

**Amended February 25, 2011**

The twenty-sixth 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 14, 2011. Present were Professors Basu, Ciepiela, Loinaz, Rockwell, Umphrey, and Saxton, Dean Call, President Marx, and Assistant Dean Tobin, Recorder.

Returning to the discussion of increasing diversity within the ranks of the Faculty that began at the February 7 meeting, President Marx reiterated that departments that identify outstanding candidates who might be brought to Amherst through a target-of-opportunity hiring process are encouraged to bring a request to the Dean, who will discuss it with him and the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP). As the Committee and the CEP had discussed, it is also sometimes possible to make more than one hire from an individual search, while respecting the FTE allocation and search processes. Professor Basu asked whether the allocation of a target-of-opportunity FTE would affect administrative decisions about subsequent requests that a department might make for new and/or replacement FTEs. Dean Call responded that all FTE requests would be considered in the context of departments' curricular needs and the strength of their arguments for an FTE. While expressing support for the opportunities described by the President, Professor Umphrey wondered whether they risk making the Committee on Academic Priorities (CAP) target-of-opportunity FTE process less attractive and relevant. She noted that the CEP guidelines concerning those CAP FTEs were drafted with Professor Cobham-Sander's advice about the importance of deliberateness and early planning in proposing target-of-opportunity hires. President Marx responded that having the flexibility to move forward expeditiously when presented with the opportunity to hire a candidate can be essential. If pursued by the Faculty, these hires would be significant for the College, but would be small in number, he said.

Under "Announcements from the Dean," Dean Call reported back to the members about a committee nomination. He then informed the members that Professor Wolfson has been nominated by the Lecture Committee to deliver the Max and Etta Lazerowitz Lectureship this spring. The Lazerowitz Lecturer, a member of the Amherst faculty below the rank of full professor, is appointed annually.

Under "Questions from Committee Members," Professor Umphrey asked about the status of the report of the Class Scheduling Task Force. In his response, Dean Call first noted that Professor L. McGeoch, Chair of the CEP, has developed a helpful computer tool that generates a grid that displays the times in which all classes are offered. The committee is in the process of reviewing the recommendations of the task force and deciding which proposals it will endorse and forward to the Committee of Six and the Faculty as a whole.

Dean Call next provided the members with an overview of plans for implementing online registration. He noted that the CEP had met with Kathleen Goff, Registrar, and Sandra Miner, Director of Database Services, to discuss training for the Faculty. It is hoped that an instructional presentation on online registration will be given at the next Faculty Meeting, which would be followed by training for faculty during the week of Spring Break and during the week following the break. Advising would occur during the last week of March, and training could be completed, at least in its initial phase, by the time of preregistration (April 4-8). Dean Call noted that the number of students registering at given times would be staggered. Professor Loinaz asked if a special help desk for online registration questions would be established or whether staffing for the regular help desk would be enhanced. Dean Call said that he believes that staffing for the standard help desk would be supplemented during the online registration.

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Returning to the topic of the recommendation put forward by the Committee on Priorities and Resources (CPR) that the College adopt an enhanced parenting-leave policy, the members reviewed some comparative data that had informed the CPR's thinking at the time it developed its proposal. Professor Umphrey wondered about the degree to which the CPR had weighed the need to enhance this benefit against other budget priorities such as, for example, salaries and funds to support research. Dean Call said that the CPR felt that enhancing the parenting-leave policy should be a priority and did not make comparisons in the ways that Professor Umphrey was describing. Professor Basu said that it would be helpful to have information about the policies of other institutions that had more generous parental-leave policies, for example Wellesley, Smith, and UMass. Professor Ciepiela said that she believes that the CPR's proposal echoes Smith's policy, including the distinction made between birth mothers and other parents in relation to benefits. Professor Basu suggested that it would be useful to compare the policies of schools with endowment-per-student figures that are similar to Amherst's. She expressed the view that the financial effects of offering course reduction appear to be a core issue in terms of the cost of the CPR proposal, while noting that the cost of implementing the proposal would be relatively low. Dean Call noted that the cost to implement the proposal on an annual basis would be around \$150,000 in its present form and about \$200,000, if the benefit were to be extended to all faculty who are serving as the primary care-giver for an infant.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Loinaz asked if there were compelling issues raised by the CPR about College benefits other than parenting leave. Dean Call said that this year's committee (the proposal, he noted had been formulated by last year's CPR) had just begun budget conversations recently and would soon discuss needs and requests. He noted that this coming year, fiscal year 2012, is the final year of the planned financial constraints that were recommended by the Advisory Budget Committee (ABC). The plan calls for a nearly flat budget and modest salary increases for this final year; adding to the budget would be challenging, he said. President Marx emphasized the importance of being mindful of the agreement that emerged from the ABC process and the continuing need to exercise restraint in spending and to monitor the budget closely, even as the College continues to invest where necessary. He asked whether the CPR's proposal would result in enhancing a faculty benefit beyond what staff receive, and, if so, whether this is likely to cause sensitivities. Professor Ciepiela said she understood from the materials provided that the proposal would bring the benefit for faculty in line with what staff already receive. Dean Call noted that it is difficult to make comparisons among faculty and staff benefits because of the complexities involved, including different units of work that exist for the two groups. Professor Rockwell wondered whether the CPR considers its proposal optimal, or whether it would have opted for a more generous policy (i.e., release from two courses at 100 percent salary for both birth- and non-birth parents) if it had not formulated recommendations during a period of financial constraint. Professor Umphrey, while noting that it would be important to learn more about the process that led the CPR to decide to put a parenting-leave proposal forward and the decision about the timing of the proposal, pointed out the importance of having a policy that would aid in recruiting faculty. Dean Call noted that the Committee might want to consider meeting with the members of this year's and/or last year's CPR to get their views, but said that it is his sense that some members of the CPR have a strong belief that distinctions exist between the birth mother's experience and that of other parents, and that the College's leave policies should reflect these differences, while others on the CPR felt that it would be prudent to have a less generous enhancement because of the need to exercise

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financial restraint. Professor Basu reiterated her concern about the proposed policy's lack of inclusivity, arising from the distinction being made between birth parents and other parents.

Concluding the discussion, the Committee agreed that it needed more context and information before it could judge how best to proceed in this matter, including how and when to present information to the Faculty, and decided to forward questions to the CPR and to meet with faculty, student, and staff representatives from the committee. It was agreed that the current members of the committee should be invited (later, by request of the CPR, an invitation to meet was also extended to members of last year's committee). The Committee agreed to forward the following questions to the CPR:

1. Does the CPR consider its proposal optimal, or would it have opted for a more generous policy (i.e., release from two courses at 100 percent salary for both birth- and non-birth parents) if it had not formulated recommendations during a period of financial constraint?
2. Please describe the parenting and pregnancy-related medical leave policies for staff. Does the CPR proposal increase a faculty benefit beyond what staff receive, and, if so, is this likely to cause sensitivities?
3. Since it is important to consider this proposal in the context of the overall budget, and the College currently is operating under financial constraints imposed by the Advisory Budget Committee (ABC), have you weighed the need to enhance this benefit against other priorities? If so, which have you considered? Either now or after the ABC constraints lift, how might we find the additional funding that would be needed on an annual basis to implement this benefits change?
4. Would you consider waiting to implement a policy change until after the ABC's spending limits have expired next year?
5. How do Amherst College's parenting leave policies today compare with those of our peer institutions? We would like clarification on whether the information you reviewed is up to date and whether you could describe the policies of other colleges which were not included in the survey.

In addition, the Committee asked the Dean for more information about Smith's parenting-leave policy, including whether written policy and practice may differ. Professor Basu asked the Dean if Amherst adheres strictly to the parental-leave policy or if there is some flexibility in how it has been applied. Dean Call said that, in the interest of fairness, the College adheres to the policy strictly.

Returning to the topic of the demographics of the Faculty, the Committee discussed issues surrounding faculty hiring over the past and in the future. Dean Call expressed the view that broadening the pools for searches as much as possible and hiring candidates through searches that allow for the flexibility to hire more than one candidate may be the best approach to enhancing the diversity of the Faculty, while noting that doing so will take time. Having reviewed the Report to the President on Diversity and Inclusion at Amherst, <https://www.amherst.edu/offices/diversityoffice>, which had been authored by Professor Cobham-

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Sander in her former role as Special Assistant to the President for Diversity and Inclusion, the members expressed support for many of the proposals that are included in the document, including the proposal that both academic and non-academic departments develop and follow diversity plans.

The President and the Dean noted that plans to hire a Director of Diversity and Inclusion were not realized, at first because of an unsuccessful search and later because the economic downturn led to a suspension of the search for this position. Paul Murphy, Legal and Administrative Counsel, has been assisting with diversity efforts, but has many other duties and cannot devote sufficient time to this area. Professor Saxton asked if most colleges have diversity officers. The Dean said that most schools do, and President Marx noted that there is some evidence that having a single affirmative action officer, who works to enhance the diversity of the staff, which is also a goal of the College, and of the Faculty, may not be an effective model, given differences in the challenges of achieving diversity in those two different categories. The Committee agreed that many Amherst faculty care deeply about enhancing the diversity of the Faculty and that it might be best for a faculty colleague to lead efforts to increase diversity within the ranks of the Faculty. Professor Basu argued that, in addition to having these colleagues collaborate on efforts to enhance the diversity of the Faculty and staff, it would be important to have the oversight of a committee—perhaps adding a focus on diversity to the charge of an existing faculty committee on the faculty side, and the Department of Human Resources on the staff side. President Marx noted that a search is under way for a new Director of Human Resources and that encouraging diversity efforts for staff will be a priority for the person who assumes this position. Professor Basu asked about the status of the recommendations regarding target-of-opportunity hiring that have been made by the CEP and stressed that the College needs to have a broad vision and to set directions. Dean Call said that, as a first step, he will meet with chairs to discuss hiring procedures and diversity planning and will be meeting with the CEP to discuss the demographics of the Faculty and the consideration of diversity during the FTE allocation process. Professor Umphrey noted that this is an educative moment for the Faculty, a time to consider how best to proceed with this initiative in the context of larger demographic shifts in the Faculty.

Discussion turned to the challenges that the College faces in hiring faculty who have partners who are also academics, who may face challenges in reaching their own professional goals if they move to Amherst. Professor Loinaz asked what tools the College has to address this issue. The Dean said that there is an Academic Career Network that includes about twenty schools within a two-hour radius of Amherst. The network facilitates the sharing of information in the hope of facilitating partner-hiring. In addition, the Dean noted, partners of new hires are sometimes able to teach at Amherst as visitors or on a single-course basis, with departmental approval. Efforts in this area have had only modest success, the Dean said. Professor Umphrey, noting that the issue of academic couples and partner-hiring is an important one, expressed the view that enhancing the parenting-leave policy would make working at the College more attractive to prospective faculty and their families. President Marx said that, while another family-oriented issue, childcare, is part of an interconnected suite of issues that have an effect on recruitment, an evaluation of the College's childcare offerings had to be put on hold during the economic downturn. He said that it is his hope that plans to examine this issue can now move forward.

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The Committee returned briefly to the topic of the proposal to form an Ad Hoc Committee on Advising ([appended](#)). President Marx asked whether it would be better to review advising in the context of the larger educational experience, rather than isolating this topic. Professor Basu agreed that it would be important to review advising in context, while noting that this issue is significant enough to be isolated for purposes of close examination. She commented that, at present, advising is not considered as part of faculty members' reappointment and tenure dossiers; this lack of evaluation may lead to less attention being focused on advising. Professor Basu said that she saw great value in the pilot project on intensive advising, which Dean Hart, Professor Sarat, and she had developed. Each faculty member who participated in this initiative worked with one advisee, helping him or her to identify specific learning goals. The advisors monitored the students' progress toward these goals by consulting with their professors and with the students themselves, during the course of the first year, and now beyond. An assessment component has been built in to this project, and it will be interesting, Professor Basu said, to see the results, as this small group of students advances through the curriculum. The challenge of broadening this approach to include all students and advisors would be the time and expense involved, she said. The members discussed when it would be best to constitute the Ad Hoc Committee on Advising, noting that the Task Force on Academic Support had done a significant amount of work on the issue of advising in 2009-2010 and that this and other research, would need to be gathered and reviewed by the Ad Hoc Committee. The members decided to consider appointments to the Ad Hoc Committee concurrently with those to other faculty committees, in early April. If it wished, the Ad Hoc Committee could start work over the summer. The members agreed to formulate a charge to the Ad Hoc Committee in the coming weeks.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory S. Call  
Dean of the Faculty

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**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