

## Committee on Governance: Minutes, if You Have a Few

Meeting #15: February 10, 2020

Faculty Governance Conference Room

Present: Kris Boudreau (Secretary of COG, HUA), Tanja Dominko (BBT, Secretary of the Faculty), Glenn Gaudette (Chair of COG, BME), Arne Gericke (CBC), Mark Richman (ME), and Wole Soboyejo (Provost).

1. Prof. Gaudette called the meeting to order at 10:09; with one addition, the agenda was approved and a theme selected: “We’re as close to 1984 as we’ve ever been.”
2. The minutes from meeting #14 were approved with one minor modification —if you call deleting an offensive joke “minor.”
3. Updates: Professor Gaudette reviewed the progress of several items recently considered by COG:
  - The proposed changes to the Faculty Handbook that would include Deans in the review of Department Heads is now under review by COAP. The request for these changes originated during last year’s BGWG discussions. Prof. Gaudette will forward the motion to the Deans and ask them to concoct a rationale for COG to review and modify as appropriate for inclusion with the motion.
  - Revising the Guidelines for Appointments of Academic Administrative Positions will be resumed in COG as soon as time permits.
  - Search for another Dean of the Foisie Business School: With 99 percent of precincts reporting, three faculty representatives have been declared elected members of the search committee. The remaining six appointed members (one Provost’s appointment, two President’s appointments, one COG appointment, and two student representatives) will all be chosen in a collaborative process involving the President, Provost, and (representing COG) the Secretary of the Faculty and Chair of COG. At least one of these appointed members must come from outside the Foisie School. COG members indicated that, as the Faculty Handbook requires, COG should also be involved in the selection of the search committee Chair. The recommendation was made that the Chair be chosen from among the elected members. COG identified potential candidates for appointment and will submit any additional names to Prof. Gaudette within the next day or two in preparation for that collaborative meeting within the next week or two.
4. Addressing violations of the Constitution and Bylaws of the WPI Faculty: Prof. Gaudette recalled that in November ([COG meeting #10, November 18](#)), COG had affirmed to the JCC the central role (s-p-e-l-l-e-d out in the Faculty Handbook) of CITP in the development of Information Technology policy. Today, Prof. Gaudette reported new

concerns from CITP members after the CIO strongly suggested at last week's CITP meeting that the committee members stop discussing policy because the Policy on Policies effectively freezes existing policies in place. A COG member said something about hell freezing over, too.

Provost Soboyejo acknowledged the importance of COG's concerns about the Policy on Policies. The Policy on Policies and in particular the [Confidentiality Policy](#), he proposed, were written to allow for quick reactions to a changing legal and ethical landscape. They're changing, all right. He shared his belief that faculty and administration can work collaboratively to more clearly develop the separation between administrative policy and policies affecting faculty. Prof. Richman was skeptical that there was a neat separation between these two types of policies, and wanted to make sure that the faculty not give up its influence over policies that affect them even when those policies affect other constituencies on campus as well.

COG members offered many concerns about the top-down sensibility expressed in the Policy of Policies and about the particularly confidential process used in arriving at the Confidentiality Policy (in effect since November 2018): specifically, that it prohibits faculty from publishing their research data. They wondered whether the administration shares these concerns. The Provost believes that the Policy on Policies should be the highest priority at the next meeting of the JCC. However, COG members reiterated that the JCC is an advisory body established to improve communication between the administration, Board of Trustees, and faculty; it is not a governing committee with authority to write policy, and it should not be used to circumvent our faculty governance processes.

Some members pointed out that our current governance committee structure is not just adequate but designed for dealing with complexities arising from changing external factors such as new federal guidelines. These committees include administrative representatives whose expertise and responsibilities coincide with the responsibilities of the faculty committees, as well as faculty experts (e.g., faculty members whose expertise is in IT security and are recognized leaders in their fields). When other information is needed (e.g., insight into legal matters), staff can be brought in for consultation and you don't even have to pay them consulting fees.

Noting with alarm the creation of administrative committees running parallel and perpendicular to faculty governance committees and operating without consulting them, some members wondered whether the [policies](#) being written by these administrative committees are big typos or symptoms of a larger problem? Why does the administration disregard the expertise and the sensibilities of faculty members on these committees? Do these new policies override existing policies that were written collaboratively and adopted transparently in the past? Some COG members, pointing to diminishing confidence among the faculty, wondered whether there was any point in

bringing these concerns to the JCC. Several members advised the Provost to urge that the policy on Confidentiality be suspended immediately.

A number of points were made about the necessity of striking a balance between concerns for security versus the need to stay functional as educators and researchers; and between legal constraints and faculty agency within their areas of responsibility. The Provost indicated that the President wants us to discuss these concerns as a faculty and decide on our values at WPI within the context of legal constraints. To get the ball rolling, one COG member suggested that the faculty should not forfeit its input into formulating policies simply because those policies may require consultations with other experts and/or might affect other campus groups.

The Provost and Profs. Dominko and Gaudette will address the Policy on Policies at the next meeting of the JCC and will ask that faculty governance representatives be at the table to help draft policies at the interface between administrative and faculty interests. According to the Provost, a critical conversation at the JCC about data and ethical and legal issues would enable an informed perspective on the extent of WPI's exposure to risk. The Provost believes that the Policy on Policies needs to retract to administrative functions only, with a clearer delineation between administrative and faculty responsibilities, working through the various faculty governance committees to ensure broad faculty involvement.

COG members agreed that emphasis should be placed on certain points:

- Transparency is the most important element of our next steps.
- A sound governance structure is in place and should be used when considering the vast middle ground of policies that apply to faculty and are of administrative interest. Although the Policy on Policies fails to define "administrative policy," the examples given of policies requiring no faculty input and approval tread on policies that faculty have had an important part in writing in the past. The 16 policies developed without input from CITP indicate that the lines are being drawn in the wrong place.

The Provost urged Profs. Dominko and Gaudette to be very specific when they bring faculty concerns to the JCC. Then we will reconstruct our approach to policy-making in the presence of the appropriate stakeholders. However, COG members reiterated that the JCC is an advisory body established to improve communication between the administration, Board of Trustees, and faculty; it is not a governing committee with authority to write policy, and it should not be used to circumvent our faculty governance processes. Not to beat a dead horse, or anything.

COG reaffirmed the role of CITP and the duties of the faculty as written in the Faculty Handbook. The Provost urged that we quickly address the Confidentiality Policy to address the concerns of the faculty. To improve communications, Professor Gaudette will identify representatives from COG and CITP and will send those names to Deb

Graves in the Provost's office in order to schedule a meeting between these faculty representatives and the Provost, University Counsel, and Chief Information Officer.

5. The meeting was adjourned at 11:40 am.

Dutifully submitted,

Kris Boudreau  
Secretary, COG