

Governance Committee
Meeting Minutes: August 20th, 2019

In Attendance

David Alvarez (chair), Steven Bogaerts (minutes-taker), Sharon Crary, Kent Menzel, Manu Raghav (via Skype)

Minutes

We discussed the makeup of the committee. It is our understanding that there are no direct representatives from other core committees, in contrast to what is currently stated online. This was later confirmed by Howard Brooks via email.

We do not know at this time who the School of Music representative will be. Nicole Brockman intends to step down.

The minute-taker will rotate each meeting, in alphabetical order of last name.

We will meet once per week on Tuesdays, aiming to finish at 5 or 5:30 PM.

David asked about any procedures for selecting a chair. The committee asked him to remain as chair, and he agreed.

We briefly discussed the importance of hearing from other committees and communicating better, and the need for better structure for that.

We emphasized the importance of each committee making decisions, not merely the chair of each committee. This should be protected by formal committee procedures.

What are the highest priorities for the Governance committee this year? We identified top priorities as the presidential search, VPAA search, improved communication with the Board of Trustees (including confidentiality issues), and policies regarding compensated service. Some details of this discussion follows.

First, we must establish procedures for the presidential and VPAA searches. The presidential search is key. These procedures are not set in stone yet. The VPAA search seems to not yet be underway. The school of music dean search is also important, though the search for now will be interim.

Beyond that, we may start with some low-hanging fruit. We also need to be careful not to get too bogged down on any particular issue.

Dave Berque asked for Governance input on extended studies. We need to work on this.

We discussed faculty review of administrators as being controversial, but a higher priority.

We also considered the need for more formal and stronger means of communication with the board of trustees, including how to ensure that faculty representatives truly represent the faculty as a whole. Confidentiality policy comes into play here too; representatives cannot be true representatives without regular communication with the faculty as a whole. The structure of the board may also be problematic, with unclear policies regarding official membership and other forms of influence.

Procedures for compensated service positions need to be discussed. We considered the extent to which the Review Committee currently covers this, and inconsistent practices for different positions.

There has been a request for consideration of administrative structures for Global Learning and PPD.

A lower priority, but hopefully later in the year, would be to reconsider the use of consultants when perhaps some of that work could be done internally.

We may also some day consider the recent revision of email lists.

Upon completing this discussion of priorities for the year, we moved to a detailed discussion about the presidential search process. Two separate anecdotes described people not wanting to fill out the application questionnaire, or finding the questions demeaning. We concluded that despite some burden, the process of filling out those questions is important, in order to be transparent and fair.

Also regarding the presidential search, a faculty member brought up some concerns:

- Regarding the number of faculty members on the committee.
- Appointment to the committee by the board is viewed as problematic, though this might not be the de facto process anyway.
- Should untenured faculty members be on the committee?

Regarding open/hybrid/closed searches, the cases of Pomona College and Ithaca College's recent open or hybrid searches is compelling. In light of tense issues on campus, involving the entire community may be very useful. Parents and alumni have been very discontent as well and we would do well to involve them deeply in the presidential search process.

What kind of hybrid search process would we be happy with? We need at least a presentation attended by all committee chairs, or department chairs and directors, or all committee members. Representatives of students, faculty, and staff of color should also be included. Other staff representatives should be included. Though possibly we should push for a fully open search and have a backup plan hybrid proposal.

We settled on proposing that the search be “open at the end, with no media”, meaning a presentation that all interested faculty and staff can attend, with no publicization of names.