

Committee on Governance: Minutes
Meeting #13: Dec. 8, 2020
Faculty Governance Branch Offices

Present: Len Albano (CEE); Kris Boudreau (Chair, HUA); Tanja Dominko (Secretary of the Faculty, BBT); Tahar El-Korchi (CEE); Glenn Gaudette (BME); Arne Gericke (CBC); Mark Richman (Secretary, AE); and Wole Soboyejo (Provost)

1. The meeting was called to order at 1:16 pm. The agenda was approved as amended.
2. The minutes of meeting #11 were approved with minor changes. The minutes of meeting #12 were approved pending one addition to be approved electronically.
3. Deans' Search Committees Membership: Prof. Boudreau reported that she had met with Provost Soboyejo last week to collaborate on the remaining COG, Provost, and Presidential membership appointments (as described in detail in the minutes of COG meeting #11) to the search committees for the Dean of Engineering and the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies. At that meeting, Prof. Boudreau represented COG and Provost Soboyejo represented both himself and President Leshin. Prof. Boudreau and Provost Soboyejo presented the tentative choices made, and with some modifications suggested by COG, the committee memberships were approved. The consensus among COG members was that the Chair of each committee should be an elected rather than an appointed member.
4. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Strategic Framework: WPI is currently developing a DEI strategic framework with four goals: Inclusive Campus Culture for Students; Innovation and Equity in Teaching, Research, and Scholarship; STEM Access and Retention; and Diverse Talent Strategies. The action plan includes the following steps: facilitating DEI dialogues in mid-January; finalizing an implementation plan by mid-March; establishing a Council on Institutional Diversity (CID) in March; conducting Sustainable Inclusive Excellence Dashboard Training in April; presenting the implementation plan to the Management Council (MC) and Governance Leads (GL) in June; and implementing DEI Professional Development with CID, MC, and GL in summer 2021.

Provost Soboyejo explained that this is an institution-wide effort that should involve the Board, the faculty, and the staff. The goal is for each group to have developed a DEI plan by the end of the academic year. COG discussion focused first on what faculty efforts are ongoing or have already been made to expand our diversity, equity and inclusivity. These include the current proposal for a teaching path to tenure; a recent study of gender disparities in faculty compensation; current mechanisms for opportunity hires; and regular placement of diversity advocates on all faculty hiring search committees. Strategies for making further progress might be prioritized by distinguishing modifications that could be made relatively easily from those that will require significant systemic and cultural change. Last year, COG had begun work on developing a formal process for creating professional advancement opportunities for faculty members, and this draft might be reexamined with a focus on DEI implications. To obtain broad faculty input, the DEI effort could be driven by the Committee Chairs and the TRT Council with the understanding that these elected groups represent the broad views of the faculty as a whole. Alternatively, these groups and/or COG might choose to appoint a task

force for this purpose. In that case, it would be worthwhile to solicit interest from faculty members who we know have interest in this effort including those who collaborated in drafting the formal statement on social justice issued by WPI's AAUP chapter in spring 2020.

Prof. Boudreau will invite Rame Hanna (Director for Diversity and Inclusive Excellence) to a COG meeting in early C-term to elaborate on the goals, process, and opportunities presented by the development of the DEI strategic framework.

5. Update on the Tenure Path for Teaching Faculty: Provost Soboyejo reported that last week he and President Leshin presented the ideas behind and the details of the proposal for a tenure path for our teaching faculty to the Board of Trustees, as well as a description of the steps that will follow: developing longer-term secure contracts for TRT faculty not placed on the tenure-track; and providing full participation in faculty governance for all secure TRT faculty members. The Provost, the President and the full Board are committed to the three-step approach designed to improve the status of our TRT faculty while addressing the concerns of all affected campus constituencies.

A subgroup consisting of Prof. Boudreau, Prof. Richman, Prof. Dominko, and Prof. Moody (HUA, TRT Council representative) will continue to work closely with Provost Soboyejo to resolve the remaining details needed to bring the proposal for the tenure path for approval at the January faculty meeting. These details include: a descriptive yet flexible institutional goal related to the number of and time period over which the tenure slots would be opened; and the ways in which the three steps in the broader plan are and are not dependent on one another, and how the approval process should take place as a result. Provost Soboyejo assured the committee that he will meet with the subgroup as often as needed in preparation for the January faculty meeting.

6. The meeting adjourned at 2:48 pm.

Respectfully Submitted

Mark Richman
Secretary, COG