

Amended March 28, 2008

The twenty-third 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, March 24, 2008. Present were Professors Frank, S. George, Jagannathan, O'Hara, Servos, and Sinos, Dean Call, President Marx, and Assistant Dean Tobin, Recorder.

The Dean began the meeting by asking the members if they would be able to meet with Shelley Storbeck of Storbeck and Pimintel, the search firm that is assisting the College with the search for the Special Assistant to the President for Diversity and Inclusion. Professors George, Frank, and O'Hara agreed to meet with Ms. Storbeck. The Committee then turned briefly to a personnel matter.

Dean Call informed the members that he had written to the six departments that rotate their chairs annually to see if they might consider extending their chair's term, for the sake of continuity. Some departments expressed willingness to do so, but said that taking this step had been impractical recently because of the small number of senior faculty among whom their chair rotates. One department agreed to experiment with having a two-year term, the Dean said.

Dean Call next reported back to the Committee about the history of the Woods-Travis Prize. The Faculty voted in 1986 to combine the Woods and Travis prizes and to award the prize to the student with the highest academic standing in the class. The prize has continued to be awarded on that basis since that time.

Professors Sinos and Servos reiterated their view that it would be desirable not to single out students with awards at Commencement, in keeping with the tradition of egalitarianism at that event. President Marx suggested that a committee of the Faculty, perhaps the Committee on Student Fellowships, should consider the criteria for awarding the Woods-Travis Prize and the venue for presenting this award, as well as for the Obed Finch Slingerland Memorial Prize, which is also given at Commencement. That prize is awarded "to a member of the senior class who has shown, by his/her own determination and accomplishment, the greatest appreciation of and desire for a college education." The Committee noted that, according to College Catalog language, the Woods-Travis Prize is awarded for "outstanding excellence in culture and faithfulness to duty as a scholar."

With regard to the criteria currently used to determine the winner of the Woods-Travis Prize, the members agreed that it would be preferable that the top academic award at Amherst not be based on GPA alone. President Marx concurred, noting that the criteria for this award should convey the values of the College. Professor Jagannathan suggested that the Committee on Student Fellowships might review the records of students with the top ten GPAs in the senior class and use a set of broader criteria to select the winner of the Woods-Travis Prize. Professor Servos commented that it might be difficult to gain consensus about such criteria. Professor Jagannathan responded that the criteria should not be very specific, in order to allow the committee to have flexibility in the selection process. Professor Servos noted that it would be important to review the original language, from the time that the gifts that funded these awards were made, to learn the donors' intent and any parameters that were set. Dean Call agreed to do so and to report back to the Committee. President Marx, while expressing his support for considering changing the criteria for the award and for considering a different venue during Commencement Weekend for awarding both student prizes, said that, for practical reasons, things should remain unchanged for this year while this issue is explored.

In connection with the conversation about Commencement awards, the Committee returned briefly to the topic of recent changes that were made to Commencement Weekend.

Amended March 28, 2008

Professor Frank asked about the reasoning behind abolishing Class Day. President Marx said that attendance at Class Day events was poor. The format also necessitated singling out one honorary degree recipient to deliver a speech, an approach that limited the ability of the community to interact with the other honorees. In the new format, the honorary degree recipients' talks are spread among multiple time slots, allowing members of the community the opportunity to hear more of the recipients speak than in the old format. Other changes, such as presenting awards to staff members at the Senior Dinner and changing the format of Senior Assembly, seem to have been well received, President Marx said. Professor Jagannathan noted that the Dean of the Faculty now delivers a speech at Senior Assembly, when, in the past, he or she typically gave a short welcome. Dean Call said that he had followed the recent tradition established by his predecessors, but that he would certainly be willing to forego giving a speech, if that was the preference. Other members did not express an opinion. In a final comment relating to Commencement, Professor O'Hara expressed concern that students often catch their robes on a handrail on stage and trip. She suggested that the rail be modified to ensure safety, and Assistant Dean Tobin agreed to inquire about this issue. The Committee then turned to a personnel matter.

The Committee reviewed the motion to create a standing faculty committee on international education. Professor Sinos wondered why the committee would not be called the Committee on Study Abroad. Dean Call said that it is his understanding that it is the current ad hoc committee's recommendation that the permanent committee be called the Committee on International Education. That title, according to the current committee, reflects the work that it has done, and will continue doing, on other opportunities under the larger umbrella of international education, rather than just semester- or year-long study abroad. President Marx noted the increasing importance for students, as global citizens, to have educational experiences that are international in scope. An increasing number of students wish to study away for a year, rather than a semester. In addition to having students benefit educationally from extended immersion in a foreign country, the prospect of having additional students study abroad for a year will enable the College to enroll more students overall, but not to increase the number of students on campus at any given time. Professor George expressed a preference for having exchange students, who come to the College for one year, rather than international students who enroll for four years. In his experience, many international students of the latter kind are unfamiliar with the liberal arts and often have difficulty adjusting to the American system, he said. President Marx disagreed, noting that most international students who come to the College for four years are as engaged as most American students in the liberal arts curriculum. The other members and the Dean agreed that having both exchange students and four-year international students is most desirable.

Professor Jagannathan suggested that the faculty members of the new standing committee should not be limited to faculty who teach foreign languages, but should include a variety of disciplines. In addition, he noted that perceived barriers to study abroad in the sciences do not exist, with the exception of issues surrounding the language of instruction. Students in the sciences who are not fluent in a language other than English are limited to studying in English-speaking countries, but otherwise should not find it a problem to study abroad, he said. Professor O'Hara noted that there is a trend toward international collaboration in the sciences, and she noted that many students are interested in having research experiences abroad in the summer. She wondered if funding would be available to support such activities, and the Dean

Amended March 28, 2008

said that the proposal to increase support for student research, which is being put forward by the Committee on Priorities and Resources, would encompass support for such summer research experiences abroad. The Committee then voted six in favor and zero opposed on the substance of the following motion and six in favor and zero opposed to forward it to the Faculty:

The Committee of Six recommends that the Ad Hoc Committee on Study Abroad be re-named the Committee on International Education, that the committee move (beginning in 2008-2009) from ad hoc status to permanent status as a standing faculty committee, and that the following draft charge be adopted:

Charge to the Committee on International Education

The Committee on International Education is composed of three members of the Faculty (each from a different department), one of whom will serve as chair, and the Director of International Experience and Registrar, ex officio. The term for the faculty members of the committee is three years. Members of the committee and the committee's chair are appointed by the Committee of Six. The committee shapes policies and procedures for evaluating and approving study-abroad programs for Amherst students. The members maintain and review a list of College-approved study-abroad programs, review student petitions for study-abroad programs that are not already on the College-approved list, review student evaluations of all international educational programs, facilitate communication between the Faculty and the Director of International Experience to aid in advising, and consult with the Director to identify new opportunities for international experiences and to facilitate student participation in them.

Discussion turned next to a draft of a charge for the First-Year Seminar Committee. After some discussion and revision, which focused on the need for specificity, flexibility, and clarity, the members approved, by a vote of six in favor and zero opposed, the following charge to the committee:

Charge to the Ad Hoc Committee to Review
the First-Year Seminar Program

The Ad Hoc Committee to Review the First-Year Seminars is charged by the Committee of Six to deliberate with the campus community and to investigate the practices of peer institutions in order to develop proposals for non-departmental first-year seminars. The Ad Hoc Committee is asked to consult with the Committee on Educational Policy and to submit its recommendations to the Committee of Six by November 30, 2008. These proposals should address the educational needs of students without regard to the logistics of staffing the program.

In recent decades, the Faculty has periodically reviewed and reconstituted seminars for first-year students. Since the First-Year Seminar (FYS) program

Amended March 28, 2008

began in 1998, we have come to understand the needs of our changing student body in greater depth through the extensive process of evaluation and planning that began with Special Committee on the Amherst Education (SCAE) in 2002. The recent accreditation review has brought into focus the need for greater clarity in explaining the workings of our curriculum and for vigorous and systematic attention to the range of preparations and talents that incoming students bring to Amherst.

Among the questions the Committee might address are the following:

- What should be the mission of the FYS program and how can that mission be communicated to first-year students and to faculty members?
- Is there a need for each student to take more than one required seminar to accomplish this mission?
- Are there certain academic skills that we want our students to develop in the first semester to prepare them to take advantage of the open curriculum?
- Should there be common expectations of pedagogical approaches, such as regular conferences?
- Should there be expectations or guidelines about the subjects of the courses? Should there be any common themes or readings?

In its deliberations, the Committee may also wish to consider the responsibilities and authority of the FYS Committee in selecting faculty to teach in the program, in shaping the particular seminars, and in maintaining balance and range in the offerings overall; what forms of training and support should be provided for the instructional staff and what kinds of mentoring should be incorporated into the program; and the membership of the FYS Committee or its successor (Should the committee include the Dean of New Students? Should there be an Associate Dean of the Faculty as coordinator of the program?).

The Committee next reviewed its motion on term limits for service on the Committee of Six, which read as follows:

Revision (in bold caps) of *Faculty Handbook*, section IV. Faculty Responsibilities, Academic Regulations, Meetings and Committees, S. Committees, 1. Committees of the Faculty, a. The Committee of Six, paragraph 6:

All professors, associate professors, and assistant professors appointed to regular, part-time or part-time tenure-track positions are eligible to serve on the Committee of Six, except: 1) the President and the Dean of the Faculty; 2) those

Amended March 28, 2008

newly appointed during their first year at Amherst; 3) those who will not be at Amherst for one or both semesters of the year following the election; 4) members of the Committee on Educational Policy; 5) members of the College Council; 6) retiring members of the Committee on Educational Policy and the College Council (who are also ineligible for one year for election or re-election to either of these committees); 7) retiring members of the Committee of Six and those who retired from it in the previous three years (i.e., retiring members cannot be reelected for four years); **8) THOSE WHO HAVE SERVED THREE OR MORE TERMS ON THE COMMITTEE OF SIX AND THEN EXERCISE THE OPTION OF TAKING THEIR NAMES OFF THE BALLOT EACH YEAR BY CONTACTING THE DEAN OF THE FACULTY'S OFFICE BEFORE THE ELECTION BEGINS;** 9) and under extraordinary personal circumstances, after petitioning the President or the Dean of the Faculty, those individuals for whom service on the Committee would be a particular hardship.

At the members' request, the Dean reviewed the number of active faculty who could potentially remove themselves from the ballot if the motion passes. Thirteen faculty members who have served on the committee three or more times could do so, he noted. Professor Servos reiterated his concern about putting the burden of Committee of Six service on associate professors and newly promoted full professors, which would be an effect of passing this motion, he believes. Professor Frank expressed concern for those colleagues, and for the costs to their careers, who have been elected repeatedly to the Committee of Six. She has found the burden of service on the Committee to be tremendous, hurting not only her research, but her teaching as well, and she has served only one year. Professor O'Hara agreed and noted that there is a personal cost for these colleagues, as well, because of the time demands that the Committee imposes. She also feels strongly that departments are better served if members have experience with reappointment, tenure, and promotion reviews as Committee members. Professor O'Hara said that there currently is not enough breadth, in terms of the range of departments, represented on the Committee of Six.

President Marx said that he is keenly aware of the burden that service on the Committee places on colleagues, and he believes that, given the importance of the work that the Committee does, the Faculty as a whole would want the best possible colleagues to serve. Professor Jagannathan expressed gratitude for the President's positive characterization of those who get elected as the "best possible colleagues," but wondered if in reality there might not be a more negative impetus in how colleagues vote. The Committee then voted on the motion. The members voted six in favor and none opposed to forward the motion to the Faculty and four in favor, one opposed (Professor Servos), with one abstention (Professor Sinos) on the substance of the motion.

Amended March 28, 2008

The Committee next reviewed the Faculty Meeting Agenda for the meeting of April 1 and agreed that the motions regarding the Committee on International Education and the Committee of Six term limits for service should be included on the agenda. It was decided that questions remained about the best way to present the report of the Faculty Committee on Admission and Financial Aid, and that discussion of that report by the Faculty should be postponed until the next Faculty Meeting. The members then approved the agenda by a vote of six in favor and zero opposed.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory S. Call

Dean of the Faculty