

**Committee on Governance: Agenda**  
Meeting #1: July 23, 2020  
Faculty Governance Branch Offices

**Present:** Len Albano (CEE); Kris Boudreau (Chair, HUA); Tanja Dominko (Secretary of the Faculty, BBT); Tahar El-Korchi (CEE); Glenn Gaudette (BME); Arne Gericke (CBC); Mark Richman (Secretary, AE)

1. The meeting was called to order at 2:05pm. The agenda was approved as distributed.
2. Action on the Teaching and Research Track (TRT) faculty statement on job security: On July 7, the TRT faculty submitted a statement to the administration expressing concerns about both their short- and long-term job security. (The full statement is attached to these minutes.) In it, the TRT faculty expressed dissatisfaction with both the delay until June 1 of their reappointments for the coming academic year and the across-the-board reduction of those appointments to one-year terms. The statement requested that, in the short-term, their multi-year rolling contracts be reinstated. In the longer term, the TRT faculty requested that:
  - immediate and substantive work begin towards drafting contracts that are longer term, go beyond “at will” employment (which carries no security at all) and secure faculty with legitimate longer term commitments.
  - contracts be deployed that include clearly defined terms, descriptions of job expectations, and adhere to the notification dates and reappointment timelines indicated in the Faculty Handbook.
  - a redeclaration of commitment to ongoing, long term efforts to establish a teaching path to tenure be made, including steps to establish security for those not eligible (PoP, Lecturers, Instructors).

Given the integral role played by our TRT faculty in successfully delivering on WPI’s academic mission, all COG faculty members present expressed their full support of all elements of the TRT statement. As a formal show of that support, COG unanimously approved the following resolution:

**WPI Faculty Resolution**  
**Concerning a Statement by the Teaching and Research Track Faculty**

We, the tenured and tenure-track faculty of WPI, note with dismay the institution’s long delay in issuing contracts to our non-tenure-track colleagues, as well as the reduction of all those contracts to one-year terms. We support our Teaching- and Research-Track (TRT) colleagues’ affirmation of their central and essential role in delivering WPI’s innovative project-based curriculum and the many co-curricular efforts that support these courses and projects. We observe with gratitude and respect their ongoing and heroic efforts to deliver high-quality education even in remote or hybrid learning environments, including their unpaid work during the summer term. We share their belief that they deserve better treatment, particularly now when economic security is so precarious for so many people around the world, in the United States, and in our state and city.

Whereas, the TRT faculty have expressed their frustration, anxiety, and hope for better treatment from the WPI administration, we the tenured and tenure-track faculty therefore resolve that we endorse the statement of the

TRT faculty to members of the Joint Coordinating Committee (JCC), and we share their expectation that their requests to the administration be granted.

The Provost will be notified of COG's action, and decisions about if and when the resolution should be sent to the TTT faculty for their endorsement will depend in part on the Provost's response.

3. Consideration of Criteria for Tenure on a Teaching Track: Because of the renewed urgency of this item due to concerns for TRT job security, in general, and in view of the recent statement endorsed by the TRT faculty, in particular, COG has placed this item on today's agenda and will make it a priority this fall.

The committee discussed two separate but related DRAFT documents: Tenure Criteria for Professors of Teaching; and Guidance for Assessment and Documenting Activities Toward Tenure. Prof. Richman explained that these documents taken together are a significantly updated version of a single set of criteria that was presented as part of a lengthier report to the faculty at the November 2019 faculty meeting. The updates were made by Prof. Richman, Prof. Boudreau, and Prof. Heilman (CBC) based on considerable feedback received at the November meeting and in many discussions since that time.

The tenure criteria are now subdivided into the categories of *teaching practice*, *continuing professional growth and currency*, and service. Separated from the details of documentation contained in the second document, the criterion of *teaching practice* focuses specifically on the high-level skills of excellent teaching, while the criterion of *continuing professional growth and currency* focuses on the general goals of such development, especially but not limited to how it enhances one's teaching.

According to the revised criteria, teaching practice must be of *high quality* and have *impact* on students and curriculum. Professional growth must be undertaken with *commitment* and it must have *impact* on teaching and learning networks and support systems, on approaches to and understanding of teaching and learning, and/or on one's own scholarly discipline and/or scholarly communities. In seeking opportunities for professional growth, Professors of Teaching should disseminate knowledge gained in this manner to others within and outside of WPI.

The second document itemizes specific ways to separately document *quality* and *impact* of teaching, and specific ways to separately document *commitment* to and *impact* of professional growth and currency. Both documents borrow from and expand upon the criteria for promotion to Associate Teaching Professor currently in Part Two, Section 7.F of the Faculty Handbook.

While the first document informs the second, separating them in this way makes it easier to have discussions that do not overlap. More committee and community input are needed, but when the drafts are finalized, they would be distributed to the faculty simultaneously but as two separate motions.

The committee discussed the many ways the criterion of continuing professional growth and currency could be satisfied, the degree to which scholarship should be included as a means to

achieve professional growth and currency, and the importance of being clear about the definition of scholarship in these discussions. As currently drafted, the professional growth and currency criteria include as possibilities the scholarship of discovery, teaching and learning, integration, application and practice, or engagement; and they also explicitly include as possibilities a variety of activities related to teaching innovation, experimentation, and assessment. Regardless of how professional growth and currency is achieved, the draft contains an expectation that knowledge gained in this way will be disseminated to others within and outside of WPI.

The committee agreed that both the criteria and the process for granting tenure to Professors of Teaching must be rigorous. The expectation is that any tenure-track faculty member will be reviewed annually by the department tenure committees (DTCs) and that a joint committee of DTC and CTAF members will evaluate the candidates for tenure. While the process must be rigorous, the standards applied by those serving on these committees must be realistic and consistent with the job responsibilities of the candidates.

4. Discussion of a proposed Interim Instructional Policy regarding faculty choice of teaching mode throughout fall 2020: Prof. Boudreau explained that despite several emails sent to the faculty regarding A- and B-term course delivery options for the faculty, there was still considerable confusion concerning the process by which those decisions would be made and the degree to which each faculty member would have their own choice. Prof. Gaudette pointed out that the uncertainty was causing considerable stress among the faculty, and he was aware of faculty members whose requests to teach remotely were rejected. Prof. Gericke thought such cases were extremely rare and was comfortable with the department-by-department process and policy currently being employed. Prof. Richman pointed out that if the current process is intended to provide faculty members with the choice to teach as they would prefer, then that intention should be stated unambiguously. If, on the other hand, many faculty members are being assigned to teach in a manner they do not prefer, then that may well be a source of faculty stress.

COG was also troubled that as part of the current policy, faculty members who - for health, safety and other family reasons - were permitted to teach remotely, will be denied access to the campus during that time. The committee agreed that the need to limit one's exposure by teaching remotely should not preclude the need for faculty members to be on campus for any one of many other reasons.

In order to express the committee consensus on this issue, COG endorsed the following policy:

**Proposed Interim Instructional Policy in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic:**

All faculty members have the option to teach remotely during the fall 2020 semester and will be permitted to exercise that option without question and repercussion. Faculty members should be given full access to the campus even if they choose to teach fully remotely. It is the responsibility of the department heads and program directors to collaborate with their faculty and allocate reasonable teaching assignments to most effectively deliver their academic programs in a manner that is consistent with the options exercised by their faculty.

The Provost will be notified of COG's action, and decisions about if and when the resolution should be sent to other faculty governance committees and to the faculty for its endorsement will depend in part on the Provost's response.

5. The meeting adjourned at 3:15pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mark Richman  
Secretary, COG

## **A Statement From the TRT Faculty Regarding Our Current Status and Value**

**TO: Laurie Leshin, President WPI**  
**Winston Soboyejo, Provost WPI**  
**Joyce Kline, WPI Trustee**  
**Tanja Dominko, Secretary of the Faculty**  
**Kristin Boudreau, Committee on Governance, Chair**

We, the undersigned Teaching Faculty, express our frustration with the Institute's handling of our re-appointments in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. While we are acutely aware that all of Academia is challenged both institutionally and economically by the crisis, we nevertheless feel that the degree of dependence on us, and the high quality of pedagogy and scholarship we provide, is out of balance with the delay in our reappointments and reduction to one year terms.

As you are aware, Teaching Faculty are an integral part of the WPI family. We are charged with delivery of half of the academic credits and are key creative thought leaders in project-based education. We also devote ourselves to WPI in ways that go well beyond classroom instruction, particularly with the signature programs and project delivery that cannot run without us. We bring prestige to WPI by developing cutting-edge curricula, directing more than half of all HUA, IQP, and MQP project centers, representing 70% of the Insight Advising team, sitting on committees at WPI and of national-level organizations, contributing to new scholarship, publishing new research, organizing conferences, and editing and co-editing academic journals.

Despite having heard throughout the crisis that keeping the WPI family together serves as our North Star, we were left in the dark about our jobs for nearly six weeks after the tenured and tenure-track faculty were secured. We weathered this insecurity while teaching summer classes, serving on committees, and innovating ways that could allow WPI to financially and pedagogically survive the crisis. Still, the re-appointment letters we eventually received were impersonal and unapologetic. They addressed neither the delay nor the across-the-board reduction in terms to one year. For many of us who have been at the Institute for many years - and who have dedicated our careers to WPI - our sudden and deeply-felt precarity is distressing.

It is in this context that we all confront the exacerbated curricular demands of a COVID-19 academic year; our Fall workloads have significantly increased as a result of our shifting reality. At the same time, as a result of our precarity, many of us face the prospect of having to prepare for and put ourselves on the job market. Given the time commitment these searches demand, we have significantly less bandwidth to devote to our voluntary endeavors, which we see as dependent on, and in response to, reasonably secure employment. While we do not want to do either, we feel pressed to do both.

We are asked to continue to work alongside our TT colleagues seemingly as equals in this crisis, yet the reality of our employment could not be more different or inequitable. As

recognition of the collective contributions of non-tenure track faculty to the WPI family, we ask that:

- multi-year, rolling contracts be immediately reinstated.
- immediate and substantive work begin towards drafting contracts that are longer term, go beyond “at will” employment (which carries no security at all) and secure faculty with legitimate longer term commitments.
- contracts be deployed that include clearly defined terms, descriptions of job expectations, and adhere to the notification dates and reappointment timelines indicated in the Faculty Handbook.
- a redeclaration of commitment to ongoing, long term efforts to establish a teaching path to tenure be made, including steps to establish security for those not eligible (PoP, Lecturers, Instructors).

These actions will ensure that WPI can retain committed, cutting-edge teaching faculty, and can have strength in recruiting faculty in the future when we are able.

Sincerely,

1. Anonymous Teaching Faculty\*  
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\*This statement was drafted and revised at two community meetings of the TRT Faculty. After distribution, 78 have read and fully endorsed this statement representing 91% of total respondents and every department across campus. Signatures have been omitted as 61% of respondents did not feel secure in submitting their name for fear of repercussion or reprisal