

Committee on Governance: Minutes

Meeting #8: October 31, 2022

Faculty Governance Conference Room, SL 225

3:00pm – 4:30pm

Present: Len Albano (Chair, CEAE), Althea Danielski (HUA), Tanja Dominko (BBT), George Heineman (CS), Suzanne LePage (CEAE), Mark Richman (Secretary of the Faculty, AE), Diane Strong (President's appointment, WBS) Karen Troy (BME).

1. Chair Albano called the meeting to order at 3:05. The agenda was approved as distributed.
2. The minutes for COG Meeting #6 that had been distributed electronically were approved as well as the minutes for COG Meeting #7.
3. Look Ahead to November Faculty Meeting (Mark Richman)

The November 10th faculty meeting will include a presentation by the ADVANCE team. Prof. Richman invited two grad students to Faculty meeting following the upcoming Nov. 2nd & 3rd vote by WPI graduate student workers to be represented exclusively by the United Auto Workers union.

In order to address immediate concerns, COG discussed strategies and nuances for running hybrid faculty meetings and set aside time Nov. 2 to conduct a dry-run in OH 107 using Zoom. The intention is to conduct the meeting in hybrid format.

Deeper concerns remain about major obstacles that make it difficult for faculty members to attend faculty meetings. These include conflicts with family responsibilities (typically in the 3-5pm time slot) and with teaching responsibilities (at any time of day). Opening weekly or monthly "no teaching" time slots at an earlier time of day would address both problems but could be difficult to implement given the nature of our academic course schedule. Alternatively, integrating faculty meetings into designated "professional days" on the academic calendar would open time for faculty to attend meetings with fewer conflicts. Such an approach can be addressed institutionally with Provost's office support if the academic calendar were adjusted to hold Faculty meetings on days when there are no scheduled courses. COG can consider holding Faculty meetings on the day after the end of the term whenever possible. In these cases, with input from the Registrar's office if might be possible to consider adjusting grading deadlines.

4. Updates from October Board of Trustees Meeting (Mark Richman, Len Albano)

Prof. Richman and Prof. Albano attended BoT meetings on October 27th/28th. The board approved a 3.5% increase in undergraduate tuition.

The Budget & Finance Committee discussed what is being called the “2025 US Demographic Cliff” which projects up a dramatic drop in traditional, college-aged population of perhaps 15% or greater. There are plans for a Cogeneration project that is part of a long-term plan for sustainability, including financial funding to change the campus energy infrastructure. COG members suggested there are opportunities for interacting with WPI faculty with domain experience in these areas.

The Academic Planning Committee (APC) discussed ways to redefine student success by thinking holistically about our students, and about the connection between our project-based approach (especially the MQP) and our research enterprise. The Technology Committee discussed whether information about our students’ academic activities could be used in real time to anticipate longer term academic struggles.

COG discussed how three years ago the Board of Trustees approved a plan to grow to 5,000 undergraduate students with a commitment to increasing the number of dual-mission faculty to 300. There was an understanding at the time that WPI would “hold the line” at 5,000 undergraduate students but current enrollment has already exceeded this size.

COG noted that the model of constant undergraduate growth is not sustainable.

5. Reorganization of Faculty Handbook (Mark Richman)

Changes were made to the Tenure section and the Appointments section of the reorganized handbook based on committee feedback. COG continues to review the reorganized sections of the Faculty Handbook.

This phase of COG’s reorganization effort is expected to be completed by early January. At that point, the intention is to share a draft version with the faculty, collect feedback continuously, and bring the revised version to the faculty for its approval by the end of the academic year.

6. Discussion on Sexual Misconduct Policy

Chair Albano assembled feedback from COG into a collection of comments and questions that focus on the need to identify specific differences between the 2018 Faculty Sexual Misconduct Policy and the interim Title IX & Sexual Misconduct Interim Policy. He will forward these questions to the Office of General Counsel (OGC).

7. Meeting adjourned at 4:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

George Heineman

Secretary