

## **Committee on Governance: Minutes**

Meeting #14: Dec. 15, 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)

**Invited Guests:** Bogdan Vernescu (VPR); Antje Harnisch (Asst. VPR)

1. The meeting was called to order at 1:20 pm. The agenda was approved as distributed.
2. **Process for Vetting Foreign Affiliations for Possible Conflicts of Interest (COI):** VPR Vernescu explained that the current federal funding landscape includes concerns about the integrity and confidentiality of the peer review process, possible diversion of intellectual property, and possible sharing of confidential information outside of the U.S. To address these concerns, the NIH, the NSF, and the DoD now require additional disclosures about foreign activities, foreign support, foreign financial activities and scientific appointments on all grant applicants. To address these same concerns, WPI has modified its Conflict of Interest questionnaire by adding the following two questions:
  - Aside from your work at WPI, have you had any paid or unpaid role, position, or affiliation with any Entity, including any institution of higher education, located in a foreign country? (With further details requested.)
  - Have you participated in or been affiliated with a Foreign Government Talent Recruitment Program?

Disclosures should include activities within the last 12 months and any activities pending within the next year before the next COI disclosure. VPR Vernescu explained that after modifying the COI disclosure form, WPI's next step will be to develop a process to vet foreign gifts, grants, affiliations, and interests. Such a process could perhaps involve a series of committees designated to conduct compliance reviews, academic reviews, and project risk reviews of activities in question. Development of this process should be done in collaboration with faculty governance, involving COG and/or CGSR .

Concerns were raised by COG members about the overly broad wording of the first additional question and about the need for clarification on what each faculty member does and does not need to report especially because the COI form is completed by all faculty members, including those not funded by federal agencies. VPR Vernescu explained that the questions were added to protect both WPI and its faculty members. In response to a question, VPR Vernescu agreed to contact Dean Camesano to make sure that our post-docs and graduate students were included in institutional and personal protections against these types of conflicts of interest.

3. Update on the Three Motions to Establish a Tenure Path for Teaching Faculty: The proposal consists of three motions: to adopt tenure criteria for Assistant, Associate, and Full Professors of Teaching; to add “Guidance for Documenting and Assessing Activities Toward Tenure for Professors of Teaching”; and to revise Part One, Appendix D (The Roles Played by Tenured, Tenure-Track, and Non-Tenure Track Faculty in Carrying Out WPI’s Mission) in the Faculty Handbook. Based on input from the Provost, the Deans, and the TTT and TRT faculty, the three motions have been revised for presentation and votes at the January faculty meeting.

One outstanding issue concerns the wording of Appendix D, which includes a descriptive yet flexible institutional goal related to the number of tenure slots that would be opened for Professors of Teaching. The consensus was that the stated goals should be aspirational, flexible, and clear. Constraints on the availability of the tenure path should be based on a coherent analysis of WPI’s mission, priorities, and resources, and should be consistent with our institutional values and concerns for equity. Provost Soboyejo agreed to share any analysis of these questions done by academic affairs to date, and conveyed both his and President Leshin’s willingness to accelerate the rate at which the tenure slots would be offered in order to reach an initial goal in the next three years.

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.

4. The meeting adjourned at 2:55 pm.

Respectfully Submitted

Mark Richman  
Secretary, COG