

Amended September 26, 2011

The second meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2011-2012 was called to order by President Martin in her office at 3:30 P.M. on Monday, September 12, 2011. Present were Professors Basu, Ferguson, Hewitt, Loinaz, Ratner, and Umphrey, Dean Call, President Martin, and Assistant Dean Tobin, Recorder.

The meeting began with “Announcements from the Dean.” The Dean informed the Committee that Janet Tobin, Assistant Dean of the Faculty, will continue to serve as the Recorder of Committee of Six minutes and that Nancy Ratner, Associate Dean of Admission and Researcher for Academic Projects, will serve as the Recorder of the Faculty Meeting minutes. He turned briefly to a personnel matter. Dean Call next informed the members that President Martin’s inauguration is now set for the weekend of October 15, with the ceremony planned for Sunday, October 16, at 10 A.M., on the main quadrangle. He said that the Inauguration Planning Committee, of which he is a member, has begun meeting to shape what promises to be an exciting weekend of celebratory events.

Continuing his announcements, the Dean noted that the membership of the Coordinating Committee for the search for Amherst’s next IT Leader has been finalized. He thanked the members for their advice on the make-up of the committee and confirmed that he will chair the committee and that Mason Bradbury ’10; Bryn Geffert, Librarian of the College; David Hamilton, Director of Web Services; Marian Matheson, Director of Institutional Research and Planning; Jill Miller, Associate Professor of Biology and member of the Faculty Computing Committee; and Katie O’Hara Edwards ’87, Director of Advancement Operations, will serve. He then turned briefly to a committee nomination. The Dean next asked whether the College’s new Director of Human Resources, Maria-Judith Rodriguez, should be introduced to the Faculty at its next meeting, as Hurricane Irene had prevented Ms. Rodriguez from attending the Labor Day Faculty meeting. The members agreed that it would be desirable for the introduction to take place at the Faculty’s next meeting.

Continuing with his announcements, Dean Call expressed his thanks and admiration for remarks made by President Martin and Paul Sorrentino, Director of Religious Life, at the September 11 interfaith gathering held on Memorial Hill last Sunday, in honor of the tenth anniversary of the September 11 attacks. President Martin commented that she had been moved by the ceremony as well.

Under “Announcements from the President,” President Martin informed the members that she is looking forward to the October 14-16 Board of Trustees meeting and to the inauguration. She asked the members to please share with her suggestions for the inauguration. The President said that she expects that the Trustees’ agenda would include discussion of the science center project and remarked that she looks forward to gathering the Faculty’s views on the project. The Dean noted that, over the summer, the Trustees reviewed all aspects of the science center project—focusing on building systems, costs, and meeting the Faculty’s programmatic goals. He said that the architectural firms of Behnisch Architekten and Payette would be on campus beginning this week to meet with science center departments to present refined plans and receive feedback. In early-October, the architects will hold all-campus meetings to discuss the shape and progress of the project. Professor Ratner said that he and his departmental colleagues would be interested in sharing their reactions with the President, following the architects’ meetings. Professor Loinaz said that the Department of Physics looks forward to discussing the project with President Martin, as well.

Continuing her remarks and comments about her early days on campus, the President noted that she had enjoyed a comprehensive tour of the campus recently, which had been conducted by a group of students; she also conveyed how impressed she had been with the student research that was presented at the Summer Science research poster session held on September 9, which

Amended September 26, 2011

she had been pleased to attend, as had the Dean. Professor Ratner thanked the President and the Dean for coming to the event, noting that their presence had been particularly meaningful for students. President Martin next informed the members of her plans to visit academic departments, beginning this week, and said that she looks forward to meeting colleagues. The Committee turned briefly to a personnel matter.

Under “Questions from Committee Members,” Professor Loinaz asked about the status of the Ad Hoc Committee on Advising, which the Committee of Six had charged in March 2011 to examine, in a broad sense, the issue of advising, at the College. Dean Call responded that the ad hoc committee had been constituted over the past several weeks and that Professors O’Hara (Dean of New Students) and Sarat have agreed to serve as co-chairs. The other members are Professors Rosalina de la Carrera and David Hall, Dean of Academic Support and Student Research Ben Lieber, and Assistant Dean of Students and Director of International Experience Janna Behrens. Ms. Ratner, who, through her work as the researcher for the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) and the Committee on Academic Priorities (CAP) is familiar with the issues that will be under consideration, has graciously agreed to provide administrative support to the ad hoc committee. Dean Call said that research suggests that, as is typically the case at peer institutions, students are less satisfied with pre-major advising than major advising at the College. Professor Ferguson commented that, in their early years at the College, before they select a major, many students have not defined their learning goals. This can make pre-major advising a challenge for faculty.

Professor Basu commented that, at present, advising is not considered as part of faculty members’ reappointment and tenure dossiers; this lack of evaluation and incentive may lead to less attention being focused on advising. Professor Basu said that she saw great value in the pilot project on intensive advising, which Dean Hart, Professor Sarat, and she had developed. Each faculty member who participated in this initiative worked with one advisee, helping him or her to identify specific learning goals. The advisors monitored the students’ progress toward these goals by consulting with their professors and with the students themselves, during the course of the first year, and now beyond. An assessment component has been built in to this project she said. The challenge of broadening this approach to include all students and advisors would be the prohibitive amount of time and expense involved, she noted. Professor Umphrey commented that, now that online registration is in place, more information should be available to advisors. Since it had taken some time to form the ad hoc committee, the Committee asked the Dean to review the charge to determine by when the ad hoc committee had been expected to report back to the Committee of Six, to ensure that sufficient time had been allotted to do so. Dean Call agreed to check the charge and to inform the members of the deadline that had been set by last year’s Committee of Six.

Continuing with “Questions from Committee Members,” Professor Umphrey asked whether target-of-opportunity hiring and other possibilities for encouraging a diverse Faculty were being communicated and made part of search practices. The Dean said that, before moving forward, he wants to make sure that the procedures are thought through with care. He informed the members that Paul Murphy, Legal and Administrative Counsel, and he would be attending the President’s Forum on Transformative Leadership for Diversity and Innovation, a forum for presidents, deans, and diversity officers, at Columbia University on September 15 and 16. It is the Dean’s hope to come away from the forum with a better sense of approaches and procedures that would be viable and effective for recruiting and retaining diverse faculty, and possible administrative structures that could aid diversity efforts at the College. The Dean said that he looks forward to sharing information from the forum with the President and the Committee. Professor Hewitt asked if the College might look to models for encouraging diversity that have

Amended September 26, 2011

been successful at peer institutions. The Dean agreed that doing so is helpful and said that he hopes that the forum will be useful in this regard. President Martin noted that efforts can be aided by making faculty hires across a broad range of experience. The Dean agreed, commenting that another benefit of hiring at the senior level is additional support for chairing and other departmental administrative duties. He also noted that such hiring may also avoid replicating the faculty demographic that the College is now facing. Professor Umphrey asked how many colleagues are now on phased retirement. The Dean responded that there are twenty-two who have signed agreements, though a handful have yet to begin their phased retirement.

The President commented that it would be useful to learn more about departmental efforts to build diverse applicant pools and suggested that this information be gathered to inform the Committee's ongoing conversation about this issue. Professor Ferguson commented that it would be helpful to have an affirmative action officer to assist departments with the time-consuming work of building diverse applicant pools and other important efforts to enhance diversity at the College. Professor Ratner noted that knowledge of the discipline would be essential for such a process to be successful, which might make it a challenge for an affirmative action officer to contribute to a search in such a way. Professor Basu reiterated the idea of looking at structures that have been successful at other liberal arts colleges.

The Dean shared recent history about the position of Special Assistant to the President for Diversity and Inclusion, noting that the position had been frozen since 2008, due to the economic downturn. Paul Murphy, Legal and Administrative Counsel, has been assisting with diversity efforts, but has many other duties and can only devote limited time to this area. He noted that there are a number of different models for diversity officers that range from having a single affirmative action officer, who may be charged with enhancing the diversity of the faculty and staff, to having separate diversity officers for faculty and staff, with a faculty colleague leading efforts to increase diversity within the ranks of the Faculty. It was agreed that it would be helpful for the members to review the Report to the President on Diversity and Inclusion at <https://www.amherst.edu/offices/diversityoffice>, which was authored by Professor Cobham-Sander in her former role as Special Assistant to the President for Diversity. Professor Ferguson noted that the diversity position has had a difficult history at the College and commented that it will be important to create a structure with which departments will feel comfortable, so that they will make use of support when planning and conducting searches. Professor Hewitt expressed the view that shaping the diversity position(s) would seem to be the best starting point for enhancing diversity efforts, as departments most often do not have expertise in this area. President Martin suggested that one model to consider would be to create a position for faculty recruitment in the broad sense. One of the responsibilities of the position would be in the area of faculty diversity. The individual occupying the position would need academic credentials to be effective as a resource to departments, she noted. The Dean said diversity will clearly be an area of ongoing discussion and that he looks forward to continuing this dialogue with the President and the Committee. President Martin noted that the next ten years of faculty hiring represents the opportunity of a generation to shape the make-up of the Faculty.

The members agreed that, at its next meeting, the Committee should consider issues for the year's agenda. The President asked the members to help identify for her campus issues and/or aspirations that might benefit from open discussion. Professor Umphrey asked the Dean about the significant issues that will be taken up by major faculty committees this year. Dean Call responded that the Faculty Housing Committee and the Committee on Priorities and Resources (CPR) are considering the issue of the affordability of homes for Faculty. He noted that he would have a better sense of the agendas of the CPR and the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP), once these committees have met. Professor Loinaz said that, following up on

Amended September 26, 2011

Committee of Six discussions of last year, it would be helpful for the Committee to discuss its communication and coordination with the other major faculty committees. Professor Umphrey said that she thinks that it is important for the members to continue last year's conversation concerning Faculty Meetings and their agendas before the next meeting, if possible. The Dean then provided information about some tenure procedures.

The Dean began a discussion of the Committee's minutes by conjecturing that more colleagues might read the minutes if they were less voluminous. He suggested that the members consider a goal of concision in the minutes. Professor Umphrey responded that there can be a trade-off between transparency and concision. The Dean reviewed issues of Committee of Six confidentiality and attribution in the minutes, noting that the public minutes should be used as a guide in questions of whether matters discussed by the Committee can be shared with others. He noted that all personnel matters are kept confidential. The Dean informed the members that each Committee of Six has come to its own understanding, informed by the Faculty as a whole, of whether or when the members would be comfortable discussing issues in confidence. Instances might include when the Dean or the President is seeking guidance from the Committee on sensitive matters that cannot be made public, or if any member wants to discuss any idea that is not yet fully formed. Professor Ferguson said that he favors the approach of keeping discussions confidential when doing so would aid the deliberations of the Committee. Some members expressed the view that the Committee should aim for as much transparency in the minutes as possible, but should use reasonableness as a guide when determining if a discussion should be kept confidential. At the conclusion of the conversation, it was agreed that, when reviewing the minutes, Committee members could consider whether they wished to have direct attribution for the comments that they had made. The Committee then discussed the circumstances under which it would communicate via email. It was agreed that email would not be used to communicate about personnel or other confidential matters and that, in general, the use of email would be kept to a minimum. The Dean informed the members that there is a secure shared drive that the Committee can use for electronic communication.

Dean Call next discussed with the members options for a regular meeting time for the Committee of Six, and it was agreed that the Committee would meet from 3:30 P.M. to 5:30 P.M. on Mondays and at a number of additional times, as needed, during the period of tenure discussions. Continuing with his announcements, Dean Call discussed with the Committee the longstanding policy of appending letters to the minutes when the matters contained within them have been discussed by the Committee. Colleagues are informed by the Dean's office as to when their letters will be appended. If a colleague states at the outset that he or she does not want the contents of a letter discussed in the public minutes, the Committee will decide whether it wishes to take up the matter in question. The Dean then noted possible Faculty Meeting dates for the Fall semester. They are September 20, October 4, October 18, November 1, and December 6. The members agreed that there was insufficient business for a September 20 meeting to be held and to aspire to have a meeting on October 4. The members then turned briefly to a personnel matter.

The members next discussed proposals for the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Summer Stipend Program and approved the nomination of two colleagues.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory S. Call
Dean of the Faculty