

Amended October 29, 2010

The ninth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2010-2011 was called to order by President Marx in his office at 3:30 P.M. on Monday, October 25, 2010. Present were Professors Basu, Ciepiela, Loinaz, Rockwell, Umphrey, and Saxton, Dean Call, President Marx, and Assistant Dean Tobin, Recorder.

The members voted to approve the Committee's minutes of October 14, 2010. Dean Call next reported back on the responses he had received to invitations to colleagues to serve on three committees.

In response to the Committee's request, the Dean provided additional information on the Croxton Fund. The members asked about the parameters for using Croxton funds to support visiting faculty. President Marx said he would review relevant documents and report back to the Committee. The members discussed briefly [the draft of the advising manual](#) prepared by Ben Lieber, Dean of Academic Support and Student Research, which will be distributed to the Faculty. The Dean noted that the manual was reviewed previously by the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP). The Committee suggested several changes, which Dean Call agreed would be made to the document before it is distributed to the Faculty. The members then turned briefly to a personnel matter.

Discussion turned to the draft titled [Optimizing the Consortial Advantage by 2020: A Strategic Plan for Five Colleges, Incorporated](#) and [the responses by the CEP and the Committee on Priorities and Resources \(CPR\)](#) (in the form of minutes) to this strategic plan. The members praised the two committees' responses and agreed with the CEP and CPR's general view that the College should support the principle of Five College cooperation, but that any specific proposals that are considered within the plan or which may emerge from this document would need to be reviewed carefully by relevant College governance structures. The three committees agreed that the draft plan represents a broad vision that does not provide the details that would be needed to generate a response from the College to particular proposals. There was hesitancy expressed about endorsing the document in any way because of this lack of specifics and because of concern about indicating a commitment to a number of ideas put forward in the plan.

Professor Basu expressed the view that some directions outlined in the plan could be fruitful, while others were controversial. She expressed enthusiasm for the plan's support for exploring consortial approaches to a range of academic-support functions, such as disability services, strengthening intellectual communities through Five College faculty symposia, and expanding opportunities for faculty members to teach on other campuses. While she appreciated Five College certificate programs in area studies and other interdisciplinary programs, Professor Basu questioned the proposal to consider a five-year master's and other post-baccalaureate degrees. She expressed concern that the intellectual rationale for this program was weak and that it appeared to be marketing the consortium. In terms of the master's proposal, President Marx commented that participation by the College in such a program would depend on faculty approval of such an effort, and that the Amherst Faculty would consider each proposal via its governance structures.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Umphrey asked about steps that might be planned to follow the stage of gathering feedback on the strategic plan from the campuses: she asked who would operationalize the plan? Who would work on developing specific proposals? Professor Umphrey stressed the importance of making the answers to these questions clear. Dean Call noted that the planning document represents ideas that have been proposed and discussed by faculty and administrators at Five College institutions, and that the relevant governance

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structures of each institution would consider, and, when appropriate would vote, on any concrete proposals that are brought forward.

The Committee noted that, in their responses to the plan, both the CPR and the CEP had commented on the view expressed in the document that difficulties with transportation pose an impediment to collaboration and the interrelated issue of aligning calendars among the campuses. The members, the Dean, and the President agreed that the current transportation system is an obstacle to students who wish to take courses on other campuses, while noting that no specific proposals for improvement have been put forward. The Committee agreed that, while some coordination of class schedules could possibly be explored, it would be difficult to implement a fully aligned class schedule. It was noted that Amherst is currently in the process of developing proposals to make fuller use of the class schedule on its own campus, and that trying to do so among the other campuses would be challenging. Professor Rockwell noted, as did the CEP, that difficulties with transportation and scheduling were in fact a curricular issue, since such impediments to taking courses on other campuses have to date made the coordination of curricula unfeasible in practice.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Ciepiela commented that she shares the concerns of the CPR and the CEP about the plan's emphasis on "greater integration and coordination of upper-level curricula in selected disciplines consistent with disciplinary needs and resource limitations on each campus; ... Through thoughtful, cooperative planning, we can achieve even greater academic preeminence while reducing unneeded duplication of effort." Professor Ciepiela noted that she has observed that this approach has moved beyond rhetoric and is beginning to have an effect on academic programs in the form of not replacing some positions upon colleagues' retirement. Professor Rockwell noted that the concept of not duplicating positions could, in a worst case scenario, lead to a tendency for Five College institutions not to hire in any academic field in which there might be even proximate coverage by faculty on one of the other campuses. The Committee discussed the possibility of other institutions, which may lack Amherst's resources, coming to rely on Amherst to fill their curricular voids. Professor Ciepiela, like the CEP, stressed the importance of Amherst continuing to be able to mount its own majors and not depend on courses on other campuses for major requirements. The President agreed. Offering the example of the sciences, Professor Umphrey pointed out that often courses at Amherst are taught at a different level and through different approaches than at other Five College institutions.

President Marx asked what the basis should be for Five College collaboration. Professor Rockwell stressed that demand in the form of enrollments should not drive decisions about the make-up of Amherst's curriculum and the allocation of faculty positions. Professor Umphrey agreed that enrollments are often an unreliable metric when it comes to making such decisions, and the members concurred that the intellectual integrity of arguments should drive such conversations. President Marx asked the members if they would agree that, when it is not possible for Amherst to hire a full FTE in a particular field that would enrich the curriculum, it is beneficial to share a faculty position between or among the schools, rather than not being able to offer courses in the field at the College at all. He cited as a successful outcome of such an approach the recent hiring of a medieval historian, who is based at Amherst and teaches two courses here and two at Mount Holyoke. Professor Saxton noted, however, that this was a net loss for the history department.

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Continuing the conversation, Professor Ciepiela said that she also shares the concern of the CEP and the CPR about the strategic plan's proposal to prioritize Five College collaboration in the review of individual Amherst College departments. Professor Umphrey agreed, noting her concern about the proposal to: "coordinate reviews of departments and programs across institutions, charging those departments and programs to include a report on current and potential complementary and parallel programs at the consortium partner schools, and charging visiting review teams to include resources across the five institutions in their investigations and deliberations, and to assess the most appropriate articulation." Professor Umphrey urged caution in the College's response to this suggestion and to other aspects of the strategic plan. Professor Basu stressed that there is a danger that Amherst could be perceived as being narrowly self interested if it simply expresses skepticism about the proposal. She thought it would be a good idea to express broad support for increasing Five College collaboration since the College is not making any commitments to specific proposals. Professor Umphrey agreed that there was much of value to embrace in many of these proposals. President Marx reiterated that, in regard to all aspects of the plan that would require a faculty vote, Amherst is not now making any commitments, and that, if such specific proposals are put forward, Amherst will make decisions about them through its regular governance structures. Professor Umphrey wondered who would vet aspects of these proposals not obviously related to the curriculum that might, nevertheless, potentially affect the College's curricular organization (for example, current deliberations among the Five Colleges concerning the coordination of academic calendars or the potential online intermingling of the Five Colleges' course catalogs). Professor Loinaz asked what would occur after each campus provides feedback on the plan. President Marx said that the Faculty's responses to the plan would be communicated to the Five Colleges. Professor Basu said that she is curious about the mechanisms that will be used during upcoming stages of the review process for the plan.

The members next reviewed a draft agenda for a Faculty Meeting on November 2 and voted six to zero to forward it to the Faculty. The remainder of the meeting was devoted to personnel matters.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory S. Call
Dean of the Faculty