**Committee on Governance: Minutes**
Meeting #13: January 27, 2020
Faculty Governance Conference Room

Present: Kris Boudreau (Secretary; HUA), Tanja Dominko (Secretary of the Faculty; BBT), Tahar El-Korchi (CEE, by Skype), Glenn Gaudette (Chair; BME, eventually), Arne Gericke (CBC), Mark Richman (ME), Sue Roberts (ChE, by phone), and Wole Soboyejo (Provost, by himself).

1. Prof. Dominko called the meeting to order at 10:08; the agenda was approved.

2. The minutes from meeting #12 were approved with modifications. Weird.

3. Proposals to form new departments:
   *Robotics Engineering*: Prof. Gaudette asked Provost Soboyejo for an update; the Provost indicated that he was not ready to discuss this proposal.

   *Aerospace Engineering*: COG received a proposal from Provost Soboyejo and Dean McNeill as well as a draft motion on behalf of the administration to elevate the Aerospace Engineering Program to an independent Aerospace Engineering Department. The Aerospace Engineering program currently has about 260 undergraduate majors and about 40-45 MS and Ph.D. students; the program awards about 60 BS degrees, 20-25 MS degrees, and 2-4 PhD degrees per year. It's like the Global School, but with students.

   The Provost indicated that AE graduates and their employers report great satisfaction. If the program were now a department, he noted, it would be the 7$^{th}$ largest at WPI, and it continues to grow. The Provost described other relevant factors: there is a current search for an tenure-track AE structural dynamics position with a likely future tenure-track AE appointment to be made in space sciences next year. The Mechanical Engineering Department is supportive of the proposal, with faculty in both the ME Department and the Aerospace program agreeing that both units could grow under the execution of the proposed plan.

   COG members asked a number of questions about the program. COG members suggested that the "resources required" section in the proposal be revised to better describe existing resources and proposed new resources.

   COG members agreed to actually read the proposal in preparation for another discussion and a vote at next week's meeting.

4. Update on work of the NTT task force: Prof. Gaudette asked COG to review feedback from the November faculty meeting and share thoughts about the proposal presented there. Prof. Richman summarized the history of the proposal: in fall 2018, Secretary of the Faculty Dominko created a task force of 5 Teaching Faculty and 5 tenured faculty

and charged them with examining the conditions and making recommendations regarding WPI's NTT faculty. This task force has been working since October 2018, its members having drafted a proposal by March 2019 to establish a rigorous yet fair set of tenure criteria for teaching professors and a plausible plan by which such tenure lines could be opened in a systematic manner. The proposal was shared with President Leshin and Provost Soboyejo in April 2019. Representatives of the task force met weekly with the Provost from late August 2019 to late October 2019 to get feedback from the administration and incorporate appropriate changes. In late October, the Provost introduced to the Board of Trustees the idea of a teaching track to tenure. In November, the updated proposal was presented to the faculty. Prof. Richman noted the complicated nature of this work given that it must meet the interests of many groups and requires collaboration between the task force, COG, the faculty, the Provost, the President, and the Board of Trustees. Any successful proposal must be collaborative and will likely be a compromise among the constituencies. Prof. Richman invited discussion from COG.

Provost Soboyejo explained that the Academic Planning Committee (APC) of the Board of Trustees strongly supports a teaching path to tenure with a suitable implementation plan; believes that all faculty have the right to vote and participate in governance; and has in mind the financial standing of the university. The Provost shared his belief that the 5-year budgeting process underway can accommodate the proposal for a teaching path to tenure as well as 1-, 3-, and 5-year contracts for remaining teaching faculty members. He hoped that the faculty would put together motion to establish the new teaching path to tenure, the administration would work with the Board on budgeting, and an implementation plan would be built into the financial and administrative plans through a collaborative process between the faculty and the administration.

The observation was made that at the November faculty meeting several tenured and tenure-track faculty may have felt constrained by the presence of non-tenure-track faculty from criticizing the proposal for fear of being seen as unsupportive of their non-tenure-track colleagues. Some COG members suggested a special faculty meeting — perhaps an executive session— to be organized to allow freer discussion among the T/TT faculty. Others, opposed to an executive session for a variety of reasons, suggested that an open meeting for T/TT faculty would be sufficient. Prof. Richman pointed out that representatives from the task force had already met privately with all Deans and nearly all the Department Heads and that the feedback received was quite positive and in many cases had been incorporated into the version of the proposal shared with the faculty in November.

The discussion turned to required resources. The point was made that the costs for these tenure lines would not be marginal if scholarship were to be a requirement for tenure for teaching professors. Others observed that the teaching faculty in their departments were over-deployed and agreed that they could not be expected to find

extra time to do the extra work required for scholarship. The proposal maintains current teaching loads and considers what is reasonable to ask of Teaching Faculty.

Professors Boudreau and Richman explained that the task force proposal discussed in November deals with this question by instead describing a broader category of professional growth that would require teaching faculty to remain current and active, would give credit toward tenure to those who conduct scholarship, but would not require them to do so. The hope expressed by Prof. Boudreau was that differences on this point could be overcome.

Provost Soboyejo indicated that he would give time to the authors of the proposal to visit an upcoming Department Heads' meeting.

The Provost indicated the administration's intention of issuing 1-, 3- and 5-year contracts for NTT faculty. Prof. Richman noted that, while longer-term contracts somewhat improve the status of NTT faculty, they don't provide academic freedom and protection, which is at the core of the University's mission. Once expired, NTT faculty employment contracts are subjected to nonrenewal for any reason, and even security during the duration of these contracts will depend on the precise legal wording regarding termination. Related to these concerns, the requirements imposed by the criteria for new tenure-track teaching positions must be realistic because solving the current problem of a widespread lack of academic freedom at the institutional level would require a sufficient number of teaching faculty moving onto the tenure track. The Provost indicated his intention to issue longer-term contracts while also working with COG to arrive at a proposal for teaching tracks to tenure.

5. Evaluation of Administrators: Prof. Gaudette described an idear for a new process that would focus on the performance of an entire unit rather than of the individual who leads it. Time being short and nobody wanting to ruin his week, COG agreed to discuss this at a future meeting.

6. Faculty Handbook Updates to Include Deans in Review of Department Heads: This item will be discussed at a future COG meeting. Provost Soboyejo invited Prof. Gaudette to bring this topic to a Department Heads meeting for discussion.

7. The meeting was adjourned at 11:40.

Respectfully submitted,

Kris Boudreau
Secretary, COG