

Committee on Governance: Minutes
Meeting #14: February 3, 2020
Faculty Governance Conference Room

Present: Kris Boudreau (Secretary of COG, HUA), Tiny Dominko (BBT, Secretary of the Faculty), Tahar El-Korchi (CEE), Glenn Gaudette (BME), Arne Gericke (CBC), Mark Richman (ME), and Wole Soboyejo (Provost).

1. Prof. Gaudette called the meeting to order at 10:05; an amended agenda was approved; people seemed serious.
2. The minutes from meeting #13 were approved with modifications.
3. Motion for Elevation of the Aerospace Engineering Program to a Department: After some slight revisions to the motion, it was unanimously approved. The motion will be discussed at the February faculty meeting and brought for discussion and a vote at the March faculty meeting.
4. Policy on Policies: Discussion concerned a draft “Policy on Policies” that was distributed by President Leshin at the most recent Joint Coordinating Council (JCC) meeting for consideration by COG. In order to review the policy, COG temporarily reconstituted itself as the Committee on Committees.

The policy describes a new process by which a broad array of policies that affect the faculty (either exclusively or with other campus constituencies) would be formulated in the future. There was significant concern that in the draft policy there is very little faculty input and no opportunity for faculty approval for the policies that fall under the scope of the Policy on Policies, especially those that will have an effect on academics. A major concern was that the Policy on Policy would significantly reduce the involvement that the faculty currently have in influencing policies that are relevant to them.

Provost Soboyejo explained that the administration, having learned that various policies are written by various committees and offices, wants a single Policy Working Group (PWG) to oversee the development of these various WPI’s policies. The PWG would be co-chaired by the Executive Vice President (and CFO) and the University Counsel and would look at WPI’s institutional needs and framework for managing certain information within a policy information platform. He explained that the administration needs some institutional framework for discussing and managing these policies.

To illustrate this need, Provost Soboyejo offered the example of the new Confidentiality Policy, written and implemented by the new Information Security Risk and Compliance (ISRC) Committee, posted on WPI’s website, and eventually conveyed to the Committee on Information Technology Policy (CITP). Under the terms of the Confidentiality Policy, faculty are not permitted to publish their research data unless they get a note from

WPI's Division of Talent and Inclusion or from the Office of General Counsel. Disciplinary action for violating the policy may include termination from WPI. (see: <https://www.wpi.edu/sites/default/files/inline-image/Offices/Information-Security/Confidentiality%20Policy.pdf> .)

Some members of COG shared specific concerns that the new Confidentiality Policy received little or no faculty input and would probably look a lot different if it had. (This policy will likely be discussed in more detail at future COG meeting.)

Others focused more generally on the draft Policy on Policies and viewed it as an Overreach of Overreaches. They pointed out that the Policy Working Group (PWG) effectively takes over important functions of faculty governance committees whose charge includes collaborating with the administration in formulating policies affecting the faculty, and it eliminates the need for faculty approval of those policies. The proposed Policy on Policies virtually eliminates faculty input on: a) policies that might also affect others on campus; and b) many other policies that apply only to faculty. Moreover, the proposed Policy on Policies allows for policies to be written or revised without notifying the community until after the President or Board of Trustees approves it. What happens if new policies written by the PWG alter or conflict with existing faculty policies?

The Provost indicated his belief that these effects were unintended, that the intent of the Policy on Policies and the PWG was to create an institutional framework that focuses on administrative policy, leaving academic policy to the faculty governance system.

However, as drafted, the proposed Policy on Policies takes jurisdiction of and restricts faculty input on policies that affect the faculty whenever those policies also apply to everyone at WPI or to all employees at WPI, and uses the Sexual Misconduct Policy as an example. In effect, the Policy on Policies would have the faculty forfeit their input on policies that affect them when those policies might also affect others, as well. Likewise, it takes jurisdiction of and restricts faculty input on "administrative policies" that apply exclusively to all faculty - without defining the term "administrative policies" - and uses the Faculty Conduct Policy as an example.

Some COG members described the proposed Policy on Policies as a rebuke of the faculty as a whole, which (through its representatives as well as through its faculty governance processes) has in the recent past worked collaboratively with the administration and Board to formulate, improve, and approve policies that affect the faculty - specifically the Sexual Misconduct and Faculty Conduct Policies singled out for inclusion in the scope of the new Policy on Policies and for exclusion from our faculty governance processes.

The discussion that followed focused on what was and wasn't, or should and shouldn't be considered an "administrative policy." COG members wanted to know if, for example, the Faculty Load Model they've been hearing all about was an "administrative policy." Provost Soboyejo explained that, no, the Faculty Load Model was an administrative "instrument." One COG member suggested developing an Instrument on Instruments.

Provost Soboyejo and Profs. Dominko and Gaudette will bring these concerns to the JCC for discussion.

5. Update to Faculty Handbook 2.1.C, Policies Regarding the Status of Faculty: Department Heads. Prof. Gaudette shared a motion to revise the Faculty Handbook to add Academic Deans to the processes of appointing and conducting performance reviews of Department Heads. The change originated with the Committee on Appointments and Promotions (COAP), which had requested changes to this policy based on the presence of Deans. The proposed changes formalize a reporting structure in which the Department Head reports to the Dean rather than the Provost. Provost Soboyejo indicated his support of these changes, suggesting that they would make WPI stronger. COG discussed the wording of the rationale, suggested that it should present these changes to the Faculty Handbook as reflections of an evolving administrative structure at WPI since the addition of Deans and the formalization of the Schools of Arts and Sciences, Business, Engineering, and Globes. Prof. Gaudette will revise the rationale to include a rationale and seek approval from COAP, with the intention that the revised motion will be presented jointly to the faculty by COG and COAP. COG voted to approve the motion, contingent on an acceptable written rationale and on COAP's acceptance.
6. Update to the Faculty Handbook 2.1.I, Guidelines for searches to fill academic positions: Prof. Gaudette circulated a motion to revise these guidelines as Guidelines for Appointments of Academic Administrative Positions. The proposed revision redefines "academic administrative positions" to specify those with a 50% or greater administrative commitment; otherwise the definition is unchanged. The proposal now adds the Global Dean. The motion specifies how these positions will be announced, who may or may not serve on the search committee, how interim positions and part-time academic and administrative positions are handled. COG members noted the good progress being made in the document to formalize *ad-hoc* procedures but thought the document doesn't specify precisely enough who is covered in the policy. They also indicated that the Assistant Vice President of Academic and Corporate Engagement should be included now that the position reports to the Provost.

In the category of Concerns about Concerns, COG took up the question of eligibility to serve as an elected member on a search committee. Some members felt that faculty choices on the ballot should not be constrained by whether one holds an academic administrative appointment, while others thought that positions elected by the faculty should be restricted to full-time faculty with less than 50% administrative appointments.

Prof. Gaudette will revise the policy and resubmit it to COG for consideration at a future meeting.

7. The meeting was adjourned at 11:43 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Kris Boudreau
Secretary, COG