

Committee on Governance: Minutes
Meeting #12: December 05, 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), Art Heinricher (Interim Provost), 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. A revised agenda was approved.
2. The minutes for COG Meeting #11 were approved with revisions.
3. Report from Executive Session.

The Committee on Governance has become aware of what appears to be a concerted effort on the part of several academic administrators to intimidate a faculty member for making what they perceive to be critical comments about actions taken by the Administration, as well as to interfere with the independence of a Committee Chair to freely set the agenda of their own committee and to use their own discretion to resolve procedural matters as they arise.

The more general effect of such tactics, if left unaddressed, would be to silence the faculty and to encroach on the autonomy of our Faculty Governance system. A robust Faculty Governance system depends on the diverse perspectives of faculty members who must be able to share their opinions freely, without fear of intimidation or reprisal.

For this reason, the Committee on Governance reaffirms the following principles:

All WPI faculty members should be free and should feel free to make observations and express their opinions concerning the actions of the WPI Administration. Members of the WPI faculty should be protected from intimidation for speaking out as full citizens of the University including as participants in its governance.

Our culture of broad-mindedness requires an openness to disagreement; our culture of inclusion requires acceptance and understanding of the wide variety of ways such disagreements may be expressed.

Proper campus discourse involves back and forth exchanges on the substance of issues in a variety of settings. We should not question the right of any individual to raise them in good faith.

WPI's faculty governance system requires autonomy from Administrative interference. Committees must be free to set their own agendas, prioritize issues as they see fit, and deliberate and resolve issues in a manner of their own choosing.

We expect that all Faculty and the WPI Administration will abide by these principles.

4. Faculty Meeting Updates

Prof. Richman listed a number of items that might appear on the agenda: A proposed motion from CITP regarding a policy on the use of security cameras on campus; the yearly faculty population report; possible presentation from Prof. Strauss; invited members from the graduate student union. The Faculty would also vote on the December graduation lists.

Prof. Richman continues to review possible adjustments to monthly Faculty meetings in C and D term to increase faculty attendance.

5. Definitions and search processes for Academic Administrators.

Chair. Albano reported on a recent Joint Coordinating Council (JCC) meeting that discussed ways to ensure the search process for Academic Administrators is transparent. The Faculty Handbook does not specify definitions or search processes for part-time positions. COG seeks to clarify these positions because they provide opportunities for faculty professional development. Interim Provost Heinricher explained there is also interest in establishing President and Provost Fellows that provide professional development opportunities for faculty interested in learning more about Academic Administration.

6. Call for Executive Session

COG voted to enter Executive Session. Chair Albano asked Interim Provost Heinricher to recuse himself for the remainder of the COG meeting and Interim Provost Heinricher agreed.

7. Meeting adjourned at 4:28 pm

Respectfully submitted,

George Heineman
Secretary