

ALERT!

Graduate education at WMU

Jon Neill, Grievance Officer

Paul T. Wilson, President

WMU-AAUP

On May 11, as part of the meeting of the Faculty Senate in the Fetzer Center, the Provost will announce her decisions regarding the graduate curriculum at Western. The following brief, historical overview of graduate education and student and faculty numbers at Western is intended to inform and contextualize our discussions after the Provost's presentation.

The Overview

On August 1, 1985 Dr. Diether Haenicke became President of Western Michigan University. He continued to serve as president until July 31, 1998. At the time of his appointment, WMU was classified by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching as a Doctoral I institution. Shortly after taking office, Dr. Haenicke announced that he intended to move the University to a higher Carnegie Classification. His ultimate goal was to transform Western into a Research II institution. By the time Dr. Haenicke left office, Western had become a Doctoral I institution, and his successor, Dr. Elson Floyd, was charged by the Board of Trustees to take Western to Research II status.

At that time the criteria for a Research II ranking were a full range of baccalaureate programs, at least 50 doctoral degrees awarded each year, and between \$15.5 and \$40 million in federal research grants. On January 22, 1999, Dr. Donald Thompson, WMU Vice President for Research, informed the Board of Trustees that the University had met the criteria for classification as a Research II institution. However, in 2000 the Carnegie Foundation changed its classification system, replacing the doctoral and research categories with Doctoral/Research Universities - Extensive and Doctoral/Research Universities - Intensive. To be placed in the former category, a university needs to offer a wide range of baccalaureate programs and award at least 50 doctoral degrees per year across at least 15 disciplines. This put Western into the same category as the University of Michigan, Michigan State, and Wayne State.

The push to Research II status dramatically changed the culture and curriculum at Western. When Dr. Haenicke took office in 1985, there were a total of 8 doctoral and Ph.D. programs at Western. But in 1990, this number began to increase. Two new Ph.D. programs were added in 1990 and during the following five years, another 11 Ph.D. programs were started. Currently, the University has 29 Ph.D. or doctoral programs. Table 1 lists our Ph.D. and doctoral programs with their inception dates.

The number of masters programs has also increased dramatically since 1985. Table 2 lists the masters programs that were added after President Haenicke took office.¹ Between 1987 and 1995, 14 new masters programs were added to Western's curriculum. Subsequently, another 12 programs were put into place.

Thus, by any measure, there was a significant increase in what President Bailey now likes to call Western's platform of graduate programs, or Western's graduate program portfolio.

The third table below shows how both undergraduate and graduate enrollment have changed since 1985. Clearly, the increases in enrollment between 1985 and 1990 were nothing short of phenomenal. In that five year period, the number of undergraduates rose by 29.2% while the number of graduate students increased by 27.4%. Recently, however, the number of graduate students has been decreasing, even more so than the number of undergraduates. The count for this academic year puts the number of graduate students at pre-1985 levels. Table 4 gives total enrollment for selected state schools, for comparison purposes.

Table 5 shows how the size of the faculty has changed since 1985. Despite the huge increase in the University's enrollment during the 14 year period that Dr. Haenicke served as president, the size of the faculty remained constant. The number of faculty grew significantly after that, though in large part that was due to an increase in the number of term appointees.

The sixth table shows how the University's state appropriation has changed over time. For comparison, the appropriations of selected state universities are listed. The per student appropriation is shown in parentheses, below the total appropriation. Table 7 shows selected student/faculty ratios since 1985.

Analysis

There are a number of very interesting features in these data. First, the huge increase in the graduate student population at Western occurred before the expansion of graduate education at the doctoral/PhD. level. In fact, the number of graduate students was virtually the same before and after more than a dozen new Ph.D. programs were up and running. Hence, enrollment at the masters' level may have been negatively affected by the addition of Ph.D. programs.

Second, it is clear that the graduate curriculum was expanded on the backs of faculty and our students - both undergraduate and graduate.

The data in Tables 3 and 5 reveal a striking contrast between enrollment and numbers of faculty. Although Western enrolled 5574 more undergraduate and graduate students in 1995 than in 1985 (Table 3), an increase of about 26.5%, the number of tenured and tenure track faculty remained virtually constant from 1986 to 1996.

It wasn't until the 1998-99 academic year that the number of faculty at Western was significantly above the number in 1986-87, and that increase resulted from the addition of 50 term faculty.

¹ Two MA programs started in 1985.

And it was only in 2000-2001, at a point when enrollment was beginning to decline, that Western began to increase the numbers of tenured and tenure track faculty. Consider, then, Table 7, which shows Student/Faculty Ratios over 20 years, in terms of both tenured and tenure track faculty and total faculty. These data show clearly that over the last 15 years, Western has significantly reduced its capability to meet the instructional needs of students.

Western's huge jump in enrollment can be attributed to its traditionally low student/faculty ratio (27:1 in 1985). Western's identity used to be that it was the university in Michigan that parents could have confidence in because their children would receive all the help they needed from the faculty, both in the classroom and outside it, to succeed in university. The dramatic changes in student/faculty ratio during the last 20 years have undermined Western's most obvious strength.

Many among the faculty suspect that because of the budget and enrollment declines, the Graduate and Undergraduate Program Reviews have been undertaken to justify Western in moving to downsize the faculty and increase the workload on those faculty who remain. The data in Table 7 suggest that any further erosion of our ability to meet the instructional needs of our students (by more increases in student/faculty ratio) could, in fact, exacerbate our enrollment declines.

Third, it is obvious from Tables 3 and 4 that there were huge increase in revenues that resulted from the increase in enrollment. These increases invite a most serious question: to what purpose were those increased revenues put?

Enrollment increased and, thus, revenues increased. Because the majority of the increase came from tuition, it's arguable that some significant portion of the new revenues should have been spent on improving our students' educational experiences. It is also obvious from Tables 3, 5 and 7 that although there were eventual increases in the numbers of tenured and tenure track faculty (some of which are accounted for by those Faculty Specialists who do not actually teach, and whose numbers, therefore, make the student/faculty ratios look better than they really are), the increased number of faculty do not come close to achieving the 27:1 student/faculty ratio in 1985-1986.

Whatever those funds were spent on, the spending has not served to make Western competitive for the highest quality students. It is sad to note that in 1995, only 11% of our freshman class graduated in the bottom half of their high school graduating classes, compared to 27% in 2004.²

Fourth, the graduate student population has dropped more, percentage-wise, than the undergraduate population. Right now, Western is educating fewer graduate students than in 1985. There are likely multiple reasons for the decline in enrollment at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. However, despite President Floyd's commitment to increasing the size of Western's faculty, our analysis shows that those increases were dramatically outpaced by enrollment. The addition of roughly 100 tenured and tenure track faculty since 1985 amounts to a 14% increase (base 700). The addition of 150 board appointed full time faculty is a 19.5% increase (base 770). But between 1985 and 2000, undergraduate enrollment grew by 42.7% and graduate enrollment grew by 17.5%. Thus, if student-faculty ratios are taken by prospective students as one indicator of the quality of instruction delivered by an institution, there is a new explanation, unacknowledged by the administration, for Western's recent precipitous decline in enrollment.

² The source of these data is the U.S. News & World Reports' annual "America's Best Colleges" report, the 1996 and 2005 editions.

Fifth and last, it is not clear that the State of Michigan has been particularly willing to fund the move to Research II status. Basing our computations on Table 6, we find that between 1990 and 2000, Western's per student state appropriation increased by about 40%. Ferris State (68%) and Michigan State (46%) had bigger percentage increases over this decade, while the increases for Central (6.4%), Grand Valley (33%), and the University of Michigan - Ann Arbor (28.6%) were less than Western's. The legislature's funding pattern for institutions does not seem to have been directly linked to the Carnegie classification. In 1990, compared to the University of Michigan, Western's per student funding was 42%, while Michigan State's was 69.6%. But in 2000, again with UM as the benchmark, Western had dropped to 34% while MSU had risen to 89.7%.

Dr. Haenicke put considerable time and effort, as did his successors, into trying to convince the state legislature that Western's curriculum is unique and therefore, that Western should be funded at a higher level than universities such as Central, Grand Valley, etc. While Western is not close to Michigan or Michigan State, our per student appropriation is still substantially greater than Central's and Grand Valley's. Our Presidents have been successful at maintaining that differentiation. However, if the basis for this difference is the breadth of Western's curriculum, there has to be concern about the impact of drastic changes in our curriculum on our state appropriation. If the Provost's decisions about program changes significantly reduce the breadth of our offerings, why would the state not reciprocate, then, by further reducing our funding?

On May 11, although the Senate meeting starts at 4:30 pm in the Fetzer Center, it is at 5:15 pm that the Provost will begin announcing the changes in the graduate curriculum that she will recommend to the Board of Trustees. All of you who are concerned about the future of our University should make every effort to attend this meeting. If this faculty believes that the changes the Provost is going to announce will be detrimental to the long-term health of this University, very quick action must be taken. It will be incumbent upon us to explain very carefully and compellingly why these changes will be detrimental to Western, and to provide a template for structuring the University's graduate and undergraduate curriculums. Opposition that is not firmly linked to securing the future of the University can easily be written off and dismissed as self-serving. And so if we are dismayed by the changes that the Provost will be announcing on May 11, it is absolutely necessary that we construct an alternative model for our University, that we present to all who need to know about it a vision for our University consistent with the role that post-secondary education must play in shaping the future of Michigan. But we must undertake this mission immediately, before the Board enacts these recommendations in July. After that, it may be too late.

Please join us in attending the Provost's announcement on May 11.

Table 1**Ph.D./Doctoral Programs at WMU¹**

Department	Type of program	Year
Counselor Ed	Doctoral/Ph.D.	1964/1998
Special Ed	Doctoral	1965
Ed Leadership	Doctoral/Ph.D.	1966/2004
Mathematics	Ph.D.	1966
Science Ed	Ph.D.	1966
Sociology	Ph.D.	1966
Psychology	Ph.D.	1974
Public Admin	Doctoral/PhD.	1979/1999
Math Ed	Ph.D.	1990
Physics	Ph.D.	1990
Geosciences	Ph.D.	1991
History	Ph.D.	1992
Political Sci	Ph.D.	1992
Statistics	Ph.D.	1992
Computer Sci	Ph.D.	1993
English	Ph.D.	1993
Biological Sci	Ph.D.	1994
Economics	Ph.D.	1994
Mechanical Eng	Ph.D.	1994
Comparative Rel ²	Ph.D.	1995
Industrial Eng	Ph.D.	1995
Counselor Psych	Ph.D.	1998
Electrical Eng	Ph.D.	2002
Health Studies	Ph.D.	2002
Audiology	Doctoral	2003
Eval, Res, & Meas	Ph.D.	2003
Evaluation	Ph.D.	2003
Spanish	Ph.D.	2003

¹ This information, and the information on master's education, was provided by Ron Davis, Vice Provost.

² Admissions to the Ph.D. program in Comparative Religion were suspended in 2002.

Table 2**Masters Programs Added to Western's Curriculum: 1986-Present**

Department	Field	Year
Educ Studies	Educ Technology	2002
Educ Studies	Eval, Res, & Meas	2002
Educ Studies	Sociocult Foundations	2002
Fam Cons Sci	Career & Tech Ed	1995
TLL	EPD:Early Child Ed	1997
TLL	EPD:Elem School T&L	1997
TLL	EPD:Reading Specialist	1997
TLL	EPD:Middle School	1997
Art	Art Education	2004
Comp Religion	Comp Religion	1990
Philosophy	Philosophy	1989
Spanish	Spanish	1990
BLVS	Teach Child with Visual Impair	1998
BLVS	Rehab Counseling	1995
English	Creative Writing	1991
Fine Arts	Performing Arts Admin	2002
Mathematics	Computational Math	1987
Engineering	Materials Sci	1995
Indust Manufac	Eng Mgmt	1987
Indust Manufac	Manufac Eng	1987
Physician Asst	Physician Asst	1998
Civil Constr	Construct Mgmt ³	1997
Elec/Comp Eng	Comp Eng	1995
Elec/Comp Eng	Elec Eng	1987
Indust Eng	Indust Eng	1988
Mech/Aero Eng	Mech Eng	1987

Total numbers of masters programs added: 26

³

This degree was replaced with an MSE in civil engineering in 2005.

Table 3

Enrollment at Western, Graduate vs. Undergraduate: 1985 - 2000

Year	Undergraduate	Graduate	Total
1985	15,943	5,020	20,963
1990	20,598	6,397	26,995
1995	20,187	6,350	26,537
2000	22,758	5,901	28,659
2005	21,434	4,805	26,239

Table 4

Total Enrollment at Selected Michigan Public Universities: 1990-2004⁵

YEAR	CMU	FSU	GVSU	UM	MSU	WMU
1990	18286	12037	11725	36391	44307	26989
1991	17812	12421	12412	35343	42790	27901
1992	17268	12071	12736	35476	39138	27281
1993	23998	11165	13384	36845	39743	26555
1994	23390	10258	13553	36543	40254	25673
1995	23575	9767	13887	36687	40647	26537
1996	24249	9495	14662	36525	41545	25699
1997	24747	9468	15676	36995	42603	26132
1998	25595	9651	16751	37197	44318	26575
2000	26845	9847	18569	38103	43366	28657
2001	27797	10930	19762	38248	44227	28931
2002	27919	11074	20407	38972	44937	29732
2003	27758	11821	21429	39031	44542	29178
2004	27683	11803	22063	39533	44836	27829

⁵ These data were taken from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) by Susan Esman, the Chapter's administrative manager. This data base is maintained by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

Table 5**Faculty employed at WMU, 1986-97 through 2005-06⁶**

Year	Tenured & Tenure track	Term	Total
86-87			770
90-91			778
95-96	701	48	749
96-97	704	58	762
97-98	707	75	782
98-99	697	125	822
00-01	726	124	850
01-02	762	136	898
02-03	797	141	938
03-04	797	136	933
04-05	814	112	926
05-06	806	68	874

Table 6

State Appropriations for Selected Michigan Universities: 1985-2005
Millions of dollars
(Thousands of dollars per student)

Year	CMU	FSU	GVSU	UM	MSU	WMU
1985	42.2	30.9	19.1	210.6	175.1	64.8
1990	56.8 (3,104)	39.8 (3,306)	28.0 (2,388)	265.9 (7,307)	225.3 (5,084)	83.0 (3,074)
1995	64.1 (2,719)	44.3 (4,536)	37.2 (3,177)	288.7 (7,869)	255.7 (6,291)	97.6 (3,683)
2000	88.5 (3,302)	54.7 (5,555)	59.1 (3,177)	358.2 (9,401)	321.2 (7,407)	123.9 (4,317)
2004	79.9 (2,886)	49.0 (4,151)	57.9 (2,624)	320.7 (8,112)	347.4 (7,748)	110.8 (3,981)
2005	80.1	48.6	61.1	316.4	345.5	109.7

⁶ The counts for 86-87 and 90-91 are based on computer printouts listing bargaining unit members stored at Montague. The counts for the other years come from Human Resources.

Table 7

Student/Faculty Ratios 1985-2006⁷

Year	S/F Ratio Ten/TenTrack	S/F Ratio Total Faculty
1985-1986		27.2:1
1990-1991		34.7:1
1995-1996	37.9:1	35.4:1
2000-2001	39.5:1	33.7:1
2005-2006	32.6:1	30.0:1

⁷ Based on data in Tables 3 and 5.