

Committee on Governance: Draft Minutes
Meeting #13: 22 November 2021
Faculty Governance Conference Room (SL 225)

Present: Len Albano (Secretary, CEE); Nancy Burnham (PH); Tanja Dominko (BBT); Tahar El-Korchi (Chair, CEE); George Heineman (CS); Mark Richman (Secretary of the Faculty, AE); Susan Roberts (CHE); Wole Soboyejo (Provost)

1. Prof. El-Korchi called the meeting to order at 11:20 am.
2. The agenda was approved as distributed.
3. The minutes of COG meeting #12 on November 15, 2021 were approved with modifications.
4. Preparations for the December Faculty Meeting:
Prof. Richman indicated that the agenda for the Faculty Meeting on December 2nd is not yet finalized. Prof. Richman and Prof. El-Korchi met with the Chairs of the CAO, CAP, and CGSR to discuss the awarding of posthumous degrees, and a motion from CAP on a formal WPI policy may appear on the agenda for the December meeting. Prof. Richman is also holding open the possibility to include any time-sensitive motions that may be submitted by a faculty governance committee to improve student and campus wellbeing. The meeting materials will be distributed this Thursday, Thanksgiving Day, which would give the faculty the necessary one week's notice.

Assuming that a policy on posthumous degrees will be established, Prof. Richman asked for COG's opinion on whether the awarding of posthumous degrees to the four students who have died since July should be conducted within a Special Faculty Meeting, or within a scheduled Faculty Meeting. The issue is to allow sufficient time to read a memorial resolution and provide a moment of silence for each student, and these expressions of remembrance may be rushed during a scheduled Faculty Meeting. The challenge of adding a Special Faculty Meeting with a significant number of faculty members attending was noted, and it was suggested that the posthumous degrees may be awarded following a scheduled Faculty Meeting because faculty members have already set aside the time on their calendars. It was added that conducting the meeting on Zoom may promote a large faculty attendance and enable the participation of the four students' parents.

5. Proposal for Administrative Searches (continued from COG meeting #12):
As a follow up to COG meeting #12, Prof. Dominko shared the latest version of the proposed changes to Section 1.I of the Faculty Handbook with the Dean of Graduate Students, the Dean of Undergraduate Studies, the Deans of the four schools, and the Vice Provost for Research and invited their feedback on whether the proposed language captures both the appropriate time commitments for the administrative position titles and the appropriate search processes. Sample job descriptions for various existing positions were also requested to help COG better understand the relationship between the nature of the responsibilities and the time commitment. COG would like to introduce the motion for discussion at the January Faculty Meeting, and so a deadline of Thursday, December 9th would

allow sufficient time for the Committee to review the feedback before its last meeting of the term on December 13th. Prof. Dominko will communicate this timeline to the six Deans and the VPR.

In a related item, COG discussed whether there was clarity in the academic departments that NTT faculty are now eligible to vote on all issues, such as election of department faculty to the Department Tenure Committees (DTCs). Prof. Roberts suggested that this could be an item for the next Department Head's meeting on December 15th. Prof. Richman will contact Deborah Graves, Operations Manager, Office of the Provost, to ask about adding this item to the meeting's agenda. Prof. El-Korchi and Prof. Richman would plan to attend.

6. Update on Student and Campus Wellbeing:

Prof. El-Korchi reported that Prof. Chrys Demetry, acting on behalf of the Academics subcommittee of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Task Force, shared a previous email communication between the Academics subcommittee and faculty governance committee chairs. The email provided an overview of short-term actions recommended by this subcommittee to promote student wellbeing. These recommendations included the option of Pass/NR grades and the suspension of downgrading academic standing. COG does not want to duplicate efforts of the faculty governance committees, but a systematic approach is needed to ensure that recommendations from the Task Force that fall within the purview of faculty governance are passed onto the faculty for proper consideration and implementation. Provost Soboyejo agreed to communicate with the Task Force and serve as a bridge to faculty governance. The Provost also noted some additional ideas, such as granting students tuition credits or free summer classes to repeat courses in which they received an NR and offering an optional Incomplete instead of an NR, that faculty governance could address rather quickly, similar to the COVID-related policies that were approved in AY 2019-20 and AY 2020-21. COG also discussed with Provost Soboyejo various ways to reduce faculty stress as they devote more time and effort to supporting students. Holding the limit on admissions for the Class of 2026 was posed as an important consideration for campus wellbeing. Currently, in certain majors, there are waitlists for classes in the upcoming C and D terms, and these waitlists contribute to student stress by causing uncertainties in scheduling. In addition, efforts by these departments to resolve the waitlists by enlarging class sizes or creating additional course sections increase faculty workload. The Provost pointed out that the deviations between the targeted and incoming class sizes vary with the summer melt, which has been very difficult to predict in recent years, and a difference of fifty students can have a significant financial impact on the operating budget.

7. Compensation for COAP & CTAF Members:

In anticipation of the budgeting process for AY 2022-23 and the upcoming elections to COAP and CTAF in early spring, COG asked Provost Soboyejo to grant course releases to the members of COAP and CTAF as compensation for their efforts. COG members maintained that the work of these two committees is critical to the faculty as a body and the future of the institution. With increasing workloads for COAP and CTAF, the leading nominees have expressed reluctance to appear on the electing ballots. Provost Soboyejo agreed to include course releases for the members of COAP and CTAF in the budget request.

8. COG Appointment to the Selection Committee for the Trustees' Award for Outstanding Teaching:
As noted in COG meeting #11, COG is to nominate a faculty member from a slate selected by CAP, CASL, and CGSR. Prof. El-Korchi has contacted the chairs of these committees to provide their nominees.

9. The meeting was adjourned at 12:45pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Leonard Albano
Secretary, COG