11-19-2008

11th meeting of the 2008-09 Academic Year

Committee on Governance, Worcester Polytechnic Institute

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The Committee on Governance (COG) held its eleventh meeting of the 2008-09 Academic Year in the Morgan Room of the Campus Center at 8 a.m. on Wednesday, November 19, 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 Prof. Hanlan.
2. The Committee acted upon the Minutes of the previous meeting (November 12, 2008).
3. COG continued its discussion of the possible implications of the nation’s current financial/economic situation on WPI.
4. Prof. Hanlan made proposals concerning the various Dean Search Committee ballots.
5. COG continued its discussion of the latest version of Provost Orr’s memo "Academic Deans at WPI".
6. The Committee continued its previous discussion of the Faculty Misconduct policies.

Detail: 1. The Agenda submitted by Prof. Hanlan was approved by the Committee.
2. The Minutes of the previous meeting, submitted previously by Prof. O’Connor, were approved as submitted.
3. Provost Orr will be discussing with President Berkey the possible implications of the current financial/economic situation on WPI. (Provost Orr has been out-of-town serving on an ABET accreditation committee.) FAP is also addressing this issue with the Administration.
4. Prof. Hanlan proposed that the nomination ballots for the Search Committees for the three new Academic Deans and the Associate Dean for the First Year--which are due at noon on November 19th--be counted, and that COG aim for a ballot of six candidates for each of the four Search Committees. COG members will be contacting the top vote getters on each Search Committee nomination ballot until six willing candidates for each Search Committee accept their nominations. The final ballot for each of the four Search Committees will be distributed after the Thanksgiving recess.
5. Provost Orr discussed his most recent revisions to his memo "Academic Deans at WPI", and the COG voiced its approval of these changes. Further COG comments were made concerning the
possibility of making the "evaluation" section more in parallel with the Deans' "assignments", and making the "evaluation" section wording less tentative. Provost Orr intends--ultimately--to send this memo to the Faculty.

6. Various aspects of the draft policies relating to Faculty misconduct were discussed. It is intended that, after due consideration by the Faculty and the Administration, these new policies will be placed in the Faculty Handbook. Topics discussed included: Have not the current policies worked well? --what is the rationale for these changes? A penalty such as suspension or "unpaid leave", may become in reality equivalent to removal of tenure; The definitions of what constitutes "Faculty misconduct" need to be more clearly specified (what is considered inappropriate Faculty behavior can easily differ between/among various Faculty constituencies); Procedures which may be appropriate for an indictment (e.g., Inquiry Committees), may well not be appropriate for ultimate resolution of such an indictment. Discussion of these three policies will continue, and will include the issues noted in the minutes of the COG's prior deliberations on this topic (please see COG minutes of October 16, 2008).

The meeting adjourned at 9 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

J.T. O'Connor, Secretary.