

## Committee on Governance: Minutes

Meeting #3: Sept. 10, 2019

Faculty Governance Conference Room (SL 225)

Present: Tanja Dominko (Secretary of the Faculty *ad terminum trium annorum*, BBT), Tahar El-Korchi (CEE, Used Solar Home Salesman, – via Zoom from Morocco), Glenn Gaudette (Chair, BME, Provost *ad aspirans - still*), Arne Gericke (CBC), Mark Richman (ME, Acting Secretary *ad incompetentem*), Sue Roberts (ChE – via Zoom from a more upscale nightclub than Tahar).

1. Prof. Gaudette called the meeting to order at 3:02, 3:05, and 3:11. The agenda was approved as distributed.
2. The minutes of COG meeting #2 (September 3) were approved with minor modifications.
3. Consideration of a Proposal to Convert RBE from a Program to a Department: Based on Provost *ad interim* Soboyejo's direction at last week's COG meeting, COG considers the draft proposal as having the formal endorsement of the administration.

The proposal includes a bulleted rationale; an assurance that all current “core faculty members” in RBE will have the right to choose either an appointment in the new RBE department, in their current home department, or in a joint arrangement between both – and how the DTCs will work for tenure-track faculty in each of these categories; student-enrollment projections; a summary of current noteworthy current NSF grants among RBE faculty members; a brief description of pending major industry sponsorship; and a summary of how the formation of the RBE department will affect Computer Science, Mechanical Engineering, Electrical and Computer Engineer, Biomedical Engineering, and Physics.

COG's discussion about the RBE proposal fell into distinct categories:

*Rationale:* Prof. Gericke suggested that the document should state more clearly how establishing an RBE department would better serve either our students or WPI's RBE research mission. Prof. Richman pointed out that the proposal included mention of a higher national profile for RBE that would attract the best faculty, which in turn would enhance both student experience and research. Prof. El-Korchi explained that converting the program to a department would add significantly to the culture of independence felt by the RBE faculty and projected to prospective students and faculty, other universities, companies, and funding agencies.

*Current Snapshot of the RBE Program:* There was a general committee consensus that the current state of the RBE program should be described in more detail. The proposal should include the following information:

- the names, current departmental affiliations, and rank and status (TTT or NTT) of each RBE program faculty member;

- the non-RBE courses (and their frequency) taught by each current RBE program faculty member;
- the number of TAs dedicated specifically to the RBE program and the number of TAs from other departments (if any) who assist in RBE courses;
- a description of the staff members (number and positions) currently dedicated to the RBE program.

*Transition to a Department:* There was general committee consensus on the following points:

- In view of an issue raised by some others on campus, some COG members were concerned about the awkward position in which each RBE faculty member would be placed – especially those without tenure – when deciding about their new departmental affiliations. As a result, the proposal should include the specifics about how such decisions would be made, including who would have input and how each individual would be protected in case of disagreement.
- The proposal should include a clear indication of the departmental affiliation to be chosen by each current RBE faculty member.
- The proposal should include a definitive indication of the School (Engineering, or Arts and Sciences) in which the new RBE department will reside.
- The proposal should identify the affected deans and department heads who support it.

*Projections:* There was a general consensus that proposal should include the following five-year projections:

- the number of additional TTT and NTT positions anticipated;
- the number of additional TAs anticipated;
- a description of any additional staff positions anticipated.

*General Concern:* Prof. Gericke thought that the proposal should explain how the new RBE department would maintain its current interdisciplinary character, and he suggested including in the proposal the formation of an inter-departmental advisory committee and/or the placement of the new RBE department simultaneously on both the School of Engineering and the School of Arts and Sciences.

4. Creation of and Appointments to New Academic Administrative Positions: Secretary of the Faculty Dominko is surveying practices at other institutions to gauge how academic administrative positions are typically created, appointed, and reviewed. She is also clarifying, based on the percentage of appointment to such positions, the appropriate eligibility for participation in various levels of activity in our faculty governance processes. These positions include assistant deans, associate deans, and deans, but do not include Dean's Beans (<https://deansbeans.com/>) currently served at the Quorum. Such positions, particularly assistant and associate deans, overlap with efforts discussed by COG last week to establish administrative leadership positions for faculty members. Prof. Roberts suggested that the title of Faculty Fellow might be used for certain leadership opportunities. She

pointed out that the HERS leadership training program, for example, includes training in all areas of university administration – including admissions; finance; and human resources. Prof. Dominko will soon bring a summary of her findings to COG for discussion.

5. New Business:

- Prof. Dominko reported that the nominating ballot for faculty members to serve on the search committee for the Dean of the Global School will go out on Wednesday (9/11) or Thursday (9/12) and will be due back one week later. In addition to TTT faculty members, the ballot will include all continuing NTT faculty members.
- Profs. Gaudette and Dominko reported on a recent meeting of the Joint Coordinating Council (JCC) at which a unifying focus was established on “barriers to academic success” that includes all activities affecting teaching, learning, and research.
- Prof. Gaudette reported on a petition signed by 1200 WPI students raising concerns that room in the Foisie Innovation Studio currently used as study space for students is being converted to more restricted I&E space that will no longer be freely open to students. The students are awaiting a response from the administration.

6. The meeting adjourned at 4:45pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Richman  
Acting Secretary, COG