

Dear WPI Community,

I am writing with an update on the work of the [Bylaws & Governance Working Group](#) (BGWG). As a reminder, members of the BGGW include: Trustee Andy Aberdale, Professor Jim Cocola, Secretary of the Faculty Tanja Dominko, Trustee Marni Hall, Professor Steve Kmietek, President Laurie Leshin, Professor Mark Richman and Provost Wole Sobojeyo. All were present at this kickoff meeting.

The group convened on Saturday (1/12) for the first time and I am pleased to share that we had a productive meeting. We spent some time reviewing and reaffirming our support for the plan outlined in the [BGWG Charter](#), and we agreed to the following meeting schedule: Monday, February 4, 2019, 8am-12pm; Monday, March 4, 2019, 8am-12pm; Monday, March 25, 2019, 8am-12pm; Thursday, April 18, 2019, 1pm-5pm.

This schedule is consistent with the expectation stated in the charter that we will bring consensus recommendations of the BGGW to the faculty for discussion in April and endorsement in May, followed by Board action at their May meeting.

The bulk of our discussions focused on two topics. First, we shared perspectives on the recent lack of interactions between the faculty, administration and board – specifically the difference between the intent of actions versus the impact they have had. Each set of constituents took some responsibility for their contributions to specific situations that lacked adequate collaboration. Some initial discussions were had about how to improve the interactions as part of a goal of improving governance at WPI. Future work of the BGGW will focus more on these opportunities.

The group then began a preliminary consultation on the pending bylaws. The group agreed to break into subgroups that will meet before BGGW's next meeting to discuss each of the seven changes to the pending bylaws (but not limited to) that were explicitly stated in the working group charter as being of concern to the faculty. The following topics will be handled by the assigned working group members:

1. Authority to override the Faculty Handbook – Andy Aberdale & Tanja Dominko
2. Academic freedom place in the Bylaws and within the framework of “society’s norms” – Jim Cocola & Laurie Leshin
3. Board’s interpretation “controls” any ambiguities in the Bylaws – Andy Aberdale & Tanja Dominko

4. President and provost written in as ex-officio members of all Faculty committees – Mark Richman & Wole Soboyejo
5. Provost “creates, reviews, and approves academic polices” - Mark Richman & Wole Soboyejo
6. Global School established without faculty approval – Marni Hall & Steve Kmiotek
7. Inclusion in the Bylaws of academic matters: Provost; Deans; Faculty; Academic Freedom – Tanja Dominko, Marni Hall, Steve Kmiotek & Wole Soboyejo

Before the next BGWG meeting on February 4, the subgroups will focus on the concerns raised, identify ways to reach agreement, and consider four possible outcomes for the language at issue: to retain as is; to retain in revised form; to relocate to another document either as is or in revised form; or fully strike the language from the pending bylaws. The full working group will then use the deliberations of the subgroups as starting points for discussion of each item. If you have input on these specific items, please feel free to reach out to a relevant BGWG member to provide input, or send a note to us at bgwg@wpi.edu.

Our meeting on Saturday was a positive beginning to our interactions, with much work ahead. I am thankful to the members of the BGWG, as well as to the whole community, for their support of these critical conversations.

Best,
Laurie, BGWG Chair