

Amended December 14, 2011

The twelfth 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, December 5, 2011. Present were Professors Basu, Ferguson, Hewitt, Loinaz, Ratner, and Umphrey, Dean Call, President Martin, and Assistant Dean Tobin, Recorder.

The meeting began with President Martin sharing with the members plans, which are still evolving, for the upcoming (January 27-28) meetings of the Board of Trustees. She noted that Trustees would be having dinner with small groups of Faculty, that the Treasurer, Peter Shea, would be giving a presentation on the financial outlook of the College, and that there would be discussions about emergency preparedness procedures. The Board is considering having a retreat in March and meeting with faculty committees during its May meetings. President Martin informed the members that the newly renovated Lord Jeffery Inn will be open to the public beginning January 6.

Under “Announcements from the Dean,” Dean Call said that he had received a request that Rosemary Feal, the director of the Modern Language Association, who is currently visiting Amherst and the Five Colleges as an ACE Fellow with faculty status, be invited to attend the December 6, 2011, Faculty Meeting as an observer. The members agreed that Ms. Feal is welcome to do so. The Dean then provided additional information about the process that he had followed to inform the recommendation to move forward with the changes to the Amherst College Defined Contribution Retirement Plan on the schedule that had originally been set. He noted that he had spoken about this issue with members of the campus community, who represented a range of constituencies, and had come away from those conversations with the sense that most people had reached decisions with which they were comfortable, and that delaying the changes would not be practical. Dean Call said, if the changes had been delayed, the College would have had to wait until March to implement them.

Under “Questions from Committee Members,” Professor Ratner noted that two colleagues—one tenured and one tenure-track—had spoken with him about the practice of holding back grades from students until they have submitted teaching evaluations. One colleague was uncomfortable that some tenure-track faculty members are being asked to prompt students to submit online teaching evaluations if they wish to receive grades. The Dean noted that, while departments may make the decision to withhold grades until teaching evaluations are submitted, in no circumstances should tenure-track faculty be put in the position of having to make that decision or be seen by their students as having chosen to withhold their grades. Department chairs or Academic Department Coordinators should re-solicit the evaluations in these circumstances, explaining the department policy. He commented that, if a department decides to withhold grades until teaching evaluations are submitted, students are not being required or coerced to write an evaluation; simply sending in a blank evaluation suffices. Dean Call stressed that departments need to make the decision about withholding grades as a department, so that using this approach is not seen as the responsibility of a tenure-track faculty member. The remainder of the meeting was devoted to personnel matters.

The meeting adjourned at 6:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory S. Call
Dean of the Faculty