

Committee on Governance Meeting Minutes
Meeting #29 (2017-18)
Monday, March 12, 2018, 10:00 am – 11:30 am
Faculty Governance Conference Room

In Attendance: Leonard Albano, Bruce Bursten (Provost), Glenn Gaudette (Chair), Mark Richman (Secretary of the Faculty), Susan Roberts, David Spanagel (Secretary), Bengisu Tulu, and Suzanne Weekes.

1. The meeting was called to order at 10:08 am.
2. The agenda was approved as amended.
3. Prof. Richman reviewed changes that he had made to his slides, in preparation for Thursday's upcoming Faculty Meeting annual report on the distribution of credits delivered by NTT and TTT faculty.

Discussion of the implications of these data continued. COG members restated their consensus view that the issue at stake is not about quality of instruction offered. The numerical breakdown of credits delivered by each category of faculty member (tenure-track, full-time continuing non-tenure track, professors of practice, and adjunct) provides a rough indication of whether the particular instructional needs of each department and program are well served by the numbers and current configuration of its faculty members, but says nothing about the capacity to pursue each program's research goals. COG agreed to put on its future agenda a more comprehensive and deeper discussion of best practices for deployment of the different categories of faculty.

Prof. Gaudette then shared his draft presentation of recommendations for how to restore the desired balance to WPI's faculty at the institutional level: hiring significantly more tenure track faculty lines each year, retaining more of those who we do hire (especially during their mid-careers), and supporting the professional development of faculty members at every stage in their employment. One of the slides featured the goal of reaching 300 TTT faculty by 2023, by a combination of these approaches. Prof. Richman asked if we could agree on this as an institutional need and a goal. In his view, it was better to consider obstacles to growth only after the need were first estimated based on teaching and research goals. Some COG members questioned whether it makes sense to name a specific number by a specific date, for a variety of reasons. Provost Bursten agreed that there is no question that we need more tenure track faculty, but maintained that there are significant obstacles that may have to be overcome (space limitations, financial resources, etc.), which could make achievement of a particular goal difficult. On the other hand, Prof. Spanagel pointed out that student enrollment numbers are also increasing; even if we reach 300 TTT faculty by 2023, that may still prove to be inadequate to meet the instructional demand, depending on future size of the institution. Despite these caveats, a majority of the committee supported including the concrete numerical growth goal on Prof. Gaudette's slide, but with a question mark attached.

4. Provost Bursten reiterated his concern about improving faculty productivity, with particular attention to the subset of those faculty members who deliver fewer than 250 credit hours per year, and the subset of those who do not conduct any active research whatsoever. In response to a request, he agreed to provide data that COG could analyze to substantiate his

concern. As time was running out, Prof. Gaudette promised to send his revised slides out to committee members for further suggestions for improvement between now and Thursday.

5. The meeting adjourned at 11:57 am.

Respectfully submitted,

David Spanagel, Secretary