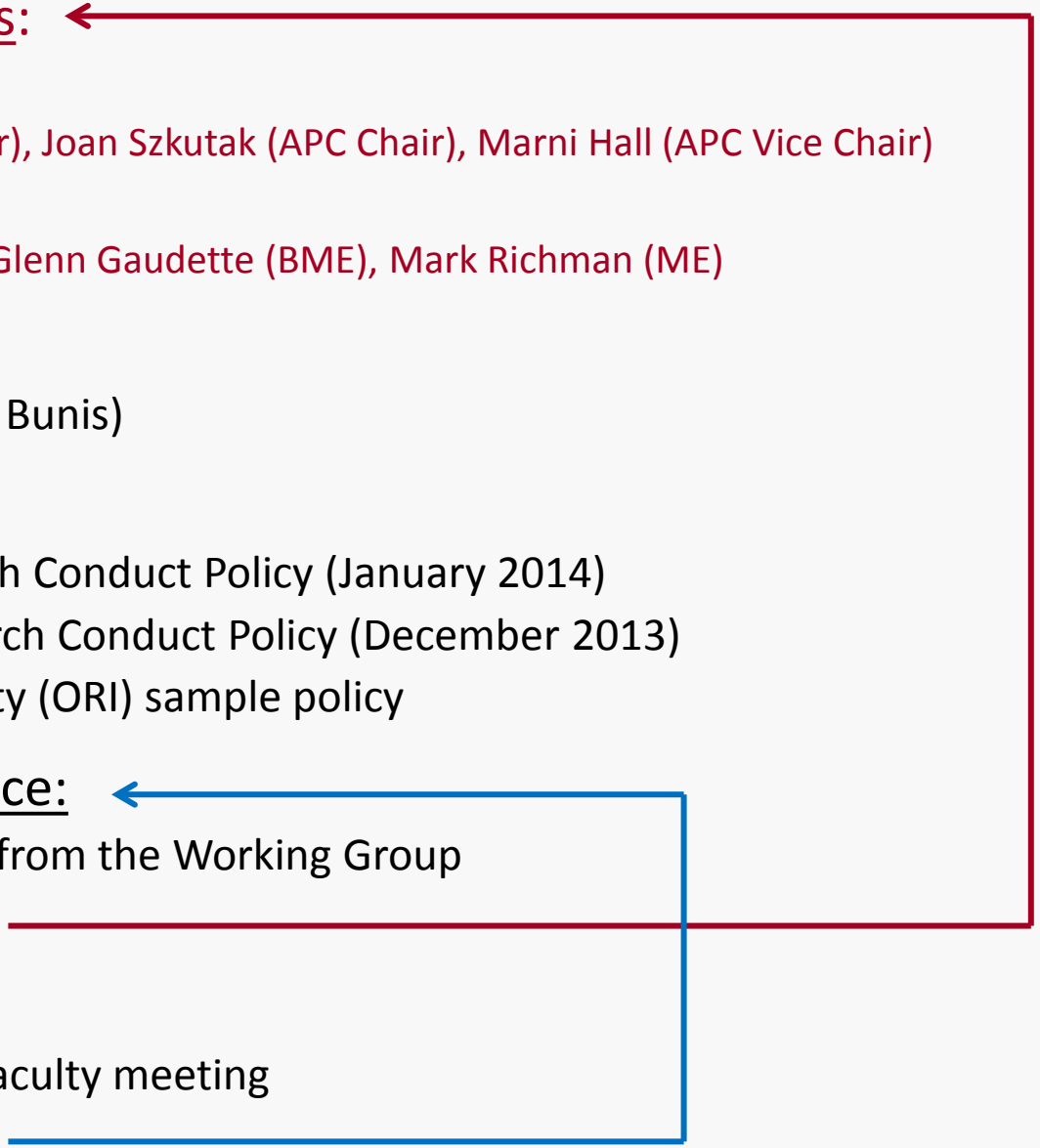
Motion to Adopt a New WPI Research Conduct Policy

Committee on Governance:
Len Albano
Bruce Bursten (Provost)
Glenn Gaudette (Chair)
Mark Richman (SOF)
Sue Roberts
David Spanagel
Bengisu Tulu
Suzy Weekes

Process Used to Develop Proposed Policy for WPI

- Working Group Members:
  - 3 Trustees
    - Jack Mollen (Board Chair), Joan Szkutak (APC Chair), Marni Hall (APC Vice Chair)
  - 3 Faculty members
    - Kris Boudreau (HU&A), Glenn Gaudette (BME), Mark Richman (ME)
- Legal Counsel:
  - University Counsel (David Bunis)
- Working Documents:
  - Faculty-approved Research Conduct Policy (January 2014)
  - Trustees-approved Research Conduct Policy (December 2013)
  - Office of Research Integrity (ORI) sample policy
- Committee on Governance:
  - Carefully reviewed drafts from the Working Group
  - Suggested modifications
- WPI Faculty:
  - Discussed at November Faculty meeting
  - Suggested modifications



Needs Addressed in/by the Proposed Policy

- The need for WPI to have a single clear Research Conduct Policy;
  - Faculty-approved policy (January 2014)
  - Board-approved policy (December 2014)

  } Reconcile…
- The need for the Research Misconduct Policy to apply to faculty, staff, and students;
- The need to allow the Institution to take all appropriate interim actions to protect public health, federal funds and equipment, and the integrity of the research process;
- The need to conform to the accepted standard of proof for a finding of research misconduct;
- The need to allow allegations of research misconduct to be raised by any means of communication;
- The need to assure that investigators have no conflicts of interest with the Respondent, the Complainant, or the witnesses;
- The need to be more explicit about the content, timing, and circumstances of required reporting.

Procedures: Overview

- Initial Assessment
  - by VPR (or VPR-appointed fact-finder)
  - to determine if allegations fall within the policy
    - If not, dismissed
  - concludes within 5 days of receiving allegation

- Inquiry (must begin within 30 days after Initial Assessment)
  - Inquiry Committee formed (three fact-finders appointed by VPR)
  - Notice given to Respondent
  - Inquiry Committee reports to VPR
    - whether to proceed
    - if so, based on a reasonable belief that Research Misconduct may have occurred
  - VPR recommends to Provost whether to proceed
  - Provost decides whether to proceed
    - if not, dismissed
    - if so, Provost must document decision to proceed if Inquiry Committee voted otherwise
    - If so, Provost must send notice to proceed and Inquiry Committee report to funding agency
  - Inquiry concludes within 60 days of its initiation

Procedures: Overview (continued)

- Investigation (must begin within 21 days after Inquiry)
  - Investigation Committee formed:
    - five faculty members appointed by SOF and Chair of FRC
  - Notice given to Respondent
  - Investigation Committee reports to VPR:
    - whether Research Misconduct has occurred;
    - severity and suggested disciplinary action (if any);
    - based on definition of Research Misconduct and Standard of Proof
  - VPR recommends to Provost:
    - whether Research Misconduct has occurred;
    - disciplinary action (if any)
  - Provost decides:
    - whether Research Misconduct has occurred;
    - disciplinary action (if any)
    - Provost must document finding of research misconduct and/or disciplinary action if either differs from Investigation Committee conclusions
    - VPR must send final Investigation Committee report to funding agency
  - Investigation concludes within 120 days of its initiation

Appeals

- *Sanctions may be appealed:*
  - *for all sanctions other than revocation of tenure:*
    - *to the President*
    - *final decision by President (in consultation with the Provost and SOF) within 30 days*
  - for revocation of tenure
    - to the Board of Trustees
    - Chair of Board and SOF appoint a Faculty committee of five members
    - Faculty committee reports to Board Chair
    - final decision by Board Chair within 30 days of receiving report
- Findings of Research Misconduct may be appealed to the President:
  - when procedural violations are alleged that could have affected the outcome
  - when the Investigation Committee finds no misconduct but the Provost finds that misconduct was committed
  - final decision by President (in consultation with the Provost and SOF) within 30 days
- Appeals must be filed within two weeks of Provost's decision

Key Modifications Incorporated from Faculty-Input

- Reorganized and formatted for clarity
  - Including overview of process and timelines
- Clarified that Respondent can have legal counsel throughout the Inquiry and Investigation
- Defined “impartial” and “unbiased” and explicitly required that all participants at all stages of the process must be such
- Added the requirement that the Provost must document reasons for a finding of research misconduct and/or for any disciplinary action if either differs from Investigation Committee conclusions
- Added appeals of findings of research misconduct (to the President)
  - when there is an alleged violation of procedure (substantive)
  - when the Provost finds that the Respondent committed research misconduct but the Investigation Committee does not
- Many other detailed suggestions…

Discussion