

Amended May 9, 2012

The twenty-seventh meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2011-2012 was called to order by Dean Call in the President's office at 3:30 P.M. on Monday, April 30, 2012. In addition to Dean Call, Professors Basu, Ferguson, Hewitt, Loinaz, Ratner, and Umphrey, and Assistant Dean Tobin, Recorder, were present. President Martin was absent from the meeting. The Committee turned briefly to personnel matters.

The members felt that it would be helpful to discuss the procedures for considering tenure cases for senior hires. The Dean noted that any changes to the prescribed make-up of ad hoc tenure committees (two tenured members who represent the department(s) of the candidate and two tenured professors from other departments) would require a vote of the Faculty.

At 4:00 P.M., John Isaacson and Ponneh Varho of the search firm Isaacson, Miller joined the meeting to discuss with the members the search process envisioned for the Provost, potential responsibilities of the position, and the qualities and characteristics that would be most desirable in a Provost. Based on what they learn after conversations with the President, Dean, Senior Staff, members of the Faculty, and members of the staff, and from two open meetings (one that had already been held and one scheduled for the next day), Mr. Isaacson and Ms. Varho will draft a position description. The President, the Dean, the Committee of Six, and the search committee, once it is appointed, will review and finalize that document.

Continuing, Mr. Isaacson said that it is his understanding that the position is envisioned as a vehicle for enhancing the College's ability to "make good ideas actionable." The conversation focused on the role that the Provost might play in the realm of strategic planning, as well in facilitating ongoing administrative processes, as well as new initiatives. Mr. Isaacson characterized the nature of the position as being that of a "convener" and emphasized that the envisioned role of the Provost would be a broad one that would extend across the College and bring members of the Amherst community together. Professor Basu commented that having a position that would have as a focus building bridges and strengthening connections and communication among the College's different constituencies would be ideal. Discussion also focused on the necessity of defining the responsibilities of the Provost in ways that do not diminish the role of the Dean of the Faculty, while still relieving the Dean's position of some of its overwhelming burdens in particular administrative areas.

Mr. Isaacson asked what the members felt the focus of the Dean of the Faculty position should be. The Committee agreed that the Dean should primarily be concerned with supporting the Faculty, including ensuring that the Faculty's scholarship and creative work and teaching flourish, and participating fully in strategic planning in academic affairs. A critical role of the Dean should remain overseeing hiring and the consideration of the future composition of the Faculty, the members noted. The Committee felt that the Dean should continue to oversee faculty compensation and other areas of the academic budget. Of course, there would be some overlap with the Provost. For example, the Provost will have responsibility for supporting diversity across the College, which will intersect with faculty recruitment. The Dean should also continue to serve as the Faculty's liaison to the President, the Committee agreed. Several members expressed the view that it will be essential that the addition of the Provost position not result in the creation of an additional layer between the Faculty and the President. Professor Ferguson commented that the Provost and the Dean should have parallel roles in the administrative structure, but that the scope and purview of each role would be different and should be clearly defined.

Professor Basu suggested that the Provost be tasked with considering ways in which the Faculty could be relieved of some of its administrative responsibilities, while maintaining the Faculty's central role in the governance of the College. Thinking about ways to streamline the committee structure might be one approach. If ways could be found for faculty to spend less

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time on committee work, colleagues would have more time to focus on their scholarship and teaching, Professor Basu said. Professor Hewitt noted that it would be helpful if the Provost plays a central role in campus space planning, with an eye to more strategic planning and coordinated oversight. Professor Umphrey stressed the need for the Provost to play a role in student life and campus culture, helping to build structures to bring students together with one another and to encourage connections among students, faculty, and staff—knitting the College together into a richer brocade. Professor Umphrey commented on the importance of having the Provost work with members of the community to generate and implement ideas, noting that the individual will not be successful if he or she tries to impose ideas from the top down. Professor Hewitt agreed. Continuing, Professor Umphrey said that she thinks the Provost might usefully play a communications role, as well, collaborating with the President and the Dean to advocate for liberal arts education to both internal and external audiences. Professor Ratner emphasized the importance of the Provost working in ways that are highly collaborative, both with the Dean of the Faculty and the Dean of Students, as well as with others with whom he or she will work closely.

Professor Basu asked if there will be a search committee for the position and about the timetable for the search. Mr. Isaacson responded that he believes that there will be a relatively small search committee and that the position description should be finalized within several weeks. It is his understanding that the search would be launched soon after, with interviews occurring this fall and a decision made by early in 2013. Just when the new Provost would start work at Amherst would depend on the successful candidate's current commitments and responsibilities, Mr. Isaacson said. He would expect that the Provost would be in place by July 2013. At the Committee's request, Mr. Isaacson discussed how Provosts at other liberal arts colleges, as well as universities, are positioned within these other institutions' administrative structures. He noted that the responsibilities that have typically been associated with a Provost take on many different forms and often have different titles—for example, Vice-President for Academic Affairs, depending on the institution. At some institutions, the Dean and the Faculty and the Provost positions are combined and held by the same person. Noting the range of preparation among Amherst's students, Professor Ferguson emphasized the importance of having the Provost focus on ways to support the entire spectrum of students, meeting the educational and co-curricular needs of all.

At the conclusion of the conversation, Mr. Isaacson and Ms. Varho thanked the Committee and left the meeting at 5 P.M.

Dean Call next informed the members that he has received a proposal for a potential change to the academic calendar for 2012-2013. The proposal is to change the week during the Fall term when Monday classes are held on a Wednesday from the first week of the term to the October-break week. The timing of the current switch has an adverse impact on those teaching and/or potentially taking a once-a-week Wednesday seminar because, under the current schedule, such seminars meet only once before the end of the add/drop period. Dean Call said he thinks, on balance, implementing the proposal would be a viable solution to the problem. Dean Call has asked Marian Matheson, Director of Institutional Research and Planning, to gather data on how many students who pre-registered in the fall would be affected by the Wednesday once-a-week seminar problem at the beginning of the term, versus being out-of-phase with the other colleges for a day during the post-fall break week. He said that he would also consult with the College Council and the Senior Staff about the proposal. Possible decisions going forward might include: trying the new system this next fall, which would require the approval of the Committee of Six and the College Council, as well as vote of the Faculty at the Faculty Meeting on May 17; referring the question for College Council consideration in the fall and possible adoption in

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2013-2014; or leaving things as they are, if research reveals that the solution would be worse than the problem. Professor Ratner wondered if the change might interfere with the scheduling of laboratory classes held during the October Break week. The Dean said that he would report back on Ms. Matheson's research at the next Committee of Six meeting. The members said that the proposal sounds viable, but would await the results of the research, and the consultation, that the Dean had described.

The Committee spent the remainder of the meeting making nominations of colleagues to serve on faculty committees for the 2012-2013 year. Dean Call noted that, once the assignments are confirmed for the standing committees of the Faculty, he would share with the Committee suggested nominations for the ad hoc committees. He invited the members to comment on these suggested nominations if they wished.

The meeting adjourned at 5:45 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory S. Call
Dean of the Faculty