Committee on Governance Annual Report
Academic Year 2023-24
Submitted July 9, 2024

The Committee on Governance met 29 times during the 2023-2024 academic year. The issues addressed by the committee are grouped by category and described below.

Elections and Appointments:

1. COG approved President Wang’s appointment of Diane Strong (WBS) to COG for (AY 23-24)
2. COG approved Provost Soboyejo’s appointments to CAP & CAO (Arne Gericke, Dean of Undergraduate Studies ad interim), UOAC (Kent Rissmiller, Associate Dean, Global School) and CASL (Prof. Stanlick, DIGS) for (AY 23-24).
3. COG collaborated with Greg Snoddy (Dean of Students) and Arnold Lane (Director, ODIME) to include appropriate representation of under-represented groups in choosing student appointments to faculty committees.
   a. Miguel Duran Guardia (IE, 2024) and Adish Jain (CS, 2024) appointed to CASL
   b. Amir Jarad (IE, 2026) and Nathan Willemsen (DS, 2025) appointed to CAO
   c. Teodor Hellgren (MA, 2025) appointed to UOAC
   d. Samuel Levitan (BBT, 2024) and Connor Chartier (CS, 2025) appointed to CAP
4. COG confirmed its (AY 23-24) appointments to Faculty Governance Committees
   a. Prof. Scarlata (CBC) as Chair for Conflict Management Committee (AY 23-24) Prof. Tao (CEAE) as alternate appointee to serve in the event of the recusals in Conflict Management Committee (AY 23-24)
   b. Prof. Stabile (MME) to Fringe Benefits Committee (AY 23-24 and 24-25)
   c. Prof. Stanlick (DIGS) to Fringe Benefits Committee (AY 23-24, 24-25, and 25-26)
   d. Prof. Pfeifer (DIGS, HUA) to three-year term on Educational Development Council (AY 23-24, 24-25, and 25-26)
   e. Prof. El-Korchi (CEAE) to Financial & Administrative Policy (AY 23-24)
5. COG confirmed its (AY 24-25) appointments to Faculty Governance Committees
   a. Prof. Walls (CS) to serve a three-year term starting (AY 24-25) on the Committee on Information Technology Policy (CITP)
   b. Prof. Scarlata (CBC) as Chair for Conflict Management Committee (AY 24-25)
   c. Prof. Tao (CEAE) as alternate appointee to Conflict Management Committee (AY 24-25)
   d. Prof. Towner (WBS) to serve a three-year term as Chair of the Campus Hearing Board starting (AY 24-25)
6. COG appointed Prof. R. Madan (HUA) to serve a three-year term as a member of the committee to select Board of Trustees Outstanding Teaching award.
7. COG conducted the election for the Secretary of the Faculty, which is a three-year term starting (AY 24-25). COG prepared the nomination ballots, which were available from Wednesday January 31, 2024 through Wednesday February 7, 2024. The final ballot with two names was available from February 20, 2024 through February 26, 2024. On February 27, 2024 it was announced that Prof. Claypool (CS) was elected to be the next Secretary of the Faculty.
8. The Secretary of the Faculty conducted the elections to fill three open positions on the Committee on Governance (COG), four open positions on the Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom (CTAF), and two open positions on the Committee on Appointments and Promotions (COAP). The nomination ballots, which were available from Monday February 26, 2024 through Monday March
4. The final ballots were available from March 22, 2024 through March 29, 2024. The election results were announced on April 1, 2024.

9. COG conducted the elections to fill 17 open positions on Committee on Academic Policy (CAP, 2 vacancies), Undergraduate Outcomes Assessment Committee (UOAC, 2 vacancies), Committee on Academic Operations (CAO, 2 vacancies), Committee on Graduate Studies and Research (CGSR, 2 vacancies), Committee on Advising and Student Life (CASL, 2 vacancies), Committee on Financial and Administrative Policy (FAP, 1 vacancy), Faculty Review Committee (FRC, 3 vacancies) and Campus Hearing Board (CHB, 3 vacancies). COG solicited campus-wide faculty interest through campus-wide emails (sent out April 8th), reminders during WPI Faculty meetings and individual outreach by COG members to individuals in each department. The final ballot was available from April 24, 2024 through May 1, 2024. The election results were announced on May 3, 2024.

10. COG elected Prof. Troy (BME) as its Chair and Prof. Kmiotek (ChE) as Secretary for (AY 24-25). COG approved Presidential appointment of Diane Strong (WBS) to COG for (AY 24-25).

Provost Search Committee:

1. In September 2023, it was announced that Provost Soboyejo would be leaving WPI. The COG Chair and the Secretary of the Faculty met with President Wang to discuss and collaborate on the transition. The former Dean of Undergraduate Studies Prof. Heinricher (MA) was appointed to serve as Interim Provost for the remainder of (AY 23-24).

2. The Secretary of the Faculty and the Chair of COG provided input into the profile specification for the position. The Secretary of the Faculty arranged a meeting between President Wang, Lauren Turner (VP T&I) and the faculty governance committee Chairs to discuss expectations for the new Provost. COG conducted the elections to fill three faculty member positions on the Provost Search Committee.

3. COG prepared the nomination ballots, which were available from October 25, 2023 through November 1, 2023. To allow for the broadest faculty representation, the committee agreed to solicit up to 15 nominations for each voting faculty member. The final ballot with nine finalists was available from November 9, 2023 through November 16, 2023. The election results were announced on November 22, 2023 and the elected faculty members were Profs. Cote (MME), Richman (AE), and Wobbe (CBC).

4. Representing COG, the Secretary of the Faculty and the Chair of COG collaborated with President Wang in selecting the remaining six members of the Provost search committee: Sam Levitan (B.S. BBT ’24); Prof. Moody (HUA); Sydney Packard (Ph.D. ChE, ’27); Prof. Hall-Phillips (WBS); VPR Vernescu (MA); and Asst. Dean Reilly (Student Success). The collaboration included naming VPR Vernescu as Chair and Prof. Richman as Vice Chair of the search committee.

Faculty Evaluations of Administrative Offices:

1. COG reviewed the long history of faculty evaluations of administrative offices at WPI, which dates back at least to 1987. The purpose of faculty evaluations is to provide feedback on the effectiveness of administrators and their offices as their effectiveness relates to the functions of WPI’s academic enterprise and the advancement of WPI’s academic mission. Such evaluations had been carried out with regularity until they were interrupted by COVID.

2. Since 2011, past practice had been to evaluate approximately ten administrators and their offices in groups of five every two years on a rotating basis, with the current plan to evaluate five positions this academic year. Given the recent arrival of President Wang, the departure of Provost Soboyejo,
the shift of Dean of Undergraduate Studies Art Heinricher into the Interim Provost position, and the interim status of current Dean of Undergraduate Studies Gerike, COG revised its plans for conducting these evaluations during the AY 24-25 academic year, to include the Dean of Graduate Studies, the VPR, the Dean of Arts and Sciences, the Dean of Business, and the Dean of the Global School.

3. The administration continues to discourage COG from conducting these faculty evaluations but COG strongly believes in the importance of providing faculty regular opportunities to provide their feedback on the effectiveness of a range of administrators and their administrative officers. COG anticipates reestablishing a sensible rotation and restarting these faculty evaluations in AY 24-25.

Committee Structure, Membership, and Reviews of Responsibilities:

1. COG discussed with Prof. Wobbe (CTAF, chair) the size of CTAF, given the projected increased workload because of the teaching path to tenure. In (AY 22-23) CTAF was expanded and COG believes this enlarged CTAF committee would be sufficient for the expected increase in cases.

2. COG worked with VPR Vernescu to revise the Conflict of Interest Policy, with some modifications to the Conflict Management Committee (CMC). The revisions were agreed upon by COG and the VPR and will be brought to the WPI Faculty for a vote in (AY 24-25).

3. At the April 11 and May 7, 2024 WPI faculty meetings, a motion was brought by COG, FAP and FBC to modify the membership of the Fringe Benefits Committee (FBC), specifically to reduce the number of faculty members on the committee from seven to five. In addition, rather than specify in advance the number of TTT and NTT faculty members who should serve on the FBC, COG and FAP will coordinate their appointments to balance representation on FBC, with careful consideration given to an appropriate representation of faculty members with different contract status. The motion was approved by the faculty on May 7.

4. One of the changes to the Bylaw Two of the WPI Faculty Handbook was a guideline to review the charge for each committee at least once every three years to either affirm that the charge and membership need no changes or to propose modifications based on evolving needs and circumstances. Given the 12 standing committees, COG proposed a rotating three-year pattern for reviewing committee charges:
   a. Year 1 (AY 24-25): COG, CGSR, CITP, COAP
   b. Year 2 (AY 25-26): CAP, CAO, FRC, FAP
   c. Year 3 (AY 26-27): CTAF, UOAC, CASL, FBC

CITP has already begun to review their committee charge in view of outdated references made to other IT committees that no longer exist, while preserving faculty representation in internal the evolving IT decision-making structure. CITP’s broad mandate requires collaboration and oversight of the IT infrastructure that is so essential in supporting the academic mission at WPI.

As part of the faculty handbook reorganization, the charges of COG and COAP charge have already been updated to reflect current practice.

5. During (AY 24-25) CTRF will be in its third (and final) year as it was originally constituted, and it is expected that CTRF will prepare a report to the WPI faculty next year.

6. At the April 8, 2024 COG meeting, FAP discussed a proposal to recommend establishing a Faculty Compensation Committee (FCC). FAP will continue to draft and FCC proposal in the form of a motion that could possibly be presented to the faculty jointly by FAP and COG in AY 24-25.

Academic Freedom:
1. During the summer of 2023 an Academic Freedom working group was established, consisting of four current and former Chairs of CTAF (Profs. Claypool, Doyle, Mathews and Wobbe) and the Chair of COG (Prof. Heineman). The working group was charged with developing formal procedures when a violation of academic freedom is alleged.

2. At the October 5, 2023 WPI faculty meeting, COG and CTAF gave a joint report on the general issue of “Defending the Principle: Formalizing a Process to Resolve Allegations of Academic Freedom Violations.”

3. At the November 8, 2023 WPI faculty meeting, COG and CTAF presented, for discussion only, a draft motion to establish a formal procedure to resolve faculty allegations of academic freedom violations.

4. COG hosted open drop-in discussions on November 21, 2023 at the Quorum to receive additional feedback on the draft motion.

5. COG presented two final motions at the March 13, 2024 Faculty meeting: (a) Motion to establish a formal Procedure for Complaints of Academic Freedom Violations; (b) Motion to modify the Faculty Grievance Procedure based on the new Procedure for Complaints of Academic Freedom Violations. The motions were both approved by the faculty.

Strategic Issues:

1. At the April 11, 2024 WPI faculty Meeting, COG presented the third annual “Report on WPI Faculty Populations and Clarification of Faculty Categories” detailing the numbers of faculty in each category across the institution and within each department, division, and school. The purpose of this presentation was to encourage an increased discussion on what WPI hopes to become. The data was discussed on its own and in the context of two institutional goals for Fall 2023 stated in the Faculty Handbook:

   a. Balance WPI’s faculty to ensure 70 percent tenured and tenure track (TTT) dual-mission teaching-research faculty and 30 percent teaching mission faculty. The current status is (280/419=) 66.8 percent.

   b. Balance WPI’s teaching mission faculty to ensure 40 percent tenured or tenure-track and 60 percent non-tenure track. The current state is (43/139=) 30.9 percent.

COG recalled that in a prior WPI administration the goal was to have 300 tenured and tenure track faculty members as part of a strategic vision to support 5,000 undergraduate students. The WPI population has grown well beyond this target yet the number of dual faculty members (280) still falls short.

2. In the spring of 2019, the Faculty, the Administration, and the Board of Trustees agreed to form a Joint Coordinating Council (JCC) as a vehicle for regular direct communication between the Secretary of the Faculty, the Chair of COG, the President, the Provost, a representative of the Board of Trustees, and a secured teaching faculty member. This year, the JCC met just four times, once per term. Chair Heineman expressed his hope that the JCC will focus more on the challenging and substantive topics for which it was designed.

Teaching Faculty:

1. In January 2021, WPI established a teaching track to tenure and adopted a goal that 40 percent of the teaching faculty would be tenured or on the tenure track by August 2023, though by Fall 2023 only 43 of our 139 teaching faculty members were on the tenure track. Interim Provost Heinricher announced on December 15, 2023 that two additional lines will be made available with a target
application deadline of April 15, 2024. The Provost confirmed that at least two faculty members will switch from a secured contract to the teaching track to tenure.

For (AY 24-25), COG will work with the Administration to answer the following two questions: (1) Will WPI add a fourth cohort as a step towards its institutional goal of placing 40 percent of its teaching mission faculty? If not, what other steps can be taken to achieve this goal? (2) Should WPI seek external candidates to be hired directly into the teaching track to tenure through competitive, advertised positions? COG believes, based on the understanding in January 2021 initially prioritizing our current teaching faculty, that after 45 internal candidates have been converted from secured teaching faculty to tenure track faculty, it will be reasonable to conduct external searches (open to internal candidates, as well) to fill additional tenure-track teaching positions.

**Election Eligibility:**

1. At the April 11 and May 7, 2024 WPI faculty meetings, COG presented a motion to clarify eligibility for election to faculty governance committees based on administrative title. Specifically, the motion:

   a. added to the “Definition of the Faculty” in the WPI Faculty Handbook that “Any faculty member who also holds the administrative title of President, Provost, Associate or Vice Provost, Dean or Associate Dean is also a member of the Administration.” and

   b. clarified in the Faculty Handbook that faculty members who are members of the Administration are ineligible to be elected to Faculty Governance Committees, although for proper collaboration they remain eligible to be appointed or *ex officio* members of Faculty Governance Committees, when specified in the Faculty Handbook.

The motion was approved by the faculty on May 7.

**Faculty Policies:**

1. At the February 14, 2024 WPI faculty meeting, jointly with COAP, COG presented a motion to modify the description of materials collected by Joint Promotion Committee. The motion was approved by the faculty.

2. At the February 14 and March 13, 2024 WPI faculty meetings, jointly with COAP, COG presented a motion to add guidance for promotion to (full) Teaching Professor and Associate Teaching Professor in preparation of the promotion dossier. The motion was approved by the faculty on March 13.

3. At the February 14 and March 13, 2024 WPI faculty meetings, jointly with COAP, COG presented a motion to establish Interim Department Head Evaluations and to modify the manner in which the Department Head Evaluation questionnaire is distributed. The motion was approved by the faculty on March 13.

4. At the April 11 and May 7, 2024 WPI faculty meetings, jointly with COAP, COG presented a motion to provide guidelines for initiating searches for new Department Heads and for the appointments and terms of Interim Department Heads. The motion was approved by the faculty on May 7.

5. At the COG meeting on March 25 2024, COG approved a motion to clarify and further elaborate on guidelines for searches to fill academic administrative positions. Because of various constraints on the agendas for the April and May WPI faculty meetings, this motion will be brought to the faculty during (AY 24-25).
Board of Trustees:

1. The COG Chair and Secretary of the Faculty have standing invitations to attend meetings of four Board of Trustees’ committees: Academic Planning, Budget and Finance, Facilities and Infrastructure, and Student Affairs. These committees also include Board-appointed faculty members. All faculty participants are bound by confidentiality which limits the scope of discussions that can be shared with the faculty community. The ongoing trustees’ practice of scheduling the Academic Planning and the Budget and Finance committee meetings at the same time and scheduling the Facilities and Infrastructure Committee and the Student Affairs Committee meetings at the same time prevents our faculty representatives from attending all the meetings.

2. Prof. Claypool and COG Chair Heineman attended the October, 2023, February, 2024, and May 2024 Academic Planning Committee meetings to present drafts of the motion to establish a formal procedure for resolving cases alleging violations of academic freedom. The Academic Planning Committee for the WPI Board of Trustees voted on May 9, 2024 to approve the formal “Procedure for Complaints of Academic Freedom Violations,” together with the modifications to the existing Faculty Grievance Procedure.

3. Due to changes made in 2018 by the Board without consulting the faculty, there remains a discrepancy between the Faculty processes (described in Bylaw Eight of the Faculty Handbook) and the Board of Trustees (BoT) process for selecting faculty representatives to the Board of Trustees committees. The process described in the Faculty Handbook designates that COG is responsible for preparing the slates of nominees (whereas the changes BoT process specifies this is the responsibility of the Academic Deans) and defines the term of service to be three years (whereas the changed BoT process specifies two years). The outgoing and incoming SOFs (Profs. Richman and Claypool) and the outgoing and incoming Chairs of COG (Profs. Heineman and Troy) will continue efforts to offer slates on behalf of COG and to resolve the mismatch in procedures.

Respectfully submitted,

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Althea Danielski (HUA, Secretary D term)
Tanja Dominko (BBT, Secretary A & B terms)
George Heineman (CS, Chair)
Art Heinricher (Interim Provost)
Stephen Kmiotek (ChE)
Mark Richman (AE, Secretary of the Faculty)
Diane Strong (WBS, President’s appointee)
Karen Troy (BME, Secretary C term)