

Amended April 11, 2011

The thirtieth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2010-2011 was called to order by President Marx at the President's house at 6:30 P.M. on Wednesday, March, 23, 2011. Present were Professors Basu, Ciepiela, Loinaz, Rockwell, Umphrey, and Saxton, Dean Call, President Marx, and Assistant Dean Tobin, Recorder. The Committee first turned briefly to a personnel matter.

Under "Announcements from the Dean," Dean Call informed the members that Professor Griffiths has agreed to return to the Dean's office as an Associate Dean of the Faculty on a half-time basis beginning in July 2011. Professor Courtright will be returning to the Faculty full time at the conclusion of the academic year, and Professor Cheney will continue with his half-time appointment as an Associate Dean for the next academic year.

The members spent the majority of the meeting discussing the issue of faculty governance. Conversation focused on both particular aspects of faculty governance and on the broader questions of the current system's strengths and weaknesses in raising and addressing issues of importance to the College. Dean Call noted that he would like to explore the workload of the Faculty. In this regard he posed the following questions to prompt discussion: Is the Faculty's time being used most effectively under the current system? Is the committee structure optimal for the Faculty and for the College? It was noted that the Committee expects to have a discussion with the Trustees about faculty governance when the members meet with the Board as part of Instruction Weekend, which will occur April 1 and 2.

Professor Rockwell began the conversation by noting that he would not be comfortable making a value judgment about whether Amherst's governance system is effective. Underlying such a judgment implicitly would be the consideration of whether other systems might be more effective, he said. He wondered whether the Committee was being asked to evaluate whether the current system is broken. Professor Rockwell noted that, since he has spent his entire career at the College, his experience with faculty governance has been limited to Amherst's system; therefore, he cannot make comparisons. Dean Call commented that the College has high expectations for Faculty in many areas—from their own scholarly work, to teaching, to involving students in their research, as well as in sharing in the collective responsibility of governing the College. While the Faculty cherishes all of these roles, the workload of the Faculty is a heavy one, the Dean pointed out. Professor Loinaz asked about the purview of faculty governance, specifically what the College governance structures are, how these structures fit together, and whether there may be overlap among various structures. The Dean replied that the Faculty, administration, Trustees, and the recently created Employee Council play governance roles. The newly created Managers' Council (which is made up of administrative colleagues who report directly to the members of the Senior Staff), has been, and has the potential to be, another effective governance structure, Dean Call noted.

Continuing with the conversation, Dean Call said that he believes that the Faculty should be at the core of the College's decision-making processes, but that administrators can also play important roles. Professor Loinaz asked if there is a sense that faculty governance has changed over the past decade. Professor Umphrey expressed the view that the Faculty is being asked to do more and more in this realm, and that the burden is particularly great for faculty in the career stage that follows promotion to associate professor. Professor Saxton agreed, commenting that some colleagues feel that they would like to spend more of their time on scholarship and teaching, rather than governance. Professor Rockwell said that there is a tension that has long existed in this regard. Continuing, he noted that, in times past, he had observed the following scenario repeated: a faculty colleague with a particular interest was enthusiastic about joining an ad hoc committee to explore an issue. The committee worked hard sifting through information

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and making recommendations, but since the Faculty is generally reluctant to delegate decision-making authority to committees, all of the positions on the issue were revisited during long Faculty Meeting deliberations and the recommendations sometimes rejected. Over time faculty who have had such experiences might have come to feel that their work was not valued, and that faculty colleagues were suspicious about the committee's motivations and/or decisions. As such, the experience of serving on ad hoc committees for some faculty could well have been an exercise in frustration.

President Marx asked about the sharing of effort between the administration and the Faculty and whether the College should more often seek administrative proposals that would be reviewed by committees and, when appropriate, revised or rejected. The Dean posed the question of whether Amherst might shift toward such a model over time. He noted that the work of the Advisory Budget Committee (ABC) is an example of bringing representatives of the College community together to participate in an inclusive process to develop proposals to address a problem facing the College. President Marx noted that, while the Trustees and many others view the ABC process as a success, as hard decisions were reviewed through a collective deliberative process, some faculty members do not see this process as an example of good governance.

Professor Umphrey suggested that any conversation about the burdens of faculty governance should focus on the following set of issues—the intensification of committee work for faculty, the increasing governance workload for mid-career colleagues, the operatic quality of Faculty Meetings, the issue of some committees operating more effectively than others, and the fragmentation of work among committees—elaborating on the last issue to note that committees may not communicate with one another about the issues on which they are focusing and/or may only communicate with the Faculty about their activities through the imperfect mechanism of minutes. Professor Ciepiela agreed that it is important to clarify what the problems may be with faculty governance, to read these challenges with care, and not to blur issues. She spoke to the admirably strong culture of faculty engagement in governance at the College and the differing perspectives on governance that may be held by faculty at different career stages. Professor Basu commented that recently tenured, and even untenured faculty, are becoming increasingly vocal at Faculty Meetings, which is to be encouraged. Still, she feels that there is not sufficient genuine exchange at Faculty Meetings. Some faculty members hesitate to challenge strongly if not widely held views of their colleagues. Professor Rockwell proposed that a solution to the problem of a small number of colleagues dominating discussion is to have stricter adherence to *Robert's Rules of Order*. He expressed the view that it is unfortunate that the rules of order have come to be seen as a repressive mechanism. In fact, in his opinion, they are a means to permit everyone to participate in a meeting in an efficient way. Once colleagues have expressed their views succinctly, they should allow others to speak. Limits should be set, and colleagues who do not adhere to the limits should be called to order by the chair, Professor Rockwell said. Agreeing that there might be some value in closer adherence to the rules, Professor Umphrey noted that, to facilitate discussion effectively, the chair—as the rules require—should not make comments during discussions, something that has been permitted at Faculty Meetings.

President Marx asked how to judge whether faculty governance is working, in particular at Faculty Meetings. Professor Rockwell responded that it is important that there be a forum (the Faculty Meeting) for all faculty members to express their opinions. While having such a forum may encourage the operatic quality of Faculty Meetings, the cacophony of views expressed can be seen as the normal “noise” of a democratic system, Professor Rockwell continued, and can serve as a release valve for the pent up pressures surrounding important issues. Professor Saxton

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wondered what issues are appropriate to bring before the Faculty for consultation. Professor Rockwell responded that, in his view, Faculty Meetings should be reserved for the consideration of issues on which the Faculty has the authority to vote. He is not in favor of having meetings only for the purpose of discussion. He said that he finds the mechanism of the Committee of the Whole not to be productive, and he has found it difficult to follow the logic of arguments that are put forward and discussed within this structure. Professor Rockwell attributed a fall off in attendance at Faculty Meetings among senior faculty, in particular, to the increasing tendency to use Faculty Meetings to discuss issues on which the Faculty may not be asked to vote.

Professor Umphrey disagreed that Faculty Meetings that are held for the purpose of communication cannot be productive. She stressed that there are no other vehicles for broad faculty conversations other than Faculty Meetings. The members discussed whether it would aid faculty governance to have more frequent Faculty Meetings with fewer action items; some members favored this approach while others did not. The question was raised about whether the Faculty should always be asked to vote on recommendations that have been formulated by an ad hoc committee, or whether, at times, the recommendations of a group of colleagues who, after being charged by the Faculty to explore a particular issue or set of questions and, after careful review, come to a set of conclusions, could be discussed in general ways and then implemented. Professor Saxton commented that faculty differ on what kinds of information and questions should come before it. Some faculty favor a very broad range of issues, and the tone of Faculty Meetings can become aggressive if members feel they have not been sufficiently consulted. This can silence others who may feel differently. The members noted that it is impossible to legislate the tone of deliberations at Faculty Meetings.

Professor Ciepiela suggested that there are ways to focus conversation at Faculty Meetings, with a result being a less confrontational debate, for example, through the ways presentations are structured by committees. Committees can strengthen proposals by including in them the pros and cons of the issue being brought forward. This approach acquaints the Faculty in advance of the meeting with the basic issues that should be considered, demonstrating that a committee has thought through different sides of an argument, Professor Ciepiela suggested. In response to a question from the President, the members discussed whether questions to the administration might be submitted to the administration twenty-four hours in advance of Faculty Meetings, giving the administration time to think through reasonable answers and to do research, if necessary. Professor Loinaz said that such questions could be invited, but the Committee agreed that, at times, colleagues will want to ask questions at Faculty Meetings and should not be precluded from doing so because they did not provide advance notice. Professor Basu said that she has been less concerned about spontaneous questions than about the abrasive tenor and tone of questions at Faculty Meetings.

In response to the President's suggestion that Faculty Meetings feature theater and not just substance, Professor Ciepiela asserted that they nevertheless do feature substance, and she commented that a number of good proposals had been approved by the Faculty in recent years, and that sound decisions had been made. Professor Rockwell reiterated that it is important to provide colleagues with the opportunity to speak their minds, and he noted that, if the opportunity to do so is not a part of Faculty Meetings, colleagues might use alternative forums for this purpose. The President asked if the Committee thought that the current system of faculty governance allowed the Faculty to consider and make decisions on hard issues. The Committee noted that the Faculty has concluded difficult and sometimes divisive deliberations by voting and has been guided by the views of the majority. In terms of the criteria for successful faculty governance, President Marx noted that he agrees that one aspect must be that faculty members

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are given the opportunity to have their say, but also the ability to arrive at a resolution, collectively, that is not necessarily consensual.

Returning to the issue of committee work, President Marx asked whether one of the functions and values of committee work, outside of the purpose of governance, is socialization for faculty with colleagues outside their fields/departments. He asked whether more such socialization should occur around intellectual work. Professor Loinaz, noting that, while the efficiency of faculty committees is an entirely separate question, he has found that committee work is an effective and important way for colleagues, particularly those who are new to the College, to engage with one another, to make connections outside their departments, and to learn about the processes for getting things done at the College. Professor Saxton noted that some colleagues would prefer not to engage in committee work for these purposes yet have no choice. Professor Loinaz said that for tenure-track faculty, committee work is most often not onerous.

The members next discussed whether changes to the committee structure might alleviate some of the burden that committee work places on the Faculty. President Marx wondered whether having a smaller number of committees that are invested with more authority and with longer terms for the members of such committees would lead to more effective and powerful faculty governance, while enabling the Faculty to focus on teaching and research. Professor Basu commented that the Faculty has, in the past, been reluctant both to delegate power to the administration and to delegate power to faculty colleagues. She expressed support for having a small number of more powerful committees, but stressed the need to provide the members of such committees with more time for scholarship, in recognition of their service. The Committee noted that there has been among the Faculty some unwillingness in the past to centralize faculty power and a general resistance to delegate authority. Some members suggested that this view might evolve with the generational shift that is about to occur within the Faculty, but that this takes time. Dean Call noted that his recent analysis of the shape of the Faculty today, and upcoming changes that will occur as a result of a wave of retirements, has demonstrated that currently a somewhat smaller proportion of Faculty are in the middle of the age distribution (ages forty-five to sixty) than are in slightly younger or older cohorts. Since these are the colleagues who are often asked to take on most of the administrative work of the Faculty and there are fewer of them proportionally, these colleagues may have a disproportionate burden, he noted. The Dean said that he would support having fewer committees to help alleviate some of this burden.

Continuing the conversation, the members discussed the possibility of developing a structure in which there would be, perhaps, five major committees—the Committee of Six, the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP), the Committee on Priorities and Resources (CPR), the College Council, and the Faculty Committee on Admission and Financial Aid (FCAFA)—to which all work would be funneled, and which would have three-year staggered terms for their members, who would be compensated for their service. Professor Saxton wondered about the desirability of the proposal, which has been put forward at various times in the past, of splitting the Committee of Six into two committees, an executive committee and a personnel committee. President Marx expressed the view that the current structure of the Committee of Six might be preferable, as it should concentrate faculty power.

Professor Ciepiela commented that, at present, ad hoc committees are charged with much of the most intensive committee work. She asked how that burden would be addressed by the proposed scheme. President Marx suggested that, if committees were limited to the five under discussion, more faculty would be free of service for a significant period when they were not on these committees. The President said that ad hoc committees could undertake this work, when

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appropriate, but that, if more often administrators with particular expertise could research questions and develop proposals and options, laying out the pros and cons for the Faculty to consider, some of the burden that service on ad hoc committees places on the Faculty could be alleviated. The members noted that additional administrators would likely be needed if such an approach were to be adopted. Professor Umphrey wondered, would the Trustees be supportive of requests for the additional resources demanded by the President's proposals, for both a larger number of administrators and compensation for faculty? As it stands, the College asks the Faculty to carry a heavy governance burden on the cheap, as it were. It may be that enhancing governance structures cannot be done without more material support. Professor Rockwell expressed concern that the approach proposed could result in information being hidden from the Faculty, and he expressed the view that a spirit of distrust could result if this circumstance occurred. Professor Basu stressed that it is not always clear which issues should come before the Faculty and which are purely administrative questions. She wondered whether having fewer layers of committees and greater clarity about the respective rights and responsibilities of the Faculty and administration might be helpful. The Committee agreed that, if a decision were to be made not to have ad hoc committees or fewer of them, there would have to be a process put in place to set priorities for the five large committees each year, and to limit the number of issues that would be addressed and the number of questions that could be delegated to ad hoc committees or task forces. It was felt that by doing so, the duplication of effort that often occurs under the present committee structure might be prevented.

Continuing the conversation, Professors Rockwell and Ciepiela questioned any view of the Faculty as unable to make decisions. Professor Umphrey commented that the Faculty has not avoided all difficult questions and decisions and pointed to the implementation of an all-College writing requirement through the First-Year Seminar program, voted in by the Faculty after significant disagreement about the issue. Dean Call commented that he does not believe the suggestions being offered would lessen the preeminence of the Faculty in decision-making at the College. Professor Rockwell reiterated that the mechanism of having the administration generate proposals that would then be brought to the Faculty for a "check" could lead to an adversarial relationship between the Faculty and administration.

President Marx offered the example of the faculty housing system. In earlier years, he noted, the Housing Committee did not meet, and faculty remained dissatisfied about the system, while some houses still remain vacant and others deteriorate. Under a system with fewer committees, the issue of faculty housing would become an issue that could be addressed regularly by the CPR, which could be charged with overseeing the system and requesting administrative proposals. Professor Loinaz expressed the view that the Housing Committee has been active and doing important work in recent years, and he noted that the committee is an important vehicle for representing the needs of tenure-track faculty, who provide regular input to members of the committee, who represent their needs. Professor Rockwell agreed.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Umphrey suggested that there might be better ways to foster communication among tenure-track colleagues than assignments to such a committee, perhaps through the creation of a tenure-track faculty forum. Professor Umphrey also expressed the view that at present, department chairs at Amherst serve mainly a bureaucratic function, have little power, and are not used effectively. She suggested, for example, that chairs could serve as a vetting device for certain kinds of proposals before they are forwarded to the full Faculty. The Committee discussed whether department chairs might be elected, serve lengthier, rotating terms, meet with the Dean more frequently, and/or receive some incentives and/or compensation, as another way of improving communication and strengthening governance

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structures. In addition, the Committee discussed briefly whether it might be more convenient and/or productive for Faculty Meetings to take place at a time of day other than the evening, perhaps in the afternoon.

The members next agreed to invite the CEP to its meeting on March 28 for the purpose of discussing the issue of class scheduling, including the committee's recommendations for addressing scheduling challenges and the problem of course-bunching, as well as several other topics. To inform the discussion, the Dean agreed to provide the members with a consultant's report on classroom space allocation and utilization at the College, to which the CEP and Class Scheduling Task Force also had access. Recommendations within this report included having the Registrar aid the Faculty in its choice of class times and classrooms and expanding the number of available time slots to provide students with broader access to the curriculum and to make better use of available space. The Dean and the President, while noting that the CEP's report offers some interesting information and suggests that the College should begin to address space and utilization issues as soon as possible, said they worried that the recommendations might not go far enough. The Dean noted that, as a result of the consultant's report, which offered detailed information about the failings of individual classrooms, the College is currently making a modest investment to modify some classrooms so that they provide better learning environments and scheduling flexibility can be enhanced. The members then reviewed the draft charge to the Ad Hoc Committee on Advising, offered some revisions, and agreed to approve the charge (by a vote of six in favor and zero opposed), which appears below with the revisions included.

Charge to The Ad Hoc Committee on Advising

The Committee of Six charges the Ad Hoc Committee on Advising with conducting a broad review of the advising system at the College, considering the meaning, purpose, and efficacy of advising at Amherst. We ask that College and major advising be assessed on their own merits, as well as in the context of the Amherst educational experience as a whole.

The review should include an examination of the advising work of faculty, deans (especially the Dean of New Students) and other administrators, coaches, and staff. In the process of evaluating existing systems for advising and considering new ones, we suggest that you consider the distinction that has traditionally been made between academic and non-academic advising, in light of the impact that those with less formalized advising roles have on our students' academic and co-curricular lives.

As part of its work, we ask the committee to review the efforts that have been under way over the past several years to improve academic advising at the College, including the development of new programs to adapt advising practices to better meet the needs of our diverse student body—which encompasses in greater numbers than in years past international students, community college transfers, first-generation students, and students who have come through the Summer Science and Summer Humanities and Social Science Programs.

We provide the following questions for you to explore:

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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 reappointment, tenure, and promotion decisions?
7. What roles do/should non-faculty (e.g., coaches, deans, administrators, peer advisors) play as advisors about academic matters?
8. What are the new questions and challenges for advising posed by online registration?

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory S. Call
Dean of the Faculty