

Committee on Governance: Meeting Minutes

Meeting #21: 7 February 2022

Faculty Governance Branch Offices

Present: Len Albano (Secretary, CEE); Nancy Burnham (PH); Tahar El-Korchi (Chair, CEE); George Heineman (CS); Mark Richman (Secretary of the Faculty, AE); Susan Roberts (CHE); Wole Soboyejo (Provost)

Absent: Tanja Dominko (BBT)

1. Prof. El-Korchi called the meeting to order at 10:07 am.
2. The agenda was approved as distributed.
3. The minutes of COG meeting #20 on January 31, 2022 were approved with modifications.
4. Preparations for the February Faculty Meeting:
Prof. Richman reported that there will be four motions brought to the faculty for voting. Two are the COG motions to modify the Committee's membership to guarantee representation by nontenure-track (NTT) faculty and to establish the Committee on Teaching and Research Faculty (CTRF) as a formal *ad hoc* Committee of the Faculty. The third is the joint motion from the Committee on Financial and Administrative Policy (FAP) and COG to revise the membership of FAP. These three motions were distributed to the faculty last week as two-week notice items for the February 17th meeting. The last motion is from the Committee on Academic Policy (CAP) to establish a temporary *Pass/NR* policy for terms C, D and E of the current academic year. This motion was developed to relieve stress from our students and is similar to the temporary *Pass/NR* policy that was approved by the faculty in Spring 2020. CAP has also been discussing a temporary modification in the Academic Standing Policy to further reduce student stress, and Prof. Richman has asked CAP to make a five-minute presentation on this issue. In addition to these four motions, there will be an open discussion on the COACHE Survey. The discussion will begin with a brief presentation on the survey results by Prof. Demetry (MME; Director, Morgan Center for Teaching and Learning), who is Co-Chair of the COACHE Survey Steering Committee.
5. WPI Leadership Transition Update:
Provost Soboyejo reported that members of the Board of Trustees have been consulting with staff, administration, and Prof. Richman to discuss the transition process. He also indicated that they have started to consider search firms. Prof. Richman met with Trustee David LaPre '74 (Chair of the Presidential Search) and Lauren Turner (Senior VP of Talent & Inclusion) to discuss interim leadership and the search process.
6. No Classes Wellness Day – Plans and Goals:
As a follow-up to his joint email message with Provost Soboyejo on Faculty Support of Students' Mental Health and Wellbeing (dated January 26th), Prof. Richman has been working with Prof. Boudreau (HUA) to meet with student groups and other interested faculty to plan a day for the community to take time out from usual routines and tend to one another. February 24th was selected

because it is already designated as Academic Advising Day with no classes scheduled, and the day will be called “WeConnect: A Day to Reconnect.” Activity centers will be within the Campus Center and the Recreation Center for students, faculty, and staff to visit and interact with one another.

Departments and programs have already planned and announced Advising Day activities, and a virtual career fair is scheduled from noon to 4pm. Prof. Richman noted that spending part of the day in faculty-student interactions to discuss courses, project opportunities, and career planning would fit within the goals for the day. Prof. Richman will continue to encourage faculty participation, and Provost Soboyejo will also work within the Administration to promote awareness and discuss the plans for the day.

7. Sexual Misconduct Policy:

Prof. El-Korchi distributed a copy of the interim Title IX and Sexual Misconduct Policy (dated August 2021). This interim Policy is intended to replace all prior WPI policies dealing with Sexual Misconduct and the “Sexual Harassment Policy” within the Faculty Handbook. According to the WPI Office of General Counsel (OGC), the interim Policy will be discussed at the APG Meeting on February 9th with a request to enter into the 30-day public comment period, ending March 16th. The Title IX Office and OGC will be coordinating listening and feedback sessions during the comment period.

COG members raised concerns on the complexity of the interim Policy and the limited time available for the faculty to comprehend the changes and give feedback. Faculty are feeling stretched as they work to support student well-being, while dealing with academic and home life. On behalf of the faculty, Provost Soboyejo, who is a Co-Chair of the APG, was asked to extend the timeline to allow the time needed for faculty to understand the high-level issues that drove the changes in Policy and the specific changes that were introduced. Provost Soboyejo will convey this feedback to the APG.

8. Preparation for Faculty Governance Elections:

Prof. El-Korchi reminded COG that the preparation of the ballots for standing Committees of the Faculty will begin after the Secretary of the Faculty conducts the elections for the Committee on Appointments and Promotions (COAP), COG, and the Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom (CTAF). COG members will be called upon to solicit interest from faculty members who may be willing to serve. Prof. Richman indicated that the nominations and elections for COAP, COG, and CTAF should be completed about two weeks after the February 17th Faculty Meeting.

9. The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Leonard Albano
Secretary, COG