Committee on Governance Annual Report
Academic Year 2022-23
Submitted June 26, 2023

The Committee on Governance (COG) met 28 times during the 2022-2023 academic year. The issues addressed by COG are grouped by category and described below.

Committee Appointments and Faculty Elections:

1. COG made the following committee appointments at the start of AY 2022-23: Prof. Dominko (BBT) to the Committee on Financial and Administrative Policy; Prof. Kurlanska (DIGS) to the Fringe Benefits Committee; Prof. Scarlata (CBC) as Chair and Prof. Tao (CEAE) as an alternate on the Conflict Management Committee; Prof. Liu (MME) to the Research Development Council; and Prof. Brattin (HUA) as Chair of the Campus Hearing Board.

2. COG asked Interim Provost Heinricher for the breakdown of how faculty members on the Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom (CTAF) and the Committee on Appointments and Promotions (COAP) chose to receive either course relief or compensation. Interim Provost Heinricher reported that course releases accounted for about three quarters of the requests for AY 2022-23, and the Provost's Office provided the funding for all extra compensation – whether for committee members who opted for extra compensation or for the cost of replacements to cover course releases. COG encouraged the Provost to begin advanced planning with Department Heads who will have faculty members on CTAF and COAP in AY 2023-24.

3. COG discussed whether faculty members who are also Academic Administrators should be eligible to appear on nominating ballots for COG, CTAF, and COAP. It was common practice for these ballots to not include faculty members who were serving as an Associate Dean or higher. One argument to continue this practice is that faculty members who participate in Faculty Governance should be able to do so without fear of retaliation. Also, faculty members who are also Academic Administrators inherently have a voice in the direction of WPI, so omitting them from the ballot could increase the opportunities for other faculty members to become involved. The ultimate decision was to include just the names of Associate Deans on the COG ballots, but to exclude them from the CTAF and COAP ballots because the responsibilities of these committees define a separate explicit administrative role.

4. The Secretary of the Faculty conducted the nomination and election process for new members of COG, CTAF, and COAP. For COG, Profs. Claypool (CS) and Kmiotek (CHE) were elected to serve three-year terms (2023-2026). For CTAF, Profs. Dominko (BBT), Sakulich (CEAE), and Titova (PH) were elected to four-year terms (2023-2027); Prof. Solovey (CS) was elected to a two-year term (2023-2025); and Prof. Sturm (MA) was elected to a one-year term (2023-2024). For COAP, Profs. Rudolph (HUA) and Zhou (CHE) were elected to three-year terms (2023-2026), and Profs. Iannacchione (PH) and Lados (MME) were elected to one-year terms (2023-2024).

5. As part of the preparation for the election of faculty members to the remaining standing governance committees, COG presented an "Overview of Our Faculty Governance Committee Structure and Election Process" at the Faculty Meeting on March 6, 2023. The purpose of the presentation was to outline the roles and responsibilities of the various committees, identify faculty contacts for additional information, and encourage faculty participation.

6. COG prepared the ballots and conducted the elections to fill seventeen open positions on seven of the remaining standing governance committees (Committee on Academic Operations, Committee on Academic Policy, Committee on Graduate Studies and Research, Committee on Financial and Administrative Policy, Undergraduate Outcomes Assessment Committee, Committee on Advising and Student Life, and Faculty Review Committee) and the Campus Hearing Board. COG solicited campus-wide faculty interest through campus-wide emails, department-wide emails, and individual outreach. COG constructed the ballots by considering individual faculty preferences and committee membership balance. The election results were announced on May 4, 2023.

7. COG elected Prof. Heineman (CS) as its Chair and Prof. Dominko (BBT) as its Secretary for AY 2023-24.

8. COG re-appointed Prof. Scarlata (CBC) as Chair and Prof. Tao (CEAE) as an alternate on the Conflict Management Committee for AY 2023-24. The Committee also appointed Prof. Stabile (MME) and Prof. Stanlick (DIGS) as its representatives to the Fringe Benefits Committee, beginning in AY 2023-24.

Reorganized Faculty Handbook:

Championed by the Secretary of the Faculty, COG engaged in a year-long effort to produce a reorganized version of the *Faculty Handbook* and bring it forward to the WPI Faculty for approval. While the existing *Faculty Handbook* was kept up-to-date, it evolved in a piecemeal fashion in which the changes could not be synthesized at every step. Consequently, it became increasingly difficult to navigate with information related to single topics and specific processes oftentimes scattered throughout the document.

The Secretary of the Faculty began the effort to reorganize the *Handbook* in summer 2022 by conceiving the overall structure of the reorganized document and preparing preliminary drafts of the first five chapters: Governance, Academic Appointments, Tenure, Promotions, and Faculty Grievance Procedure. Working from the existing *Handbook*, he prepared the drafts by shifting whole sections intact, combining sections, reorganizing information within sections, and extracting elements from different sections and recombining them into new sections and subsections. He shared all the drafts with the Chair of COG and relevant drafts with Chairs of CTAF and COAP.

When COG began its weekly meetings in fall 2022, it reviewed and discussed the drafts extensively for section-by-section modifications, accuracy and consistency checks, and clarifications. To focus on producing a reorganized *Handbook* and to avoid making substantive changes, the following hierarchy of modifications was adopted:

- Pure reorganization and the moving of whole sections – which involved no changes in text;
- Necessary editorial, stylistic, and grammatical changes – which were needed to patch adjacent elements together and to reformat appropriately;
- Corrections to obvious inconsistencies;
- Helpful clarifications – which involved changing or adding text for better and easier understanding without changing substance;
- Simple process improvements – which involved adding text without changing the effect of current policy; and
- Documentation of accepted current practices not yet formally adopted in the current *Handbook* – which involved changing text to update the *Handbook* to conform to established current practices.

The resulting version of the *Handbook* consists of two parts, each with five chapters. Part One contains the reorganized Governance, Academic Appointments, Tenure, Promotions, and Faculty Grievance Procedure chapters. Part Two contains content from the existing *Faculty Handbook* that was placed unchanged (although reordered) in the following five new chapters: Policies Regarding Academics and Academic Programs, Awards and Awards Committees, Certain Policies on Faculty Benefits and Opportunities, Certain Legal Policies, and Faculty Conduct Policies

COG used an iterative, consensus-building process that involved the Faculty, Administration, and the Board of Trustees to bring forward a final version of the reorganized *Faculty Handbook* by the end of the academic year. This process included sharing updated relevant chapters with CTAF, COAP, and the Committee on Teaching and Research Faculty (CTRF); presenting overviews of the reorganization process at two Faculty Meetings, followed by more substantive information at two additional Faculty Meetings on the five reorganized chapters that comprise Part One; distributing updated full drafts to the Faculty at three points during the spring; and hosting six hours of drop-in sessions at the Quorum. The evolving sections of each chapter were shared with Interim President Soboyejo and the Office of the General Counsel. In addition, Interim President Soboyejo convened a reading group (including the Secretary of the Faculty; the Chair of COG; the Secretary of COG; the Interim Provost; the Interim Dean of Undergraduate Studies; the Associate Dean of the Global School; and two representatives of the Office of the General Counsel) to re-verify in detail that the reorganized draft of the *Faculty Handbook* is consistent with the sensibility and constraints described by the above hierarchy of modifications.

At a fifth Faculty meeting, COG presented a motion to adopt the reorganized *Faculty Handbook* on May 9, 2023. The Faculty overwhelmingly approved the motion by a vote of 131 to 1. The Secretary of the Faculty and the COG Secretary made a formal presentation on the reorganized *Faculty Handbook* to the Academic Planning Committee (APC) of the WPI Board of Trustees on May 11, 2023. Their presentation gave an overview of the need, the process, and the reorganized *Handbook*. The APC and the full Board voted to approve the reorganized *Faculty Handbook*.

<u>Faculty Governance Coordination</u>:

1. COG collaborated with CTAF on proposing to enlarge the membership of CTAF from six to nine to manage the anticipated increase in the number of tenure cases to be reviewed over the next few years. The proposal included a detailed implementation plan, beginning with the election of CTAF members for AY 2023-24, as well as other changes and clarifications to the description of CTAF within the *Faculty Handbook*. Prof. Richman served as the liaison between CTAF and COG. Prof. Claypool (CS, CTAF Chair) presented the proposal on behalf of COG and CTAF for discussion at the October Faculty Meeting and for a vote at the November Faculty Meeting. The changes were approved by the Faculty on November 10, 2022.

2. Recognizing the importance of broad faculty participation in the monthly faculty meetings, COG discussed the obstacles that make it difficult for faculty members to attend. These include conflicts with family responsibilities (typically in the 3pm to 5pm time slot) and with teaching responsibilities (at any time of day). Opening weekly or monthly "no teaching" time slots at an earlier time of day would address both problems but could be difficult to implement given the nature of the academic course schedule. Alternatively, integrating faculty meetings into designated "professional days" on the academic calendar would open time for faculty to attend meetings with fewer conflicts. Such an approach can be addressed institutionally with the support of the Office of the Provost if the academic calendar were adjusted to hold faculty meetings on days when there are no scheduled courses.

   In the short term, the Secretary of the Faculty collaborated with COG to make some changes to the Faculty Meeting Schedule for AY 2022-23 to minimize conflicts with teaching and family responsibilities whenever possible. These changes included adopting a hybrid meeting format, shifting the December Faculty Meeting to 10am on the day after the end of B-term, and shifting the February Faculty Meeting to 10am on the day after the end of C-term. Shifting the dates for the December and February Faculty Meetings necessitated changes in several other meeting dates to allow sufficient time between meetings for committees to prepare materials for the two-week and one-week notices. Looking ahead to AY 2023-24, the Secretary of the Faculty and the COG Chair met with the Interim Dean of Undergraduate Studies and the Registrar, who serve on the committee that prepares the academic calendar, to understand constraints and share a proposed calendar that includes a cycle of "professional days" that aligns with a workable schedule for nine Faculty Meetings.

3. The Secretary of the Faculty, the Chair of COG, and the Secretary of COG served on a working group charged with formulating a process for CTAF to investigate and resolve complaints of academic freedom violations. The working group was led by Prof. Claypool (CS, CTAF Chair) and Prof. Mathews (BBT, former CTAF Chair). The *Faculty Handbook* charges CTAF with the investigation of academic freedom complaints, but language to guide the investigation is limited. The working group established guiding principles for developing new language in the *Faculty Handbook* to clarify the investigation process and expand the remedies to all populations of faculty members – tenured, tenure-track, and

non-tenure-track. This work is ongoing with the goal of bringing the proposed changes to the Faculty by December 2023.

Faculty Growth and Development:

1. COG discussed progress on the teaching path to tenure. A total of 30 teaching faculty had been placed on the teaching track by the start of AY 2022-23, and Interim Provost Heinricher said he will work with the Deans to nominate a third cohort of 15 additional teaching faculty for AY 2023-24. COG discussed the following two questions: (1) Will WPI have reached its institutional goal of placing 40 percent of its secured teaching faculty on the tenure track? If not, will a fourth cohort be identified or what other steps can be taken to reach the goal? (2) Should WPI seek external candidates to be hired directly into the teaching track to tenure through a competitive, advertised position? COG believes that after the first three cohorts have been chosen internally, it is reasonable to allow external candidates to be considered, especially in efforts to increase diversity, while still honoring and respecting current faculty colleagues. As a related item, Interim Provost Heinricher reported that the candidates on the teaching track to tenure are receiving varying amounts of feedback and differing advice from their Department Tenure Committees (DTCs) concerning the new tenure criteria. In its meeting minutes for September 12, 2022, COG advised Department Heads and DTCs to review the institutional guidelines as detailed in the *Faculty Handbook*, which were formulated after extensive input from the entire WPI community. Interim Provost Heinricher stated his intention to give nominees in the third cohort more time than in the past to decide whether to accept their nominations.

2. COG prepared the "Second Annual Report on WPI Faculty Populations," and presented it at the Faculty Meeting on February 2, 2023. The report focused on WPI's progress in achieving two institutional goals as stated in the *Faculty Handbook*: (1) 70 percent of the full-time Faculty to be dual-mission tenured or tenure-track, and the remaining 30 percent to be secured teaching faculty; (2) 40 percent of the secured teaching faculty would be tenured (or tenure-track) Professors of Teaching and 60 percent would be non-tenure track (by Fall 2023). The report was prepared based on faculty population data from early January 2023. At the time, there was a total of 409 full-time faculty members, consisting of 273 dual-mission and tenure-track, 30 tenure-track Professors of Teaching, and 106 secured teaching faculty. The report showed that an additional 44 TTT dual-mission faculty members must be added to achieve the first goal, and that the current projection for the numbers of tenured (or tenure-track) Professors of Teaching would be nine short of achieving the second goal.

3. COG worked on a proposal to modify the "Guidelines for Searches to Fill Academic Administrative Positions" which is in Chapter Two, Section 6 of the reorganized *Faculty Handbook*. This initiative began in 2019 with the goal of establishing a transparent, internal search process for appointing Assistant or Associate Deans as leadership development opportunities for faculty members. To facilitate an internal search for an Associate or Assistant Dean, COG recommended the formation of a five-member search committee (which is a reduction from the nine-member search committee for the Provost and Academic Dean positions), and the search committee would report its evaluations of the candidates to the Provost and the supervising Dean (which involves fewer parties than for

the evaluation of candidates for the Provost and Academic Dean positions). As a matter of shared governance, the proposed changes would add language to inform COG of decisions to create new positions or to sunset existing positions. The proposal would also introduce a process for handling interim appointments of academic administrators. A draft version of the proposal was prepared, but the draft was neither reviewed nor approved by COG for presentation to the Faculty.

4. COG revisited the concept of Presidential and Provost Fellows as short-term development opportunities for faculty members; this initiative also began in 2019. Presidential Fellows might support non-academic activities (e.g., finance, advancement) whereas Provost Fellows would focus on academic activities related to instruction, academic programs, or research. The concept of a Leadership Development Council (LDC) was proposed as a strategy for giving interested faculty members a mechanism to propose projects, advertising available projects, and providing a transparent process to select faculty members to serve as Fellows. Additional work is required on this initiative before it can be brought to the Faculty for consideration.

5. COG discussed the value of modifying the *Faculty Handbook* to include a standard process or guidelines for hiring full-time faculty members. Such language could be used to unify a process for hiring faculty members, including the formation and role of the search committees, much like how the *Faculty Handbook* includes specific language for hiring Department Heads and Academic Administrators. Prof. Strong provided the Committee with documentation on the process used to hire faculty in the Business School. COG considered this a possible follow up activity to the reorganized *Faculty Handbook*.

6. COG discussed a proposal from CTRF to expand the eligibility for sabbatical leave to include all secured teaching faculty members. The *Faculty Handbook* describes the purpose of sabbatical leaves as follows: "Leaves of absence, and particularly sabbatical leaves, are among the most important means by which a teacher's effectiveness may be enhanced, a scholar's usefulness enlarged, and an institution's academic program strengthened and developed." The discussion focused on (a) how this change would benefit the teaching mission of the Institution, eliminate a current inequity, and promote greater diversity in the sabbatical program (b) how such sabbaticals would be managed; (c) the six years of service required for Faculty to be eligible; (d) the percentage of eligible faculty who might seek a sabbatical leave; (e) the resources that might be required for equitable eligibility; and (f) the effect the sabbatical leave would have on the years counted within a 3- or a 5-year secured teaching contract. COG recommended a wider discussion of the idea, perhaps in the form of a preliminary proposal, and the discussion should involve the Faculty, the appropriate Faculty Governance committees, the Provost, the Deans, and the Department Heads.

Shared Governance:
1. COG met in executive session to discuss what the committee concluded was a concerted effort on the part of several academic administrators to intimidate a faculty member for making what they perceived 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. COG members expressed concern that such tactics, if left unaddressed, would be to silence the Faculty and to encroach on the autonomy of our Faculty Governance system. COG issued a statement reaffirming the basic principles that faculty members must be able to share their opinions freely, without fear of intimidation or reprisal, and the Faculty Governance system requires autonomy from administrative interference.

2. COG met with Prof. Cowlagi (AE; CITP Chair, 2021-2022), Prof. Smith (IMGD; CITP Chair, 2022-2023), and Prof. Heineman (CS; CITP member, 2020-2021) to discuss their experience as members of the faculty advisory team in the search process for a new Chief Information Officer (CIO). Michael Horan (Executive Vice President/Chief Financial Officer) conducted the search process, and he was also invited to the meeting but was unable to attend. Profs. Cowlagi, Smith, and Heineman informed COG that their role was to meet with the final candidates to assess their strengths and weaknesses without ranking them. They reported that there would not be any open meetings with the finalists; the finalists would meet with several other advisory teams; and CFO Horan would make the final hiring decision after receiving feedback from the advisory teams. The three faculty members shared that the timeline felt rushed, and the situation would have been improved with a clearly defined search process and search committee. COG members expressed concern about the closed nature of the search given the connection between the CIO's responsibilities and the teaching and research activities of the WPI Faculty. The process stood in contrast to the way high-profile positions, such as Provost, Deans, and Vice Provost for Research, are filled.

3. COG met with President-elect Wang in late January 2023. After introductions, COG members enjoyed a wide-ranging discussion with Dr. Wang on WPI and her past experiences with shared governance.

4. COG discussed an act of intolerance that occurred on campus in early March 2023. Specifically, articles were removed from the doors of one or more faculty members, including stickers/flags showing support for LGBTQIAP+. It was noted that some of the faculty members whose doors were affected are themselves members of the LGBTQIAP+ community. The incident was reported as a *bias incident*, which involved contacting the relevant Department Heads, Deans, and the WPI Police Department. COG members recommended that the Secretary of the Faculty be included in the list of those who receive notice of such bias incidents. In addition, the Secretary of the Faculty could and should be considered a resource and advocate for faculty members who are affected by such incidents. An upcoming meeting of the JCC was proposed as an opportunity for discussing a formal mechanism to share relevant information about such incidents with the Secretary of the Faculty just as it is with other officers of the University. In addition, the suggestion was made to announce such incidents in a timely manner, just as the WPI Police Department shares emails about safety incidents.

5. Prof. Soboyejo resumed the position of Provost and returned to COG as an *ex officio* member when President Wang joined WPI on April 3rd. With this transition, Prof.

Heinricher continued to work on projects to support Provost Soboyejo and attended COG meetings as a non-voting guest for the remainder of the academic year.

6. COG viewed and discussed "Lead with Purpose Strategic Priorities" slides from a management council retreat. These slides were directed at moving the Strategic Plan into its next phase for FY 2023-26, and they were shared with Deans, Department Heads, and Chairs of Faculty Governance committees. COG observed that some of these priorities are about who we are rather than what we do, some focus on what we already do, and that it would be difficult to assess/evaluate outcomes for some of the stated priorities. By contrast, COG highlighted that the goal of making WPI affordable is an example of a concrete goal that can be used as a benchmark to evaluate progress towards these strategic priorities.

WPI Policies:
1. COG reviewed the "Interim Title IX and Sexual Misconduct Policy" (dated June 22, 2022) which was drafted in response to the Title IX changes that were announced by the Trump Administration in May 2020. WPI Administration issued the "Interim Title IX and Sexual Misconduct Policy" to comply with these changes, and it asked COG to bring this new policy forward to the Faculty for approval and subsequent inclusion in the *Faculty Handbook*. COG spent time carefully considering the 2022 "Interim Title IX and Sexual Misconduct Policy" and comparing it with the "WPI Sexual Misconduct Policy" (approved by the Faculty and Board of Trustees in 2018). In response to specific questions, COG received information from the Office of the General Counsel on the differences between the 2022 "Interim Sexual Misconduct Policy" and the 2018 "WPI Sexual Misconduct Conduct Policy," and the differences between the Title IX and non-Title IX provisions. Several questions were raised in these discussions, such as (a) Can the process we had in place for sexual misconduct that falls outside the Trump Title IX changes remain intact even under the new interim Title IX & Sexual Misconduct policy? (b) What are the changes that *must* be incorporated for Title IX misconduct? (c) How does WPI write policies that are more likely to be stable as succeeding presidential administrations introduce changes to Title IX? (d) Can OGC provide COG with a clear summary of all the changes made to formulate the interim policy from the existing policy?

   In January 2023, the COG Chair and Secretary met with David Bunis (Senior VP & General Counsel) regarding COG's review of the 2022 "Interim Title IX and Sexual Misconduct Policy." Counsel Bunis suggested that COG delay action until after the changes to the Title IX rules that are expected from the Biden administration are formalized later in 2023. COG discussed how to proceed when the new requirements become available. The consensus of COG was (1) have the non-Title IX provisions of the 2018 "WPI Sexual Misconduct Policy" updated to align with all new relevant guidelines, and (2) define the Title IX provisions in a manner that differs from non-Title IX policy only in ways required by Federal law.

2. COG discussed the revised "WPI Policy of Indemnification for Faculty, Professional Staff and All Other Employees" that was distributed by the Administrative Policy Group (APG). The primary change in the revised indemnification policy is its extension to cover nonexempt employees (the previous version only applied to Faculty, Professional Staff,

and all other exempt employees). COG was concerned that the word "reasonable" was inserted, which changes the policy to now read "WPI shall indemnify all of its Faculty, Professional Staff and all other Employees … against any and all *reasonable* liabilities, losses, costs and expenses…" This seems like a scale-back of indemnification against "all expenses" as described in the previous version. Furthermore, it is unclear who would decide whether a specific expense was "reasonable" and what supporting evidence would be used to make the decision. There was also some confusion regarding the circumstance where someone could be "adjudicated in any proceeding not to have acted in good faith…" Although this wording was not a proposed change to the policy, the interpretation is subjective, and it would be helpful to have specific examples for when the indemnification policy would and would not be applicable. Finally, the question was raised about why the sentence structure of the policy couldn't be simplified so that it was more easily understood by members of the WPI community who are not lawyers. Interim Provost Heinricher shared COG's feedback with the APG. The revised indemnification policy was approved by Interim President Soboyejo in March 2023 and included in the reorganized *Faculty Handbook* without any of COG's concerns addressed

3. COG discussed the "Animals on Campus Policy" distributed by APG, which carefully defines the terms "Assistance Animal," "Therapy Animal" and "Pet." COG did not express any concerns.

Respectfully submitted,

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