

MEETING AGENDA

Attendees: Oana Armeanu, Andrew Buck, Amy Chan Hilton, Sara Christensen Blair, Charles Conway, Brian Crose, Cindy Deloney-Marino, Erin Dennis, Jay Dickerson, Wes Durham, Trent Engbers, Renee Frimming, Sukanya Gupta, Emily Holt, Jenn Horn, Marna Hostetler, Rick Hudson, Paul Kuban, Denise Lynn, Kyle Mara, Tony Maria, Amie McKibban, Chad Milewicz, Simone Nance, Tom Noland, Mary Phillips, Kenny Purcell, Erin Reynolds, Nick Rhew, Todd Schroer, Chase Smith, Jack Smothers, Ken Walsh, Paul Weimer, Shelly Blunt.

I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM LAST MEETING

The meeting minutes from October 29, 2025 were approved.

II. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Council of Chairs website is available at <https://www.usi.edu/council-of-department-chairs-and-program-directors>

III. INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

a) Updates from Provost Office, Dr. Shelly Blunt

1. Under-Threshold Program Legislation

- a. State requirements for under-threshold, ramp-up, and permission-to-continue programs continue to evolve. While the process originally seemed transparent with clear timelines, it has become less predictable.
- b. A new *Civic Engagement* requirement has been added for all application types. Dr. Purcell has drafted a Core 39-aligned Civic Engagement statement that can be included in each program. All new program proposals will require this content and it will likely factor into future program reviews.
- c. On December 1, the Provost and Deans met with the Commission. Numerous questions were raised, but the Commission indicated that required components are mandatory and that no further guidance would be provided. No clarification was offered regarding the process or outcomes if proposals are denied.
- d. The Provost hopes to meet with USI's local Commission representative to further discuss program impact on Evansville and the Southwest Indiana region.
- e. It is unclear whether program decisions will be made at the March Commission meeting. Decisions will take effect in Fall 2026, with implementation expected in Fall 2027.
- f. Applications for Fall 2026 are already open and student recruitment is underway. USI is still committed to teaching out any under threshold programs cut by the commission selected by incoming students for Fall 2026.
- g. There will be a very short implementation window for Curriculum, Banner, and the Bulletin.

2. Additional Meeting with the Commission

The Provost has requested another meeting with the Commission specifically to discuss new academic programs.

3. Teacher Credentialing Meeting – December 11

A meeting with the Commission is scheduled for December 11 regarding teacher credentialing, likely related to Dual Credit instructors. Currently, USI requires dual credit instructors to meet the same credentialing as faculty or adjuncts. There may be a push statewide to lower these standards.

4. AI Planning Grant

USI has been awarded a \$150,000 Lilly Planning Grant focused on AI. Congratulations to the team who completed the application on short notice before the December 1 deadline.

A second cycle for planning grants (up to \$8.5 million) is due May 1. Dr. Blunt will create a committee for this opportunity, and interested faculty should submit their names to her.

5. Winter Recess Schedule – December 2025

Monday, December 22, 2025 (the final workday before winter recess), will *not* be designated as a holiday. Faculty and staff must use vacation time if they will not be on campus.

The university will reopen Monday, January 5. The University Meeting will be held Wednesday, January 7, followed by workshops. Faculty attendance is expected.

6. Watermark – Spring Updates

a. FAR workflows are live and due to the Provost's Office by **January 31**.

b. Expedited Reviews and Spring Reappointment workflows will open soon.

c. Dr. Chan Hilton will offer Watermark workshops during the January sessions.

7. Honorary Degrees

Beginning this spring, USI will resume awarding honorary degrees. The committee responsible for these recommendations has been reactivated. Honorary degrees will only be awarded during Spring Commencement.

8. Alumni Service Award Nominations

Nominations are now open for the Alumni Service Award. The selected recipient will serve as the Spring 2026 Commencement Speaker.

IV. OPEN ITEMS

- a) Questions regarding Under Threshold Program Legislation
 - a. There is currently no information about which programs other universities may be eliminating.
 - b. For language programs—identified as potential areas of concern due to low enrollment—there is discussion about forming a consortium. Each university would continue to offer Spanish locally, while other languages would be provided through shared online offerings taught by faculty across participating institutions.
 - c. There is concern about programs with fewer than 10 students. Programs in designated “high-need areas” may face less risk.
 - d. Commission staff are relatively new, and institutions are still learning how they operate and how decisions are being made.
 - e. Questions were raised about how potential program cuts could affect the core curriculum (e.g., language requirements). Dr. Blunt suggested that it may be an appropriate time to review Core 39 after the HLC accreditation visit.
 - f. There was discussion about the timing of under-threshold decisions and potential impacts on summer workflows. Curriculum Committee work may be required during the summer—with possible stipends—and revisions to the program modification process may be needed to align with under-threshold requirements.
- b) Question regarding Title II updates.
 - a. Brian Crose provided an update on Title II requirements. This expanded version of Section 508 Disabilities will require all university-produced documents, including those on websites, in courses, and in emails, to be fully accessible. Compliance is required by April 24, 2026, and enforcement will likely occur through formal complaints. A standardized, screen-reader-accessible syllabus template may be needed to meet these requirements.

V. ADJOURNMENT

Dr. Walsh adjourned the meeting at 9:13 am.