

**Committee of Six Minutes  
of Monday, September 3, 2007**

The first meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2007-2008 was called to order by President Marx in his office at 9 A.M. on Monday, September 3, 2007. Present were Professors Frank, S. George, Jagannathan, O'Hara, Servos, and Sinos, Dean Call, President Marx, and Assistant Dean Tobin, Recorder.

The President opened the meeting by welcoming new and returning members of the Committee of Six and said that he looks forward to working with the Committee this year. The members then considered five course proposals and voted to forward them to the Faculty for approval. Professor Sinos suggested that it would be beneficial to develop ways to facilitate cross-departmental discussion about course proposals when course content overlaps. If a faculty member is alerted that another department is planning to offer a course that is similar to one that he or she is proposing, one or another of the departments might want to make scheduling or other adjustments, she noted. Professor Servos commented that, logistically, it would be difficult to achieve such coordination when courses are submitted to the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) over the summer. The President said it would be desirable to explore systems that would allow for coordination, both during the year and in the summer, if possible. Dean Call agreed to discuss the possibilities with Nancy Ratner, Researcher for Academic Projects, who assists the CEP with the course approval process.

Under his announcements, President Marx explained to the members that, after four years of conversation on campus about the priorities that will inform the upcoming capital campaign, he will continue working in the coming months with Trustees to raise very significant funds from a small number of donors. These funds will form what is known in advancement parlance as a nucleus fund, which would represent about half of the funding goal for the campaign. President Marx explained that it is the practice before formally announcing a campaign to have significant funding in hand as an expression of confidence that the overall campaign goal can be met, keeping in mind that shifts in the economy can affect that ability to raise funds. He said that he expects that the campaign will be announced in 2008.

Continuing his announcements, President Marx noted that, among the matters that he would expect to consider with the Committee of Six and other faculty committees over the course of the year are how best to meet needs surrounding writing instruction for all Amherst students, to combat grade inflation at the College, and to mitigate the burden imposed on the faculty by the demands placed on them (pressures related to scholarly and creative productivity, teaching, and College service).

Dean Call next reported back on an issue raised by Professor O'Hara at the end of last year. She had suggested that it might be beneficial for a staff member, perhaps an Academic Department Coordinator, to be added to the Faculty Computer Committee, since staff members work closely with technology. The Dean had noted that staff members interface with the Faculty Computer Committee, he believed, through other groups. He had offered to check with Peter Schilling, Director of Information Technology, to confirm how staff members' technology interests and needs are represented. The Dean said that Mr. Schilling has informed him that the

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vast majority of Academic Department Coordinators are part of the Desktop Computing Department Liaisons Group. These liaisons participate on IT listservs for the exchange of all time-sensitive notifications, attend meetings each semester to discuss new tools, and provide feedback on concerns.

Continuing his remarks, the Dean said that he was delighted to announce two new appointments in his office. Pat O'Hara, Amanda and Lisa Cross Professor of Chemistry, and Austin Sarat, William Nelson Cromwell Professor of Jurisprudence and Political Science and Five College Fortieth Anniversary Professor, have been named Senior Advisors to the Dean of the Faculty for Academic Life. The Dean said that Professor Sarat began his appointment in August, and that Professor O'Hara will start in July 2008, at the conclusion of her term on the Committee of Six. Both appointments are for one year and are renewable. The creation of these new positions within the Office of the Dean of the Faculty is a direct outgrowth of the recommendations of the Committee on Academic Priorities, Dean Call commented. Professor Sinos asked if the appointments entail a reduction in teaching for these colleagues. The Dean said that no such reduction is associated with the appointments.

Dean Call noted that, in her role as Senior Advisor, Professor O'Hara will focus on raising the visibility of Amherst science research, enhancing collaborative opportunities within the College, the Five Colleges, and internationally; coordinating support for less well-prepared science/math students (including participants in Summer Science and the Phoenix Program); investigating new initiatives for student research; and developing outreach opportunities in science. The Dean noted that Professor Sarat will concentrate his work on issues surrounding student intellectual engagement including grade inflation, flexibility in class scheduling, the intersections of academics and athletics, and evaluating the benefits for students and faculty of the Academic Internship Program. He will also focus on program development for the Schupf Scholars Program and will work with departments to identify students who may have an interest in post-graduate academic study, and with the Office of Admission to identify further applicants who manifest intellectual curiosity, including those who may be interested in pursuing Ph.D.s.

Continuing his remarks, Dean Call informed the members about the following three initiatives that will be under way in 2007-2008: the undertaking of a campus-wide academic facilities study (focusing primarily on classrooms and faculty offices); the assessment of programmatic needs that might be addressed through the renovation of Frost Library; and the consideration of the future of the sciences at Amherst and planning for the renovation of the Merrill Science Center. He expressed the hope that standing committees of the Faculty would work on the first two of these projects, while the third would require the establishment of a new standing Science Committee (as recommended by the science faculty during a conversation held in July).

While applauding the Dean's desire not to create new committees, Professor Jagannathan commented that members of the Library Committee who would join the Library Planning Group might not necessarily have special talent in the area of building renovation. The Dean said that, when making appointments to the Library Committee, he had considered that such expertise

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would be required. President Marx noted that it is necessary that plans for the library move forward expeditiously, if a compelling argument for additional resources is to be made to the Board—and in order for this project to be included among the campaign's funding goals. He expressed the hope that the Library Committee would seek advice broadly, by holding open meetings and by consulting with faculty groups.

Professor Sinos asked about the timetable for developing a plan for the library. The Dean noted that a sense of the project's direction and scale is needed by the time the Trustees meet in April. President Marx responded that this schedule would permit the project to move forward toward greater specificity, if the plans that are developed receive Board approval.

Under "Questions from Committee Members," Professor Jagannathan said that he had some questions about the launch of the new Content Management System (CMS) and how the system will be managed and supported. He asked the Dean if Mr. Schilling would be discussing this project in his report to the Faculty at the September 3 Faculty Meeting. The Dean said that he believed that Mr. Schilling did indeed plan on reporting on the CMS.

Professor O'Hara asked the Dean about the status of the Committee's review of attendance and voting at Faculty Meetings. The Dean recalled that last year's Committee of Six had decided, after some discussion about the possibility of adding, moving, or removing administrative positions within various categories—attendance without vote, attendance with vote, etc.—that no changes should be made at present. The Committee had viewed this issue as a complex and potentially divisive one within the Amherst community and felt that caution should be exercised when making changes. It was agreed that Molly Mead, the new Director of the Community Center Engagement, and Marian Matheson, Director of Institutional Research, should be invited to attend the meetings without voting privileges. Upon the Committee's request, the Dean agreed to provide the members with a list of those who are entitled to attend Faculty Meetings and their privileges in regard to voice and vote.

Professor O'Hara next asked the Dean if he planned to share with the Committee and—through the minutes—with the Faculty as a whole information about a new pilot program that is being launched this year at the College to support premedical students who are underprepared in the sciences. The Dean said that he would be happy to do so. Professor George said that he had brought information with him about the program, and he then distributed a letter to the CEP that described this trial post-baccalaureate program in detail. The members agreed to review the letter and to discuss the program at their next meeting.

Professor Frank asked the Dean whether a committee has been created to explore the future of Film Studies and New Media at the College. Dean Call said that the CEP has recommended the establishment of such a committee and suggested that the Committee of Six discuss this matter at its next meeting.

Dean Call informed the Committee that he had been asked by a member whether the Committee might wish to have a retreat to discuss the agenda for the year. He asked the members to think about whether they might like to have such a retreat at the Deerfield Inn in the near future. Professor O'Hara said that she would welcome such a planning session as an

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opportunity, at the beginning of the year before business is pressing, to talk about the role this year's Committee wishes to play and to be reflective about the past year. Professor Sinos suggested that the Committee of Six might host regular lunches with the Faculty. The members agreed to consider these ideas at the Committee's next meeting.

The Dean next discussed with the members options for a regular meeting time for the Committee of Six, and it was agreed that the Committee would meet from 3:00 P.M. to 5:30 P.M. on Mondays. The Dean said that it may become necessary to schedule additional meetings, and the members agreed to discuss at their next meeting potential times for extra meetings. He informed the Committee that Assistant Dean Janet Tobin will continue to serve as the Recorder of Committee of Six minutes and that Marcy Larmon, Director of Programming in the Office of Alumni and Parent Programs, will serve as the Recorder of the Faculty Meeting minutes. Continuing his announcements, the Dean informed the members that community teas will be held once again this year on Thursdays at Frost Library, from 3:30 P.M. to 4:30 P.M., and that coffee, tea, and confections will again be provided at Lewis-Sebring from 8:00 A.M. to 11:00 A.M., Monday through Friday. He then reminded the Committee that, during the first week of classes, Monday classes would be held on Wednesday.

Dean Call then reviewed issues of Committee of Six confidentiality and attribution in the minutes, noting that the public minutes should be used as a guide in questions of whether matters discussed by the Committee can be shared with others. Professor Frank asked, as a newcomer to the Committee, what matters other than personnel matters are kept confidential. The President and the Dean said that minutes of discussions of certain sensitive or unresolved matters and plans in their formative stages, about which they are seeking the advice of the Committee of Six, are sometimes kept confidential. Often, discussions of these issues are made public once the matter is in a less tentative state. The Dean said that very few conversations (with the exception of personnel matters and committee nominations that are under consideration) have been kept out of the public minutes of the Committee. The members agreed that, for reasons of transparency, there should be direct quotation in the minutes although members could be referred to simply as "a member" if they so requested. The President, the Dean, and the members agreed to strive for transparency in the minutes.

The Dean next informed the members of the longstanding policy of appending letters to the minutes when the matters contained within them have been discussed by the Committee. Colleagues are informed by the Dean's office as to when their letters will be appended. If a colleague states at the outset that he or she does not want the contents of a letter discussed in the public minutes, the Committee will decide whether it wishes to take up the matter in question. The Committee then discussed the circumstances under which it would communicate via email. It was agreed that email communications would not be used to communicate about personnel or other confidential matters and that, in general, the use of email would be kept to a minimum.

In response to a question posed by Professor Frank, Dean Call then reviewed rules governing participation in the Committee's tenure discussions when members belong to the department of a tenure candidate. The Dean next asked the members to consider colleagues to

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serve on Memorial Minute Committees for Ernest Alfred Johnson, Professor of Romance Languages, Emeritus, and Mirjana Lausevic, Joseph E. and Grace W. Valentine Visiting Assistant Professor of Music, in 2006-2007. Dean Call expressed regret that he had only recently learned of the death of Professor Johnson, who passed away on May 14, 2006. He informed the members that Professor Lausevic had died on July 15, 2007.

Professor George next expressed concern that a proposed committee assignment that appears on the Faculty Meeting agenda of September 3 had not been discussed by last year's Committee of Six. Dean Call noted that an unanticipated issue had impeded the Committee's first choice from serving and that the new nominee was among the candidates vetted by last year's Committee of Six. Professor George said that it is important that committee assignments rotate among the Faculty, and that committee service should not be imposed on a limited few. Professor Frank asked if all faculty members serve on committees. The Dean said that, to inform the Committee, he would provide the members with a full committee history for each faculty member. Professor Sinos noted that it would be helpful to consider committee assignments earlier in the spring than has been the practice in the past so that the Committee has more time to review nominations.

With limited time remaining, Dean Call noted that, after eliminating dates for which there were scheduling conflicts, the possible dates for Faculty Meetings this semester, based on the Faculty's longstanding practice of reserving the first and third Tuesdays of each month of the term for possible meetings, are October 2, October 16, November 6, and December 18. He noted that he had received both positive and negative feedback about the experiment of last spring of having a Faculty Meeting with lunch after classes concluded. The Dean asked the members to think about whether alternative times for Faculty Meetings should continue to be explored and tried.

The members reviewed and approved the agenda for the Faculty Meeting of September 3 and adjourned at 9:55 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory S. Call  
Dean of the Faculty