

**Amended May 12, 2011**

The thirty-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, May 2, 2011. Present were Professors Basu, Ciepiela, Loinaz, Rockwell, and Umphrey, Dean Call, President Marx, and Assistant Dean Tobin, Recorder. Professor Saxton was absent. The Committee turned briefly to a personnel matter.

Under “Announcements from the Dean,” Dean Call informed the members that he has accepted the Faculty Computer Committee’s recommendation, which has been informed by the external review of the Department of Information Technology, that the College move away from using its content management system (CMS)—in this context the web-based system for organizing and managing web information—as its learning management system (LMS)—in this context, the web-based system for supporting teaching. The CMS became the LMS of choice for Amherst after the decision was made four years ago to encourage faculty to move away from the use of Blackboard as the College’s LMS. The Dean noted that feedback from faculty indicates that using the CMS as Amherst’s LMS has not effectively met the needs of some faculty, and, as a home-grown system, it has been a drain on the College’s IT staff, which has had to devote considerable time to building the system. This set of circumstances resulted in the Faculty Computer Committee’s recommendation to move to Moodle, a free, open-source LMS used by colleges across the country and three of the Five Colleges, by fall of 2013. The CMS will continue to be the mechanism for organizing and managing other College Web content, Dean Call said. Plans call for Blackboard to continue to be made available until May 2012, when it will be discontinued. In the summer of 2012, IT will work with faculty to begin to migrate to Moodle. By fall 2012, Moodle will be fully functional and will run in tandem with the CMS-LMS system. In January 2013, the migration to Moodle will continue. During the spring of 2013, the College will continue to run both the CMS-LMS and Moodle, but by May 2013 the CMS-LMS will be shut down. The final migration of faculty to Moodle will be completed during the summer of 2013. Dean Call apologized that the Faculty is being asked to transition to a new system again, but said that the amount of dissatisfaction with both Blackboard and the CMS-LMS warrants this change. Noting that it is now clear that the approach of building all of the necessary LMS tools ourselves was flawed, the Dean said that he understands that Moodle has many desirable features that are available to users “out-of-the-box,” and that the system is user-friendly. Plans call for focus groups to be held with the Faculty this summer and fall to introduce colleagues to Moodle. Crucial to a successful transition will be IT’s commitment to provide all the support necessary to Faculty as they learn the new system. This issue will be discussed with the full Faculty at the May 3 Faculty Meeting, the Dean said.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Loinaz asked if it might be advisable to wait until a new Director of Information Technology is in place before making such a dramatic change. The Dean said that it is clear that a new approach is needed in the near term because of the degree of faculty unhappiness with both Blackboard and the CMS-LMS. The Faculty Computer Committee has studied the timing for the transition to Moodle carefully and its recommendation of a two-year phased schedule has been designed to spare the faculty and IT from spending the time required to implement what would have been a necessary update to the College’s existing systems. The Dean noted that the approach to information technology that has been taken in recent years is now viewed as too rigid and stressed that the College needs to be more varied in its approach in the future. Professor Loinaz asked if care will be taken to ensure that the transition to the new system is as efficient as possible and that, to the degree possible,

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functionality issues have been addressed before the new system is launched. The Dean and the President said that the College will ensure that sufficient support is available to the Faculty for the move to Moodle; plans call for having groups of faculty pilot the system before the larger transition takes place, Dean Call noted. Professor Loinaz asked about the timetable for naming a new IT director. The Dean said that a search firm had recently been engaged to assist with identifying viable candidates, and that it is hoped that finalists for the position will be selected by the time a new president is appointed, so that he or she can play a role in the selection process. Professor Loinaz asked if there are plans to release the findings of the team that conducted the review of IT. Dean Call responded that a summary of the team's report will be made available to the College community.

President Marx next shared with the members the names of individuals who will be honored at Commencement on May 22 and informed the Committee that he would provide the Faculty with this information at the Faculty Meeting the next evening. The recipients of honorary degrees will be John Abele '59, retired founding chairman of Boston Scientific and Trustee Emeritus of the College; Adam Falk, high-energy physicist and seventeenth president of Williams College; Andrew Kendall '83, executive director and president of The Trustees of Reservations, a Massachusetts-based conservation organization; Christine Lagarde, France's finance minister; Gail Kern Paster, retiring director of the Folger Shakespeare Library; economist Paul Volcker, former chairman of the Federal Reserve; Alice Waters, chef at Chez Panisse and advocate for local, organic, and sustainable food; and Kimmie Weeks '05, founder of several organizations that support children affected by war and poverty, particularly in West Africa. The Medal for Eminent Service will be given to Arthur W. Koenig '66, who has helped expand the presence and diversity of international students at Amherst. In addition, three World War II veterans who left the College to serve in the military during World War II will receive honorary bachelor's degrees.

Under "Questions from Committee Members," Professor Umphrey said that she had been asked by a colleague to inquire about any progress that may have been made in the area of developing a College policy regarding discrimination based on gender identity or expression. President Marx responded that Paul Murphy, Legal and Administrative Counsel, has been researching this issue and that Mr. Murphy will propose at the next meeting of the Board of Trustees that the College adopt a formal policy that Amherst does not discriminate on the basis of gender identity or expression.

The Committee next reviewed the nomination from the Department of Physical Education and Athletics for the Edward Hitchcock Fellowship, and voted five in favor and zero opposed to support the awarding of the fellowship to the nominee and to forward the nomination to the Faculty. The members reviewed proposals for new courses and voted five in favor and zero opposed to forward them to the Faculty. The members also decided to forward to the Mellon Foundation a proposal from an emeritus faculty member for a Mellon Emeritus Fellowship. The Dean had solicited proposals from emeriti who met the criteria for the fellowship. The fellowships support the research activities of outstanding scholars in the humanities and humanistic social sciences who, at the time of taking up the fellowships, are retired but remain active and productive scholars. Emeritus Fellows receive funds for a year for research and other related expenses. The Mellon Foundation stipulates that the nominees be selected through an internal competition, Dean Call said.

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The members next returned to a discussion of possible changes to some tenure procedures. It was agreed that the Dean's office would research end-of-semester evaluation forms used by Amherst departments, at other institutions, and at the Bok Center at Harvard, and that next year's Committee of Six, in the context of continuing the discussion about the evaluation of teaching, would be provided with five templates to evaluate as possibilities for model evaluation forms that could be shared with departments.

Dean Call informed the members that some members of performing arts departments may wish to make an amendment to the motion that the Committee planned to bring to the Faculty at the May 3 Faculty Meeting. Instead of proposing that a timeslot be added on Monday evening, these departments might propose that a slot be added on Sunday evening, colleagues have told the Dean. The members said that they would accept such a proposal as a friendly amendment if it is brought forward. The Dean noted that, if any changes are approved by the Faculty in regard to the schedule for classes, the *Faculty Handbook* would be revised to reflect these changes. The Dean reported that the Faculty Research Awards Committee has declined to review the proposals for Post-Baccalaureate Summer Research Fellowships and that he would instead consult with colleagues within his office to select the awardees. The Committee spent the remainder of the meeting on nominations for faculty committees.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory S. Call  
Dean of the Faculty