11-12-2008

10th meeting of the 2008-09 Academic Year

Committee on Governance, Worcester Polytechnic Institute

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The Committee on Governance (COG) held its tenth meeting of the 2008-09 Academic Year in the Morgan Room of the Campus Center at 8 a.m. on Wednesday, November 12, 2008.

Present: 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 its previous meeting (November 5, 2008).
3. The Committee acted on a motion to appoint a new Chief Justice of the Campus Hearing Board (effective July 1, 2009).
4. The Committee heard reports on the Trustees' meeting.
5. Election ballots were examined.
6. The Committee discussed the possible implications of the nation's current financial/economic situation on WPI.
7. The Committee discussed Provost Orr's revisions to his memo "Academic Deans at WPI".

Detail: 1. Several items were added to Prof. Hanlan's previously submitted Agenda.
2. The Committee accepted the Minutes of its previous meeting (November 12, 2998) as submitted by Prof. O'Connor, after one spelling correction.
3. The Committee voted to approve the appointment of Prof. Joel Brattin as Chief Justice of the Campus Hearing Board, to become effective as of 7/1/09.
4. Professors Hanlan and Vassallo discussed the meetings they attended during the last Trustees meeting. In particular, the expectations of the Chair of the Academic Policy re the issue of Academic Deans were clarified.
5. Prof. Hanlan distributed the final editions of the ballots for the Search Committees for the three new Deans and for the Associate Dean for the First Year. The ballots will be distributed this afternoon (11/12/08) and the due date for their return is 11/19/08.
6. The COG discussed concerns that have been raised by many faculty members with respect to the possible effects of the current financial/economic situation on WPI. Prominent universities such as Harvard, Cornell, Brown and B.U. have announced steps (hiring freezes, delays
in physical expansion plans, etc.) which they will be taking so as to minimize possible disruptions to their financial well-being (e.g., decreased availability and/or higher interest rates on student loans, reductions in the potential for college financing via home equity borrowings, growing levels of unemployment, decreased returns from endowment income to the operating budget, etc.).

The Committee passed the following motion:
"In view of the current financial/economic situation, COG urges the Committee on Financial and Administrative Policy to examine carefully WPI's planned new financial commitments."

7. The Committee began its discussion of the newest version (dated November 5, 2008) of Provost Orr's memo "Academic Deans at WPI". This discussion will continue next week after Provost Orr returns from his ABET accreditation duties.

The meeting adjourned at 9 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

J.T. O'Connor, Secretary