

Amended February 15, 2008

The twentieth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2007-2008 was called to order by President Marx in his office at 3:30 P.M. on Monday, February 11, 2008. Present were Professors S. George, Jagannathan, O'Hara, Servos, and Sinos, Dean Call, President Marx, and Assistant Dean Tobin, Recorder. Professor Frank was absent due to illness.

The meeting began with announcements from the President. President Marx informed the members that he had shared with the senior staff of the College the Committee's view that it would be best that students not be singled out for special recognition through awards that are presented during Commencement. Last year, the Woods-Travis Prize, the award given to the graduating senior who has the highest overall grade average, and the Obed Finch Slingerland Memorial Prize, which is awarded to the senior who has "shown by his/her own determination and accomplishment the greatest appreciation of and desire for a college education," were given at Commencement. (In addition, Phebe and Zephaniah Swift Moore Teaching Award recipients were acknowledged at Commencement.) President Marx noted that some members of the senior staff felt that it was important that such awards be given at Commencement so the awards and their recipients have maximum visibility. They felt, in particular, that awarding the Woods-Travis Prize at the Phi Beta Kappa ceremony would not be a good idea, since only a small number of students, faculty, staff, and family members attend that event. Noting her belief that most faculty members feel that Commencement should be day for honoring all Amherst students equally for the accomplishment of earning an Amherst degree, Professor Sinos wondered if most faculty members would agree with the Committee that awards should not be given at Commencement. She wondered if it would be helpful to the President to have the Faculty vote on this matter. Other members felt that the Faculty's time should not be used for this purpose, while noting that they believe that other colleagues would feel as the Committee does.

Discussion turned to the related matter of whether the College should be awarding the chief academic award (the Woods-Travis Prize) on a strictly numerical (raw GPA) basis. All agreed that using this sole criterion often does not identify the most accomplished or well-rounded student, academically. Some members wondered whether it has been agreed that this is the chief academic award. The President reiterated that he too feels that a purely numeric calculation of academic performance may not be the best measure of academic excellence and suggested again that the Faculty might want to consider the criteria for the award in the future. Professor George suggested that the history of the Woods-Travis Prize be reviewed, and the President agreed to read the relevant minutes and legislation, as well as the current description of the award. He said that he would share his findings with the Committee at a future meeting.

Continuing his remarks, President Marx reviewed with the members the consultative process that took place over the past two years, which has resulted in a set of college-wide priorities that are serving as the underpinning of the upcoming comprehensive campaign. He noted that a planning committee was created (the Committee on Academic Priorities, a.k.a. the CAP) with a majority of faculty membership; the Faculty voted to have co-chairs of that committee; the Faculty reviewed the full report of the CAP, including its twenty-two recommendations; the Faculty voted to support in principle the CAP report and the accompanying sum and substance; and the Committee of Six helped to determine which

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committees would consider the implementation of individual recommendations, based on the charges of these committees and the substance of the recommendations. The members agreed that the purposefulness with which the Faculty was included in the process of setting the priorities that would inform the campaign was unprecedented.

The President noted that he and colleagues have been consulting with the Committee on Priorities and Resources (CPR) about the costs of implementing the CAP recommendations. He commented that, while it may be important for donors to be given fundraising categories and numerical targets for particular priorities—such as increasing access (financial aid) or academic life—setting and meeting fundraising goals for these categories will not determine the implementation, or the timing of the implementation, of the CAP recommendations. President Marx noted that all of the CAP's proposals are now in the process of being implemented or are the subject of further consultation (for example, writing). By necessity, funding may shift, based on donor response and interest. Any changes in the fundraising goals for particular areas will not change the College's ability to fund all of the CAP proposals—through fundraising, as well as through other means such as the endowment, loans, and the operating budget. While the campaign goal will likely be between \$400 million and \$425 million, the costs of implementing all of the CAP recommendations will be higher, President Marx said. The President reiterated his and the Board's intention to proceed to implement the recommendations of the CAP, even before all funding has been secured. For example, he noted that he expects that the Board will vote to implement the 100 percent sabbatical program in 2009-2010 and need-blind admission for international students (beginning with the Class of 2013) at their next meeting in April. The President commented that the Trustees have agreed to allocate new FTEs more quickly than originally envisioned, as well, in keeping with advice received last year from the Faculty.

Continuing the conversation, Dean Call noted that, while the practices associated with fundraising were new to many members of the CPR—and that some members worried initially that the setting of fundraising goals for particular areas would have an impact on the resources that would be devoted to implementing particular CAP recommendations—he believed that the members were now feeling more comfortable with the purposes and process of establishing fundraising targets. The President reiterated that campaign funds will not be sought or accepted to support any goal that has not been part of the consultative process of the CAP or future faculty deliberations. He noted that, in his conversations with donors thus far, they have been very excited by the priorities of the campaign. Many are willing to offer general support for the recommendations of the CAP, rather than stipulating that their gifts be put toward a particular priority. Dean Call noted that, as it should, the CPR is playing an important role in the process of consulting with the administration about the campaign. In keeping with their role in the implementation process, the CPR informed the President and the Dean that the initial proposal for supporting student research did not fully reflect the extent of interest among the Faculty and the students. As a result, the CPR plans to recommend a significant increase in the amount of support for faculty-student collaborative research, Dean Call noted.

Several members of the Committee commented that the pace of change in recent years has surprised many colleagues, and that some colleagues may be feeling some unease or

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confusion about the implementation process because they have not yet had time to catch their collective breath. Some members felt that some colleagues might also be a bit suspicious of the CAP implementation process because of its scale and ambitiousness, resulting in the view that some CAP recommendations will be given higher priority, when it comes to implementation, than others. Professor Servos said that he could not have imagined several years ago how quickly the CAP process would move forward, nor that so much would be accomplished so quickly. He commented that he views the success of the CAP process as testimony to the energy and skill of the administration. Professor O'Hara said that she has felt, at times, that there is less of a consultative process now than in the past, when it comes to certain things. She noted that she sometimes feels that she finds out about changes after the fact, when it's too late to make her voice heard. She wondered if this state of affairs is a byproduct of the rapidity of the changes that the College has been experiencing. President Marx noted that, if systems—such as committee structures—are working properly, individuals should not feel disconnected in this way. He said that he remains committed to faculty oversight through established committee structures and that he is grateful for the Faculty's engagement and the way in which committees have sought to be all the more effective. The President also reiterated that it is his hope that any concerns about a lack of consultation would be anticipated or brought forward, and he said that the administration must remain cognizant of such concerns. Professor Servos noted that, for most colleagues, their scholarship and teaching come first, and the life of the College comes second. It has been, in fact, hard to keep up with everything that has been going on in recent years, he said, but the basics of faculty governance do appear to be working and to be up to the tasks at hand. Professor Sinos suggested that faculty concerns are not based on misunderstanding of the process so much as a concern that the College budget is not unlimited, so that priorities do matter.

The Dean made several announcements, including that Professor Benedetto has agreed to serve on the Student Fellowship Committee and that Professor Brandes will join the Ad Hoc Committee on Study Abroad. Vacancies on these committees were the result of leaves and changes in committee assignments, the Dean said. Professor Sinos asked if the Committee could discuss committee assignments earlier this year than it has done in the past, or at least have a list of eligible faculty members to consider. The Dean said that he is open to doing so, but some of the timing around the consideration of committee assignments is dependent on the completion of the Committee of Six election. The Dean next asked if the administrators, librarians, and students who are serving with faculty on the Library Planning Committee should attend the February 19 Faculty Meeting, since campus facilities planning is on the agenda and the library will be discussed under that rubric. The members agreed that it would be helpful to have the full Library Planning Committee present. In response to the Committee's inquiry at the last meeting, the Dean reported that he had confirmed with the Dean of Students office that the Counseling Center, Health Center, and Dean of Students' Office all have regular hours during Interterm.

Under "Questions from Committee Members," Professor Sinos asked the Dean if plans were in place to evaluate the new pet policy, which was implemented in July 2006. She

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suggested that a special committee be established for this purpose. The Dean and the President said that they would consult with the senior staff about this issue.

Professor George next raised questions about some of the recent practices and directions being taken by the College's Department of Information Technology (IT), and the other members also expressed criticisms of IT. These criticisms were directed primarily at policy decisions regarding the role of IT, particularly the balance between service and support to the academic work of the Faculty, versus innovation and production of software, and not at the work of the IT staff. The members agreed that staff in all areas of IT have been and continue to be responsive and helpful. At the conclusion of the discussion, the Dean suggested that there seemed to be a need to improve communication between the IT Department and the Faculty. As a first step, he asked the members if they would like to have an informal meeting with Peter Schilling, Director of Information Technology, and, perhaps, Lyle McGeoch, Chair of the Faculty Computer Committee. The members agreed that such a meeting would be helpful for gaining clarity on these matters.

At 5:10, the Committee was joined by Rick Griffiths, Associate Dean of the Faculty and coordinator of Amherst's New England Association of Schools and College (NEASC) reaccreditation review, to discuss the upcoming (March 2-5) visit to campus of the evaluation team. In preparation for the Committee's meeting with the reviewers, Dean Griffiths reviewed the procedures and expectations of the reaccreditation process and the standards by which the College will be evaluated. He also discussed with the members issues that might be of particular interest to the reviewers, given the matters raised by the last evaluation team a decade ago, and NEASC's recent revision of its standards and current emphases. President Marx stressed that what is most important to convey is that, rather than resting on its successes, the College is actively engaged in thinking about its work, challenging itself, and exploring important and complex questions that are not easily resolved. At the conclusion of the discussion, the members thanked Dean Griffiths for sharing his knowledge about the reaccreditation process.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory S. Call  
Dean of the Faculty