

Amended December 10, 2007

The twelfth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2007-2008 was called to order by President Marx in his office at 1:00 P.M. on Monday, November 19, 2007. Present were Professors Frank, S. George, Jagannathan, O'Hara, Servos, and Sinos, Dean Call, President Marx, and Assistant Dean Tobin, Recorder.

President Marx discussed with the members his current thinking, after consulting with colleagues both at Amherst and at other institutions, about the institutional structures that might best facilitate additional progress in the area of diversity for faculty and staff. He noted that Professor Cobham-Sander has graciously agreed to continue as Special Assistant to the President for Diversity until the end of the spring term. President Marx said that he has decided to launch a national search for a new Special Assistant for Diversity and Inclusion. This individual would be responsible for overseeing areas relating to diversity for both faculty and staff. He or she would work closely with a faculty council, which would be made up of three or four faculty members, on issues of recruitment and retention that relate specifically to the Faculty. President Marx said that he feels that it is particularly important that faculty colleagues work in tandem with the new Special Assistant if the new position is to be effective. On the staff side, the President noted that he envisions that the new Special Assistant, who will be the College's Affirmative Action Officer, will work closely with the senior staff and with the Office of Human Resources.

Professor Jagannathan commented that the nature of the questions that arise in the area of diversity have become more and more complex and legalistic in recent years. He said that he supports the idea of hiring a professional who has the ability and training to navigate these intricacies and who would push the College to make greater inroads on the diversity front. Professor Frank said that she believes that it is a good idea for the Special Assistant to be able to effect change by having some authority over Human Resources. Other members commented that diversity was one part of Human Resources' broader portfolio of responsibilities and that, while the new Special Assistant should work closely with that office, he or she should not necessarily have direct supervisory responsibility over it. Professor O'Hara asked the President if he had explored models of how such a position should fit within the reporting structures of other institutions. President Marx said that he had done such research, but that there were many models, and that there seemed to be no one model that correlated with success. Professor Sinos said that she does not believe that diversifying the staff should be number-driven. The President said that he agreed, but wondered about setting targets, in some sense.

The Committee, the President, and the Dean discussed strategies for strengthening the diversity of the Faculty, including providing incentives through out-of-sequence and bridge FTE appointments. Professor Servos agreed that having FTE distribution play a role in diversity initiatives would be critical, but he said that a new Special Assistant who is brought in might not understand how best to conduct delicate negotiations with Amherst departments. It was agreed that any special process of FTE allocation for diversity purposes must closely resemble and respect the regular process of FTE allocation. The Dean noted that the Special Assistant could advise the Dean of the Faculty and the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) and could work with departments to develop diversity plans, so that when an opportunity for a diversity hire

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presented itself—either through a regular search process or by having an individual come to a department’s attention at a time that is out of sequence with the normal FTE cycle—the department could bring it to the attention of the Dean and the CEP and, referencing the diversity plan, a decision about whether to pursue the opportunity could be made quickly. The Committee discussed the idea of identifying potential candidates of color earlier in their careers, perhaps through post-doctoral fellowships. Professor O’Hara discussed her hope that the Special Assistant might also take on broader challenges. For example, the small numbers of students of color who pursue careers in math and science is a pressing concern, and a subject of discussion at the national level. A Special Assistant could help the Faculty keep on top of new initiatives to increase diversity in this and other areas. The President thanked the members for their advice.

President Marx next noted that, in response to his recent letter to the Amherst community about several incidents of intolerance and hatefulness that have occurred on campus, he was contacted by members of the community who raised concern about the treatment of staff members at the College, about gender issues, about anti-semitism, and about the harassment of students who hold conservative views. The President said that he would meet with those who wrote to him about these issues to learn more about their concerns. He also noted that he has been in conversation with President Hexter of Hampshire, who would like to explore collaborative ways of raising awareness about issues of hate and intolerance.

Under “Questions from Committee Members,” Professor Sinos asked why the Johnson Chapel bells no longer ring on the hour, as they did for many years. The President asked Assistant Dean Tobin to research this question, and she agreed to do so.

The Committee turned to personnel matters.

The meeting adjourned at 3:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory S. Call  
Dean of the Faculty