

Committee on Governance Annual Report Academic Year 2017-18

Committee on Governance (COG):

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COG met 36 times during AY2017-18, with meeting lengths of 1.5 to 2.0 hours. At the first meeting of the academic year (AY), COG discussed the content and intent of meeting minutes: 1) inform the faculty and WPI community at large (as transparently as possible) about matters of importance in Faculty governance; while exercising discretion to 2) enable frank exchanges of individual views during discussions of sometimes sensitive issues.

1. In the beginning of the academic year, COG identified potential agenda items for the upcoming year, which included:
 - a. possible modifications to the procedures for Faculty evaluation of administrators;
 - b. changes in CITP charge;
 - c. COG's role in WPI's response to the COACHE (Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education) faculty satisfaction report;
 - d. recent trends in TTT/NTT balance;
 - e. promotion task force report;
 - f. Department Head evaluation procedures (in general) and whether to evaluate/include program directors;

2. COG identified several significant annual duties:
 - a. conducting elections for the next Secretary of the Faculty
 - b. developing a full ballot for spring elections to Standing Committees of the Faculty;
 - c. conducting search committee elections for academic administrators (as needed);
 - d. conducting this year's Faculty evaluation of administrators;
 - e. presenting this year's TTT/NTT report to the Faculty.

3. COG discussed possible changes in the administrative structure of the Foisie Business School.
 - a. COG discussed the Department Head's Meeting Minutes (June 20, 2017), which stated:

It was announced that the Foisie Business School was reorganizing and that Professor J. Sarkis would be returning to the FBS faculty. Prof. A. Zeng was appointed as interim department head and remained Assistant Dean. The restructuring is forming four areas which will have area heads leading them: Management Information Systems; Operations and Industrial Engineering; Accounting, Finance, and Law; and

- Entrepreneurship, Marketing, and Management. It was noted that changes to the Faculty Handbook were necessary in order to institute these changes within the school and the Dean and the Provost would be working closely with COG in the upcoming academic year to implement these changes.
- b. COG discussed the *Policy on Creating, Merging, Realigning or Eliminating Academic Programs and Research Facilities* (Faculty Handbook; page 2-28):
 - i. Should the Administration propose creating, merging, realigning or eliminating an academic program or major academic or research facility, that proposal shall be conveyed to the Committee on Governance when it has been advanced to the stage of serious consideration, but before any commitments to action have been made. The Committee shall conduct a critical review of the proposal, which may include referring it to other committees for consideration. Upon receipt of all relevant information, the Committee on Governance will frame a recommendation to the Administration and present it to the Faculty for its approval.
 - c. The Provost agreed to bring forward a proposal to COG if there were changes to the administrative structure in the Foisie Business School. COG was informed that no changes to the academic structure were planned at this time. Prof. A. Zeng was named Department Head and will maintain the Assistant Dean position for the foreseeable future. COG members agreed that the mere creation of Area Heads within the Foisie Business School (as currently configured) would not warrant any consultation with COG. If any Faculty Handbook-specified Department Head responsibilities were to be delegated to Area Heads, however, such changes would require consultation with COG.
4. COG acted on the President's announcements at the September WPI Town Hall and the September Faculty meeting regarding ideas to combine the Interdisciplinary and Global Studies Division (IGSD) with several other globally focused elements of our academic program to form a new academic structure, tentatively named the Global Impact Division (GID).
- a. Provost Bursten indicated that the first step is to convene and charge a task force to bring the brief outline of President Leshin's vision into fuller shape as a proposal. He also shared his expectation that an academic Dean would lead the Global Impact Division.
 - b. Several COG members asked questions about the decision-making process that led up to the President's announcement, and some expressed concerns about the mechanics of implementation steps yet to come.
 - c. A consensus emerged among the Faculty representatives on COG around the matter of how and when WPI should launch the search for a Dean to lead the newly reconfigured division. The Faculty Handbook's language in Section 2 D (Policy on Initiating and Terminating Departments or Programs, page 2-32) is quite clear: *that proposal shall be conveyed to the Committee on Governance when it has been advanced to the stage of serious consideration, but before any commitments to action have been made.*

- d. President Leshin attended a COG meeting to share her ideas with COG members about how she would like to see the implementation of the Global Impact Division (GID) move forward, and this effort would include the search for a Dean.
 - e. Provost Bursten informed COG of the Administration's request that the process of electing Faculty members to the search committee for the Dean of the proposed GID be initiated in concert with consideration of the GID description to be brought forward at the November Faculty meeting. COG decided to seek the approval of the Faculty at the November Faculty meeting as it is not clear which Faculty would be eligible to stand for election as the Dean of IGSD crosses several academic programs. In addition, according to the Faculty Handbook (2-21)
 - i. *There is an understanding between the Provost, the President, the search committee, the candidates, and the WPI community that the job description will not change substantially throughout the search and for a reasonable period of time after an appointment is made to fill the position.*

Given that the job description was unknown at the time, COG initially felt it best to seek approval from the Faculty. After discussions with the Administration, all agreed it was best to begin the search at a later time.
 - f. In January, Profs. Richman and Gaudette met with Dean Wobbe in her role as co-Chair of the Global Impact Division (GID) implementation advisory group to discuss possible timing of a proposal for faculty consideration of the GID. The suggestion was to bring the proposal to COG in time for COG to forward it to the Faculty at the April Faculty meeting and then revise it based on feedback for a vote at the May meeting. Unfortunately, it was not possible to meet this timeline.
 - g. In April, Prof. Rissmiller updated COG on the work that had been accomplished by the Global Impact Division Implementation Advisory Group, and shared the current state of their draft document recommending the formation of a Global School at WPI.
5. COG was updated on the formation of a Working Committee (composed of three Trustees and three Faculty members) to begin work on any changes needed in the WPI Conduct policies.
- a. The Research Misconduct Policy was first addressed. This policy was altered to cover all WPI personnel, including students and staff. Several modifications were made to the existing policy and were explained at the November Faculty meeting. The Faculty then voted to approve the new policy at the December Faculty meeting.
 - b. The Sexual Misconduct Policy was then addressed. It was also altered to cover all WPI personnel. Similar to the Research Misconduct Policy, the revised policy was presented for discussion at the March and April Faculty meetings and approved by the Faculty at the May Faculty meeting.
 - c. The Faculty Misconduct Policy was only briefly discussed. However, as the WPI general counsel suggested that the current policy was out of compliance with

current practices, the Trustees voted to implement a new policy. This policy was presented to the Faculty at the May Faculty meeting for information only.

6. At the beginning of the AY, Prof. Gaudette requested that Provost Bursten provide timelines to COG for him to report on each of the following:
 - a. a proposed strategy for increasing the number of TTT faculty (in order to bring the TTT/NTT credit delivery ratio back into compliance with the Faculty Handbook), and
 - b. a description and explanation of the roles of Academic Deans, VPs, and other executive positions within the Academic Affairs division.

Despite continued requests during the AY, these high priority COG items were not addressed. At the end of the AY, COG expressed their concern with the lack of attentiveness by the Administration to items viewed as significant by the Faculty.

7. Provost Bursten wanted the faculty to better understand academic space constraints on WPI's plans for faculty hiring and recommended that AVP Kris Sullivan present to COG the results of the Academic Space Committee's analytical work over the past year. AVP Sullivan presented the committee's work. Due to time constraints, discussion on the presentation and data was limited. However, COG did not feel that the presentation contained sufficient information that warranted its presentation at a Faculty meeting.
8. COG modified a proposal from the Committee on Information Technology Policy (CITP) to update the learning management system. The proposal was sent to the Faculty (at the May 8 Faculty meeting) for review and potential approval.
9. COG received a copy of the report from the Task Force on Academic Promotions at WPI, and in collaboration with COAP forwarded the report to the Faculty for its input. COG discussions (throughout the year) focused on establishing a mechanism to provide post-tenure mentoring.
10. COG invited a member of the Administration to help them understand how the annual Faculty evaluations of administrators might be improved and made more useful for the administrators being evaluated. After much discussion, COG made modifications to the questions and format of the Faculty evaluations of administrators (for the President, the Dean of Undergraduate Studies, the Dean of Graduate Studies, the Vice Provost for Research). COG decided not to include the Chief Financial Officer in the evaluations mainly because: 1) this position does not have a direct effect on academics and 2) the Administration has requested that non-academic positions not be evaluated. This decision may be revisited in the future by COG. COG added an additional set of questions on the current status of the Institution. COG received feedback of the modified questions from administrators being evaluated, distributed the evaluation surveys to the Faculty (electronically), tabulated the results, and distributed the results to the Faculty, to the administrators evaluated, and to the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

After the results were distributed to the proper parties, it was made clear that the Board of Trustees does not value this feedback mechanism. COG members hoped that future discussions between the Chair of COG and the Secretary of the Faculty will help elucidate the Board's reasoning for dismissing Faculty feedback as documented through the survey.

11. Prof. Weekes was appointed by COG to assist Prof. Richman in conducting the nomination and election for the next Secretary of the Faculty, whose term will begin on July 1, 2018.
12. Prof. Richman, in his role as Secretary of the Faculty, conducted the COG and CTAF elections for new members whose terms will begin on July 1, 2018.
13. COG prepared preliminary and final ballots for all other Standing Committees of the Faculty, conducted the elections, and disseminated the results to the Faculty.
14. COG received the yearly report from the Provost on the TTT/NTT Faculty Populations and on the credits delivered by TTT and NTT faculty members. Although the Faculty Handbook calls for the report to be provided "Early each fall", the initial report was received in November. COG express a desire to receive the report earlier so that proper attention can be paid to this important item. COG noted that the initial report was incomplete as it did not contain data on credits delivered by CPE. These data were not provided to COG until February.

COG expressed concern regarding continued decrease in the percentage of credits delivered by TTT, as identified last year. COG developed an institutional strategy to address the issue of appropriate growth of the TTT faculty needed to meet the University's teaching commitments and research goals. This strategy, along with the supportive data, was presented to the Faculty at the March 15 meeting. Key initiatives presented as part of the strategy include:

- a. Growing the tenured/tenured track Faculty to 300 by 2023
 - b. Identifying areas for significant growth as demonstrated by measurable metrics
 - c. Hiring the right candidates for WPI by demonstrating our commitment to balancing teaching and research
 - d. Investing in our successful programs
 - e. Only growing in areas that have Faculty buy in and "fit" WPI
15. COG reviewed a proposal to ask the Faculty to consider revising the Faculty Handbook's current restriction which prevents an incumbent Secretary of the Faculty from being elected to a consecutive term of service. The proposal had been submitted to the chair by a faculty member who had collected a dozen signatures in support of the motion. The submitter did not want their name revealed as they were concerned about possible retaliation by the Administration. COG chair agreed to keep the submitter's name

confidential. The proposal's language would allow at most two consecutive terms (6 years of continuous service) for a Secretary of the Faculty. The motion was brought to the December Faculty meeting for discussion. After receiving a significant amount of feedback from the Faculty, COG withdrew their support for the motion.

16. COG Chair met with COAP to discuss:

- a. COAP evaluations processes for Department Heads, including whether Program Heads should be evaluated in those processes as well – COAP expressed concern about whether the Administration values the Department Head evaluation performed by COAP. COAP also suggested that knowing the roles of academic Deans would help COAP better determine if they should include Program Heads in their evaluations. Perhaps the Deans should be evaluating the Department Heads using methods similar to those currently used by COAP.
- b. COG/COAP (FAME) subcommittee's progress on the mentoring issues – this subcommittee presented its report at the May Faculty meeting.
- c. Questions about which materials (e.g. yearly reviews) should be included among CTAF and/or COAP dossiers – COAP indicated this was not a major concern for them at this time.
- d. COAP let COG know that they were considering introducing procedures for when the Nominator and Advocate should (or should not) be present during discussions about a candidate for promotion.

17. COG made the following appointments:

- a. Research Development Council – Elke Rundensteiner
- b. Committee on Financial and Academic Policy (FAP) – Randy Paffenroth (1 year term; renewable up to 3 consecutive years)

18. COG invited Student Government Association President Sarah Boecker to share her perspective on the student experience at WPI, and to identify opportunities for more effective coordination between the WPI student government and faculty governance systems.