The members of the 2020-21 Committee on Governance were Lenny Albano (CEE), Kris Boudreau (HUA, Chair), Tanja Dominko (BBT, Secretary of the Faculty), Tahar El-Korchi (CEE), Glenn Gaudette (BME), Arne Gericke (CBC, President’s Appointee), Mark Richman (ME, Secretary), and Wole Soboyejo (Provost).

The Committee on Governance met (remotely over Zoom) 32 times during the 2020-21 academic year. The issues addressed by the committee are grouped by category and described below.

I. Major Strategic Accomplishments

Changes to the Status of Nontenure-track Faculty:
COG developed and oversaw faculty approval of major changes to the status of NTT faculty. When these motions were approved by the faculty in January and May 2021, they included a tenure track for teaching faculty including criteria and guidelines for documenting and assessing progress toward tenure under this new tenure track; secured contracts for full-time nontenure-track faculty; and inclusion in governance for all TTT and secured teaching faculty. This suite of motions included the following changes to the Faculty Handbook:

- Adopted tenure criteria for Assistant, Associate, and Full Professors of Teaching, and that the tenure criteria be added to Section Two, Part 1.A of the Faculty Handbook (approved by the Faculty on January 28, 2021)
- Added Guidance for Documenting and Assessing Activities Toward Tenure for Professors of Teaching to Section Two, Part 1.A of the Faculty Handbook (following the Tenure Criteria for Professors of Teaching.) (approved by the Faculty on January 28, 2021)
- Revised the text and title of Part One, Appendix D (The Roles Played by Tenured, Tenure-Track, and Nontenure-Track Faculty in Carrying Out WPI’s Mission) in the Faculty Handbook (approved by the Faculty on January 28, 2021)
- Updated (Part Two - Section 7 of the Faculty Handbook) to include Assistant, Associate, and (full) Professors of Teaching; to revise categories of nontenure-track faculty; and to document revised terms of appointments, reappointments, and performance reviews for both secured and short-term nontenure-track teaching faculty members (approved by the Faculty on May 6, 2021)
- Included (as Appendix A of Part Two - Section 7 of the Faculty Handbook) a sample appointment letter for all Teaching Professors and Instructors holding secured nontenure-track teaching appointments (approved by the Faculty on May 6, 2021)
- Included (as Appendix B of Part Two - Section 7 of the Faculty Handbook) a sample appointment letter for all Professors of Practice (approved by the Faculty on May 27, 2021)
• Expanded responsibilities for the Faculty Review Committee to include cases related to termination and non-reappointment of secured non-tenure-track teaching faculty (approved by the Faculty on May 6, 2021)
• Expanded of the definition of the WPI faculty (in Part One, Section One of the Faculty Handbook) to include tenured and tenure-track assistant, associate, and full professors of teaching; all full-time non-tenure-track assistant, associate, and full teaching professors, senior instructors, instructors, professors of practice, and assistant, associate, and full research professors (approved by the Faculty on May 6, 2021)
• Addition of a new section (in Part One, Section One) of the Faculty Handbook, “Governance of the Faculty,” delegating the responsibilities of faculty governance to all full-time faculty members who are tenured, on the tenure track, or hold non-temporary secured nontenure-track teaching appointments that are made with provisions for a long-term institutional commitment from WPI. (approved by the Faculty on May 6, 2021)
• Explicitly extended the full range of academic freedom to all members of the WPI faculty (in Part One, Section Two, Subsection V.D of the Faculty Handbook) – (approved by the Faculty on May 6, 2021)
• Modified (Part One, Bylaw Five) of the Faculty Handbook to require that the Secretary of the faculty be a tenured member of the Faculty (approved by the Faculty on May 6, 2021)

Formation of New Departments:
COG developed the following motions that were approved by the faculty:
• Motion for the establishment of the Department of Integrative and Global Studies (DIGS) (approved by the Faculty on December 10, 2020)
• Motion to rename the Mechanical Engineering Department (ME) the Department of Mechanical and Materials Engineering (MME) (withheld until 2021-2022)

II. Major Operational Accomplishments

Electronic Voting:
Electronic voting: After several years of informal discussions, COG piloted, tested, and revised a process for electronic voting for committee membership. COG invited Professor Craig Shue (CS) to design and test a process for electronic rank-choice elections with instant runoffs to be run through Qualtrics. The process supports anonymous voting without the possibility of multiple votes from a single individual. COG piloted the elections with Prof. Shue, then (as approved by the Faculty on Oct 1, 2020) ran the fall and spring elections electronically.

Responses to the COVID pandemic:
COG collaborated with the administration and other governance committees to continue to maintain academic functions through an academic year still dominated by covid. COG
successfully collaborated with the Provost to implement a policy allowing faculty to teach remotely for any reason and to continue to have access to campus by following established protocols. COG oversaw the passage of motions:

- to continue holding remote faculty meetings and synchronous remote voting (approved by the Faculty on August 27, 2021 and extend again on April 8, 2021)
- to authorize the elected members of faculty governance committees to vote on critical time-sensitive matters if a faculty meeting could not be held (approved by the Faculty on August 27, 2020)

COG collaborated with the Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom (CTAF) on motions

- to extend the notification deadline for tenure-track faculty who opt out of the COVID-related extension of their pre-tenure probationary period (approved by the Faculty on April 8, 2021); and
- to extend the probationary periods for new tenure-track faculty members (approved by the Faculty on April 8, 2021).

III. Other Operational Accomplishments

Elections and Appointments:
In the fall, COG conducted elections for faculty representatives to the Search Committees for the Dean of Engineering and Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies (3 elected faculty members for each committee) and collaborated with the President and Provost to identify appointed committee members. In the fall COG also conducted elections for the standing committees that had been held over due to the campus closure in March 2020. The results were as follows: Faculty Review Committee (FRC): John Bergendahl (CEE) and Jianyu Liang (ME); Undergraduate Outcomes Assessment Committee (UOAC): Kate McIntyre (HUA); Committee on Financial and Administrative Policy (FAP): David Spanagel (HUA); Campus Hearing Board (CHB): Beth Eddy (2 years, HUA), John Sanbonmatsu (2 years, HUA), Robert Walls (2 years, CS, Fanfang Wang (1 year); Committee on Graduate Studies and Research (CGSR): Loris Fichera (RBE), Scarlet Shell (BBT); Committee on Advising and Student Life (CASL): Jeannine Coburn (BME), Ed Gutierrez (HUA/IMGD); Committee on Academic Policy (CAP): Jen deWinter (HUA), Oleg Pavlov (SSPS), Susan Zhou (ChE, 1 ½ years); Committee on Academic Operations (CAO): Laureen Elgert (SSPS), Jagan Srinivasan (BBT). COG made appointments to FAP, the Educational Development Council (EDC), and the Conflict Management Committee (CMC).

In the spring, the Secretary of the Faculty conducted the following elections: Secretary of the Faculty (electing Mark Richman, ME); Committee on Appointments and Promotions (COAP, electing John Sullivan, ME; Alex Wyglinski, ECE; and Susan Zhou, ChE); Committee on Governance (COG, electing Tanja Dominko, BBT; George Heineman, CS; and Nancy Burnham, PH, for a one-year term to replace Glenn Gaudette); and the Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom (CTAF, electing Kris Wobbe, UGS). COG ran elections for the standing committees with the following results: Committee on Academic Operations (CAO): Danielle Cote (ME), Michelle Ephraim (HUA), Patricia Musacchio (CBC); Committee on Academic Policy
(CAP): Berk Calli (RBE), Brigitte Servatius (MA); Committee on Academic Advising and Student Life (CASL): Francesca Bernardi (MA), Adam Powell (ME); Committee on Graduate Studies and Research (CGSR): Dave Medich (PH), Yunus Telliel (HUA); Campus Hearing Board (CHB): Holger Droessler (HUA), Aaron Sakulich (CEE), David Samson (HUA), Sarah Stanlick (DIGS); Committee on Financial and Administrative Policy (FAP): Joseph Sarkis (FBS); Faculty Review Committee (FRC): Robert Dempski (CBC), William Michalson (ECE); and Undergraduate Outcomes Assessment Committee (UOAC): Andrea Arnold (MA), Doug Petkie (PH).

Academic Credits Delivered Report: In keeping with its mandate, on May 6, 2021 COG presented an abbreviated annual report to the faculty on credits delivered. The May faculty vote to revise Appendix D (See “Major Strategic Accomplishments” above) means that the AY 20-21 report on credits delivered will be the last of its kind.

DEI Action Plan: COG wrote a “DEI Action Plan” and submitted it to the Office Multicultural Affairs (OMA). The Secretary of the Faculty and the Chair of COG met with OMA staff to review the plan.

Collaborations with other Faculty Governance Committees: COG reviewed and provided input on a number of draft policies originating with other committees.

- With CITP, these included the Research Data Retention and Maintenance Policy; the Academic and Research Computing User Account Policy; and the Acceptable Use Policy. With COAP, these included revisions to the process of reviewing sabbatical and unpaid leaves and modifications to the procedures of giving feedback to faculty who are denied promotion.
- With CTAF, COG collaborated on a draft proposal to replace Department Tenure Committees with Program Tenure Committees for tenure candidates housed in interdisciplinary programs (although this last proposal was left unresolved at the end of the year).

Process for Vetting Foreign Affiliations for Possible Conflicts of Interest: COG met several times with the Vice Provost for Research to provide feedback on a process being developed in response to new requirements from federal agencies about disclosures of collaborations with foreign entities.

Faculty Appointments to Board of Trustee (BoT) Committees: COG collaborated with the Academic Deans to identify faculty to serve on the following five BoT committees: Academic Planning; Budget and Finance; Facilities and Infrastructure; Student Affairs; Information Technology Task Force; and Economic Development. For each committee, two individuals were identified and presented to the Board for its selection. (See “Governance Concerns” below.)

IV. Work not Completed in AY21
**Academic Administration and Faculty Leadership:** COG resumed work on a proposal begun last year to provide opportunities for mid-career faculty (post-tenure or at the equivalent stage for NTT faculty) to acquire leadership experience. The proposal included provisions for a transparent application and selection process for faculty leadership appointments (such as part-time academic administrative appointments tied to specific responsibilities and Presidential and Provost fellowships to recruit faculty to perform specific tasks for a limited period of time). The proposal also sought to clarify the term "Academic Administrator," given the implications of this classification on eligibility for different kinds of service. The proposal underwent discussions and revisions but was not completed by the end of AY21.

**Faculty Evaluations of Administrators:** According to COG’s established schedule of reviews, the Academic Deans and the Vice Provost for Research were due to be reviewed this year. In general, administrative review surveys are distributed in the spring. COG took up the topic of survey fatigue (given the uncharacteristically large number of elections this year) and agreed to postpone this spring’s review until A term (AY 21-22), then resume its regular schedule next spring, reviewing two sets of administrators next year. COG reminded the Administration that the President and Provost have committed to including the traditional faculty review of administrators in its annual review process. COG’s position is that faculty reviews confidentially implemented by COG are an important component of any performance review of an academic administrator.

**V. Governance Concerns**

COG addressed ongoing concerns about decisions and policies that are academic in nature but have been undertaken administratively without the involvement or consent of the Secretary of the Faculty or the relevant faculty governance committees. While these concerns predate the COVID pandemic, instances have multiplied during the pandemic. These include:

**Creation of New Administrative Committees that Violate Faculty Policies and Accepted Practices:** In the following cases, COG strongly resists the following new committees:

- “Information Security Risk and Compliance Committee,” a committee that includes only one faculty member and subsumes the responsibilities of the Committee on Information Technology Policy, a subcommittee of COG. This new committee was administratively appointed without faculty consultation or approval.

- The “Administrative Policy Group” and its founding document, the “Process for Creating and Revising Institutional Administrative Policies” (PCRIAP). Both the PCRIAP and the APG override the responsibilities and authority of established faculty governance committees. COG has, on a number of occasions this year, urged the administration to follow the practices of shared governance that are reflected in governance committee
structures (which include relevant administrative personnel) and to involve and respect both the Department Heads and faculty governance leaders in the process.

Violations to Faculty Handbook Policies on Appointments of Nontenure-track Faculty: The administration failed to issue regular appointment letters at the customary time (April) to the full-time NTT faculty, issuing instead June 1 appointment letters that reduced appointments across the board to one year. In response to and solidarity with the NTT faculty, 78 of whom submitted a letter of protest to the Joint Coordinating Committee (JCC), COG wrote and approved a resolution of support.

Appointments of Faculty Representatives to Board of Trustees Committees: In fall 2018, the Board of Trustees changed the process by which faculty members would be nominated to serve on five of the Board’s committees. The process had been established in March 2012 in a collaboration between the Secretary of the Faculty, the President, and the Board Chair and is described in detail in the Faculty Handbook. According to that official process, COG forwards the names of two faculty members for each Board committee vacancy - from which the Board chooses one. The changes made by the Board in 2018 were imposed without consulting the faculty and removed faculty governance from the nomination process. The responsibility for forwarding nominations to the Board was given to the Deans instead. COG’s overarching concern is the need for all members of the WPI community to respect the policies in the Faculty Handbook.

This year, COG participated in a modified process that brings COG and the Deans together to collaborate on identifying nominations. While the Board had converted the purpose of the appointments to one that emphasizes mentoring and development of faculty members, COG continues to affirm the importance of the criteria defined in the Faculty Handbook, which give preference to faculty members with current or past experience serving on faculty governance committees. This is meant to ensure that the nominees are knowledgeable about faculty processes and issues related to those that overlap with the Board’s committee deliberations. COG agreed to participate in this temporary compromise but reiterates its concern about this and other violations to the Faculty Handbook.

Various Interim Educational Policies Administratively Implemented During the COVID Period: In response to the COVID-19 crisis, WPI has had to make interim decisions affecting important educational matters. In anticipation of the need to act quickly, our faculty governance committees and the faculty itself demonstrated a willingness to meet remotely (both at regularly scheduled faculty meetings and at additional special meetings) to discuss important matters and to approve needed actions. In spring 2020 and again in fall 2020 the faculty approved an expedited process that could be used to consider time-sensitive issues whenever needed.

Nevertheless, on several occasions this year, interim policies affecting educational matters were set without faculty approval. COG repeatedly shared its concerns with the Provost and President that the mechanisms the faculty have in place to influence and approve educational
policies, even on an interim basis, continue to be overlooked. This was true in the following cases:

- The administrative decision, made without consulting faculty leaders, to move all courses online in C term.
- Administrative changes to the academic calendar for C and D terms that were made without consulting the Secretary of the Faculty or the relevant faculty governance committees.

Respectfully submitted,

Kris Boudreau, Chair of COG
Mark Richman, Secretary of COG