

Committee on Governance: Minutes
Meeting #6: Oct. 6, 2020
Faculty Governance Branch Offices

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

Invited Guests: Kent Rissmiller (IGSD); Kris Wobbe (GPS)

1. The meeting was called to order at 1:20pm. The agenda was approved as amended.
2. The minutes of meeting #5 were approved as distributed.
3. Preparation of Ballots for Remaining Committee Elections: Two additional faculty members were identified for inclusion on ballots for the remaining faculty governance committee elections. Prof. Boudreau will contact them to confirm their willingness to serve at which point the ballots will be considered finalized. The goal is to distribute electronic ballots to faculty by no later than the end (Oct. 9) of this week.
4. Faculty Appointees to Board of Trustees' Committees: COG has been asked by the Board of Trustees to re-engage in a modified nomination process that would involve both COG and the Deans. The Board had converted the purpose of the appointments to one that emphasized mentoring and development of faculty members, whereas the purpose outlined in the Faculty Handbook emphasizes past or current faculty governance experience. So the criteria the Board has in mind for selecting the next round of faculty appointees to Board's committees is still not clearly understood. Provost Soboyejo indicated that the appointments should be made based on institutional and faculty governance expertise. The Board committees that need to be filled are Academic Planning, Budget and Finance, Facilities and Infrastructure, Student Affairs, Information Technology Task Force, and Economic Development. COG will work with the Deans to identify nominees after the results of the faculty governance elections are known.
5. Update on Motion to Establish a Teaching Path to Tenure for Teaching Professors: The current approach established to addressing the overall status of the TRT faculty involves three successive steps:
 - Establish tenured and tenure-track positions (with associated tenure criteria) for qualified Teaching Professors;
 - Provide secure contracts to all current TRT faculty members who are not placed on the tenure-track;
 - Modify faculty governance processes to ensure full participation by all secure TRT faculty members.

This three-step approach has the strong support of the TRT faculty, Provost Soboyejo, President Leshin, and the Board of Trustees.

Prof. Boudreau and Prof. Richman received constructive input at an open meeting (on Oct. 5) for TTT faculty that focused on the proposed tenure criteria, the guidance for documenting and assessing activities toward tenure, and the overall three-step approach.

Provost Soboyejo repeated his enthusiasm for the tenure path and for the proposed overall institutional approach. In his view, with all the support that has been garnered to this point, the stars are aligned for WPI to take a giant leap forward in solving several institutional problems in a systematic way that we can accomplish in fairly short order. Specifically, the Provost believes that the category of Professional Development and Currency in the proposed tenure criteria requires the right combination of innovation in teaching, creativity, scholarship, and public dissemination that will embody the impact of our teaching faculty and will make WPI a stronger institution both internally and reputationally. He pointed out that just as the Board appreciated the changes we made to our promotion criteria several years ago, they will celebrate the expansion of our tenure ranks as a demonstration of our educational and scholarly values.

The strong consensus of the committee was to have Profs. Richman and Boudreau present a draft motion concerning the proposed tenure criteria at next week's COG meeting. The intention would be to send a revised draft to the faculty in time for discussion (only) at the November 5 faculty meeting.

6. Proposal for a Department of Integrative and Global Studies (DIGS): Two main issues concerning the proposal were addressed.

- The first issue was general: Given the interdisciplinary nature of the work done and to be done in the Global School, questions were raised about whether adding an additional departmental sub-structure would work against the collaboration and flexibility that our Global programs need to flourish.
- The second issue was specific: Our current model for the IQP and the GPS relies on active participation of faculty across the campus. Concerns about walling these off from other faculty members had been raised in the discussions about the formation of the Global School itself, and the strong feeling now was that even if a DIGS were formed, the IQP, especially, and the GPS, as well, should not reside within the additional confines of the new department.

Prof. Wobbe explained that the department was intended only to support the faculty members within it. This support includes providing faculty development opportunities, providing opportunities for group-faculty discussions, and an appropriately constructed department tenure committee. With respect to the second concern, both Prof. Rissmiller and Prof. Wobbe were comfortable revising the proposal to clearly identify the IQP and GPS programs as University-owned programs that will continue to depend upon the contributions of faculty across the institution. This remains an important but unresolved issue.

Respectfully Submitted

Mark Richman
Secretary, COG