

MINUTES

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS AND ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN INDIANA BOARD OF TRUSTEES

September 4, 2025

The Academic Affairs and Enrollment Management Committee of the University of Southern Indiana Board of Trustees met on Thursday, September 4, 2025, in the Griffin Center on campus. Present were Committee Chair John M. Dunn and Trustees Ronald D. Romain '73 and Christina M. Ryan. Trustee Christine H. Keck was absent. Also in attendance were President Steven J. Bridges '89 M'95 and Provost Shelly B. Blunt.

Chair Dunn called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m.

1. TRANSFORMING TEACHER EDUCATION THROUGH INNOVATION

Committee Chair Dunn called on Provost Blunt who provided the background information for Teacher Education's interest in the Science of Reading (SoR), a literacy initiative that is currently legislated by the state of Indiana and supported through Lilly Endowment, Inc. Dr. Blunt introduced Dr. Tori Colson, Professor of Education and Assistant Dean of the Pott College of Science, Engineering, and Education, to highlight how Teacher Education champions this initiative through its prep programs and how the University utilizes innovation to provide support.

The state of Indiana began requiring all higher education Teacher Education programs to integrate the Science of Reading into teacher preparation by July 1, 2024. The University received a three-year, \$1 million grant created by Lilly Endowment, Inc. to support schools in meeting the state's requirements. As a result, the University of Southern Indiana established the USI Literacy Center, located in the Rice Library on campus. The Literacy Center consists of two main parts; the Interactive Classroom which provides resources to support literacy instruction, and the Screagle Simulation Lab where students practice teaching with live avatars in a safe controlled environment.

In addition to the USI Literacy Center, the University was able to provide direct support to students by issuing vouchers for the Praxis 5205 literacy exam. This eliminated the financial barriers to taking the exam which is now required for all Early Childhood, Elementary, and Special Education graduates as of July 1, 2025. Additionally, USI supplied Keys to Literacy vouchers providing professional development in the five pillars of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, as well as purchasing Praxis study books for students to borrow and use free of charge.

With the opening of the USI Literacy Center, Teacher Education was able to build a learning infrastructure that changed how students learn through study sessions for the Praxis 5205 that provided materials, expert instruction and a supportive environment. The Literacy Center makes textbooks, children's books and research-based instructional tools available to students. This program has experienced unprecedented impact on the state in just two years. Currently, there are 321 students enrolled in USI's Teacher Education and secondary programs, graduating approximately 100 students annually with many staying in the region to teach. USI is the only university in Indiana offering teaching simulations through a partnership with the University of Mississippi.

The Screagles Simulations allows students to practice teaching lessons and parent-teacher conferences in realistic, risk-free environments using Mursion software. The university also uses GoReact, a video-based system that records students teaching or tutoring. Faculty and peers provide feedback, allowing students to improve their skills before ever entering a classroom. GoReact uses AI features to analyze patterns, highlight strengths and points out areas for growth.

Dr. Colson concluded her report by providing a live Mursion demonstration for the Trustees. She explained how avatars are used to represent students in the classroom, with the avatars driven by trained actors who respond according to different teaching approaches. The Trustees were encouraged to interact with the student avatars

by asking questions and engaging with the simulation that was uploaded to BlackBoard. Dr. Colson explained how Artificial Intelligence is able to provide effective feedback that is specific, time-stamped, and constructive guidance to develop confident, skilled educators ready to meet today's classroom challenges.

2. INTRODUCTION OF NEW ACADEMIC LEADER

Chair Dunn called on Provost Blunt, who introduced Dr. Teresa Beam, Dean of the Pott College of Science, Engineering, and Education to share her vision for the college.

Dr. Beam's initial plan is to formulate a strategic plan for the college that aligns with Academic Affairs Strategic Focus Areas to deliver innovative programs and embedded career-relevant experiences, support faculty and staff through growth and development using training and incentives, and to build and strengthen collaborations with external stakeholders. Dr. Beam's overarching vision for Pott College is to build partnerships and service in the community which prepares students for their professional careers so they positively contribute to society and provide growth for their communities.

3. ACADEMIC AFFAIRS PROGRAM AND POST-TENURE REVIEW UPDATE

Provost Blunt provided an update on the work being done to address the requirements of Indiana House Enrolled Act 1001. The first component of the legislation requires a post-tenure review of faculty. Guidelines were approved by the Board of Trustees at its July 2025 meeting. The University is now focused on finalizing the timelines for implementation with plans for the first post-tenure reviews to occur in the 2026-2027 academic year.

The second component of the legislation requires the University post all course syllabi on the University web site. On July 1, 2025, USI launched a dedicated web page on our website to house all course syllabi. All courses that started in August 2025 are currently posted at the site. The page will be updated again in October to reflect the second start of the fall semester and continue to be updated at the start of each term.

The third and largest component of this legislation under new Indiana Code is the review of programs to justify their continuance if they do not meet graduation thresholds set by the Indiana Commission for Higher Education (ICHE). Three-year average graduation thresholds have been established for each degree type. Programs which fall below the threshold are required to submit a plan to the ICHE, that includes actions such as eliminating programs, merging or consolidating programs, or suspending programs with the intent to consolidate. This ultimately will impact USI's overall ability to grow programs that generate interest and revenue for USI. The colleges and program directors and chairs are actively developing plans for those programs under review.

There being no other business, the Committee meeting adjourned at 10:28 a.m.