

Committee on Academic Policy (CAP): Meeting Minutes

Monday, December 2, 2024, 2:00pm; Mid-Century Room

Meeting #12 AY 2024-2025

Attendees: J. Dudle (CEAE, CAP Chair and EDC Representative, via zoom), N. Farny (BBT, CAP secretary, B term), A. Gericke (Dean of Undergraduate Studies ad interim), D. Heilman (CBC, UOAC representative; via zoom), M. Leatherman (student representative), L. Roberts (BBT), S. Wodin-Schwartz (MME), F. Zoutendyk (MME), S. Miles (Registrar), B. Antupit (student representative)

The meeting was called to order at 2:02 pm.

Minutes from 11/25/24 (meeting 11) were discussed, revised, and approved.

Discussion continued on the use of AI in courses. Chair Dudle will contact Dean Perlow with feedback from CAP about unifying the AI-related examples on the posted dishonesty policy website, in order to ensure clarity and consistency for both faculty and students. The nature of the proposed “AI community forum” was discussed. The idea behind convening such a forum was motivated more by the need for pedagogical discussions rather than for policy purposes, though it was generally agreed that a pedagogically motivated conversation was an important precursor to discussions on policy.

The Secretary of the Faculty (SoF) requested that CAP review its charge. On page 24 of the faculty handbook, the roles and responsibilities of CAP are written as follows: “CAP is responsible for making policy recommendations regarding the direction and goals of undergraduate education at WPI. To do this, the Committee reviews the admission and financial aid policies, reviews the degree requirements, and judges the quality of the academic program as related to WPI goals.” Issues were raised regarding two key clauses in the roles and responsibilities as written. It was noted that “judges the quality” seemed vague and did not accurately reflect what CAP does with respect to the academic program. CAP does not make value judgements about the quality of the academic program. It was also noted that “reviews the degree requirements” sounded more consistent with the purview of CAO than CAP. CAP does not routinely review changes to degree requirements, when those requirements are made within the bounds of existing policies. There was consensus that it is worth considering a revision to the charge. Chair Dudle will confer with the CAO chair regarding their charge and the respective roles each committee plays in reviewing degree requirements. A subcommittee consisting of Profs. Heilman, Dudle, and Roberts will draft amended language for the CAP charge for future discussion.

Dean Gericke suggested that the issue of required quorums for faculty governance committees be clarified by COG. The faculty handbook is silent on what constitutes a quorum for a meeting of a standing faculty governance committee. The assumption by CAP has been 50% of its voting membership constitutes a quorum. Chair Dudle will bring the question to SoF Claypool.

CAP discussed, upon request of the SoF, to discuss the new format for fall open house events. This fall the admissions office decided to run the open house events without specific sessions for each department and program, and instead to have presentations by the deans of each school. SoF

Claypool communicated to CAP some faculty concern about the exclusion of departments from the fall open house programs. Dean Gericke stated his position that the format of open houses is not a matter of policy, and provided some additional clarification on the process and rationale for the fall open house programs. In an attempt to recruit more participants, admissions wanted to hold more open houses on weekends and holidays, when prospective students were more available to attend. However, some faculty have scheduling challenges on weekends and holidays. Admissions also desired to differentiate the fall and spring programs so that they were not redundant, and prospective students would be more likely to attend both programs. Thus, admissions collaborated with the deans to try a new format. Early data from the admissions office says that participation has increased in this new format. Admissions will continue to evaluate the program to see if this yields an increase in applications and/or acceptances. Spring open houses, which target accepted students who are looking for more details on specific programs, will be held as they always have been and will include department and program presentations.

This concludes CAP's meetings for B term. A new meeting time will be set for C term.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:50 pm.