imagine itself with new quality of life investments. They can't solve all issues (the Cubs-Cardinals division is intractable). But the aim is to get a community with conflicting visions and agendas to coalesce around 3-5 shared goals. IIRA creates a framework in which they get 100 ideas and distill them through a group process down to 3-5 ideas they can address in 4-8 years. They then create a document for a community's strategic vision. For example, Strasburg wanted a restaurant for its town of 500 (under its Entrepreneurship goal). Leadership comes locally, and often comes from places you wouldn't expect. Between 2007 and 2017, Strasburg built an 8-house residential subdivision and a 24-hour fitness center in a former school gym, renovated a community center, created a community foundation, and recruited a gas station/convenience store/restaurant. Chris said, "We're annoying in that we ask for annual reports."

IIRA has worked in 140 communities across Illinois. 90% of IIRA's mapping communities are PCF communities or counties. There have been a wide range of community outcomes, including a childcare complex, the revitalizing of beautiful old downtown buildings, coop co-working spaces, walking paths, and initiatives to draw remote workers to live in a small town.

In addition to outreach, IIRA is trying to do research too. You can see some of IIRA's research publications at their website: <https://www.iira.org/publicationsresearch/>. Some recent reports cover automation's effects on employment, attributes of new and beginning farmers, rural education in charts, metro vs. non-metro differences in coronavirus vaccine refusals, the effect of the opioid epidemic on Illinois' labor productivity, etc. News outlets sometimes utilize their reports (e.g., CNN picked up their Dollar General report).

If communities continue to shrink, how do you measure success? IIRA has done strategic visioning three times in Rushville. An anonymous donor (probably a shy wealthy farmer) dropped \$2 million for a fitness

center. The community then raised that to \$7 million. Rushville still lost 200 people. What does a slightly better place look like? Bigger? More prosperous?

There are state, national, and global forces that are affecting rural communities. Provost Zoghi counts the numbers of grants IIRA produces rather than the demographics. As agriculture becomes more productive with technological changes, fewer laborers are needed. The more rural a county is, the more likely it is to be in decline with respect to population.

The fastest growing segment of Illinois' population is 65 and older. The fastest shrinking segment of Illinois' population is under 20. The rural under-20 cohort is shrinking faster than the urban cohort. State legislators—shouldn't they be all over this? **What state and federal policy changes can address rural and youth outmigration and workforce development challenges?**

Chris then connected to FAC's 2019 position paper: higher education can be a tool to reverse rural outmigration. Higher education can serve as a demographic and economic development catalyst. Chris showed what he was writing in 2019. He has been trying to preach to anyone who listens. (But the only people who do are the people who need a grade.) He understands how the state of Illinois treats businesses; they have a strategy and large investment in business development. The state goes on trade visits, and has trade centers abroad. On business recruitment and retention, the state spends millions of dollars. **In Illinois, we need to be investing in students like we invest in businesses. The IBHE should be doing this and should be 5-10 x more robust and aggressive in what it does.** There was a statewide attempt to diminish higher education during the budget crisis (under Governor Rauner). We need something comparable to statewide tourism plans. **IBHE needs to coordinate with the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity,** communicating why Illinois is better than surrounding states. We have a good product. But Springfield doesn't care about that product. "I get very wound up about this." We should be treating students like we treat businesses—invest in both in the same way. Alabama has a student recruiting office in Chicago (WIU is the Alabama of Illinois). "I wouldn't have been here for 25 years if I didn't think we are doing something good. But it's hard to get people to take higher education seriously as an economic strategy."

Our education funding peaked two decades ago. And state higher education policy is failing downstate and rural Illinois. We should compete for students like we compete for businesses. This is a concrete idea. We could be doing this the way a DCEO does. We have business recruitment and retention—we have people going around and asking what it takes to keep businesses here. The state doesn't fully appreciate that our 18-22 year olds are our future business owners, community leaders. We should be offering—and do offer—a better product for higher ed in Illinois (e.g., better than in Iowa, where he studied). Trying to get people to promote it is the challenge.

Student debt is emptying small towns; the higher the student debt, the more likely they are to leave to find higher paying jobs to pay off their debts. Rural outmigration is rural wealth outmigration.

Besides better funding higher education—at least to 2002 levels—we could also do things at a local level: community foundations. STEM labs, etc. The wealth generated will leave when young people leave. Can you create a community foundation by asking a wealthy family to bequeath ½ of a percent of their estate to a community foundation? If you get multiple people doing that, you can create a nest egg/legacy account for your community. Iowa and Nebraska are far ahead on this—they seeded

counties without community foundations with \$10,000 to start one. A community foundation can apply for grants for STEM labs for high school students, hospital technology, etc.

Illinois could also create Promise Programs that pay young people to stay in downstate communities.

“The town that decided to send all its kids to college.” Galesburg, Peoria, and other larger communities have Promise Programs, with funding from community foundations, wealthy benefactors, and local tax revenue. But there are constraints in how small communities can use their local sales taxes. The state might need to lower the population size at which communities can take advantage of “home rule”. Home rule is power granted by the State to local communities larger than 25,000 residents to have more control over city governance and budgets. Small towns that are too small have limits placed on how they can use local taxes, for example, to fund for Promise Programs. Maybe the state could work to allow communities with populations 15,00 – 25,000 to allow smaller communities to use local taxes this way.

On federal support for rural development: 1) Increase support for USDA-RD programs. Most of the USDA funding is currently spent to increase agricultural productivity, which only accelerates rural depopulation. **They could invest in non-farm RD too—e.g., broadband, water, community facilities, entrepreneurship.** 2) **Immigration reform.** Hispanic immigrants are key for stopping population decline in the Great Plains and Midwest (“I’m an immigrant—full disclosure”). A report from 10 years ago noted this. The communities that extend a hand are going to survive. **A progressive rural development policy is a progressive immigration policy.**

Chris thinks the loss of rural young people is the biggest cause of rural decline. State policies exacerbate this.

Reach out to Chris with questions or for further conversation: CD-Merrett@wiu.edu

Paul asked, “Are Illinois legislators on the same page?” CM: “I’ve not talked to any legislators; I’ve not had a forum. I’ve talked with [State Senator] Mike Halpin in a general sense. But I’d be happy to share this info with legislators. DO IT!” He has shared it with the Farm Bureau and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Opportunity.

J. Matt asked who is producing the IIRA reports. CM: Most are in-house. IIRA has 30 years of research reports. They have been downsized from a staff of 40 to 22.

Pete asked, “For someone like me from a suburban background, what might motivate people in our schools to get involved with this? Such as the Peace Corps angle?” CM: VISTA – rural areas have that too. Chicago is replete with VISTA volunteer opportunities. Some are summer only, some yearlong. Chris’ daughter was in the Food Corps doing school gardening, etc. in San Diego. There’s an education credit with VISTA and health care access—you get up to \$10,000 for a previous student loan or a future tuition payment.

Nataka: “We need to work on this like a business”—that put her in the mindset of how gas companies had to rebrand before the pandemic, since coal is not the way. But it also made her think about how what she didn’t see in the presentation is what young people’s understanding is about what it means to be in a rural space in 2023, especially as it relates to the host of underlying connotations people have--- like social justice. There are different connotations for “rural” and “urban.” Her children wouldn’t apply

to any rural schools because of what it means to cross that cultural divide. CM: The cultural divide is surprising in ways he is still amazed at. Colchester has 1300 people and looks at Macomb as the big bad urban center, 5 miles west. Chris had to wrap his brain around that. In an urban hierarchy, Macomb is different from Peoria, which is different from Chicago. He doesn't have an easy answer for how to get beyond the rural-urban binary; he's not sure we can until you've been out here. There's a movement afoot in downstate Illinois to leave the state [as in: take counties out of Illinois and put them in Indiana or create a new state]. He was in Rushville last night and someone was driving around a truck with a banner that says, "Leave Illinois Without Even Moving." The epicenter for this movement is in the southeast part of the state. That culture divide is real, but you'd be surprised where progressive thinking can be found in rural areas, and retrograde thinking in urban areas. A schism is easy to see and the go-to way we characterize rural vs. urban, but the reality is more nuanced than that. WIU has good faculty-student ratio; Macomb is not Iowa City—which is an oasis in Iowa; Macomb is more purple than red or blue, and it is extremely easy to live in Macomb. He thought he and his wife would be gone fairly soon to Boston (where his wife grew up) or Ontario after they arrived in 1995. He has been here ever since. How does he market that sentiment? He doesn't know. "There's something about it."

Nataka: "I think it [concerns about the urban-rural divide] is still worthy of including and discussing, even if there's no answer. It's at the heart of young people's decisions and their ideas of what rural and urban mean from a social justice perspective. We'll have to tackle that."

Gay: "My sense is the most important aspect of thriving in rural communities sometimes comes down to ONE PERSON—a good leader in those communities. We can provide leadership development for our students in higher education."

Marie said she was at a bridal shower in NYC for someone who married a farm boy from Kansas; they retired back to New York. They sold their family farm to the Chinese. Chinese corporations are buying up farms all over America. They are making housing to bring over people to work, and hiring locals some—because there are no people to work the farms. CM: They're not making any more land, so it's an investment strategy: driving up home prices as conglomerates far removed from rural Illinois are buying up the land and then cash rent to farm it. There is long-standing literature on how farmers behave if they're owning vs. renting the land: if owning – buying locally, running for school board; if renting, the farmers could be living 30 miles away. American venture capitalists do this too. From a rural development perspective, it's someone who is time zones away who may never visit here, and care only about commodity prices. Marie: should there be legislative protection? CM: "I don't have a good answer. USDA is now tracking foreign ownership, so it's an issue. Researchers do talk about it. It's an issue." In the 1940's the Goldschmidt hypothesis was that when one community had people on the sidewalks, buying things, while the next community was dead, the difference was explained by whether or not you have a higher percentage of farmers who own the farms. When you do, you have a more vibrant community than you do with cash rent and absentee owners. But the broader issue is technological change. The person who promoted what GPS can do for farming in Iowa went on to serve on the BOT for the Iowa State University system, and advisor for Federal Reserve ... ultimately, in 1992 he said we just need to automate everything. There were 90,000 farmers in Iowa: if we converted the average farm size to be 200-250,000 acres, Iowa will need only 200 farmers. He was the Undersecretary for Rural Development when he said this. This is why part of IIRA's strategy is to diversify the rural economy.

Cyndi: It takes a leader in a community. She found it interesting Chris had the article about immigrants coming into small turn rural America – benefiting rural communities if they embrace it. She does come from SE Illinois, that part of the state that speaks of secession, and she’s heard in her Crawford County people who complain about immigrants moving into their community, taking away jobs at Hershey and Marathon. This always rubs her wrong. They are taking jobs no one else wants, and can’t retain as many locals. [Statewide] we do have a decline in the birth rate that started in 2008-9, and are battling each other for enrollment at our institutions—but not just in Illinois. Immigrants would balance this. CM: By definition, an immigrant is a risk-taker. Also, the immigration resentment has been going on for a long time, and we forget this. Which state was the first to make English the official language as a response to foreign immigration? Nebraska. Because of the German immigrants. Cyndi: On the cultural difference – the legislators in her part of the state trying to leave – there are some great informative videos that shows what would happen to Illinois without Chicago. She hears this rhetoric among people she works with who say, “Chicago gets all of our money.” There is a lack of education about the facts—how to better educate people in our portion of the state? Our legislators aren’t doing it. CM: It’s just a power grab for them.

CM: There was an SIU-C study that showed that for every tax dollar suburbs give, they get 85-90 cents back. Chicago gets 98-99 cents back. Southern Illinois gets \$1.50 or \$1.75 back. Lane: This is true nationwide. The red states are pure takers. CM: There are more retirees on social security in rural areas. Hating government, hating the other—this is painful.

Amy: IIRA is envisioning from the ground up—unlike the Illinois strategic plan for higher education.

We moved to working groups.

Old Business

Paul moved, Ken seconded approval of the minutes from March 2023. The motion passed.

New Business

Lane is chairing the nominating committee for next year’s officers, and will send an email next week soliciting nominations. Voters will send their ballots via email to all three committee members at the same time (Lane, Joao, and Steve Miko). The election should be concluded by the May 19 meeting.

Dan said he’d agreed to serve on the by-laws committee with Nataka and Ken. Shawn says it was up to them to meet and make recommendations policy-wise at their leisure.

Angela asked if teachers at the Illinois Math and Sciences Academy (IMSA) could attend FAC meetings because they are open to the general public, even if non-members don’t have privileges. The IBHE has said we are not subject to the Open Meetings Act, because we are not a policy-making body. Shawn said we wouldn’t invite IMSA as a member, but welcome them to attend a meeting and see what we do.

Meeting with Senator Mike Halpin

State Senator Mike Halpin represents the 36th Senate district—Macomb, Monmouth, Galesburg, the Quad Cities. He is also the Higher Education committee leader. This is his first term in the Senate; he previously served three terms in the Illinois House. His biggest initiatives have been around labor and employment issues and higher ed issues as well as veterans' affairs. He got his start in 2002 as a staff assistant and driver for Congressman Lane Evans, including district scheduling. He also helped veterans get honors they had never received. This showed him the value of constituent service, even when you can't get the big things done in Springfield or D.C.: solving a tax problem, a driver's license issue, etc.

His district includes three community college systems—Black Hawk, Spoon River, and Carl Sandburg—as well as Knox, Augustana, and WIU, plus some pre/apprenticeship training programs. There is a history of bipartisanship on these issues; Dale Fowler, a Republican, is his co-chair on the Higher Ed committee. They work collaboratively, and have done well this first session. His priorities include developing a plan as a state with regard to workforce shortages: nurses, teachers, STEM field folks. We've been reactive rather than proactive. His goal is to have state agencies work with IBHE to try to put together a program to look ahead five years. Individual colleges are trying to do this, but it is hard to do this alone when faced with immediate pressures about enrollment, maintaining quality faculty, etc. But as a state we have the long-term resources to try to put a plan into place. He is a huge supporter of our public universities, but we need to make sure that *all* of them are successful. He has no other immediate priorities, but is anxious to hear what you might have to say to him about where you think we need to be as a state when it comes to higher education.

Gay: Different schools have different capabilities in setting up long-term plans. Good to hear that you're working to address shifting demographics and employment.

Amy asked about his feedback regarding FAC's early college considerations document. Senator Halpin said he is a strong supporter of programs where we can get people engaged early on, if they have the aptitude and desire. He understands that it creates problems in the out years, and he think there's a way to work through that. The reality is that a lot of these students aren't choosing between dual credit now and community college later; a lot, they don't go to college at all without access to these. There's a line to be drawn there, and in state government he's not sure we've always drawn it in the right place.

Amy asked more. Senator Halpin: Data doesn't support that all credits are good credits. We've heard that some are taking credits not even required by the programs they'll be taking.

Nataka: We had a wonderful presentation on a thriving Illinois. She is wondering—how are you working with other committees to bundle policies and legislation that impact students staying in Illinois? We are bleeding students out of the state. Passing one bill per committee might not be enough. MH: That's a great Q. Unfortunately, in a lot of cases we're *not* doing that. We want to bring in employment security data, etc. On a bill by bill basis, it doesn't happen a lot, although we serve on multiple committees and are familiar with various policy areas, and can try to make parallel tracks harmonious. One bill would allow access to student directory info so our universities could more effectively market to them. Both publics and privates will benefit from that.

Dan mentioned the Illinois commission on public funding and the funding formula, pointing out that many of us here are attending the commission's meetings, and adding public comment. Is there a way to have input into that process to affect what that formula is after the commission hands it off? MH: The short answer is yes. Anything included in legislation will go through our regular committee process. The best place for a voice is probably in the commission now. The legislative process is typically not as rigorous as a task force analysis. A typical bill through committee has a month or two from introduction to passage.

Marie: What is your current position on the renewed push for authorizing Bachelor's programs at community colleges in our state? MH: The systems we have in place are all very complementary. So in the past he has not supported broad access to Bachelor degrees from our community colleges. He is open to the idea of CCs partnering with a public university, but not just opening it up for our CCs to award Bachelor degrees. It's a conversation that he thinks is going to continue.

Shawn: Our state universities have seen three strikes in recent weeks. What are your thoughts on these? MH: As a general matter, at the root of it, he supports faculty and staff's right to bargain over these issues. It's tough when those negotiations don't come to fruition and employees feel a need to exercise that option. But he is fully supportive of that right. And the reality is the state hasn't done its part in funding higher ed adequately. His goal is to at least start the process of reversing that trend. Every faculty and staff member deserves a fair wage and benefits.

Gay: What kinds of work is the legislature thinking of developing around people pipelines for areas of need that take longer—like healthcare, mental health? MH: Incentives like loan repayments or financial incentives to work in a school district for a certain period of time. We didn't have that kind of funding available recently because of the state debt issue. Another creative way: WIU's teacher accreditation approach to shortening the time frame; that's one option. He is not as well-versed in what individual universities are doing, and open to seeing what others are doing that can put a dent in that need.

Nataka: Majors are often connected to the workforce that we want. But one thing we talked about a number of years ago: our sociology, history, ethics, etc. majors are disappearing. STEM needs a human element—an ethics and a human mindset. Are there conversations being had about how to support these majors to be strong in the universities, and do we create a pathway or workforce for those majors to intersect with STEM or other workforce development movements? MH: That's a great Q. When I'm around, yes, we're having those conversations. Workforce needs change over time. Whatever we need in the STEM fields, nursing, or teaching doesn't mean we won't need people to teach the liberal arts. His experience: he went to Roger Williams University in Rhode Island. He was confident he was going to be an architect. But he found the program of study wasn't what he expected, he didn't enjoy it; but he had a political science minor he was thriving with. If he'd gone to a school that was only promoting the workforce side of things, he would not have discovered that. We need to keep that strong. It is hard to start that back up once it's gone.

Amy commented on the connection between the rise in early college course credit and the decline in liberal arts fields. An opportunity like the one he had wouldn't be possible if liberal arts programs close because students are not getting exposed to them through general education courses in their first years of college.

Shawn asked Senator Halpin if there is anything we in FAC can do to help him in his position. Shawn has a good relationship with the IBHE and with the ICCB (Illinois Community College Board). If there's anything Senator Halpin would like him to review, let him know; he'd like to be kept informed as to what's going on. He doesn't attribute anything nefarious to agencies, but they don't necessarily relate to what some of our partners in FAC are working on. So the more information he has, the better for what he thinks is important to faculty.

Working Group Reports

Prior Learning Assessment

Marie reported that they have a solid working statement and their goal will be to submit it for our initial review next month, and get a vote on it in the June meeting. It would encourage all institutions to examine their current policies about PLA as well as converting it to credit, and looking to increase the amount of it that's done to become more relevant to adult students we want to bring to our campuses. It also addresses the loss of PL credit in transfer. Other states are developing these.

Angela: Is this an effort done collaboratively across the institutions? Or is it primarily institution by institution? Marie: It's so idiosyncratic to institutions. Illinois seems to award the least amount of PL credit. PL credit is being treated like IAI (the Illinois Articulation Initiative, Illinois' transfer policy) in some states, with review panels. Our equity-focused populations are most affected.

Marie: A colleague and she discovered that until this February, community colleges couldn't evaluate any student's PL credit until they'd had 15 student credit hours. This made no sense; it's those courses that would be exempt. It's now out of the rules. Marie and a colleague wrote the language for the bill, and it finally passed in early February.

Gay: This topic is the wild West. The more your proposal feels less this way, the more traction it will get. Marie: You need to build PL credit into your articulation agreements. Start that way. They did that in Ohio—started out with the one-offs, now it's a statewide system. In the end, institutions had to be forced.

Equity

Paul reported that they put together a framework for how to construct equity plans. What do we do next with them? Not everyone is convinced we need these equity plans. Why *is* it in the best interest of society? We could also offer webinars. What does the IBHE want done with them? These are things we might do next year.

Nataka said she is on the IBHE equity working group. They are thinking about equity as opposed to justice, and how equity is defined is very individual focused, not rooted in community impact. It is not focused on justice that decreases inequity to begin with, as opposed to graduation rates and debt reduction.

Student Debt and Affordability

Pete reported. He noted that many students are working full-time jobs. Today we had the best speaker he'd ever seen in his time with FAC. Linda said in their working group meeting that we may want to consider the connection between higher ed and community development as a working group. They saw it as a corollary to what they might do. We tend to view Illinois as Chicago and "the rest of the state." So Pete was inspired by what Chris was saying about initiatives for building up towns to make it more desirable for students to stay home. You get idealistic, affect your little part of the earth—and then boom, you fail. It doesn't have to be quite that way. They were looking hard at incorporating what Chris was presenting. They also continued to talk about Promise Programs and help for the middle class, but also this grassroots rural initiative—rather than just focusing on urging the Governor to get more money to the institution.

Someone added that we should have a "Pete and Popcorn" event to watch a documentary he did.

Student/Faculty Mental Health

Sue reported that she and Nataka worked on an edited down version of their PowerPoint that is shareable. Their Institutional Research Boards are still thinking about it, and have questions.

Amy mentioned that she wrote a resolution for the UPI House of Delegates meeting in late March that urged UPI chapters to work with the resources of this working group to promote education and policy initiatives about faculty mental health. This resolution passed resoundingly.

Early College and Online/Remote Learning

Amy reported that they focused on talking about further steps with the "Early College: What to Consider?" document, including translating it into Spanish and ways to encourage its use. Amy plans to join John Cooksey in his office at Truman to be available to respond remotely to any IBHE Board questions about the document at the June Board meeting. Thus far the reception we have heard from various constituencies has been positive and appreciative.

Amy added that she wrote another resolution for the UPI House of Delegates meeting that urged UPI to work to modify the Dual Credit Quality Act to be explicit about academic freedom expectations for dual credit courses being the same as they would be when taught on a college campus. The resolution passed with little opposition.

Linda S. said (or someone said *for* Linda?) that she might have someone in her Spanish program who could help to translate the Early College Considerations document. Cyndi said they recently began planning to limit the number of dual credit courses they offer at Cyndi's school to various kinds of social sciences and other courses that fit with the General Education Core Curriculum (GECC). They are taking financial aid into consideration because so many dual credit classes there have financial aid implications. Taking a drafting class as dual credit isn't wise; it isn't going to transfer. But their parents think it's great. The list of acceptable dual credit courses is still in process and there is lots of disagreement on it. Linda [S.?] said a community college in her area is starting to limit it as well.

Higher Ed Funding

Dan reported that they have major concerns still with the commission on equitable funding. He recapped earlier concerns that Jen had raised. It's also not clear how this formula could be adjusted over time. The formula may increase HE funding, but it's not clear if it will address state goals. One goal Gay mentioned is a 70% graduation rate within six years, and looking at how allocations are spent by each institution. Dan doesn't think any state meets that level. No state has 60% of HE degrees by 2025, a goal a few years ago. Dan said what that meant to him was that college will become like high school. Gay: would it make a difference to employers, in terms of how they view the rigor of the degree? Dan: It may not attract new businesses. James Marshall: It may help with the debt issue, even if the quality of the degree hasn't gone up.

Caucus Reports

Community College Caucus

Cyndi reported that they had already decided who will be chair: Cyndi again, with Laura M. as co-chair. John will serve at-large to 2027. On months to Zoom for the next academic year: their opinion was that December and January are the best options. The third Friday usually falls in January during the first week of the semester. The December FAC meeting happens during finals and before holidays. But they'll do what everyone else wants to do. Pratima said that Waubensee CC can host next year's April meeting. John will see if Truman can host in June 2024. Laura said that Kishwaukee could possibly host in September or February/March. Their caucus also talked about ChatGPT. Kishwaukee has a new policy about AI. They talked about how institutions are going to respond to ChatGPT. A publisher had sent Cyndi something about how using ChatGPT was good as instructors. Ken brought up something the IAI Math panels are considering about proctoring math exams. They also discussed co-requisites again.

Pratima asked about the bill on IAI approved by both the House and Senate and the requirement for offering 4 courses for each IAI major. Dan said that BARD (Google's AI engine) doesn't use the internet to create its content. Marie had been watching videos on how to beat the AI detectors. Angela asked us to share AI policies with each other, maybe in Canvas. But people have trouble getting into Canvas. Shawn said that the FAC Ex Co will talk about it.

Private/Non-Proprietary Institutions Caucus

Paul reported that they talked about who will be chair, who is/not coming back.

Public University Caucus

Dan reported that the public caucus thought that we'd be less productive doing two Zoom meetings in a row. Someone also had raised the possibility that ADA may require accommodating Zoom access. Ex Co will need to discuss this. Dan will serve as chair again next year, Farid vice chair. We need reps from UIS and NEIU. The caucus also wondered: what happens when someone from the publics doesn't attend? This is a by-laws issue to talk about. They then talked about strike reports. Lane noted that the Texas legislature recently eliminated tenure for all new hires at their universities.

Shawn thanked Lane and the nominating committee. He said that Mike Phillips will be sending out an email regarding the Thursday advocacy day in Springfield in May. Our May meeting will be at the Illinois Association of School Board offices on May 19. He thanked Amy and WIU for hosting.

Ken made a motion to adjourn; Paul seconded. The meeting ended sometime after 2:30 pm.

Minutes written by Amy Carr, FAC Secretary.