

Committee on Governance: Minutes

Meeting #19: Feb 23, 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); Wole Soboyejo (Provost).

Invited Guest: Mark Claypool (CS, member CTAF)

1. The meeting was called to order at 1:22 pm. The agenda was approved on an *ad interim* basis.
2. The minutes of meeting #17 were approved with minor retaliations.
3. Motion to Extend the Tenure Clock Due to Covid Disruptions: Prof. Claypool described a draft motion from CTAF to automatically extend the probationary periods of all tenure-track faculty members who joined WPI in fall 2020 due to COVID-related disruptions, with a choice provided to opt out of the extension by no later than May 2022. COG members were strongly in favor of the extension, and they suggested that for added flexibility the date to exercise the opt-out choice could be delayed to May of the year before tenure materials would otherwise be submitted for full review by the joint committee. Prof. Claypool will take this suggestion back to CTAF for further discussion.

The committee also discussed with Prof. Claypool the possibility of bringing a separate motion to provide a second year extension of the tenure clock (with a choice to opt out) for all tenure-track faculty members who had already joined WPI before the current academic year. Although WPI may get back to normal operations in less than two years from March 2020 (when our academic operations were initially altered), the total disruption will certainly be for more than the one year anticipated by the first tenure clock extension. The consensus among COG members was that an additional year's extension was warranted, and that it would provide a significant reduction in stress for our tenure-track colleagues. Prof. Claypool will take this suggestion back to CTAF for further discussion, as well.

4. Annual Credits Delivered Data: Although the annual report to the faculty on the credits delivered by school, department, and category of faculty has been scaled back considerably in the past two years, the detailed data had continued to be provided to COG. The intention this year is again to present only a brief report, but so far COG has received neither the data needed for its brief report nor the detailed data it collects for institutional purposes. Provost Soboyejo will have AVP Sullivan send the data in its usual detail to COG soon.
5. Part Two Faculty Handbook Changes Needed to Document Security for TRT Faculty Members: Prof. Boudreau provided an overview of the sections of Part Two, Section 7 of the Faculty Handbook that will need to be modified to include updated and improved terms of appointments, reappointments, and protections for Teaching Professors, Instructors and Lecturers, and Professors of Practice. Included in this way, the terms will be clear and transparent, and both the TRT and TTT faculty can judge and monitor them for – among many

concerns - the security the terms provide, and for the clarity needed in extending full participation in faculty governance to all secure faculty members. In order for the faculty to approve these changes by May, it is urgent that the administration resume discussions about future TRT contracts immediately with both the TRT Council and COG representatives, so that there is sufficient time for healthy and productive collaboration and for additional discussions, as needed.

Provost Soboyejo was comfortable with including language in the contracts that assured TRT faculty members of their academic freedom during the term of their contracts, and also wanted to include mechanisms that would assure accountability in teaching through mid-contract teaching evaluations that would influence decisions about contract renewals. Prof. Boudreau and Prof. Richman emphasized that real academic freedom is not guaranteed by assurances, but rather by conditions of employment (including for renewals) that provided the security faculty members needed to act without fear of reprisals. The Provost assured the committee that he would share with TRT and COG representatives an outline of his progress on the contract language and contract provisions within a week so that discussions about the contract language and faculty handbook changes could begin in earnest.

6. Professor of Practice Reappointment Process: At the same time that contracts for other TRT faculty members are being modified, it makes sense for COAP to reexamine the process and/or timing of the second and subsequent reappointments for Professors of Practice. COG will suggest that COAP take up the matter and perhaps time their actions to coincide with the anticipated changes to be made for all other TRT appointments.
7. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Efforts within Faculty Governance: In an effort to address these complex challenges, faculty governance has in recent years participated in a study and analyzed the extent of WPI's gender inequities in faculty salaries, and has been the driving force in establishing a teaching path to tenure for our teaching faculty colleagues. In addition, faculty governance continues to advocate for secure contracts for those TRT faculty who will not be placed on the tenure track, and has reacted quickly to extend the tenure clocks for all tenure-track faculty members due to COVID disruptions - recognizing the special burdens placed on women and families.

Prof. Gericke volunteered to collect and analyze data that would measure the diversity of the membership of faculty governance committees over the past ten years, and to compare the diversity of our committees to the diversity of the faculty as a whole over the same period of time.

8. Process for Providing Academic Leadership Opportunities to WPI Faculty Members: Last year, Prof. Dominko and Prof. Gaudette drafted a document that included a proposed set of academic leadership positions that might be standardized and made available specifically to interested and qualified faculty members. Although COG did not get to explore these ideas further at the time, this year Prof. Gericke (co-chair) and Prof. Dominko (member) are serving on WPI's strategic plan subcommittee referred to as "How We Work," which includes efforts to develop campus leaders. Given the overlap, several members of the committee agreed that this might be an opportune time to pursue the ideas outlined in last year's draft.

The meeting adjourned at 2:49 pm.

Respectfully Submitted

Mark Richman
Secretary, COG