

**AMHERST COLLEGE
REPORT OF THE DEAN OF STUDENTS**

October 18, 2011 Faculty Meeting

The Dean of Students Office has begun the year with the excitement of welcoming 478 (463 first-year and 15 transfer students) new members to our community. My last report to you, among other things, praised the work of the Fellowships Office (in particular Denise Gagnon and Suzanne Spencer) and continued to describe the challenges of meeting our students' needs while enlivening and fostering their Amherst experience. With this report, I am pleased to note that we have completed our new-this-year Extended Orientation Program for first-year students (designed to continue conversations about the honor code into the school year), successfully navigated registration and the add/drop period, and have settled into the first stage of the annual academic marathon with 1793 active students on campus.

The scheduled arrival of the Class of 2015 coincided with the arrival of Hurricane Irene on August 28th. College officials had met in the days prior to the forecasted storm to be fully prepared to ensure the safety and well-being of students. Several orientation events were canceled during the height of the hurricane. Lodging, meal service, and other considerations were scheduled to minimize the need for students to leave their dorms. Events, first-year registration, and class trips resumed Monday as scheduled, with only some minor adjustments made for safety concerns (mostly canceling rafting trips on the Connecticut River, which crested just above flood stage on September 2nd).

Because the hurricane interrupted our schedule to meet with the parents, Pat O'Hara (Dean of New Students) and I hosted a conference call on September 21st with parents of the classes of 2014 and 2015, during which we responded to questions submitted by parents via email. A transcript of this call has been posted online for all parents to access. During Family Weekend and at Homecoming, Bidy will give several addresses and have an opportunity to meet with parents whom she had not been able to welcome during the hurricane.

Through a combination of replacement hires and a reallocation of resources, I have been able to make some significant changes in staffing. There have been three staffing changes in the Career Center: Ursula Olender comes to us from Colgate, where she became Director of Career Services in 2007, and replaces Allyson Moore as Associate Dean of Students and Director of the Career Center. Deanne Maxwell comes to us from Cornell, where she was Associate Director for Student and Career Development at the College of Human Ecology, and fills our new position of Assistant Dean for Alumni Networking and Mentoring. Karen Lovely-Leach moves from Biology to become the Receptionist and Health Professions Administrative Assistant. Their resumes are in the Dean of Faculty report.

In addition (partially in response to Board support and encouragement), I was granted and redirected funds that were authorized to relieve me of class dean duties to serve three more pressing needs. With those funds I have been able to increase the hours of the recently hired Dean of Student Conduct from a half- to a full-time position. We were able to add additional support to our Residential Life staff, and designated a senior Area Coordinator position to serve as the Associate Director of Residential Life. Lastly, we have been able to increase student appointment times for the Counseling Center by eight hours.

Numbers for students studying abroad seem to have rebounded after a dip last spring, which our department surmises might have been due to the number of natural disasters and areas of political unrest in various parts of the world, an idea supported only by anecdotal data. Ninety-two students will be abroad in the fall semester, and eleven for the entire year. The spring application deadline is still a month away but we expect those numbers to continue this upward trend.

As part of our own initiative to effect positive change in student life, we invited a nationally-recognized counselor and attorney (Saundra K. Schuster) to the College in mid-September. Atty. Schuster helped us to review our practices and gave advice about updating our Honor Code and policies regarding Respect for Persons, in light of the “Dear Colleague letter” sent by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights. We had a two-day retreat which brought together student, faculty, staff, and administrative constituents to discuss the College’s disciplinary system with regards to sexual misconduct. As a result of this session, we have decided to take a broad-based approach to these issues by educating and enlisting those with expertise from around campus to assume support roles throughout our disciplinary processes.

Another change has been to designate a more complete list of Title IX officers to serve specialized community populations. Moving forward, we will have Dean Charri Boykin-East serving as Title IX Coordinator, Dean Greg Call serving as Deputy Title IX Coordinator for Faculty, Dean Liza Nascebene serving as Deputy Title IX Coordinator for Students, and Human Resources Director Maria-Judith Rodriguez serving as Deputy Title IX Coordinator for Staff and Visitors.

Due to changing state laws regarding crowd management as they pertain to party spaces, the College is no longer able to host parties in spaces without sprinklers, with a capacity of 100 guests or more. In response to this change, we have joined forces with student constituents and formed a Social Life Task Force. This group is charged with determining how to effectively implement the required changes on campus, working to adjust campus customs to adapt to these changes, and also to think creatively about how to effect change in the culture of Amherst’s social life so it is more inclusive and there is less reliance on alcohol.

The Association of Amherst Students presented the Valentine staff with an (unannounced and unprovoked) Proclamation of Appreciation. The students expressed particular gratitude for the significant recent renovations, the increased quality and selection of food choices, and other steps taken to improve the overall dining experience for all Amherst students. The often-maligned Valentine staff was deeply moved by the proclamation, which is the first such student recognition given to an on-campus department.