Committee on Governance: Minutes
Meeting #4: September 25, 2023
Faculty Governance Office
Faculty Governance Conference Room, SL 225
3:00 pm – 4:30 pm Zoom Link: https://wpi.zoom.us/j/95482156236

Members: Mark Claypool (CS), Althea Danielski (HUA), Tanja Dominko (Secretary, BBT), George Heineman (Chair, CS), Stephen Kmiotek (ChE), Mark Richman (Secretary of the Faculty, AE), Diane Strong (President's appointment, WBS).

1. Agenda was approved as distributed

2. Minutes for meeting #3 were approved

3. Update from the Academic Freedom Working Group
Prof. Claypool and Chair Heineman summarized the progress that the group has made over the past months. Group members (current and former Chairs of CTAF: Profs. Claypool, Mathews, Wobbe, and Doyle; and the Chair of COG Prof. Heineman) held listening sessions with faculty, department heads, faculty governance committee chairs, and academic administration. Following the guiding principles approved by CTAF and the Board of Trustees in May 2023, the group will develop formal procedures when a violation of academic freedom is alleged. Currently, policies and procedures in the Faculty handbook only address the process that CTAF follows when reviewing applications for early tenure by probationary faculty alleging academic freedom violations. The current procedures outlined in the faculty handbook for investigation of allegations of violation of academic freedom are not specified in detail. The recommended guidelines will balance the need for fairness with the need to protect those who would come forward with such an allegation. As the cornerstone of faculty rights, maintaining and protecting academic freedom is critical to continue the quality of our academic programs and protecting faculty members from retribution.
The group will make a presentation during the October 5th faculty meeting.

4. Upcoming Faculty meeting: October 5th
Secretary of the Faculty Prof. Richman reviewed the two main items that will be presented at the October faculty meeting. The Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom and the Committee on Governance will present a report - Defending the Principle: Formalizing a Process to Resolve Allegations of Academic Freedom Violations. The Committee on Information Technology Policy will present a Motion to revise WPI's Mailing List Policy. Both items will be presented for discussion only. He highlighted the importance of our monthly faculty meetings where timely, informed and robust discussions can take place and guide development of motions for faculty approval.

5. Considering candidates for Chair of the Campus Hearing Board (CHB) to shadow existing CHB chair Prof. Brattin (HUA), who will be transitioning out of this important role in Spring. COG will identify a faculty member to participate this Fall and allow for smooth transition and continuity of the Board's work.

6. Faculty Evaluation of Administrative Offices by Function
The committee discussed the initial process that will guide this year's evaluation of administrators. After a three and a half-year gap in evaluations that was primarily due to COVID and its aftermath, the committee will again review the evaluation instruments that were thoroughly redesigned at that time. Members of the COG will work with individual administrators selected for review this year (Dean of Graduate Studies, Dean of Arts and Sciences, Dean of Business, Dean of Engineering, and the Vice Provost for Research) to collect their input and modify the instrument to best reflect responsibilities and expectations of their positions.

7. Search Committee for Provost
In anticipation of the Provost position vacancy announcement, COG discussed the steps that will involve faculty governance in formation of the Search Committee, as outlined in the Faculty Handbook. The committee membership is as follows: three elected faculty members; one faculty member appointed by COG; three appointments by the President; two students appointed jointly by the President and COG. The President and COG will collaborate on all appointments to ensure balance of the committee's membership and to select the Chair of the search committee. Election of the faculty members will follow a two-step process: a nomination ballot will identify six faculty candidates with the highest number of nominations who are willing to serve; election ballot will identify three candidates elected by the instant run-off method.

8. Evaluate the size of CTAF considering expected number of cases in future years
Despite the faculty-approved expansion of CTAF membership from six to nine last year, CTAF Chair Prof. Wobbe expressed concern that the expected increase of tenure applications in the coming years will further strain the committee. COG will work with CTAF to evaluate the need for an increase after the current Fall semester has concluded.

9. Adjourned at 4:38 pm.

Respectfully,
Tanja Dominko
COG Secretary