

Minutes of FAP Meeting #30 AY2020-21

May 3, 2021

4:00 PM – 5:00 PM

Meeting Held Electronically via ZOOM

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

Absent: Mike Radzicki (FBC Chair)

Call to Order. Chair Fehribach called the 30th FAP meeting of the year to order at 4:01 PM.

1) **Faculty Compensation Discussion.** Chair Fehribach reported the results of his interactions with Alicia Mills (Interim VP for Talent and Inclusion/CDO) regarding FAP's draft motion language regarding the process by which annual salary pool increases are allocated to cover promotions, equity, and merit raises. While she noted some possible exceptional circumstances which may affect how staff promotion increases may occur when staff are employed by academic departments (or when promotions occur off-cycle), Chair Fehribach indicated that Interim VP Mills expressed her support of the idea that FAP should articulate and advocate a public position on this matter and she also liked the gist of what FAP was saying in this motion. After a full discussion, all five FAP members who were present voted unanimously in favor of the final motion:

“It is our understanding that when faculty salary increases are accorded to individuals for being promoted at WPI in any given year, those funds are taken out of the total approved salary increase pool for that year. That allocation for promotion raises comes off the top of the total salary pool funds on a division-wide basis. Thereafter, every department/cost center within a division (e.g., Academic Affairs) ordinarily has access to the **same remaining percentage** of salary increase pool funds to allocate as merit and equity increases among their non-promoted employees, regardless of the number of individuals receiving promotion raises from within that same department/cost center. **FAP would like to document and endorse the fairness of this current practice**, and we recommend to the Administration that it continue to be followed unless any proposed changes are discussed with FAP.”

2) **Financial/Class of 2025 Update.** CFO Solomon reported on the most recent figures that VP/Chief of Staff Amy Morton had shared with him: 1495 deposits have been received for students seeking a spot in the entering class (whose target size is 1335). If last year's "melt" rate of ~10% reoccurs, we

anticipate landing a couple dozen students above the class size target. This cohort of students is also more diverse than those we have seen in the past. He also reported that these admissions were secured within the budgeted target “discount rate” (which measures the fraction of tuition revenue remaining after financial aid awards). Altogether, the financial picture looks very strong with respect to the entering class.

CFO Solomon also shared some good news about preliminary decision-making around the resumption of sending faculty and students to off campus project centers: the Acadia (Maine) Project Center has been approved from summer term project work, and other locations for A term are now being assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Chair Fehribach posed a question that had arisen in the conversations among attendees at the most recent AAUP chapter meeting: Given that some WPI employees have apparently lost their jobs during the past year, was it really the case that “no Covid-related layoffs” had occurred, per the Administration’s pledge last spring to avoid any layoffs? CFO Solomon responded that indeed nobody at WPI was laid off due to the financial circumstances of the pandemic. He did explain that a small number (somewhere between 2 and 5) of staff departures had resulted from planned restructuring within some divisions due to the WPI Forward initiatives for cost savings, but these were changes that were well-in-the-works prior to and independent of any Covid impacts on the Institute’s budget. CFO Solomon also acknowledged, naturally without providing confidential details about any particular case, that some employees were terminated from their jobs *for cause* this year (as may happen in any year). Chair Fehribach expressed his appreciation for these clarifications, which are helpful in addressing sincere feelings of collegial distress as well as potentially baseless rumors that can otherwise flourish in an environment of community fragmentation and isolation, such as we have endured during this unusual year.

- 3) **Disposition of 2019-20 FAP Faculty Review recommendations.** AVP Sullivan reported that he had followed up with Provost Wole Soboyejo regarding the results of FAP’s work last year on Faculty Review processes. Provost Soboyejo formally endorses the guidelines that FAP recommended for how to structure and document annual review *conversations*. He also intends to continue working with Department Heads to implement FAP’s recommendations for a more transparent “formalized, substantive, and supportive faculty performance management process” going forward.

4) **Approval of Minutes.** After making minor corrections, the minutes for Meeting #29 were approved without objections.

5) **Adjournment.** The meeting was adjourned at 5:01 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

David Spanagel

FAP Secretary