

Minutes of FAP Meeting #31 AY2020-21

May 10, 2021

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: Wole Soboyejo (Provost)

Call to Order. Chair Fehribach called the 31st FAP meeting of the year to order at 4:01 PM.

- 1) **Approval of Minutes.** After making minor corrections, the minutes for Meeting #30 were approved without objections.
- 2) **Class of 2025 and Finance Updates.** CFO Solomon reported that the announcement requiring students to be vaccinated before the fall term had gone out.

Some of the anticipated additional FEMA reimbursement funds for Covid-related costs (post January 21, 2021) may go into the FY 22 budget.

- 3) **Fringe Benefits Committee.** The TALON presentation had to be rescheduled to Thursday of this week. Alicia Mills and Maria Martone are preparing a reduced summer hours policy announcement that they hope FBC can also review and approve at its meeting on Thursday.
- 4) **Academic Portfolio Project Update.** Provost Soboyejo recounted the steps that had been taken since Huron Consulting first collected data and made suggestions about ways of enhancing efficiency and creating savings within the academic part of the operating budget. Three subcommittees composed of a mix of faculty and administrative staff, each led by the Dean of one of the Schools, have been working on various related to the development of a budget incentive model framework to enhance strategic thinking and support the implementation of targeted growth of WPI's academic enterprise. Arts and Sciences Dean Jean King is leading the effort to think about Faculty Activity. The Program Performance group was initiated under Interim Business School Dean Steve Taylor but its leadership has since been handed off to Dean Deborah Jackson. The Budget Modeling group is being

led by Engineering Dean John McNeill. Altogether, the effort is intended to achieve ~\$500K of savings over a two-year period of implementation without jeopardizing any of our valuable programs.

One FAP member noted that some other divisions at the university besides Academic Affairs interact in significant ways with the academic enterprise and wondered how those divisions (e.g. Human Resources, Information Technology, the Library, the Registrar, etc.) are being integrated into the subcommittees' thinking. This member also wondered how the views of our "customers" (i.e. students, parents, employers of graduates) are also factored into the deliberations.

Another member expressed his persistent concern that data-based decision making depends critically upon the quality of the data (and sought some assurance that, say, when the publicly reported numbers of majors deviate from the actual numbers of majors that these discrepancies will not translate into poorly informed choices about whether and where to redeploy resources among programs and departments).

A third FAP member asked how and when the recommendations of these subcommittees will be shared with the Faculty, and how faculty governance entities (FAP in particular) will be consulted to help prevent any unintended negative consequences of the work. Provost Soboyejo suggested that FAP could anticipate engaging in some summer conversations and that iterations of the subcommittees' work will be available for Faculty discussion, feedback, and refinement during the Fall terms. The hope is for that two-year implementation period to begin on January 1, 2022. FAP members responded that convening committees for serious work during the summer can be a challenge, so we encourage some sense of flexibility around that timeline of conversations to take place in August and September.

Provost Soboyejo thanked us all for raising these important issues and considerations.

5) **Adjournment.** The meeting was adjourned at 5:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

David Spanagel

FAP Secretary