12-10-2008

13th meeting of the 2008-09 Academic Year

Committee on Governance, Worcester Polytechnic Institute

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The Committee on Governance (COG) held its thirteenth meeting of the 2008-09 Academic Year in the Morgan Room of the Campus Center at 8 a.m. on Wednesday, December 10, 2008.

Present: Provost Orr. Professors J. Blandino, J. Hanlan (Chair), J. O'Connor (Secretary), M. Richman, J. Rulfs, and H. Vassallo

Summary: 1. The Committee acted upon the Agenda previously submitted by Professor Hanlan.
2. The Committee acted upon the Minutes of the previous meeting (December 3, 2008).
3. The Committee reviewed the status of the ballots for the search committees for the Associate Dean for the First Year, and the three Academic Deans (Engineering, Arts & Sciences, and Management).
4. The potential for financial difficulties at WPI because of the nation's economic situation was addressed.
5. COG reviewed Provost Orr's most recent draft of "Academic Deans at WPI".
6. The Committee returned to its discussion of the drafts of the proposed policies on research misconduct and sexual harassment.

Detail: 1. The Agenda submitted by Professor Hanlan was approved by the Committee without change.
2. The Committee approved the Minutes of the previous meeting, with additions.
3. Professor Hanlan handed out samples of the ballots for the search committees for the Associate Dean for the First Year and the Dean of Engineering. These ballots will be distributed to the faculty later in the day with a due date of December 17th. The ballots for the Dean of Arts & Sciences and the Dean of Management will be distributed at a later date.
4. Faculty concerns about potential financial difficulties because of the nation's economic situation were discussed with Provost Orr. The Provost noted that many of the colleges/universities which are announcing cutbacks are more endowment-dependent than WPI, and that the effects of deterioration in the financial markets on their operating budgets will be felt almost immediately. He informed the Committee that WPI's administration is monitoring closely data which might indicate signs of financial difficulty (e.g., admission applications, applications for off-campus projects,
Spring semester tuition payments, etc.). It is the Provost's view that the proposed faculty hires are necessary to maintain and improve the quality of WPI's educational program. COG members voiced their opinion that if it becomes necessary to cancel any of the proposed searches, that such cancellations should occur as soon as possible--before potential candidates are selected to visit campus.

5. The Committee examined the relatively few changes Provost Orr has made in his 12/10/08 version of "Academic Deans at WPI". It is the Provost's intent to distribute this memo to the Faculty.

6. WPI is required by the federal government to have explicit policies on research misconduct and sexual harassment. The Committee decided that it needs to have a clearer understanding of the precise legal requirements for these policies before it can adequately evaluate the two draft policies that have been placed before it. To that end, Provost Orr is going to invite Mr. Michael Curley, University Compliance Officer, to the next COG meeting.

The Committee adjourned at 9 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

J. T. O'Connor, Secretary