

Date: March 16, 2017

To: WPI Faculty

From: Committee on Governance (Prof. Dominko, Chair)
Committee on Academic Policy (Prof. Humi, Chair)

Re: Motion to revise the language describing the membership of Undergraduate Outcomes Assessment Committee (UOAC)

Motion: The Committee on Governance (COG) and the Committee on Academic Policy (CAP) recommend and I move that the current language describing UOAC membership, be revised (in Part One, Bylaw One, Paragraph X. of the Faculty Handbook) as delineated below.

Details of the motion:

Current UOAC Description:

BYLAW ONE: MEMBERSHIP, DUTIES, AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE FACULTY, p 1-13

X. The Undergraduate Outcomes Assessment Committee (UOAC) consists of the following members: four Faculty Members elected for staggered, three year terms, a member appointed annually by the Committee on Academic Policy (CAP) from among the Faculty, one undergraduate student appointed by the Student Government Association, a representative of the Provost's Office, the Director of the Morgan Teaching and Learning Center (*ex-officio*), and the Director of Institutional Research (*ex-officio*). One of the four elected Faculty Members shall be elected from the Faculty at-large. The other three shall be elected by the entire Faculty but shall be chosen from among the following departmental groupings: One chosen from the Engineering programs; one chosen from the Natural Sciences, Math or Computer Science; and one chosen from The Foisie School of Business, Social Science and Policy Studies, Humanities and Arts, or IGSD.

The UOAC shall function as a permanent subcommittee of CAP. It shall report to CAP and forward recommendations for Faculty action to CAP for its consideration and possible recommendation to the Faculty.

The UOAC is responsible for:

- a. proposing policy with regard to WPI's undergraduate learning outcomes;
- b. identifying and facilitating procedures for assessing those outcomes;
- c. coordinating outcomes assessment activities on campus;
- d. communicating assessment results; and
- e. formulating academic policy recommendations based on its assessment activities.

The Committee is not responsible for the assessment of departmental majors or programs, but for the identification and assessment of learning outcomes that arise from the undergraduate curriculum broadly defined, including assessment of the first year program.

Rationale:

The motion updates the faculty handbook with regard to new titles and offices and adds the Director of Institutional Research to the membership of UOAC. In spring 2016, WPI hired its first Director of Institutional Research. Her responsibilities include supporting the Committee and the Dean of Undergraduate Studies in the assessment of undergraduate learning and the documentation of learning for both NEASC and ABET accreditation. It is expected that the Director of Institutional Research will work closely with UOAC to improve our learning outcomes, design methods for assessment of those outcomes, analyze data, and communicate performance on learning outcomes to the faculty.

The Undergraduate Outcomes Assessment Committee believes strongly that the Director of Institutional Research (IR) should be an *ex-officio* member of UOAC. The Director of IR will be more than a source of data for UOAC; this person's knowledge and ability to design assessment strategies and help carry out committee decisions are essential to the effective functioning of the committee. When the Assessment Plan for Institutional Learning Outcomes was approved by the Faculty in April 2005, it called for the Provost's Office to designate an "Assessment Coordinator" who would have responsibility for data collection and coordination. An Assessment Coordinator was never appointed, and the absence of this expertise has been a challenge for UOAC for more than a decade.

When the new position of Director of Institutional Research was under discussion at WPI, UOAC was a strong advocate since IR offices play a central role in assessment of learning outcomes at most institutions. Naming the Director as an *ex-officio* member of the committee will formalize her commitment of time to assessment work deemed important by the Faculty as part of her professional responsibilities. In this way, the Faculty and the quality of our undergraduate curriculum will benefit from greater assurance of this support in the future.

A specific example that illustrates the importance of the Director of IR to a well-functioning outcomes assessment system follows. In recent years many WPI constituencies have discussed the value of developing a periodic survey of recent alumni, and UOAC would like to lead that effort for purposes of outcomes assessment. While the current membership of the committee has some expertise in assessment design and implementation, the consistent participation of an assessment professional like the Director of Institutional Research would be invaluable in that process. As a member of the committee, it will be natural and appropriate for the Director to coordinate an alumni survey in collaboration with the other members of the committee.

Finally, we understand that it is desirable for faculty governance committees to have a majority of faculty members among their membership. The addition of the Director of IR to the committee would still leave the committee with a 6:3 ratio of faculty members to others on the committee. Also, UOAC is a standing sub-committee of CAP, which must approve all UOAC supported motions. The ratio of faculty members to others on CAP is 6:3, and three of the non-faculty members on UOAC and CAP are students.

In addition, the proposal would delete the requirement that the UOAC member appointed by CAP actually be an elected member of CAP. Making this change would give CAP the latitude to appoint a CAP member or other faculty member with the interest, expertise and time to serve on

UOAC. UOAC has found that the liaison duties are infrequent and the Dean of Undergraduate Studies, who serves on both CAP and UOAC, also acts as a liaison between the committees.