

Minutes of FAP Meeting #18 AY2019-20

March 16, 2020

3:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Meeting Held Electronically via ZOOM

Members in Attendance: Nancy Burnham (Chair), Joe Fehribach (FBC Chair), George Pins (RPC Representative), Mike Radzicki (Secretary), Kris Sullivan (Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs)

Absent: Jeff Solomon (Executive Vice President/CFO)

- 1) **Call to Order.** Chair Burnham called the eighteenth FAP meeting of the year to order at 3:09 PM.
- 2) **Approval of Minutes.** No minutes were approved as the meeting was being held electronically and, although the draft minutes from the previous two FAP meetings were posted to FAP's Canvas page, it would be inconvenient to review them in real time. Chair Burnham asked that the committee review the unapproved minutes for consideration at the next FAP meeting.
- 3) **Financial Implication of COVID-19.** A wide ranging discussion on the possible financial implications of COVID-19 was held. Associate VP Sullivan reported that he and his associates have been focusing on the financial impacts of the pandemic on academic affairs, primarily those associated with moving all classes on-line, including:
 - a) Project center cancellations.
 - b) The need for additional PLAs and TAs for on-line classes.
 - c) Additional hardware and software needs for on-line classes.
 - d) Support resources for students who have problems with home internet access.
 - e) Student withdrawals due to an unwillingness or inability to take classes on-line.

On the positive side of the ledger he noted that the administration is evaluating cost saving offsets from COVID-19 such as cancellations of special events. Finally, the committee discussed that the unanticipated move to a comprehensive on-line curriculum in D term may serve as a "tipping point" at WPI, and in higher education in general, for the increased (or decreased) delivery of university-level education in an on-line format.

- 4) **WPI Forward Health Care Working Group.** Professor Radzicki gave FAP an update on the WPI Forward Health Care Working Group. Although the sub-committee is in the information gathering stages of its work, several

themes had emerged. The first was the need for clear, two-way, communication between the sub-committee and the WPI community. The second was the need for a program to educate the WPI community on the Institute's next set of health care benefit plans. Such a program would go significantly beyond the fall "benefits fair" and would consist of, say, recorded plenary session briefings covering health insurance in general (e.g., what is the difference between an HSA and a FSA?), modern tools that are available to WPI employees to assist them in making sound health care plan selections, and WPI's next menu of health insurance plan choices (including scenarios illustrating the circumstances under which each health care plan choice would make sense). These briefings would be followed by individual counseling sessions for those WPI employees who would like help in plan selection. The third theme was the sub-committee's commitment to directing the burden from any changes to WPI's health care benefits away from the lowest paid employees.

- 5) **WPI Forward Merit Pool and 403B Working Group.** Professor Pins gave FAP an update on the WPI Forward Merit Pool and 403B Working Group. The sub-committee has a target and will run scenarios to determine how much money the Institute would likely save under each proposed strategy. The sub-committee is aware of retention issues associated with benefit and raise cuts, and is mindful of the need to place the smallest burden on the lowest paid employees.
- 6) **Deferred Maintenance.** A discussion on the amount of deferred maintenance included in WPI's annual budget was held. The general sense was that the amount is too low, but that boosting it would exacerbate WPI's budget problems. Associate VP Sullivan indicated that WPI has a deferred maintenance plan and suggested that FAP invite Vice President for Campus Planning and Facilities Management Eric Beattie to a meeting to hear a briefing on the plan.
- 7) **Announcements.**
 - a) Chair Burnham reported that she had received no new information on WPI's benchmarking of faculty salaries. She noted that this is understandable given the disruptions due to COVID-19.
 - b) Associate VP Sullivan reported that the WPI Forward Mobile Device sub-committee is reviewing cell phone use on campus.
 - c) Associate VP Sullivan reported that the WPI Forward External Marketing and Professional Services sub-committee is similarly reviewing data provided by the Huron Consulting Group.
 - d) Chair Burnham announced that Trustee Andy Aberdale will join FAP at its March 23rd meeting and asked that committee members assemble a list of questions for discussion.
- 8) **Adjournment.** The meeting was adjourned at 4:02 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J. Radzicki
Secretary