

Committee on Governance: Minutes

Meeting #12: December 4th, 2023

Faculty Governance Office

Faculty Governance Conference Room, SL 225

4:00 pm – 5:30 pm

Zoom Link: <https://wpi.zoom.us/j/95482156236>

Members: Mark Claypool (CS), Althea Danielski (HUA), Tanja Dominko (Secretary, BBT), Art Heinricher (Interim Provost), Stephen Kmietek (ChE), Mark Richman (Secretary of the Faculty, AE), Diane Strong (President's appointment, WBS), Karen Troy (BME).

1. The agenda was approved as amended.
2. The minutes for meeting #11 were approved as amended.
3. Upcoming WPI Faculty Meeting December 6th
Prof. Richman reviewed the three main items on the agenda that will be presented to the faculty. The lists of undergraduate and graduate students completing degree requirements will be presented for a faculty vote by the Committee on Academic operations (CAO) and the Committee on Graduate Studies and Research (CGSR), respectively. The second item is the motion from CGSR to establish an M.S. Program, a B.S./M.S. degree path, and a Certificate Program in Artificial Intelligence (AI). As the proposal indicates, the motion is the result of an intricate campus-wide, cross-disciplinary faculty collaboration that reflects not just the ways in which our faculty works best, but how artificial intelligence itself crosses all boundaries in its effects on us. The third item on the agenda, WPI's Graduate Workers Union Agreement: An Overview for the Faculty, will be presented by Dean Camesano. The intention of the presentation is not just to summarize the agreement, but – most importantly – to highlight and anticipate its implications for faculty members in their ongoing working relationships with our graduate students. COG agreed that a future presentation by the Graduate Workers Union representatives would be beneficial for further understanding of graduate student perspective.
4. Report on Faculty Populations
Prof. Richman reminded the committee of preparations for this year's annual report to the faculty detailing the numbers of faculty members in each category (by school, department, and program) identified in the Faculty Handbook. The report is required by the Faculty Handbook and will be presented at a faculty meeting in Spring 2024. The Faculty Handbook provides quantitative guidelines for distribution of faculty by their roles to maintain the appropriate balance between teaching and research at WPI. As background for the report, Provost Heinricher agreed to provide the committee with data concerning credits delivered by the various categories of faculty across the campus.
5. Professors of Teaching

In January 2021, faculty voted to establish teaching track to tenure. The administration agreed to grow faculty populations on this new track tenure track to 45 by August 2023. At present there are 43 faculty members on the teaching tenure track to tenure. Interim Provost Heinricher reported that the remaining two additional lines will be made available in this upcoming academic year. The announcement will be made by December 15th, 2023, and applications will be finalized by April 15th, 2024.

On the more general issue of reaching the goal stated in the Faculty Handbook that 40 percent of our teaching faculty would be either tenured or on the tenure track, Provost Heinricher indicated that there has been no further discussion about reaching this established goal. He stated that decisions about how to best fulfil departmental and program needs for both teaching and research should be made by department/program heads and Deans, while considering specific accreditation and programmatic requirements, as appropriate. Requests for new positions are then included in departmental and school proposed budgets for the next academic year. Department heads and Deans will be reminded to consider fulfilling their programmatic needs with different faculty populations.

6. Provost Search Process

COG is currently collaborating with the President on six appointees (including two students) to finalize the membership of the Provost Search Committee. All the faculty, staff and students who have been nominated will be contacted to ensure their willingness to serve. COG anticipates that the search committee membership will be finalized in the week of December 11th with the position description to follow shortly afterwards.

7. Sabbatical Leaves for All Secure Faculty Members

Prof. Danielski and Prof. Kmiotek introduced a draft proposal developed by CTRF that would extend the availability of sabbatical leaves to all secured faculty. The committee made the following recommendations:

- The proposal needs to be revised with more accurate data reviewing past awardees of sabbatical leaves, including proportion of eligible faculty applying each year; proportion of full vs. half year sabbaticals; and associated cost to departments and programs to continue delivering their programs during sabbatical absences.
- The proposal should describe the advantages and costs of full year vs. half year sabbatical leaves.
- The proposal should limit eligibility for sabbatical to secured faculty who are not in their final year of their current contract.
- The proposal should make clear that faculty who return from sabbatical provide a report and evaluation of the benefit provided to WPI from the faculty's sabbatical leave.

The committee recommended that CTRF share an updated draft with Department Heads, Program Directors, and Deans for their input, as applications for sabbatical leaves are approved with significant input from them.

8. Provost Fellowships

Prof. Troy presented a revised version of a proposal to establish Provost Fellowship program as a new professional development opportunity for faculty interested in expanding their academic leadership experience. These opportunities will be distinct from the existing Assistant and Associate Deans.

The revised proposal:

- articulates the scope of the fellowships that transcend departmental needs
- identifies goals, expectations, and metrics of success
- defines fellowship duration and appropriate effort
- establishes a process for advertising, nominating and selecting fellows

The committee will continue strengthening the proposal and will work with the Provost and others on campus to improve the proposal.

9. The meeting was adjourned at 5:38pm.

Respectfully,

Tanja Dominko
COG Secretary