

Amended February 25, 2011

The twenty-seventh 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 21, 2011. Present were Professors Basu, Ciepiela, Loinaz, Rockwell, Umphrey, and Saxton, Dean Call, President Marx, and Assistant Dean Tobin, Recorder.

The Committee was joined by the following members of the Committee on Priorities and Resources (CPR): Professors Catherine Epstein (Chair), Robert Benedetto, and Nasser Hussain, who joined the meeting at 4 P.M.; HVAC Technician Kevin Gladu; Associate Treasurer and Director of the Budget Shannon Gurek; Associate Director of Human Resources Pat Long (who is serving on the committee until a new Director of Human Resources is hired); and former student member Chris Anderson '12. Benefits Administrator Ernie LeBlanc also attended to provide information about the College's benefits, as required, as the two committees discussed the CPR's parenting-leave proposal.

Professor Epstein responded to the questions that had been posed by the Committee of Six to the CPR in advance of the meeting. Discussion began with the question of whether the CPR considers its proposal optimal, or 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 Epstein explained that the committee's examination of the parenting-leave policy had been prompted by a letter from a faculty member, which had been sent to the CPR in 2007, requesting that the committee review the policy. Professor Epstein noted that the current parenting-leave policy for faculty does not allow for a leave at full pay and thus can pose financial hardships. Tenure-track female faculty may be most vulnerable under the current policy, Professor Epstein said, and may delay having children as a result. This constituency is often not represented on committees that may consider this issue, she noted. At present, Professor Epstein said, the policy (which is described fully at https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/dean_faculty/fph/fachandbook/facstatus/leaves) offers three options. One: A faculty member may elect to continue working according to the terms of his or her appointment and receive his or her regular compensation. In return for this arrangement, it is expected that, under normal circumstances, he or she will return to his or her full-time teaching duties within a reasonable period of time. No special leave is necessary in this case and no adjustments are made to compensation. Two: A member of the Faculty who holds a regular full-time appointment may elect to take a one-course reduction for the semester (January-June or July-December) of leave. In this case, the College will pay 72 percent of that semester's salary, and the College will maintain its regular contribution to fringe benefits. Three: The faculty member may elect to take a leave for a whole semester during or immediately following birth or adoption, in which case the College will pay 44 percent of that semester's salary. The College will pay its share of the fringe benefits as it does for a leave of absence, provided the faculty member pays his or her share. Professor Epstein noted that, after a review of comparative data on parental leave policies at Amherst and other colleges, which had been compiled by the former Director of Human Resources, Katie Bryne, the CPR had agreed that the College's parenting-leave policy appears to be less generous than that at most other schools.

In response to the faculty colleague's letter, the CPR began to discuss this issue prior to the economic downturn, in fall 2008 (see CPR minutes of [October 8](#), [October 15](#), [October 22](#), 2008). At that time, the CPR was considering putting forward a proposal of a policy in which all faculty members who received a parenting leave would receive a one-course reduction at 100 percent salary, and that any faculty member who wished to receive two courses off during such a

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leave would receive 85 percent of his/her pay during the semester in question. Due to the downturn, the committee did not consider the matter again until the fall of 2009/spring 2010 (see the CPR minutes of [September 16, 2009](#), [November 4, 2009](#), [December 16, 2009](#), and [April 21, 2010](#)).

When it returned to its consideration of parenting leave in 2009-2010, Professor Epstein noted that the CPR had considered a number of different ways in which the benefit for faculty members could be expanded, taking into account factors that included equity issues for faculty and staff and for women and men, the additional demands that pregnancy and post-natal care make on women who give birth, and the estimated costs of implementing different options. Ultimately, the committee decided to put [its proposal forward in the current form](#) after weighing these factors and with awareness that there would be advantages in terms of cost if the leave policy for birth mothers could encompass pregnancy-related short-term disability/medical leaves. The committee noted that the College already had a medical leave policy in place, and the committee decided to propose for birth mothers a paid leave of up to eight weeks to recover from pregnancy and giving birth, which is already available to staff birth mothers. Under a medical leave, as described in the CPR's proposal, a birth mother could have a medical leave of at least eight weeks but less than a full semester and would have the option of taking a one-semester leave from her teaching with full compensation. Paid medical leaves would run concurrently with leave to which the faculty member may be entitled under the Family Medical Leave Act of 1993 and the Massachusetts Maternity Leave Act. Professor Epstein explained that, while some members of the committee believe that the leave policy for Faculty should specifically reflect the additional demands that pregnancy and post-natal care make on women who give birth, those members would certainly not be opposed to a more generous policy that offered a one-semester leave from teaching for all faculty parents. The current CPR proposal is that non-birth parents be offered the option of taking a one course reduction for a single semester (during or immediately following birth or adoption) at full pay or of taking a leave from teaching for a single semester (during or immediately following birth or adoption) at 72 percent of that semester's salary.

Professor Epstein, noting that at present the College currently pays only a portion of the salaries of those on parenting leave, said that the cost of implementing the CPR's proposal is estimated to be \$45,000 per year, which is a relatively low figure to implement a benefit that is a high priority for many faculty, she and the other members of the CPR believe. Dean Call said that the cost of the proposal is best estimated by comparing the actual expenditures that the College makes under the current policy to the costs anticipated under the proposal. In particular, the estimated additional annual expense of adopting the CPR's proposal would be \$147,000, which includes the cost of hiring approximately six per-course replacement faculty (estimated at \$45,000 per year) combined with the cost of paying some faculty full salaries, rather than partial salaries, for a semester in which they would not be teaching (a cost estimated to be about \$102,000). If the CPR's proposed benefit were extended to all parents, the estimated additional cost would be greater. The conjectured number of per-course replacements would rise to nine (an expense estimated to be \$67,500) and the additional cost in salary is estimated to be about \$137,000, for an additional expense totaling about \$204,000.

At the request of both committees, Mr. LeBlanc described the parenting benefit that is available to staff. He noted that short-term disability pay is available for a birth mother following the birth of a child. The first ten days are used to satisfy a waiting period and are paid (if available) from accumulated time, such as medical/family or vacation banks. Payment

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thereafter, usually for another six weeks, is pro-rated based on years of service, from 70 to 100 percent of pay. Accumulated time (from medical/family or vacation banks), if available, may be used to remain at full pay. Disability payments may continue for a longer period if a medical condition persists. Extended family leave, consisting of four weeks at 100 percent pay, may be taken immediately following the end of the disability period. A non-birth parent who certifies himself or herself as the primary caregiver may apply for an extended family leave of four weeks of 100 percent pay, after a two-week waiting period. The employee must use accumulated time such as medical/family or vacation during the waiting period in order to remain in pay status. When the College also employs the employee's spouse or partner, combined leave under this policy will not exceed four weeks for any one reason. If the two-week wait has been met for any one reason, the second partner does not need to fulfill this waiting period.

Professor Epstein expressed the view that the CPR's proposal would enable faculty birth mothers to have a parenting-leave benefit that would be equivalent to that of staff women. (A member of the Human Resources staff offered a clarification after the meeting, noting that, under the CPR's proposal, faculty birth mothers could receive full pay for eight weeks of short-term disability/medical leave, plus four weeks of extended family leave, plus (in order to have the full semester off) an additional six weeks at full pay. If the proposal is applied to all faculty parents, Professor Epstein noted, faculty non-birth parents would be offered a benefit that would be more generous than that available to staff non-birth parents. In addition, questions around having more generous leaves for care-giving situations other than pregnancy and birth might arise, she said. Professor Ciepiela asked how many members of the College community might be interested in a benefit that would focus on other kinds of care-giving. The Dean noted that a previous CPR had discussed this issue and had decided at that time not to bring a proposal forward.

Professor Basu asked if the CPR would consider waiting to implement a policy change until after the Advisory Budget Committee (ABC)'s spending limits have expired next year. Professor Epstein responded that this year's CPR has not discussed this issue and that, because of the budget cycle and the committee's schedule for considering budget requests and priorities, the proposal might easily languish year after year (commenting that she first began contacting the CPR about a revision of the current benefit in 2000), unless action is taken. She urged the Committee to forward the CPR's proposal to the Faculty as soon as possible and stressed that the current policy is an embarrassment for the College, which is an outlier among its peers when it comes to parenting leave for Faculty, and may be affecting faculty recruiting. Professors Benedetto and Hussain also argued that the proposal should be brought to the Faculty as soon as possible. Professor Loinaz asked whether the CPR had weighed the need to enhance this benefit against other priorities. Professor Epstein responded that the cost of enhancing the current policy would be relatively low, and that the CPR had judged this proposal to be a high priority. She noted that, last year, while still under the constraints of the ABC, additional funds were allocated to enhance food offerings at Valentine.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Loinaz noted that, while the College might be an outlier in terms of the generosity of its parenting-leave policy, he wondered if the CPR had considered this benefit in the context of others offered by the College. Was the College more generous in terms of other benefits it offers to Faculty, he wondered. Mr. LeBlanc noted that making comparisons among benefits packages—as well as between faculty and staff benefits packages—can be difficult because of the complexities involved. However, he judged that

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Amherst is more generous than peer institutions in some areas. Dean Call agreed, noting that the support that Amherst provides for faculty research, the sabbatical policy, the phased retirement program, and the rental housing program are quite generous and in most cases exceed those offered by peer institutions. Professor Basu asked Professor Epstein how Amherst's parenting-leave policy compares with those at other institutions. Professor Epstein reiterated that it is the least generous of all that the committee had researched.

Assuming that the College is an outlier in terms of the generosity of the parenting-leave benefit, but is a leader in terms of some other benefits, and, if the College assumes that spending more in one area would be offset by spending less in another, for purposes of the discussion, President Marx asked in what areas the CPR might consider reducing spending in order to be able to offer a more generous parenting-leave benefit to the Faculty. Professor Epstein responded that, faculty on leave might not be replaced, though this would mean offering fewer courses, which would be regrettable for students.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Committee thanked the CPR for meeting, and the committee left at 4:00 P.M.

Under "Announcements from the Dean," Dean Call informed the members that the date, time, and topic of Professor Wolfson's Lazerowitz Lecture are now known. He will speak on the topic of "Secret Lives of the Stalinist Stage: Self and Theater in the Soviet 1930s" on April 27 at 4:30 P.M.

The Committee next met briefly with Paul Murphy, Legal and Administrative Counsel, to discuss legal issues surrounding target-of-opportunity hiring and initiatives to diversify the Faculty and staff. The Committee agreed that it would be helpful for the Committee also to meet with Professor Cobham-Sander at an upcoming meeting to hear her perspectives on this issue. In addition, it was agreed that the Dean would organize a chairs meeting, to which the members of the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) would be invited, to discuss the issue of target-of-opportunity hiring. The Committee thanked Mr. Murphy for meeting with the members. The Dean asked for nominations for a committee assignment.

The members next reviewed proposals for new courses. Professor Rockwell expressed some concern about a small number of proposals that indicated that over-enrollment would be addressed on a "case-by-case" basis," that is that there would be no stated criteria by which the College would know how the instructor planned to choose from among the "applicants" who pre-enrolled for his or her course. Professor Rockwell stressed that he has no suspicion that the instructors who have included this provision in their current course proposals have done so with malicious intent. He argued, however, that to allow any instructor to deal with over-enrollment on a "case-by-case" basis sets a precedent that could conceivably be used by other instructors in the future in ways that the Faculty might find inappropriate. Professor Rockwell expressed the view that to allow instructors to select their students on a "case-by-case" basis is a problematic policy. For example, he said, it is possible that some instructor might decide that she or he does not want to include a student who holds political or religious beliefs that the instructor finds objectionable. If a course is highly over-enrolled, an instructor who might harbor a bias against a certain subset of students on campus could decide to exclude them systematically from his or her course, Professor Rockwell suggested. Or, for example, certain instructors might decide that they would rather not teach students known to complain about grades, or students who are reputed not to write well, or simply a given student whom the instructor finds unpleasant in some way. To allow instructors to choose from among the "applicants" for a course on a "case-by-case" basis

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opens the door to the exercise of all sorts of problematic biases, Professor Rockwell argued. Continuing, Professor Rockwell said that he recognizes that prerequisites for certain courses are necessary for students to succeed in specific programs. Why one might give priority to majors in certain circumstances is also evident to him, and he said that he recognizes that there are legitimate reasons for giving priority to sophomores in one class and juniors in another. As a matter of principle, however, he said that he objects to the prospect of any instructor being allowed to select her or his students on an individual basis.

In response, Dean Call noted that the CEP had discussed some of these same concerns, while noting that it is sometimes necessary to cap courses for reasons surrounding resource constraints. Professor Rockwell reiterated that he understands the reasons for enrollment caps, but he feels that instructors should publish clear criteria by which they will choose students for their classes among those who have pre-enrolled, if it is necessary to do so. Dean Call said that the course proposals at hand are within faculty guidelines. Professor Basu said that she appreciated Professor Rockwell's concern, but that it was sometimes difficult to know whether students had the appropriate background and skills for a course unless faculty interviewed them before admitting them. This was often the case with interdisciplinary courses. She also said that she was struck by the relatively large number of courses that are capped and by the inconsistent criteria that faculty used in capping courses. She wondered if chairs routinely discuss with departmental colleagues how many courses individual faculty should cap, thereby exercising some oversight of the overall number of courses that would have enrollment caps. She also raised the question of whether departments should decide how many courses they wanted to cap in a given semester. The Committee agreed that it would be informative to meet with the CEP to discuss the issues that had been raised during the review of the course proposals and asked the Dean to extend an invitation to meet with the committee's members. Though the course proposals under discussion had raised some concerns, the members agreed that these issues did not warrant a delay in forwarding the courses to the Faculty. The members then voted six in favor and zero opposed to forward the proposals to the Faculty. Professor Umphrey asked if the new online system would prevent students who had not met the stipulated pre-requisites for a particular class from pre-registering for it. The Dean noted that the CEP had discussed this question in January (See CEP minutes of [January 25, 2011](#)), and that the plan for this spring's pre-registration is to flag students who don't have the stipulated pre-requisites and share that information with instructors.

The Committee reviewed the draft of the agenda for the Faculty Meeting of March 1. Commenting on the meeting with the CPR, Professors Umphrey and Saxton said they found the argument that the proposal before them would bring the benefit offered to faculty birth mothers in line with that offered to staff birth mothers to be compelling. Professor Ciepiela said she supported the benefit change for faculty birth mothers in principle, hoping it might eventually be extended to all parents. Professors Loinaz and Basu said that, while they would favor a more generous and inclusive benefit that would recognize the needs of all parents, perhaps this is not the moment for suggesting a more expensive proposal, particularly if doing so would jeopardize the gains that would be made from endorsing the proposal before the Committee. On the other hand, a motion outlining such a proposal could be proposed at the Faculty Meeting or could be forwarded to the Faculty at a later time, it was agreed. The members then voted on the substance of the motion that the Faculty endorse the CPR's proposal. The vote was four in favor (Professors Ciepiela, Rockwell, Saxton, and Umphrey), one opposed (Professor Loinaz), with

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one abstention (Professor Basu). The Committee voted six in favor and zero opposed to forward the proposal to the Faculty. The members then voted six in favor and zero opposed to forward the agenda to the Faculty.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory S. Call
Dean of the Faculty