

Amended November 11, 2011

The seventh 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, October 24, 2011. Present were Professors Basu, Ferguson, Hewitt, Loinaz, Ratner, and Umphrey, Dean Call, President Martin, and Assistant Dean Tobin, Recorder.

President Martin commented that she had enjoyed the Homecoming events that she had attended the previous weekend and getting to know Amherst alumni and their families. Earlier today, she reported, she had met with participants in the Five-College Counselor Colloquy, a group of high school guidance counselors from different regions of the country that visits Five-College campuses biannually to meet with students, faculty members, and admission staff. Continuing her remarks, President Martin informed the members that a Senior Staff retreat has been planned for November 1 and 2, during which the long-range planning process will be discussed. She said that she would report back to the Committee about these discussions. The President informed the members that, at the October 15 meeting of the Board of Trustees, the Board had voted to amend Amherst's non-discrimination policy to state explicitly that the College does not discriminate against individuals on the basis of gender identity or gender expression. Expressing her pleasure with this news, Professor Umphrey commented that this step is indeed a positive one for the College.

Under "Questions from Committee Members," Professor Umphrey said that some colleagues have asked her if she would inquire about upcoming changes to the Amherst College Defined Contribution Retirement Plan. The Dean noted that information sessions about the changes are planned for October 27, October 28, and November 1. If colleagues have questions at any time, they can also contact Ernie Leblanc, the College's Benefits Administrator. The Dean explained that new federal regulations have increased the responsibility of employers, requiring them, as plan sponsors, to take a more active role in the management and administration of their plans. The changes that the College is about to implement reflect efforts to identify "best-in-class," presumably better-performing investment fund choices, for the Amherst community. These options have been selected with the help of an independent investment advisor. The plan will become effective on December 2, 2011. Retirement contributions made on or after this date must be made from a new investment menu, which will include several new investment fund choices, and certain TIAA-CREF annuity funds that are currently used by Amherst participants now. Retirement contributions that were made prior to December 2 will remain in the investment funds to which they were originally allocated, unless an individual chooses to move those investments into funds offered through the new investment menu. This initiative, which was authorized by the Board of Trustees, is being led by the Defined Contribution Retirement Plan Investment Committee (Peter Shea, Treasurer and chair; Mauricia Geissler, Chief Investment Officer at the College; Maria-Judith Rodriguez, Director of Human Resources; Ernie Leblanc, Benefits Administrator; and Paul Murphy, Legal and Administrative Counsel). Baystate Fiduciary Advisors, Inc., an investment advisory firm, has assisted the committee with selecting and evaluating the investment options and will assist the College in monitoring these options on a quarterly basis.

Continuing with "Questions from Committee Members," Professor Ratner, noting that the budget for fiscal 2011-2012 is the final year that is covered by the Advisory Budget Committee (ABC) report of 2009, asked what the expectations are for the budget moving forward and what entities are considering whether the economic climate might necessitate the development of a new ABC-like plan when the current plan concludes. The Dean responded that

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the administration and subcommittees of the Board of Trustees have been monitoring how the College's operating budget, endowment distribution, and endowment spend rate compare with what had been projected, and the steps that the College took to reduce the operating budget and the projected spend rate of the endowment. The volatility of investment markets and other economic factors have prompted a decision to revise endowment assumptions (which had been based on historical averages) and projected investment returns on the endowment to 0 percent for 2011-2012, and from 6.8 percent to 6.0 percent, after this year. President Martin noted that, as part of its long-ranging planning efforts, this fall the administration will be examining the assumptions currently in the projections. Dean Call commented that the Committee on Priorities and Resources (CPR) will also have a conversation about the budget in the early spring, when projections are put forward. He said that he does not expect that a new plan will be needed once the ABC plan has concluded. President Martin commented that there is an expectation that current funding levels will be maintained and that expenditures will not increase. Professor Loinaz asked whether the College's debt service is included in budget projections and whether the taxable debt that had been taken out during the financial crunch of 2008-2009 might be restructured at interest rates that are more advantageous. The Dean responded that funding for debt service is built into the projections, and that currently the costs of restructuring that particular debt issue would make refinancing disadvantageous. Professor Loinaz next inquired about the status of the Dakin Estate, noting that the property seems to be in decline. President Martin said that she is unaware of any specific proposals regarding this property, while noting that she has not yet considered this matter.

Continuing with "Questions from Committee Members," Professor Loinaz suggested that it would be productive to consider ways in which science departments and science programs might be enriched outside the process of developing the new science building. Dean Call commented that such a process is already under way. After visiting a number of science departments and learning about their anticipated needs, Dean Call said that the President and he had informed the Board that additional resources will be needed to support staffing (post-docs, post-bacs, and lab technicians), as providing these positions, the departments told them, will enhance the science faculty's ability to pursue their own research and to provide more research opportunities for the increasing number of students who want them. The details of this proposal still need to be worked out, the Dean said, but he anticipates that there would be space and support for one position for every two labs. Professor Basu suggested that a similar model might be considered for the humanities and social sciences. Dean Call noted that the College currently has post-docs in the humanities and humanistic social sciences that are supported through the Mellon-Keiter post-doc endowment. These colleagues, who have two-year appointments and teach one course per semester, are mentored by their host departments. There are typically three such post-docs at the College each year. In answer to the question of how these positions are allocated to departments, the Dean said that he determines the allocation of these positions through conversation with departments and consideration of short- and long-term staffing needs, and, taking a longer view, the development of the department. The program encourages young colleagues to consider teaching at liberal arts colleges. In addition, the Dean noted, there are Five College shared post-doc positions that are being funded through a grant from the Mellon Foundation. At present, the Dean said, in terms of the sciences, there is a post-doc in statistics at the College that is being funded through a grant from the National Science Foundation; there have also been post-docs funded through the Howard Hughes Medical Institute. Professor

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Umphrey said establishing a post-doc program in the social sciences, in her view, would raise different sets of questions than those that might arise when establishing a post-doc program in the sciences because of the differing nature of scholarly work in those divisions, given that the sciences remain more collaborative and lab-based than other fields. The Committee then discussed the importance of having robust mentoring programs for new faculty.

The members then turned briefly to personnel matters.

Under “Announcements from the Dean,” Dean Call reported that there had been constructive discussion on the topic of building a more diverse Faculty at the department chairs meeting ([click here to read the minutes](#)) that had been held on October 21. Professor Ferguson commented that the Faculty, overall, seems quite receptive to moving forward with efforts in this area. The Committee then moved to personnel matters.

The Committee returned to the topic of the structure of Faculty Meetings. The Dean asked if the Committee felt that it would like to implement any of the suggestions that it has made previously. Agreeing that the committee-of-the-whole format had generated good discussion at the Faculty Meeting of October 18, the members decided not to make any changes to the structure of Faculty Meetings at this time. Professor Umphrey said that she does not see the need for monthly Faculty Meetings, but that two meetings per semester might be a good goal. Professor Ferguson expressed the view that there should be two meetings that occur every year (one at the beginning of the year and one to vote degrees before Commencement), but that other meetings, for the most part, should be held when there are action items that require a vote of the Faculty. Lunch meetings would also be good vehicles for engaging the Faculty and gathering input, the members agreed, noting that it would be most productive for the President and the Dean to attend such gatherings. The President and the Dean concurred.

Turning to the prospect of the long-range planning process, President Martin suggested that the members review a list of the potential topics that had been under discussion by the Committee this fall, and set priorities. She noted that she had asked the Senior Staff also to think about what should be discussed as part of the long-range plan. Professor Basu said that it will be important to consider the pace at which issues covered by the plan are discussed. There should be a balance between thinking capaciously and not taking on too much too fast, she suggested. It would be useful, perhaps, to organize the list of priorities into clusters by related topics and time frames, she added. Professor Ferguson asked the President what the anticipated time frame is for developing the long-range plan. She responded that she expects that it would be for a year, beginning in January. The Committee agreed that the need to be deliberative should be balanced with the desire to move forward on some issues and not to defer them because of the ongoing planning process. Professor Umphrey noted that Amherst is not a complacent institution, but rather a self-reflective one. Professor Ratner commented that the College has tended to be less introspective when it comes to institutional practices. Individual faculty and departments, however, frequently focus on self-evaluation with the goal of making improvements. President Martin commented that it appears that, for a number of purposes, it would be helpful if the College would articulate more explicitly its practices and strengths for a larger public.

One area in which this approach would be helpful would be in the area of reaccreditation. President Martin discussed with the Committee needs surrounding the upcoming five-year reaccreditation review by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. It will be necessary to begin gathering data for the review this year, she noted. Professor Griffiths has

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agreed to make a presentation to the Committee about the process at the October 31 meeting.  
(Note: this meeting was later rescheduled.)

The Committee returned to its conversation about possible ways to structure the position of Chief Diversity Officer at the College and reviewed a number of models. It was agreed that the position would only be successful if the individual who is hired has the support of the College's leadership and is provided with the resources and authority. The Dean noted, and the members and the President agreed, that the ad for the position should be constructed broadly in order to attract the widest possible applicant pool.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory S. Call  
Dean of the Faculty