

## Minutes of FAP Meeting #26 AY2020-21

March 29, 2020

4:00 PM – 5:00 PM

### Meeting Held Electronically via ZOOM

Members in Attendance: Joseph Fehribach (FAP Chair), George Pins (RPC Representative), Mike Radzicki (FBC Chair), Jeff Solomon (Executive Vice President/CFO), David Spanagel (FAP Secretary), Kris Sullivan (Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs)

Guest: Tanja Dominko (Secretary of Faculty)

**Call to Order.** Chair Fehribach called the 26<sup>th</sup> FAP meeting of the year to order at 4:02 PM.

1) **Faculty Compensation Discussion.** SoF Dominko urged FAP pursue further work on improving transparency with respect to the allocation of merit raises, an aspect of Faculty Compensation policy still in need of clarification since there is still no clear understanding across campus about how salary pool funds for annual raises in each department are divided among individuals. This was an item first broached almost five years ago as a proposed part of the comprehensive Faculty Salary Policy and Faculty Compensation Review work that FAP undertook in that year. She shared a “2016-2017 FAP Agenda Items” document (dating from when she was FAP Secretary) which contained the following illuminating thoughts and policy suggestions (several of which pertain especially to the situation we face in any year when there were no merit increase funds available in the immediately preceding year due to financial constraints -- such as the Covid-19 pandemic’s impact on our operating budget):

#### ***“Merit Raises***

*When funds become available for faculty salary increases, they shall be allocated in the following manner: salary-increase pool shall be allocated thirty percent (30%) to professional development (meets expectations), forty percent (40%) to exceeds expectations, and thirty percent (30%) to extraordinary merit, equity and market adjustment. The professional development portion reflects professional growth and service to the University during the period of review and, unless extraordinary circumstances occur, each faculty member will receive this professional development adjustment. The professional development portion shall be uniformly allocated as an equal percentage of annual salary to all Faculty, unless substandard performance or extraordinary circumstances occur. The exceeds expectations portion, also a performance based merit adjustment, reflects the degree of merit above the average performance realized*

*during the period of review. The remaining portion will be allocated based on extraordinary merit and comparative information for equity and market.*

*If in any year or period of years, no funds are allocated for salary increases of faculty members, or if only a cost-of-living increase is available to the faculty member, the annual review reports will be retained and preserved at the department or equivalent administrative level for inclusion in the next year's reviews. At that time all retained evaluations will be considered and used to determine salary increases.*

*Recommendations for merit-based salary increases follow the same administrative channels used for employment. If a merit-based increase is available to a faculty member, then the report will be forwarded through the appropriate administrative channels. If no merit-based increase had been available to the faculty member in the immediate previous annual review period, then reports for both the current and previous annual review periods will be forwarded to the Provost for final action. If no merit-based increase was available to the faculty member for the most recent two annual review periods, then reports for the current and two previous periods will be forwarded.*

*To assure that salary increases and promotions will be made objectively, equitably, impartially, and as recognition of merit, the policies and procedures given here are to be observed. In addition, to qualify for salary increases and promotion, a faculty member is expected to observe all policies applying to faculty covered in the Faculty Manual Freedom, Responsibility, and Discipline, Section II.*

*Ordinarily, recommendations for an increase in salary will only occur at the time of annual review and take effect July 1."*

An examination of FAPs meeting minutes from Nov. 10, 2016 shows that the committee did discuss merit allocations, but only in the context of how the annual salary pool amount was determined:

*"FAP also mentioned the need to better explain the amounts within the salary pool that are allocated to increases, incentives, bonuses, promotion, and equity adjustments. Due to large disparities in percent increases and other bonus/incentive pay between officers/key personnel (determined by the Board of Trustees) and Faculty/staff, there is a perception that the average 2.5 or 3.5% does not accurately represent what remains available for Faculty and staff salary increase. Ms. Trainor assured FAP that the percentage approved for salary increases accurately represents the amount that remains available for Faculty /staff increases."*

Several members who served on FAP in 2019-2020 recalled how FAP representatives met with Department Heads last year, who agreed to incorporate Advance Grant recommendations into their annual review meetings with faculty members. This effort should help articulate qualitative criteria for planning aimed at enhancing any given faculty member's case for a merit increase in future years. Institution-wide quantitative standards for merit raises of various sizes were not proposed (although

individual FAP members are aware of some supervisors that have provided their employees with department- or division-specific “scorecards” to help them understand why their raises were of a certain size).

To be clear, however, SoF Dominko’s notes from five years ago did not seek for FAP to specify universal criteria for what one must do to deserve a base salary increase for “meeting” expectations, versus a larger merit increase either for “exceeding” or for “greatly exceeding” expectations; instead the “Merit Raises” component of a “Faculty Salary Policy” was only intended to develop and promote guidelines that all Department Heads could use (and that all faculty would understand) about what relative proportions of the overall annual salary increase pool should be earmarked toward recognizing each of these broad categories of comparative job performance.

In any case, Chair Fehribach agreed to inquire and report back on what had become of the 2019-2020 FAP Faculty Review work and its associated recommendations, whose reporting and implementation may have been partially sidelined due to the pandemic circumstances which redirected so many Faculty Meeting discussions and priorities last spring. Chair Fehribach was also willing to include further discussion of merit raise determination and allocation practices in a future FAP meeting agenda, to resume consideration of the matters previously identified in the document that SoF Dominko shared. AVP Sullivan added that he can report on recent work he has been doing for Academic Affairs to develop TRT faculty performance evaluation practices in concert with the proposals for increasing the security of employment for all categories of our TRT faculty.

2) **Approval of Minutes.** The minutes for Meeting #23 were approved as distributed, with no objections.

The minutes for Meeting #24 were approved as distributed, with added mention of Acting Secretary Sullivan’s authorship. Secretary Spanagel expressed his deep gratitude for that favor on a day when he himself was unavoidably late arriving to the meeting.

The minutes for Meeting #25 were approved without objection after some corrections were made to the FBC Report section (per the request of FBC Chair Radzicki).

3) **Financial/Class of 2025 Update.** CFO Solomon reported that “regular” admits were due to be released that day, and he renewed his sense of cautious optimism that the Class of 2025 will come in at expected size and financial aid cost, despite the larger context of declining yields across higher education which stem from students applying to more places, and the consequent need for bigger

waitlists. He also expressed appreciation for all the hard work of our Admissions staff that has brought us to this result.

FAP members asked about financial implications with respect to the recently announced closure of Becker College, particularly in light of President Leshin's email message from earlier that afternoon. CFO Solomon assured FAP members that no negative financial consequences for WPI were expected, and he reiterated that the most important piece of this news was that WPI was well positioned to help some Becker students (those studying Interactive Media and Game Design, particularly) to be able to successfully complete their educations despite this unfortunate disruption.

- 4) **Engineering Dean Search.** Prof. Pins noted that the finalists' names would be announced shortly and will have "campus visit" days in April.
- 5) **Retirement Plan Committee.** FAP's RPC representative Pins reported that RPC met to discuss the investment advisor RFPs received, and have narrowed the search down to two finalists who will each be interviewed in April. RPC will also be selecting an external Auditor firm as well within the next month.
- 6) **Adjournment.** The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

David Spanagel

FAP Secretary