

Committee on Governance: Minutes

Meeting #15: January 19, 2021

Faculty Governance Branch Offices

Present: Len Albano (CEE); Kris Boudreau (Chair, HUA); Tanja Dominko (Secretary of the Faculty, BBT); Tahar El-Korchi (CEE); Arne Gericke (CBC); Mark Richman (Secretary, AE); and Wole Soboyejo (Provost)

1. The meeting was called to order at 1:18 pm. The agenda was approved as amended.
2. The minutes of meetings #13 and #14 were approved with minor revisionist history.
3. Final COG Action on the Three Motions to Establish a Tenure Path for Teaching Faculty: The proposal consists of three motions: to adopt tenure criteria for Assistant, Associate, and Full Professors of Teaching; to revise Part One, Appendix D (The Roles Played by Tenured, Tenure-Track, and Non-Tenure Track Faculty in Carrying Out WPI's Mission) in the Faculty Handbook; and to add "Guidance for Documenting and Assessing Activities Toward Tenure for Professors of Teaching".

Based on continuous input received since the November faculty meeting from the Provost, the Deans, and the TTT and TRT faculty, the three motions have been revised for presentation and votes at the January faculty meeting. The significant changes made to these motions since November and COG's action on each are as follows:

- *Motion to adopt tenure criteria for Assistant, Associate, and Full Professors of Teaching*: A preamble has been added recognizing the contributions of our teaching-intensive faculty and the need to provide them with the highest level of academic freedom and institutional commitment. Clear definitions of both "professional growth" and "currency" have been added to avoid ambiguities. And, in order to reach the strongest possible community consensus, the titles of the TTT teaching faculty have been changed to assistant, associate, and full Professors of Teaching. **The motion passed unanimously.**
- *Motion to revise Part One, Appendix D in the Faculty Handbook*: The institutional goal for the number of TTT lines to be introduced for Professors of Teaching has been changed from 50 percent of the full-time teaching faculty within five years to 40 percent of the full-time teaching faculty within three years (i.e. by fall 2023) with an explicit statement expressing an openness to increasing the number of tenure lines in the years that immediately follow the three-year period. **The motion passed unanimously.**
- *Motion to add "Guidance for Documenting and Assessing Activities Toward Tenure for Professors of Teaching"*: Under the category of "Teaching Practice," the candidate's activities have been separated from evidence of either quality or impact. The *quality* of teaching practice is described, not by a list of artifacts, but by examples of positive features of one's teaching approach. The *impact* of teaching practice continues to be measured separately by documentation of the positive effects that one's efforts have had on others. **The motion passed unanimously.**

The implementation of the motions will involve a community-wide effort by the Provost, the Deans, the Department Heads, the department tenure committees (DTCs), and the TRT faculty members themselves in which different combinations of these groups would decide the number of tenure lines to establish for July 1, 2021, who will be placed on these lines, and the length of the probationary period for each individual faculty member placed on a tenure line. In order to do so in a careful, open, and thorough manner, and in time to identify the first cohort of TTT teaching faculty members by April 2021, the implementation process should begin immediately after the motions are passed by the faculty. For this reason, and because the three motions creating the tenure path for teaching faculty stand on their own, the motions will be forwarded to the Trustees as a single coherent set of actions that can be approved as one at their upcoming February meeting with assurances that secure contracts for those TRTs not placed on the tenure track will be developed in time to be issued this spring for AY 2021-22, and that full participation in faculty governance for all secure TRTs will be brought to the faculty for its approval by the end of the academic year.

4. Upcoming elections: The committee agreed that at this late date, the current vacancy on COG due to Prof. Gaudette's departure from WPI would be filled as part of the upcoming COG election, in which an additional faculty member would be elected to fill the unexpired term. That election, as well as those for new CTAF and COAP members, will take place immediately after the election of the next Secretary of the Faculty, followed by elections for the remaining faculty governance standing committees.
5. Consideration of Further Stoppage of the Tenure Clock Due to the Pandemic: Last April, the faculty approved a motion to automatically provide (with the opportunity to opt-out) a one-year extension of the tenure clock to all tenure-track faculty members due to the disruption caused by the pandemic. Prof. Boudreau pointed out that this extension was provided before the full extent of this year's disruption was known and suggested that COG consider an additional one-year opt-out extension. Prof. Gericke indicated that he had begun discussions in his department about the same possibility. Prof. Richman thought that differences between those who would opt for no extension, a one-year extension, or a two-year extension could be accommodated by allowing candidates to appropriately delay the date by which they would be required to opt out of each extension. Regardless of whether or not a second one-year extension is provided, the committee agreed that the one-year extension we approved last April should be available to those tenure-track faculty members who joined WPI this past fall. Prof. Boudreau will contact Prof. Doyle (Chair, CTAF) to see about collaborating with CTAF on these issues.
6. Concerns about the Process for Approving Interim Policies Concerning Course Delivery During the COVID Period: In response to the COVID-19 crisis, WPI has had to make and continues 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 addition, last spring and again early this fall the faculty approved an expedited process that could be used to consider time-sensitive issues whenever needed.

Nevertheless, interim policies affecting educational matters are still being set without faculty approval, and the mechanisms the faculty have in place to influence and approve educational

policies, even on an interim basis, continue to be overlooked. This concern has been raised by COG repeatedly throughout the academic year. Despite these discussions, the most recent decision concerning on-line delivery of courses for the early part of C-term was again made without faculty approval. Through its expedited process, the faculty is fully capable of making quick decisions in the best interest of the University. There should be open communication involving faculty governance in ongoing discussions in order to anticipate the need for timely faculty action. Unfortunately, so far it does not appear that any changes have been made that would improve the situation.

7. The meeting adjourned at 2:47 pm.

Respectfully Submitted

Mark Richman
Secretary, COG