

Committee on Governance: Agenda

Meeting #2: August 19, 2020
Faculty Governance Branch Offices

Present: Len Albano (CEE); Kris Boudreau (Chair, HUA); Tahar El-Korchi (CEE); Glenn Gaudette (BME); Arne Gericke (CBC); Mark Richman (Secretary, AE)

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:35am. The agenda was approved as distributed.
2. Motions related to temporary faculty governance issues during the COVID-19 period: The committee considered the following motions for temporary changes to faculty governance operations:

Motion #1: The Committee on Governance recommends that faculty meetings continue to be conducted remotely, including synchronous remote voting, through the first faculty meeting of C term 2021.

The motion passed and will be placed on the August 27 faculty meeting agenda.

Motion #2: The Committee on Governance recommends that if a Faculty meeting cannot be convened in a timely manner for any reason, **all the elected members of Faculty governance committees** will have the power to vote on critical time-sensitive issues through the first faculty meeting in C 2021 with a quorum of at least 25 percent of those members required. Any such vote would be revisited by the Faculty at the earliest possible convenience.

The motion passed and will be placed on the August 27 faculty meeting agenda.

Motion #3: The Committee on Governance recommends that all remaining Faculty governance committee elections held over from the spring 2020 be conducted electronically. Elected governance committee membership from AY2020 will remain through the end of A term 2020.

Prof. Shue (CS) is working with Prof. Dominko (SOF) to develop a Qualtrics-based electronic voting system. The challenge is to implement an algorithm for counting ballots using the preference voting system and to test it to ensure that it functions properly including when there are intermediate ties within a vote-counting round.

The motion passed, but to allow for additional testing, it will not be placed on the faculty meeting agenda until October 1.

3. Remaining faculty governance committee elections held over from spring 2020: Only the elections for the Committee on Governance (COG), the Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom (CTAF), and the Committee on Appointments and Promotions (COAP) were conducted last academic year. In order to prepare the ballots for all other committee elections held over from the spring 2020, members of COG will contact the members of all academic departments to encourage them to serve and to gauge their interests in doing so. The departments were divided among COG members for this purpose.

4. Internal vs. External Searches to fill Academic Administrative Positions: The committee discussed its understanding of the process by which decisions are currently made to fill such positions internally or externally. In the case of external searches, COG members weighed in on the role and purpose of outside search firms and some of the problems that have arisen in past searches as a result of using them. In the case of internal searches, the committee was concerned about the inevitable dynamic in which the person appointed to the interim position is oftentimes considered the presumptive permanent successor, which in turn may limit opportunities and motivation for other faculty members to apply. Last year, Prof. Dominko and Gaudette had drafted a document addressing several of these concerns, including as they relate to professional advancement opportunities for our own faculty. COG agreed to take up the issue again this year.

5. Preliminary COG Agenda Items for Academic Year 2020-21: Recognizing that this is a preliminary and partial list for now, the committee itemized issues that it anticipates addressing this year:

- a. **Teaching Track to Tenure for Teaching Professors:** COG has already discussed this issue at its first meeting (see the minutes of COG Meeting #1 - July 23, 2020) and will continue to solicit input with the intention of bringing motions for faculty-wide approval this fall.
- b. **Proposal for a Department of Integrative Studies:** The proposal for the department was forwarded to COG late last spring, but due to time constraints was put off for discussion, input, and action until this fall.
- c. **Sexual Misconduct Policy:** Due to changes in Title IX Regulations imposed in late May by the Department of Education, and in order to comply with an August 14 deadline to comply with the new rules, the University has established two interim policies: a Title IX misconduct policy that applies only to those violations that rise to a new more restricted legal definition of sexual harassment; and a sexual misconduct policy that applies to all the additional forms of sexual misconduct that had been covered by our most recent policy. The committee agreed that any permanent changes made to policies that apply to sexual misconduct should closely follow the process used last time, which included strong faculty input and faculty-wide approval through faculty governance mechanisms.
- d. **Process to Create and Revise Institutional Administrative Policies (PCRIAP):** Last March, the administration put this process in place. In April, concerns were raised (in a letter to the administration signed by all faculty committee chairs) that, as designed, the PCRIAP can impose on the educational policy-making authority of the faculty, and that disputes in these matters would be resolved by a committee with very little faculty representation. So far, no response to the requests made in the letter have been received. As a result, this remains an outstanding issue for COG this year.
- e. **Process for Approving Interim Educational Policies:** In response to the COVID-19 crisis, WPI has had 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 the faculty approved an expedited process that

could be used to consider time-sensitive issues if needed. Nevertheless, interim policies affecting such educational matters as our academic calendar, our mode of course delivery, and the extent to which faculty could choose their method of course and project delivery were set without faculty approval. COG will work this year to make sure that even interim educational policy decisions are brought to the faculty for their adequate attention and consideration.

- f. **Faculty Load Model:** Efforts will be made by COG to shed campus-wide light, as appropriate, on on-going work to establish faculty load models within departments and schools.
- g. **Professor of Practice Reappointment Process:** Based on previous consideration of this issue, COG will propose increasing the length of the terms of appointment (beyond the first five-year term) to make repeated reappointments less onerous.
- h. **Campus Elections:** This fall, COG will conduct elections held over from spring 2020, and in spring 2021, COG will conduct elections in their regular cycle.
- i. **Faculty Governance Survey:** COG will develop and deploy a survey designed to solicit constructive input from the faculty on the state of faculty governance.

6. The meeting was adjourned at 10:00am

Respectfully Submitted,

Mark Richman
Secretary, COG