

Amended February 25, 2011

The twenty-fifth 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, February 7, 2011. Present were Professors Basu, Ciepiela, Loinaz, Rockwell, Umphrey, and Saxton, Dean Call, President Marx, and Assistant Dean Tobin, Recorder.

The meeting began with the Dean reporting back to the Committee that he had learned at the meeting of the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) the previous Friday that there is an extensive plan in place for providing training to the Faculty as part of the implementation of online registration, including a presentation for a Faculty Meeting.

Under “Questions from Committee Members,” Professor Umphrey asked about the status of discussions about the Five-College calendar. Dean Call responded that the Five-College deans have met, and that the Five-College presidents will soon do so, to discuss Smith’s decision to start its spring semester later than had been agreed upon previously. If Smith pursues its plans, the dates of the start of the spring semester would be out of sync among the Five College schools during some years. The Dean said that the deans and presidents are studying the implications of this situation and are requesting that Smith reconsider. Since the calendars that are in place for the next two years are in sync, the Dean told the members that there is no need to rush to reconsider the Amherst College calendar that was approved by the Faculty at its meeting of December 7. The College Council is being alerted to this issue and will be asked to consider it, Dean Call said.

Continuing with “Questions from Committee Members, Professor Umphrey inquired about the next phase of the Five-College strategic planning process. President Marx said that he is not aware of significant outcomes at this point, while noting that there is information about the progress of the plan on the Five-College web site (http://www.fivecolleges.edu/sites/planning/documents/5college_strategic_initiatives1-7-11.pdf). Dean Call reported that he has been told that Five Colleges Executive Director Neal Abraham has been reviewing bus schedules with the director of the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVRTA) in an effort to synchronize bus schedules with class schedules. The Committee next turned to a personnel matter.

As part of a discussion of the changing demographics of the Faculty, the Dean reviewed with the members data ([appended](#)) on faculty age ranges and the method by which faculty members are “counted” in the FTE count during the period of phased retirement. (Faculty members in phased retirement are counted as half an FTE if the colleague is sixty or sixty-one and are not included in the FTE count if they are age sixty-two or over.) The Dean noted that, due to the number of retirements (despite robust tenuring and reappointment rates, an excellent retention rate for faculty, and significant hiring in recent years), the Faculty FTE cap of 168 has not been reached. At present, the FTE count is 163, the Dean said. He reviewed once again (see Committee of Six discussion of the program in the [January 31, 2011, minutes](#)) the details of the enhancement of the phased retirement program that is being supported through a grant from the Mellon Foundation. The Dean noted that the program, which is scheduled to end on June 30, 2012, will aid in efforts to plan for the new hiring that will be necessitated by transitions within the Faculty, as more faculty choose to enter phased retirement and their schedule for retirement is set. At present, the Dean said, one third of the Faculty is on phased retirement or is eligible for

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it. Professor Loinaz asked whether the requirement that Faculty who own College houses must sell their homes back to the College within two years of retiring serves as a disincentive to retirement. The Dean said that this policy could influence some colleagues' decisions, as do many other factors, the state of the economy and financial markets among them.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Rockwell asked about the optimal distribution of ranks within the Faculty. Dean Call noted that it is desirable to have a balanced distribution of experience across the Faculty, and he offered that the distribution at present is fairly good. In the future, as faculty retire, President Marx commented that it may be desirable to make some senior faculty hires, in order to maintain the distribution within faculty ranks. Professor Umphrey asked if the level of experience within a department could be taken into account when making FTE allocations. President Marx said that it is possible for the CEP and the administration to take the level of experience of faculty into account as one of the factors that is considered as part of an FTE request. For instance, departments can be informed that the CEP and the administration would welcome requests for senior faculty hires; departments would be free to submit such requests, if they wished.

Professor Loinaz said that it has been his understanding that the College has been reluctant to make senior faculty hires in the past and wondered whether there would now be more flexibility in this regard. Professors Umphrey and Ciepiela agreed that senior faculty hires have been rare, on the theory that departments often prefer to hire tenure-track assistant professors so that colleagues have time to adjust to the Amherst culture and to the College's expectations for scholarship, teaching, and service. President Marx noted that hiring at the senior level can allow for bringing in different perspectives. Professor Basu said that some departments in which significant numbers of senior faculty were retiring might benefit from senior hires, particularly in mentoring tenure-track faculty. She noted that the College does not, at present, have mentoring policies and suggested that models for mentoring at other institutions be explored. Professor Umphrey expressed concern that a wave of retirements will occur at the same time that the student body has been enlarged. She suggested that resources be applied more aggressively toward faculty hiring and urged that there be faculty-led conversation about this once-in-a-generation moment to determine the shape of the curriculum. Dean Call commented that phased retirement permits retiring colleagues to remain at the College to teach a reduced load for three to ten years, depending on when they enter the program. When a replacement is hired, a department may have the teaching equivalent of 1.5 FTEs during the overlapping years. Bridge appointments also provide this opportunity, he said. Professor Ciepiela noted that faculty on phased retirement most often do not participate in committee work or in advising.

While discussing the other end of the experience spectrum, the Committee agreed that, in many fields, it is more common for new Ph.D.s to have post-docs, and for this reason and a range of others, tenure-track faculty are often older when they are hired now than they may have been in the past, depending on their field. Dean Call commented that the College's Mellon-Keiter postdoctoral program allows Amherst to support recent Ph.D.s in the humanities and humanistic social sciences by bringing them to campus in two-year positions to teach one course per semester—introducing them to teaching at a liberal arts college—while they conduct research.

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The College also participates in the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) New Faculty Fellowship Program, which allows recent Ph.D.s in the humanities to take up two-year positions at universities and colleges across the United States. In addition, Amherst annually hosts one of the three to five thesis-completion fellowships that are made available through the Five Colleges.

The Committee turned to the topic of the diversity of the Faculty and the related subject of target-of-opportunity hiring, which has been discussed by the CEP on a number of occasions, most recently at its October 1, 2010 ([see the CEP's minutes](#)) meeting. Dean Call noted that the CEP's conversation has centered around ways to attract a more diverse pool of candidates for faculty positions and the best approach to take when outstanding candidates are identified. The committee has developed some procedures to guide departments and the CEP in this area, Dean Call said. For example, the Dean noted that it is possible to make more than one hire from an individual search (hiring a second colleague, for example, who does not meet the precise needs of the authorized search but would be able to contribute in important ways to the department and one that does meet the precise needs that had been outlined in the FTE request), while consulting the CEP and respecting the FTE allocation and search processes. President Marx noted that the two target-of-opportunity FTEs that were recommended by the Committee on Academic Priorities and approved by the Board have thus far not been allocated. The President said that it would be possible for departments—outside an authorized search—to bring an outstanding candidate to the attention of the Dean, who could work with the CEP and the President to move forward with the hire via an accelerated process, if all agreed that doing so would be advantageous to the College. Professor Basu requested information about the racial and gender composition of the Faculty to inform discussions of this issue, and the Dean said that he would be glad to gather information. It was agreed that the members should also review the Report to the President on Diversity and Inclusion at <https://www.amherst.edu/offices/diversityoffice>, which was authored by Professor Cobham-Sander in her former role as Special Assistant to the President for Diversity. The members suggested making chairs aware of the possibilities and procedures surrounding target-of-opportunity hiring. The Dean agreed, noting that he plans to include this topic on the agenda for a meeting of department chairs this spring. The Committee also felt that it will be important for the Faculty to have a conversation about the shape and demographics of the Faculty at an upcoming Faculty Meeting.

The members discussed a proposal from Professor Sarat and Deans Hart, O'Hara, and Lieber ([appended](#)) to appoint an Ad Hoc Committee on Advising. Professor Rockwell, who agreed that constituting such a committee would be desirable, wondered whether it might be preferable to delay doing so until there can be an assessment of how advising has been affected by the introduction of online registration. Professor Umphrey noted that any effects of online registration would likely not drive a conversation about the larger questions that have been raised about advising. She suggested that, perhaps, the committee be formed now, with a charge to focus on larger questions this spring, and to consider any matters related to online registration in the fall. She commented that other technological tools, beyond those related to online registration, have been introduced to enhance advising. Professor Ciepiela expressed concern that the shift that online registration will bring could have a significant effect on the quality of pre-majoring advising. Professor Basu expressed a preference for having the advising committee

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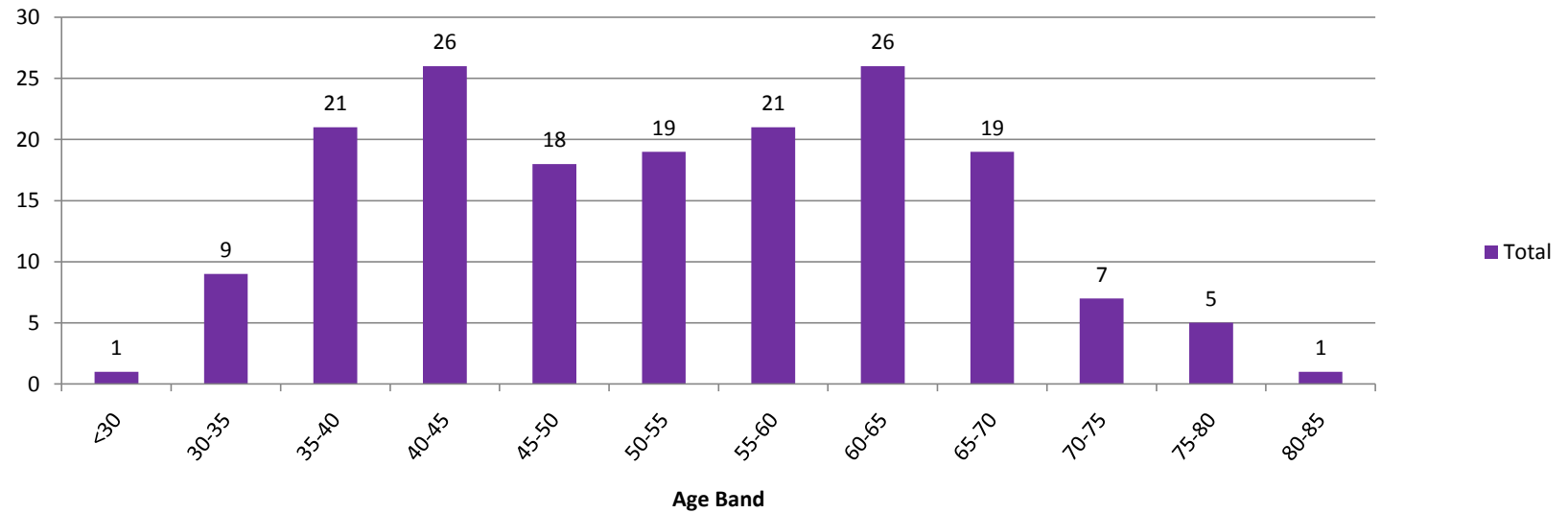
begin work in the fall. She asked whether it would be useful to have administrators and staff who provide informal advising to students join faculty on the committee. The Committee agreed to discuss the scope of a charge to the committee, and the timing of the group's formation, at one of its upcoming meetings. The members asked the Dean to provide any background information that might inform this discussion, and he agreed to do so.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory S. Call
Dean of the Faculty

Tenure-Line Faculty by Age Band



Current Age	Total
<30	1
30-35	9
35-40	21
40-45	26
45-50	18
50-55	19
55-60	21
60-65	26
65-70	19
70-75	7
75-80	5
80-85	1
Total	173

From: Austin Sarat

Sent: Monday, January 31, 2011 11:26 AM

To: Martha Umphrey; Amrita Basu; Martha Saxton; Paul Rockwell; William Loinaz; Catherine Ciepiela; Gregory Call; Anthony Marx

Cc: Patricia O'Hara; Ben Lieber; Austin Sarat

Subject: Advising

Dear Colleagues:

We are writing to request the appointment of an Ad Hoc Committee on Advising to conduct a broad review of the advising system at Amherst College. That committee should be charged to assess —both college and major advising, and to make recommendations concerning any needed changes. The issues that need to be addressed involve the work of faculty, deans (especially the Dean of New Students), coaches and members of the support staff as they touch important aspects of our students' academic lives.

For the last several years each of us has been engaged in efforts to improve academic advising at the College or to develop new programs to adapt advising to better meet the needs of our changing student population. Having been so engaged, we have come to the conclusion that the time is right for a comprehensive review of academic advising.

In addition conversations about advising have been held in Teaching and Advising lunches and in the CEP. Experiments (for example, the learning goals experiment) have been undertaken to try out new approaches. Moreover, the diversification of our student population (greater numbers of international students, community college transfers, first generation students, students who have come through the Summer Science and Summer Humanities and Social Science Programs) as well as the impending move to online registration pose new questions and challenges for advising. Many comparable colleges now are thinking about the meaning, purpose, and efficacy of advising. They are evaluating existing systems and experimenting with new ones, sometimes challenging the distinction between academic and non-academic advising, sometimes reaffirming that distinction.

The following is a range of questions/issues that might be taken up by an ad hoc committee on advising:

1. What are the purposes of academic advising? Is academic advising primarily an adjunct to the student course selection and registration process? Should advising focus more specifically on the articulation and assessment of student learning goals?
2. What priority should faculty give to their advising responsibilities in relation to their work as teachers and scholars?
3. Should all faculty continue to be required to serve as college and major advisors?

4. Is the allocation of advising responsibilities among faculty equitable and fair?
5. What are the virtues and problems with the Orientation Advising system?
6. Should the effectiveness of advising be evaluated and considered as part of re-appointment, tenure, and promotion decisions?
7. What roles do/should non-faculty (e.g. coaches, deans, administrators) play as advisors about academic matters?

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Allen Hart

Ben Lieber

Pat O'Hara

Austin Sarat