

Committee on Governance: Minutes
Meeting #2: Sept. 3, 2019
Faculty Governance Conference Room (SL 225)

Present: Tanja Dominko (Secretary of the Faculty, BBT), Tahar El-Korchi (CEE –via Zoom from his air conditioned solar home in Morocco), Glenn Gaudette (Chair, BME, Provost *ad aspirans*), Arne Gericke (CBC), Mark Richman (ME), Wole Soboyejo (Provost *ad interim*).

1. Prof. Gaudette called the meeting to order at 3:12, sharp. The agenda was approved as distributed. The committee welcomed Prof. Gericke (CBC), who will be serving as the president's appointment to COG.
2. Dean of the Global School Search Committee: The goal is to have a balance of TTT and NTT faculty members on the search committee. After three faculty members are elected to the search committee by the TTT and NTT faculty, COG and the Provost will make two additional appointments consistent with this balance. The President has committed to making at least one academic appointment (out of her two appointments). Given that all appointments will be made collaboratively, COG is confident that the search committee can be appropriately balanced.

In response to a concern about ensuring appropriate input into the search from staff members in IGSD, COG will draw special attention to the statement in the Faculty Handbook that requires the search committee to conduct the search in such a manner that all members of the staff (as well as the faculty and administration) who would interact in a substantive way with the appointee be given the opportunity to review the candidates' resume, meet with and ask questions of the candidate, and provide both written and oral feedback to the search committee.

Representatives from the search firm Isaacson Miller will meet with COG for on Sept. 17 to get the committee's input about the search.

3. Guidelines for Dean/Provost Positions and Faculty Leadership Opportunities: There was general agreement that mechanisms should be put in place to provide academic/administrative leadership opportunities for faculty, and that those opportunities should be consistent with the internal needs of the institution as they arise naturally. In this way, WPI will benefit from the insights brought by internal members of the community. Whatever mechanism we adopt should include a fair and clear process of selection and appointment. Prof. Richman pointed out that our view of faculty leadership and the potential for further leadership should take into account past and current activities in faculty governance. Provost Soboyejo agreed and thought that there were several pathways to leadership for faculty with a variety of interests.

There was a significant disagreement over the extent to which faculty concerns and involvement should or should not be restricted to the Division of Academic Affairs as it is defined at WPI. Provost Soboyejo was inclined to restrict such involvement strictly to the Division of Academic Affairs. Others thought that, given the University's core academic mission, faculty members should ask questions of, express concerns about, and provide input into all divisions that affect academic conditions at WPI. This involvement across divisions could include having faculty members possibly assume short-term well-defined roles in such divisions as Admissions, IT, CPE, Finance, Marketing, and HR.

The committee agreed that perhaps a subcommittee or an ad hoc committee could look more closely at these issues for the purpose of proposing a process to identify administrative roles and provide leadership opportunities. Prof. Gaudette will draft a possible charge to the subcommittee.

On a related matter, Prof. Dominko expressed the desire to establish a clear guideline that distinguishes a faculty position from an administrative position. Such clarity is needed when deciding eligibility to serve on certain governance committees and eligibility to vote in certain governance elections. She will work on a draft to address this issue.

4. Progress on the Formation of an RBE Department and an AE Department: COG has received a draft proposal to form an RBE Department, although it did not come directly from the administration. Provost Soboyejo indicated that the idea of an RBE department was initiated by Prof. Xiao (Director of RBE), and that the proposal was written by Prof. Xiao, Prof. Fischer (ME), Prof. Gennert (CS), and Prof. Michalson (ECE). The Provost believes that RBE has evolved from a purely interdisciplinary program into a separate stand-alone discipline, and that at WPI it has grown to a critical size. From his discussions with others, Provost Soboyejo reported that the faculty (both TTT and NTT) in the RBE program unanimously support the idea of forming an RBE department, and that as a group, a majority of the department heads in ME, ECE, and CS together with the Dean of Engineering and the Dean of Arts & Sciences support the idea, as well.

The Provost informally endorsed the RBE proposal for formal consideration by COG. He believes that forming an RBE department will open national leadership possibilities for WPI. He also pointed out that budgeting for RBE would be more efficient and effective, and that problems with tenure and promotion processes caused by involvements by others without expertise in RBE would be resolved if RBE were its own separate department. While the Provost did not believe that a significant additional investment would be needed to convert RBE to a department, he did anticipate eventually replacing faculty lost to RBE in ME, ECE, and CS. Prof. Gericke asked how we would ensure that RBE remained interdisciplinary with respect to research interests that up to now have been successfully shared between several departments.

The Provost also reported on the status of the proposal to elevate the Aerospace program to an engineering Department at WPI. He has a full formal proposal from the AE faculty, has had very positive discussions with key AE faculty members, and believes that like RBE, the growth dynamics for AE are quite strong. As a group, the AE faculty are strong and enthusiastic, and the elevation of the AE program to a department would resolve many of the same issues for the AE program that the RBE proposal would address for RBE. Based on its current size, AE would constitute the seventh largest department on campus. And unlike RBE, which continues to evolve as a field, AE has long been its own stand-alone discipline.

5. The meeting adjourned at 4:50pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Richman
Secretary *ad interim*, COG

(These minutes were approved electronically by a majority of COG.)