

Committee on Governance Meeting Minutes #26 (2015-16)
Monday, April 25, 2016, 11:00 am – 12:00 pm
Faculty Governance Conference Room (SL 225)

In Attendance:

Provost Bruce Bursten, Chrysanthe Demetry, Tanja Dominko (Secretary), Daniel Dougherty, Glenn Gaudette (Chair), Mark Richman, Diane Strong, Suzanne Weekes

1. Consideration of agenda:
The agenda was approved as distributed.
2. Update on the final ballots for standing committees:
The ballots will be distributed today for return expected by no later than Monday, May 2nd, 2016.
3. Review minutes from meeting #25:
Minutes of the meeting #25 were approved as amended.
4. COAP motion to include WPI promotion procedures in Part Two of the Faculty Handbook:

All the COG members agreed that it is important that we have a thorough community-wide conversation about the purpose of promotion (in particular, to Full Professor) and what it does or should mean to be Full Professor at WPI - before COG or COAP brings any motions to the Faculty concerning promotion criteria and other matters that might be affected by the criteria. The Promotions Task Force report and COAP's promotions presentation at the January Faculty meeting - including the discussion that followed - provided a promising starting point for further work.

COG's original intention - based on the valuable work that COAP has done this year to clarify the procedures used in the promotions process - was to have COAP bring a motion to the May Faculty meeting clearly describing the current promotions procedures for insertion into Part Two of the Faculty Handbook. COAP submitted such a motion to COG. To the extent that such explicit descriptions do not hinge on the actual criteria or the type of mentorship we might foresee putting in place, doing so might be helpful as an intermediate step to clarifying the promotions process without having to resolve the much more fundamental issues built into updating our promotion criteria.

However, in the course of discussion, several concerns were raised about COAP's proposed motion:

- Prof. Dougherty was concerned that if the motion simply affirms the current procedures, then it would be simpler to just post the procedures prominently on the Faculty Governance website. Placing language reflecting current practice might send the wrong message about our determination to continue to work to fix the problems identified by the COACHE survey. Prof. Richman agreed that it would be counterproductive to place language in the Faculty Handbook this year that might well have to be changed again next year.

Prof. Demetry was concerned that COAP's proposed motion about procedures contained language about promotion criteria that was not consistent with the current Faculty Handbook (about external recognition of leadership, for example). Changes related to criteria that will be the subject of discussions to be held next year. She was also concerned that the current

procedures did not clarify the role that Deans currently have or would have in the promotion process.

Provost Bursten mentioned that he is meeting with COAP at their request to discuss the current procedures more holistically. He anticipates that those discussions will continue in the coming academic year. He was concerned that additional changes in procedure might ultimately be brought forward, and would it be better to wait rather than having the procedures brought to the faculty piecemeal.

Prof. Weekes was concerned that the format of COAP's proposed motion made it difficult to determine what parts of it reflected current practice and what parts included recommended changes, and that the rationale did not adequately explain the changes.

As for the procedures themselves, a concern was raised that the current procedures require fewer letters from external reviewers (at least 5) than from professional associates (no more than 6 to 8). Several members of COG emphasized the value of input by internal professional associates who are oftentimes in the best position to evaluate a candidate's teaching, institutional commitment, and institutional service, and who probably understand best how a candidate fits into WPI's distinctive context.

A question was also raised about whether COAP's procedures should include explicit guidelines with respect to normal "time in rank" (at least five years) before promotion, as COAP's motion currently does. The answer to that question may well depend on how the promotion criteria are revised. Finally, one member speculated about the possible advantages of incorporating the results of annual reviews into evaluations of future promotion cases.

COG agreed that it was best to hold off on bringing COAP's motion to the May Faculty meeting. Prof. Richman will discuss the matter with Prof. Sivilonis (Chair, COAP) and ask him instead to update the Faculty in May on the progress made so far on the promotions issue. Prof. Richman was anxious to devote as much time as possible at next year's Faculty meetings to promotion-related issues (i.e. COAP membership and recusal; professional development and mentoring, promotion criteria, and promotion procedures). Some COG members thought it would be worthwhile to address these issues in a smaller group during the summer. Prof. Dominko emphasized that in order to make further progress on the issue of promotion, it will be necessary for all involved (including members of COG and COAP) to come to terms with some reasonable level of disagreement.

5. Adjourned at 12:00 noon.

Tanja Dominko
Secretary