

Amended April 25, 2011

The thirty-third 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, April 11, 2011. Present were Professors Basu, Ciepiela, Loinaz, Rockwell, Umphrey, and Saxton, Dean Call, President Marx, and Assistant Dean Tobin, Recorder.

The Committee reviewed the final minutes of its March 23 meeting and voted to approve them. Under “Announcements from the Dean,” Dean Call informed the members that he is seeking feedback from Gina Rodriguez ’11, the first (and only) recipient of the Mellon Senior Thesis Prize, and Professor Frank, who advised her as part of the award, about their experience working together. The Dean explained that the Committee would soon be asked to consider whether the prize should be continued, and that it is his hope that feedback from Ms. Rodriguez and Professor Frank would inform the members’ discussion of this issue. Providing some background, Dean Call reminded the members that the Mellon Senior Thesis Prize had been created in 2009-2010 with a modest amount of funding that the College had received for one year only from the Mellon Foundation to encourage student research. It had been agreed that the prize would be awarded to a graduating senior who had completed an honors thesis that had been judged by his or her major department to be of exceptionally high quality. The winner would receive a \$2,000 stipend and \$1,500 toward living expenses in the summer after graduation, to enable him or her to spend the summer at Amherst doing work to turn the thesis into a publication, under the supervision of the original thesis advisor or another member of the same department. As part of the award, the advisor would receive a \$500 grant toward research expenses or as an honorarium. Each department had been offered the opportunity to nominate one of its theses to be considered for the prize, and the winning thesis had been selected by the Committee of Six on the grounds of intellectual quality, originality, and potential for publication. Explaining more about the origins of the prize, the Dean said that he regularly receives requests to support students’ continuing thesis work for the summer after they graduate. It had been decided to develop and award one prize, using the Mellon award as seed funding to support a student in this way as an experiment, with the possibility of continuing to award the prize in the future. The Dean said that he would soon share Ms. Rodriguez’s and Professor Frank’s impressions with the Committee and looked forward to having a discussion with the members about whether to continue the prize in future using College funds.

The members next reviewed a draft agenda for an April 19 Faculty Meeting and decided that there was insufficient business to warrant a meeting. The Committee next turned briefly to a personnel matter.

Under “Questions from Committee members, Professor Basu noted that departments are routinely asked to host individuals as visitors, often to teach a single course, for reasons such as accommodating the partner of another Amherst faculty hire and/or through initiatives such as the Croxton and Simpson Lectureship or McCloy Professorship. She asked the Dean whether hosting such a visitor, which can often involve substantial work for a department, is counted against other departmental requests for visitors. Professor Basu noted that a department’s request for a visitor often includes expectations of advising and other responsibilities that may not be part of a visiting position that is offered to a department. Dean Call responded that there are many considerations that are weighed when decisions are made about visitor requests, including the overall number of requests and the reasons for offering/circumstances surrounding any visitors that may have been offered to a department. He noted that the visitor budget had reached its peak immediately prior to the economic downturn and that, while the budget has

Amended April 25, 2011

rebounded somewhat, it is now at the level it was nearly a decade ago. This level is consistent with plans that call for allocating and hiring an increasing number of tenure line FTEs in the coming decade, which is expected to reduce the need to rely as heavily on visitors.

Continuing with “Questions from Committee Members,” Professor Umphrey asked the Dean about the outcomes of faculty searches that had been authorized for 2010-2011. Dean Call reported that the hiring season had been successful. There were nine searches, and the College has hired seven of the first-choice candidates recommended by departments. He noted that he is impressed with all of the candidates who have been hired. One of the searches failed and another produced two offers, one of which has been accepted and the second of which is in negotiations, he noted. Professor Umphrey asked if the target-of-opportunity process had been used to hire any of these new colleagues. Dean Call said that these procedures were used to make a second offer in a single search. Professor Umphrey asked if one of the two FTEs that had been reserved for target-of-opportunity hires through the Committee on Academic Priorities (CAP) process has now been allocated. The Dean said that one of these FTEs has been allocated, but that the “bank” for these FTEs would be “repaid” almost immediately as a result of a phased retirement.

Professor Loinaz next noted that Professor Jaswal had asked him how best to ensure that the comments that she had made at the April 5 Faculty Meeting, as part of the discussion of the proposal of the Committee on Priorities and Resources (CPR) regarding parenting and medical leave, could be distributed to the Faculty in their entirety. He had advised her to write to the Committee of Six, which she has now done. The Committee agreed to append (via link) [Professor Jaswal's letter](#) to the minutes of today's meeting. In terms of next steps, President Marx noted that a summary of the Faculty's discussion of the CPR's proposal, including the Faculty's vote and a discussion of the constituencies that would not be included if the voted proposal were approved by the Trustees and implemented, would be forwarded to the Human Resources Committee of the Board of Trustees. In addition, the administration plans to provide the Trustees with an analysis of the costs of several different models of parenting leave. Dean Call noted that the CPR's proposal, which was endorsed by vote of the Faculty, is estimated to cost approximately \$147,600 annually. Extending the same benefit (a release from teaching for one semester) to all faculty parents who are primary care-givers is estimated to cost approximately \$204,000, or about \$56,000 more, the Dean said. He noted that it is difficult to get a sense of what an equivalent benefit would be for staff, and thus of any additional costs that would be incurred if an additional benefit were extended to the staff, given the different units of work of faculty and staff, but that some options would be developed and costed out for further discussion. The Dean said that the administration is gathering information on parenting leave policies for staff at peer institutions.

Continuing the discussion, Professor Basu asked if the Committee of Six and the Faculty would be asked to consider any parenting leave proposals for staff. She noted that she had written to the CPR to request that the committee conduct research on costs and develop a more inclusive parenting leave proposal for the Faculty to consider. Professor Basu expressed the view that, in its deliberations about the CPR's proposal, the Committee of Six and the Faculty as a whole had raised issues surrounding faculty/staff equity that were an implicit part of past deliberations about this issue, and which should continue to be discussed in relation to any future proposals that may be developed. Professor Saxton agreed, commenting that she does not want to see the issue of faculty/staff equity de-coupled from future proposals about parenting leave. Professor Rockwell commented that he feels uncomfortable with the increasing tendency for the

Amended April 25, 2011

Faculty to use Faculty Meetings as a means to weigh in on, negotiate, or vote on benefits for staff, or for faculty for that matter. It seemed to him that the CPR's charge provides a forum for the Faculty's voice in setting institutional priorities, but that transforming the Faculty Meeting into a forum for management/labor negotiations could have regrettable, unforeseen consequences for the entire community in the long term. Professor Umphrey agreed, commenting that it would likely be understandably difficult for the Faculty to vote, for example, for a benefit decrease. Summarizing the current state of the issue and steps going forward, President Marx noted that, through regular processes of the Faculty, the CPR had put a motion forward for a parenting and enhanced medical leave policy, the Committee of Six had forwarded the proposal to the Faculty, and the Faculty had voted to endorse it. The Board will now consider this proposal and the issue of parenting leave more generally. Professor Umphrey asked if the President and the Dean would share with the Committee their recommendations to the Board regarding parenting leave. They agreed to do so for the faculty benefit. The Committee then turned to personnel matters.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory S. Call  
Dean of the Faculty

April 6, 2011

To the Committee of Six:

As a parent, I appreciate the hard work that Catherine Epstein and the CPR have put into the parental leave policy passed by the faculty, and recognize that it makes great progress from before.

As an adoptive parent blessed with two children with special needs, I have confidence that my colleagues, the administration, and the Trustees would want to support my family, by giving my children the same opportunities this policy would currently only give to infants of biological parents.

My children came home (separately) at ages 2 and 3 after beginning their lives in orphanages in India. Although I did not experience the physical burden of recovery from childbirth or undergoing lactation, it would have been impossible for our family if I had been expected to teach one course while I was a new parent and the primary caregiver to each child. After having exhausted our savings to finance each adoption, under this policy, I would have had to take unpaid leave so that I could focus 100% on our new child, during their adjustment to losing the only caregivers they had ever known, learning English, and attaching to a new family who doesn't speak their language. There is no question I would do that because I am a parent first and my children's needs come first.

As a newcomer to the College, it is clear to me that Amherst prides itself on matching or exceeding peer institutions in every possible arena. It is therefore puzzling that despite the clear recognition that we are behind in attracting underrepresented and nontraditional faculty, we are not rallying the Trustees to match the parental leave benefit currently provided by other local institutions. Instead, the policy crafted relies on the legal definition of childbirth as a medical condition to classify new biological mothers as disabled, so that they alone may have the two-course leave that is granted to all new parents by the more generous Smith and UMass policies.

Perhaps I am optimistic, but I would think that the Trustees would want to commit any resources necessary to ensure that the parental leave policy is attractive to all candidates, rather than by consequence, if not by intent, privileging those who can conceive and give birth, those whose wives can take leave or stop working, and those with resources to finance an unpaid leave to prioritize their new child for his or her first eight weeks in the family. My hope is that Amherst will craft a parental leave policy granting every new parent who is the primary caregiver of a new child, whether through birth or adoption, whether infant, toddler or in elementary school, equivalent parenting leave.

Sincerely,  
Sheila Jaswal, Ph.D.