Date: November 4, 2026
To: WPI Faculty
From: Committee on Governance (COG) (Prof. Gillian Smith, Chair)
Re: Motion to modify Chapter 2, Section 2 of the Faculty Handbook to add language related to equal opportunity

Motion

The Committee on Governance recommend and I move that Chapter 2, Section 2 of the Faculty Handbook be modified in the following ways:

- Rename Section 2 to "Balance **and Composition** of the Faculty at WPI" (new text in **bold**)
- Move existing language regarding the balance of faculty by track to a dedicated subsection: "Section 2.1 Faculty Populations"
- Relocate some language regarding equality of opportunity from Chapter 9, Section 5 to a new subsection: "Section 2.2 Commitment to Equal Opportunity"
- Add new language regarding mechanisms that the Faculty should use to enact this commitment to equal opportunity

The full proposed text of Chapter 2, Section 2 is included below. Newly authored text is highlighted in blue; relocated text from Chapter 9, Section 5 is highlighted in green. There is no text being removed from Chapter 2, Section 2.

For reference, the full text of the current Chapter 9, Section 5 is included as an appendix to this motion.

> **Chapter 2 – Academic Appointments**
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> …
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> **Section 2 – Balance and Composition of the Faculty at WPI**
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> Consistent with WPI's purpose to create, discover, and convey knowledge at the frontiers of academic inquiry, the University is committed to maintaining an appropriate balance of faculty members who combine both research and teaching, and faculty members who primarily serve the educational mission as teachers and experts in pedagogy, course design, and course delivery. The University is also committed to non-discrimination, and shall seek, employ, and promote the best qualified faculty without regard to their identity.
>
> *2.1 Faculty Populations*
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> WPI meets this commitment by aiming to balance its Faculty as follows: 70 percent tenured and tenure-track (TTT) dual mission teaching-research faculty members and 30 percent teaching mission faculty members. The TTT dual-mission teaching-research faculty members consist of Assistant, Associate, and Full Professors. The teaching-mission faculty members consist of the following: tenured and tenure-track (TTT) Assistant, Associate, and Full Professors of

Teaching; and non-tenure track (NTT) Assistant Teaching Professors, Associate Teaching Professors, Full Teaching Professors, Professors of Practice, Instructors, and Senior Instructors.

WPI's initial three-year goal is to balance its teaching mission faculty members (by fall 2023) as follows: 40 percent tenured or tenure-track and 60 percent non-tenure-track, with an openness to further increasing the fraction of tenured or tenure-track teaching mission faculty members in the years that immediately follow.

The University should periodically revisit these commitments and goals through campus-wide discussions that either affirm their soundness or develop an understanding and a consensus concerning changes in mission, priorities, resources, or strategy that would require them to change. While the goals are described quantitatively to provide clarity, there is flexibility in the understanding that they are not exact and can be reconsidered when necessary.

Early each fall, the Provost will provide a report to the Committee on Governance detailing the numbers of faculty members in each category (described in Section 1) across the institution and within each department, division, and school. In collaboration with the Provost, the Committee on Governance will disseminate a final report to the Faculty and present the results for open discussion at a faculty meeting during the same year.

2.2 Commitment to Equal Opportunity

WPI is committed to the principles of equal opportunity for all persons and it is the policy of WPI to affirmatively seek, employ, and promote the best qualified employees, students, and applicants without regard to race, sex, age, color, national origin, religion, genetic identity, disability, gender identity or expression, marital or parental status, sexual orientation, transgender status, veteran status, or any other protected status. This commitment applies to the total WPI community and is intended to comply with both the spirit and letter of governing state and federal laws. This commitment is accomplished by providing equality of opportunity in employment, employing and retaining a diverse workforce of the best-qualified individuals, and ensuring a workplace that is free of discrimination and harassment.

In support of our institutional values regarding commitment to equal opportunity, faculty hiring committees shall:

- Work to cultivate a pool of applications that represents the full diversity of the field;
- Acknowledge that there are a diverse set of career pathways in academia, and not disqualify candidates based on a bias against non-traditional career trajectories;
- Engage their departments and programs in defining merit criteria;
- Evaluate candidates on their merit independent of the reputation of institution from which they earned their degree; and

- Work in collaboration with the Office of Talent & Inclusion to define these qualifications and search criteria in accordance with institutional goals for equal opportunity and to ensure the search is conducted in a manner that is compliant with state and federal laws.

WPI's Office of Talent & Inclusion is responsible for policies related to equal opportunity and non-discrimination and ensuring their compliance with federal and state law. These policies are reviewed with the Committee on Governance at least every three years, and Talent & Inclusion will collaborate with faculty governance whenever making significant changes to these policies.

Rationale

This motion maintains language about WPI's commitment to equal opportunity in the Faculty Handbook and adds some detail on how the faculty can proactively work to meet this commitment through diversifying applicant pools and considering merit criteria. By relocating existing text away from Chapter 9 ("Certain WPI Legal Policies") to Chapter 2 ("Balance and Composition of the Faculty at WPI") it enshrines our commitment to equal opportunity as valued as much as to ensuring an appropriate balance of teaching and research faculty at the institution. The additional mechanisms in Section 2.2 improve upon the language in Chapter 9 by adding direct actions that can be taken when hiring faculty at WPI and tightening collaboration between T&I and faculty when there are meaningful changes to policies.

Since the policy language is often connected with legal requirements on the university, stating T&I maintains the equal opportunity policy allows a more nimble response to changing federal policies while also ensuring that the Faculty are collaborated with whenever there is a proposed change. Current federal policies regarding equal opportunity constrain allowable actions in hiring to all be prior to interviewing candidates. Any language that makes a commitment, either directly or indirectly, to meeting employment targets is currently unlawful. Thus, the list of proposed actions here focuses on how to best ensure a diverse pool of applicants.

Implementation

This faculty handbook modification is to be effective immediately.

Links to impacted sections will be updated, as needed. COG commits to reviewing the outcomes of making this change no later than Spring 2029, and, if necessary, creating recommendations for revisions.

Appendix A: Full Text of Chapter 9, Section 5

The full text for Chapter 9, Section 5 is provided below for reference. The text below that appears in the new Section 2.2 is highlighted in green.

5. Statement on Affirmative Action

(Updated by SOF through Human Resources, *August 15, 2016*)

WPI is committed to the principles of equal opportunity for all persons and it is the policy of WPI to affirmatively seek, employ, and promote the best qualified employees, students, and applicants without regard to race, sex, age, color, national origin, religion, genetic identity, disability, gender identity or expression, marital or parental status, sexual orientation, transgender status, veteran status, or any other protected status. This policy applies to the total WPI community and is designed to comply with both the spirit and letter of governing state and federal laws. It is expected that this policy, as well as the WPI Affirmative Action Plan will be effectuated by employees, students and others who act on behalf of WPI.

All supervisors, managers, and administrators are responsible for helping the campus fulfill its equal opportunity responsibilities. This is accomplished by making good faith efforts toward meeting affirmative action goals and ensuring a workplace that is free of discrimination and harassment. WPI's goal is to employ and retain a diverse workforce of the best-qualified individuals.

a. Employment of Minorities and Women

The Institute's Affirmative Action Program is intended to expand our efforts to guarantee equality of opportunity in employment and in education and to reduce underrepresentation and underutilization of minorities and women at WPI. For all Institute categories of employment, our objectives are to achieve a representation of minorities and women that is at least in proportion to their current availability and to provide new opportunities for career development which both stimulate and respond to their changing interests and aspirations. WPI's obligations as a federal contractor under Executive Order 11246 includes the development of an affirmative action program which provides for analysis of utilization of minorities and women in all job groups in each organizational unit.

b. Employment of Disabled Individuals

The Institute's program for the employment of individuals with disabilities is intended to expand WPI's efforts to provide opportunities for employment and advancement for qualified persons with disabilities. The Institute will not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of physical or mental disability in regard to any position for which the employee or applicant is qualified.

WPI's obligations as a federal contractor under Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act, include an assessment of all employment practices to assure that any adaptation that permits the employment or advancement of individuals with disabilities is reasonably accommodated, provided it does not cause undue hardship to the employer. Some individuals may require flexible work schedules, worksite accommodations, or auxiliary aids in order to perform the required duties of a job. Reasonable accommodation to needs such as these is the Institute's affirmative action responsibility under the law.

Inquiries regarding this policy may be directed to the Benefits Administrator in the Office of Human Resources

c. Employment of Disabled and Other Covered Veterans

In compliance with the Vietnam-Era Veterans Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974, as amended, and the 2002 Jobs for Veterans Act (JVA), as amended, WPI does not discriminate

against any qualified employee or applicant for employment because he or she is a veteran with a disability or other covered veteran. WPI, in this respect, takes affirmative action to employ, advance in employment, and treat without discrimination, veterans with disabilities and other covered veterans.

A covered veteran is a person in one of the following categories:

- Armed Forces Service Medal Veteran: Any veteran who, while serving on active duty in the U.S. military, ground, naval or air service, participated in a United States military operation for which an Armed Forces service medal was awarded pursuant to Executive Oder 12985.
- Recently Separated Veteran: Any veteran during the three year period beginning on the date of such veteran's discharge or release from active duty in the U.S. military, ground, naval or air service.
- Other Protected Veteran: A person who served on active duty in the U.S. military, ground, naval or air services during a war or in a campaign or expedition for which a campaign badge has been authorized.
- Disabled Veteran: A veteran of the U.S. military, ground, naval or air service who is entitled to compensation (or who but for the receipt of military retired pay would be entitled to compensation) under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs, or a person who was discharged or released from active duty because of a service-connected disability.
    - A disabled individual is defined as any person who has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more of such person's major life activities, or has a record of such impairment, or is regarded as having an impairment. ("Life activities" are those which affect employability; "substantially limits" means the degree that the impairment affects employability.)

As a government contractor, WPI will take affirmative action to ensure that job applicants are employed and that employees are treated during employment without regard to their race, creed, color, national origin, sex, or other protected classifications.

WPI also invites all employees to voluntarily self-identify themselves to the Office of Human Resources. More information can be found on our website.