

Committee on Governance: Meeting Minutes

Meeting #31: 26 April 2022

Faculty Governance Branch Offices

Present: Len Albano (Secretary, CEAE); Nancy Burnham (PH); Tanja Dominko (BBT); Tahar El-Korchi (Chair, CEAE); Mark Richman (Secretary of the Faculty, AE); Susan Roberts (CHE); Wole Soboyejo (Provost)

Absent: George Heineman (CS)

1. Prof. El-Korchi called the meeting to order at 12:08 pm.
2. The agenda was approved as distributed.
3. The minutes of COG meeting #30 on April 19, 2022 were approved with modifications.
4. Preparations for the May Faculty Meeting:
The agenda for the May 10th Faculty Meeting is still evolving, and there will be several business items for faculty voting. As noted in the minutes to COG meeting #30 (April 19th), the agenda will include the May 2022 graduation lists for undergraduate and graduate students, three joint motions from the Committee on Appointments and Promotions (COAP) and COG (see item 7, below), a motion from the Committee on Information Technology Policy (CITP) on the Learning Management System (LMS) and Video Lecture Support Policy, and a motion from CGSR to make changes to WPI's rules for the BS/MS Program. The agenda may also include a report on executive compensation from the Committee on Financial & Administrative Policy (FAP), and a joint motion from the Fringe Benefits Committee (FBC), FAP, and COG to approve a Resolution calling for WPI to restore retirement benefits as well as needed spending and staffing to the levels that were effective in AY 2019/20 (pre-COVID) (see item 8, below). Another agenda item under consideration is a request for COG to bring forward a Resolution calling on WPI to divest from fossil fuels (see item 9, below).
5. Update on Faculty Governance Elections:
A rough draft of the ballots for the nine remaining standing committees of the faculty was completed during last week's COG meeting (meeting #30 on April 19th). These nine committees are the Committee on Academic Operations (CAO), CAP, Committee on Advising and Student Life (CASL), CGSR, Campus Hearing Board (CHB), Committee on Teaching and Research Faculty (CTRF), FAP, Faculty Review Committee (FRC), and the Undergraduate Outcomes Assessment Committee (UOAC). Since that meeting, additions and adjustments have been made to the ballots to balance committee vacancies and diversity of representation. Prof. Richman has individually contacted the faculty members listed on the ballots to confirm their interest in participating. Nearly fifty faculty members agreed to have their names placed on the final ballots. The ballots will be distributed to the faculty as a Qualtrics survey link on Wednesday morning, April 27th. The deadline to respond will be Wednesday, May 4th at 6pm.
6. COG Appointments to Faculty Appointed Committees:

Prof. El-Korchi noted that the terms of service for the COG appointees to the Conflict Management Committee (CMC) and the Research Development Council (RDC) will be ending with the close of this academic year. COG will consider faculty representatives to fill these vacancies after the completion of the current faculty governance elections.

7. Update on Joint COAP & COG Motions:

The Committee reviewed updated versions of the three joint motions from the Committee on Appointments and Promotions (COAP) and COG. The motions are related to proposed criteria for promotion to (full) Professor of Teaching, procedures for promotion to (full) Professor of Teaching, and guidelines for eligibility and time-in-rank for promotion of tenured and tenure-track faculty members (COG meeting #28). Prof. Iannacchione (PH; COAP Chair) and Prof. Richman have modified the motions based on faculty input that was received after the motions were presented in draft form during the April Faculty Meeting. COG members reviewed each motion, discussed the minor changes that were made, and voted to approve each motion. Prof. Richman will distribute the three motions to the faculty later today as two-week notice business items for the May Faculty Meeting.

8. FBC Motion:

The Committee took up discussion of a motion from the Fringe Benefits Committee (FBC) to approve a Resolution calling for WPI to restore retirement benefits as well as needed spending and staffing to the levels that were effective in AY 2019/20 (pre-COVID). FAP and the FBC, which is a subcommittee of FAP, would like to have COG co-sponsor the motion. Prof. Dominko, who also serves on FAP, reported that FAP met Monday, April 25th, to finalize the language in the motion, and FAP members then voted to approve the Resolution for faculty voting at the May Faculty Meeting. If the Resolution is approved at the May Faculty Meeting, it would be delivered to the WPI President and Board of Trustees for consideration in the budget for AY 2022/23, which would become effective on July 1st. Prof. Dominko noted that retirement benefits was the one significant area of dissatisfaction in the most recent COACHE faculty survey. One COG member asked about benchmarking data from other institutions and whether the restoration of retirement benefits will impact the funds available to hire new faculty in AY 2022/23. Prof. Dominko responded that she has data from eighteen institutions and shared the following information: WPI's contributions are not on the high end, half of the schools have reinstated the retirement benefits to pre-pandemic levels, and some schools have also made retroactive contributions. Provost Soboyejo noted that thirty-seven TTT/TRT faculty have been hired this academic year to support our academic mission.

COG approved co-sponsorship, and the motion will be presented at the May Faculty Meeting.

9. Resolution Calling on WPI to Divest from Fossil Fuels:

The Committee received a draft Resolution on behalf of the WPI faculty calling on WPI to divest endowment funds from the fossil fuel industries. The Resolution was written by Prof. Strauss in parallel to a similar resolution authored by the organization DivestWPI and the Student Government Association, and COG was asked to support the Resolution for voting at the May Faculty Meeting. With the available meeting time drawing to a close, the Resolution was tabled.

10. Faculty Convocation Update:

The Faculty Convocation is scheduled for Friday, April 29th at 11am in the Odeum. The awards ceremony will be followed by a light lunch. Prof. Richman emailed an invitation to the faculty on Friday, April 22nd. He encouraged COG members to attend and to invite their colleagues to attend as well.

11. The meeting was adjourned at 1:15pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Leonard Albano
Secretary, COG