

AY 2015-16 Committee on Administrative and Financial Policy (FAP)

FAP Meeting # 18 - 11:00 a.m., Thursday, February 4, 2016 Conference Room-Financial Services; Boynton Hall 2nd FL

In Attendance:

Professor David Spanagel (Chair)

Professor Hossein Hakim (FBC Chair and FAP Faculty Representative on RPC)

Professor Tahar El-Korchi (Secretary)

Jeffrey Solomon Executive Vice President/CFO

Kristopher Sullivan; Assistant Vice President Academic Affairs

Judi Trainor; Assistant Vice President Budget and Planning (invited guest)

1. Chair Spanagel began the meeting at 11:05 a.m.
2. Prof. Hakim reported on his discussion with the staff of National Center for Education Statistics who collect IPEDS data. Professor Hakim stated that the way IPEDS data has been used by Orion Stavre, Marketing Analyst for Marketing and Communication Group, is not a reliable method to draw the conclusions that were reported in that report. He also added that the perspective reported by Provost Bursten that WPI spends a significant amount of its budget on instruction, not enough on research and is lean in administrative expenses as compared with other AITU Institutions, cannot be concluded from Orion Stavre's report and the IPEDS data utilized for the report.
3. Professor Hakim proposed several operational guidelines for FAP that he would like to follow as Chair of FAP in Term D.

He encouraged FAP to revise the meeting minutes online to maximize meeting time for discussions.

4. Professor Hakim presented his view that the Chair of FAP will have the obligation to present the committee reports at the monthly Faculty meetings. He added that the Chair also has the authority to present to the Faculty the issues of concern to him/her as long as the Chair makes it clear that those views are his, and not the collective view of the FAP members. Prof. Hakim informed the committee that he conferred with Professors Hanlan and Rissmiller as current and ex- faculty parliamentarians, and they have confirmed that the Chair has the right to present his own views as long as he makes it clear that those are his personal views and not those of the Committee.

AVP Sullivan expressed his concern that as FAP Chair, the individual should not be reporting on FAP matters that have not been discussed and voted on by the Committee.

Chair Spanagel supported the idea and indicated that there should be a clear break between the official FAP report to the Faculty and professor Hakim sharing his opinions and perspective on FAP matters.

Professor El-Korchi agreed that there should be a clear delineation between the two reports.

VP Solomon stated that if this procedure is acceptable by Faculty bylaws, then we should accept it.

5. Professor Hakim suggested that FAP should write summary reports on important issues that the Committee discusses and that may take more than one academic year to study and complete, such as the summer compensation or the 'Dean' thing.

VP Solomon inquired if the annual report from FAP was adequate for that purpose, otherwise the Committee can do a better job on the annual report to satisfy this need.

Chair Spanagel added that maybe the annual report could be more detailed and have recommendations for future FAP committees.

Professor El-Korchi agreed that the annual report could serve as a living document and help in preserving the institutional memory for some of these important issues that could have a long life span.

6. Professor Hakim reported on his activities as Chair of FBC. He reported that currently WPI has a different vacation policy for exempt and non-exempt employees. There is an ongoing discussion about developing a proposal to FAP to evaluate this policy and make it aligned for both exempt and non-exempt employees. Prof Hakim reported that there is a wide range of vacation benefits among the universities we compare WPI to.

VP Solomon stated that WPI has a generous benefits package compared to our peer group. He added that the benefits package should be looked at as a whole and not just a specific element of the benefits package.

AVP Sullivan, inquired about how this change may affect the benefits cost and recommends that a study should be completed first.

Chair Spanagel requested that Professor Hakim give the committee an update once they have discussed this further and are ready to provide FAP with proposal request.

Professor Hakim reported on activities and discussions occurring in the Retirement Plan Committee: He reported that some members of the community are requesting more information and training about managing retirement accounts and portfolios.

VP Solomon stated that he believes that the institution has a good plan, with very good choices, good providers, good record keeping and reasonable fee structures that provide tools for people to make good decisions. He cautioned that we should not bring additional third party providers that may create a perceived conflict of interest but we should investigate how we can augment what we currently have through TIAA-CREF and Fidelity.

AVP Sullivan added that we should address inquiries from the community and direct them to existing resources that are available through HR.

5. Chair Spanagel summarized the remaining agenda items for the remainder of the year:

A Committee response to the summer faculty compensation proposal and the response received from the Provost.

AVP Sullivan reminded the Committee of the Provost's desire to have FAP facilitate some discussion of the scale of WPI's escalating "start-up packages" issue, and how it bears upon "who we are trying to be" as an institution. Chair Spanagel sees a strong connection between this issue and the project he outlined last year (having to do with better predicting the financial consequences of investments in various types of faculty hires, programs, and structures at WPI). The results of the Feb. 10 round of APBP discussions may yield some clearer sense of the stakes involved in these matters, and so he believes it makes sense for FAP to try to take up this discussion in earnest in the near future.

The timing of FAP's promise to look at and better understand endowment performance has been sidelined a bit, both by these other issues and by the news that VP Solomon's original plan (to present on the same topic to the Trustees) had been scratched from the February Board retreat agenda. Nevertheless, FAP has already received some useful materials, and can proceed to work together through them (and any other relevant information anyone might bring to bear) as time permits during the coming weeks.

Meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Tahar El-Korchi, FAP Secretary