11-1-2010

7th meeting of the 2010-2011 AY

Committee on Governance, Worcester Polytechnic Institute

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Suggested Citation


1. Prof. Kinicki called the meeting to order at 3:03 PM.

2. Approval of the minutes of October 14, 2010 (meeting # 6, AY 2010-2011) were postponed until the next meeting (#8 AY 2010-2011)

3. The agenda for the meeting was to discuss the Department Heads statement on the 3/5 year rule. Prof. Gennert presented the statement which had been circulated to the Department Heads by email.

“The WPI Department Heads Committee expresses its support for eliminating the 3-5 rule limiting time-in-service for non-tenure-track faculty members. These instructors provide valuable contributions to the University’s teaching mission, offering essential flexibility in support of faculty research leave and off-site project advising, and freeing tenure-track faculty to engage in teaching innovation and creative scholarship. While we affirm the primacy of the tenure-track faculty in fulfilling the University’s educational and research responsibilities and insist that their numbers increase commensurate with the University’s growth, we also believe that our most accomplished non-tenure-track faculty ought to be members of our long-term teaching staff, without time-in-service limits.”

Prof. Kinicki had the guests speak first. Several of the guests discussed their reasons for supporting the statement including:

a. The 3/5 year rule doesn’t work and Faculty consideration of removing it should be uncoupled from statements of institutional goals.

b. The rule poses an implied limitation on people WPI needs to conduct its programs. Having such a rule (even though it is not followed) is not honest.

c. Some speakers were against expressed ratios of TTT/NTT faculty at any level.

d. Department Heads should be afforded the latitude of determining the distributions of TTT/NTT faculty appropriate for their own departmental mission.

e. It was noted that there are some external pressures, such as accreditation, that involve reviewing the qualifications of both tenured and professionally qualified faculty. In such cases, given the mission of WPI, it would be expected that there would be a presence of both of these categories of faculty in an appropriate balance.
f. A number of operational issues related to titles and NTT faculty being classified as staff and reviewed as such were also brought forth.

Members of COG then spoke and addressed the following issues in many cases referencing minutes from meetings held in the current academic year.

g. COG has already adopted the approach of separating a goal statement from the 3/5 year rule and has decided that a goal statement should be presented first. COG’s concern is that a 2/3 vote is required to remove the 3/5 year rule from the Faculty Constitution. Adopting a goal statement first would improve the chances of obtaining a positive vote on the 3/5 year rule (item 3, meeting #3, 2010-11).

h. There was considerable discussion about the difference between a “feel good” statement and one that is more quantifiable. It was noted the Department Heads statement does indeed include a type of goal statement, but doesn’t quantify the words “primacy” or “commensurate”.

i. Prof. Richman reviewed and handed out copies of the minutes of the Faculty meetings of 10/1/09, 1/21/10, 2/25/10, 3/25/10 and 4/15/10. He noted that the NTT issue has been brought to the Faculty 5 times in the past year. COG has been addressing the issues raised by the Department Heads. There are far more similarities than differences between the respective positions of the two groups. He felt that major changes take time and that there was a need to work together and be patient with the process.

j. Prof. Kinicki noted that COG had referred the issues related to titles and operational procedures for NTT faculty to the Department Heads and had not yet received a response (Item 7, meeting #4, 2010-11). He also noted that eliminating the 3/5 year rule by itself does not immediately resolve many of the operational issues related to NTT faculty.

4. The meeting was adjourned at 4:02 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Allen H. Hoffman
Secretary