

Committee on Governance: DRAFT Minutes

Meeting #6: October 09, 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), Art Heinricher (Interim Provost), Stephen Kmiolek (ChE), Mark Richman (Secretary of the Faculty, AE), Diane Strong (President's appointment, WBS), Karen Troy (BME).

Invited Guest: Elke Rundensteiner (CS; Program Director, Data Sciences)

1. The agenda was approved.
2. The minutes for meeting #5 were approved as amended.
3. Proposal to Clarify Joint Faculty Appointments

Prof. Rundensteiner (CS; Program Director, Data Sciences) introduced a draft motion that attempts to clarify by modifying the current section of the Faculty Handbook (Chapter Two, Section 7 – Definitions, Conditions, and Procedures for Faculty Joint and Appointments).

The proposed motion addresses the ambiguity around the roles of faculty in interdisciplinary programs at WPI, such as Data Science and IMGD. The current language in the Faculty Handbook does not describe interdisciplinary academic Programs as academic units and as such the responsibilities and affiliations of faculty members hired to support interdisciplinary programs as well as those of faculty who participate and spend time on interdisciplinary degree programs at WPI are not articulated. These ambiguities create managerial and logistical problems for corresponding department heads and program directors, who all need clarity about the particulars of the appointment as well as expected responsibilities of faculty in these interdisciplinary programs.

These faculty members typically split their time between the program and the department with which they are affiliated. Yet this “joint appointment” is not formally spelled out, leaving the program director, the department head, and the faculty member without a clear articulation of the expectations of the rights and responsibilities of these faculty in the different units. This can create undue pressures on these interdisciplinary faculty members.

This proposal is a result of a two-year effort by a set of faculty members composed of the following department heads, program directors, and others who have all been affected by the current situation: Kathryn Moncrief (Dept. Head, HUA); Elke Rundensteiner (CS and Prog. Dir., Data Science); Craig Shue (Dept. Head, CS); Gillian Smith (CS and Prog. Dir., IMGD);

Carolina Ruiz (CS; Associate Dean of A&S); Sarah Olson (Dept. Head, MA); and Diane Strong (Dept. Head, WBS).

COG members identified several additional considerations that should be considered: opportunity for individual interdisciplinary program faculty to influence division of their responsibilities; better definitions of what constitutes a Department, a Program, an Interdisciplinary Program; considerations of composition and responsibilities for Department Tenure Committee (DTC) and joint Tenure Committee (JTC) for joint interdisciplinary appointments between departments and programs; and interim reviews of secure, non-tenure track interdisciplinary appointments between departments and programs.

4. Formation of the Search Committee for Provost

The Committee discussed the timeline for the formation of the Search Committee for the Provost with the intent to complete the process by the week after Thanksgiving.

COG will follow the process described in the Faculty Handbook:

When an academic administrative position is to be filled from either inside or outside of WPI, a search committee of nine members is formed consisting of three elected faculty, one faculty member appointed by the Committee on Governance, one faculty member appointed by the Provost, two members appointed by the President, and two students appointed jointly by the President and by COG. The President, the Provost, and COG will collaborate on all appointments to ensure balance of the committee's membership and to select the Chair of the search committee. In this case, because the search is for the Provost, the President will make three appointments.

The Secretary of the Faculty will oversee the nomination and election process that will identify elected faculty representatives on the search committee. To allow for the broadest faculty representation, the committee agreed to solicit up to 15 nominations for each voting faculty member and select the faculty with the highest number of nominations who are willing to serve for the final ballot.

The committee agreed that an acceptable balance between protecting confidentiality and following the openness of the search process described in the faculty handbook, would allow for candidate anonymity until the finalist are selected, followed by a campus visit and by making their application materials available to the WPI community. This would be in agreement with a provision for openness described in the Faculty Handbook that states:

It is the responsibility of the search committee to conduct the search in such a manner that all members of the faculty, administration, and staff who would interact in a substantive way with the appointee be given the opportunity to review the candidate's resume, meet with the candidate, ask questions of the candidate, and provide both written and oral feedback to the committee. The search committee may invite members of the staff to meet with the committee and/or serve as resources for the search.

5. The meeting was adjourned at 4:36pm.

Respectfully,

Tanja Dominko
COG Secretary