

Committee on Governance: Minutes

Meeting #18: Feb 16, 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)

1. The meeting was called to order at 1:45 pm. The agenda was approved to a standing ovation.
2. The minutes of meeting #16 were approved to polite applause.
3. Nominating Ballot for the Secretary of the Faculty: The electronic ballot will be sent out (Wed.) Feb. 17 and will be due back by (Mon.) Feb. 22 at 5pm. Reminders will be sent on (Frid.) Feb. 19 and (Mon. morning) Feb. 22. Because of the importance of the position of Secretary of the Faculty, participation by the faculty in both the nominating and final election process is always quite high.
4. Motion(s) to Extend the Probationary Period for Tenure-track Faculty Members Due to COVID Disruptions: The committee reviewed a draft motion from CTAF that would extend by one year the probationary period of all tenure-track faculty who joined WPI in AY 20-21 due to the hardships associated with the COVID pandemic, with the right for each faculty member to opt out of the extension. The current draft requires that notification of the choice to opt out be given by May 2022.

The CTAF motion extends to our newest tenure-track faculty members the same one-year extension that we have already provided for all tenure-track faculty members who were at WPI before fall 2020. The May 2022 notification date for new faculty members is also consistent with the May 2021 notification date given last April to all those current tenure-track faculty members. Several members of COG were concerned that, even if we return to normal next academic year, the effects of the disruptions may not be fully felt by each faculty member until several years later. An alternative, which increases flexibility and may reduce professional stress further, is not to require notification to opt out until perhaps one year before the original tenure deliberation year. This might mean reexamining the required May 2021 opt-out notification date that was included in last April's action.

The committee also took up an earlier discussion (COG meeting #15) concerning the one-year tenure clock extension given last April to all tenure-track faculty members at that time. This extension was provided before the full extent of this current year's disruption was known, and several members of COG suggested that we consider providing an additional one-year opt-out extension to those faculty members affected by the ongoing COVID-related disruptions. Details concerning the 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.

Prof. Boudreau will invite Prof. Doyle (Chair, CTAF) to COG's next meeting to discuss the draft motion for the new tenure-track faculty members and to explore the possibility of providing

a further extension for those tenure track faculty members who have been at WPI since before fall 2020.

5. Encouraging Broad Participation in the COACHE Survey: Dean Heinricher has asked for help in promoting faculty participation in the survey. The usefulness of the COACHE results depends very strongly on the response rate within departments and schools, within TTT and TRT faculty subsets, and across all demographic categories. This message could be communicated by both the Secretary of the Faculty and Provost, perhaps in a joint message to the faculty. Given the intention to involve appropriate faculty governance committees in analyzing the results when they are received, it might be worthwhile for the committee Chairs as a group to appeal to the faculty for its participation in the survey. Given that, relative to other institutions, a weakness identified in the 2017 COACHE results related to departmental leadership and climate, it will be especially important to involve department heads in the institutional response to the survey results this year, and it might be helpful if the department heads would explain to their faculty members how the results will be used this year to address such concerns.

6. The meeting adjourned at 2:43 pm.

Respectfully Submitted

Mark Richman
Secretary, COG