

Amended October 29, 2007

The sixth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2007-2008 was called to order by President Marx in his office at 3:00 P.M. on Monday, October 15, 2007. Present were Professors Frank, S. George, Jagannathan, O'Hara, Servos, and Sinos, Dean Call, President Marx, and Assistant Dean Tobin, Recorder.

The Dean informed the members that Jenny Kallick, Professor of Music; David Schneider, Associate Professor of Music; and Adam Sitze, Assistant Professor of Law, Jurisprudence and Social Thought, have agreed to serve on the Memorial Minute Committee for Mirjana Lausevic, Joseph E. and Grace W. Valentine Visiting Assistant Professor of Music in 2006-2007. Professor Lausevic died on July 15, 2007. Dean Call said that he is working to form a Memorial Minute Committee for Ernest Alfred Johnson, Professor of Romance Languages, Emeritus.

In light of the Committee's recommendation that the proposal for a new Environmental Studies major be reformulated to reflect a greater emphasis on the intellectual arguments for the major and the strengths of the proposed program within the field of Environmental Studies, the Dean asked if the Committee wished to meet with representatives of the faculty group that has developed the proposal for the Environmental Studies major. The Committee agreed that a meeting would be helpful, and Dean Call agreed to ask the Environmental Studies group to send some representatives to meet with the Committee of Six on October 22.

Under "Questions from Committee Members," Professor George inquired about the committee that will review the functions and structure of the Office of the Registrar, which was discussed by the Committee of Six on September 10. Professor George noted that, since Mr. Mager, the current Registrar, will leave his position at the end of March, there does not seem to be much time to do the review and also to have a search for a replacement. He wondered if the committee has been named. He also asked whether consideration of the structure of the Registrar's office might include possibly changing the reporting line of the office so that it would no longer be on the faculty side of the College's organizational chart. Professor George expressed concern about any changes in structure that might erode faculty control over the awarding of academic credit for the degrees Amherst confers and/or the independence of the Registrar in implementing the policies approved by the Faculty. He also asked if the Dean remained committed to having a faculty member chair the committee and to having another faculty member serve on it. In the same vein, Professor Sinos commented that some faculty members have conveyed concerns to her about the possible weakening of the role of the Registrar as the Faculty's representative, should a restructuring result in a change in the reporting line.

The Dean said that, after consulting with colleagues, he has become convinced that the best approach is to have the committee initiate a search for a new Registrar and consider simultaneously the functions and structure of the office. He noted that Allen Hart, Professor of Psychology and Dean of New Students, has agreed to chair the committee; his experience on the Faculty and in the Dean of Students office gives him a broad perspective on the work of the

Amended October 29, 2007

Registrar's office. The Dean said that he would announce the members of the committee soon and that there would be one additional faculty member.

Professor George noted that having a committee run a search while simultaneously engaging in a reconsideration of the basic function and organizational place of a College office seems unusual. Dean Call responded that it has been his experience on a number of search committees that the search process itself may reveal not only an excellent pool of candidates, but that it may also help educate the search committee about the range of organizational models and practices at peer institutions. It is his hope that by focusing on the search, the committee may also learn whether there are models or practices at other institutions that would be interesting to investigate. Dean Call said that, under Mr. Mager's leadership, the College has had a well-functioning office that provides excellent service to faculty and students. However, with the Registrar's retirement, the impending move to online registration, and the increasing demands for data and the astute analysis of it, it seems an opportune moment, perhaps even a necessity, to examine what the College does with its most important academic information and how the Amherst community's expectations for excellent service and analysis can best be met and how resources can be most efficiently allocated.

Professor Servos said that he shares some of Professor George's concerns and is puzzled about how a review of the functions of the Office of the Registrar will interdigitate with a search for a new Registrar. He commented on the recent growth in the staffing of the Dean's office and asked if the College may be missing an opportunity to look at how multiple pieces of the administration relate to one another. The Dean noted that it is his hope that the committee that will focus on the Registrar's search will begin the process of studying the functions and the structure of the office, but that no specific plans will be made in terms of reorganization until the new Registrar arrives—so that he or she can be involved. Professor Jagannathan asked what candidates for the position will be told in this regard. The Dean said that they will be informed that the selected candidate will play a role in developing the office and negotiating change, if needed. The Dean said that, while there is no presumption that the reporting line will change, he would not foreclose the possibility.

Professor George reiterated that his concern is that, if the Registrar were no longer to report to the Dean of the Faculty, it would be more difficult for him or her to resist pressures to grant credit for courses that may not meet the Faculty's standards. Professor George noted that half of all students who graduate from the College receive transfer credit for courses taken on study abroad programs or at other colleges outside the Five Colleges toward their Amherst degree. The Dean said that he does not believe that having a different reporting line would necessarily diminish the independence of the Registrar. He noted that the Registrar currently vets Five-College registrations to determine if courses at other institutions meet Amherst's criteria for a liberal arts course. If courses are questionable in the Registrar's mind, they are forwarded to Associate Dean Griffiths, who renders a judgment. This practice would remain the same even if the reporting line changed, Dean Call said. He emphasized that no decision about changing the reporting line has been made. Professors Sinos and Jagannathan commented that they have worked collaboratively with the Registrar regarding course approvals for courses being

Amended October 29, 2007

taken at other institutions and have found that the current process works well. The Registrar has asked pointed questions and has examined details closely.

Professors George and Sinos noted that, in the past, a President had tried to influence the Registrar to award credit for a particular course. President Marx said that he would never have imagined such a scenario. Professor O'Hara said that, clearly, some faculty members feel that there is at least symbolic significance to having the Registrar report to the Dean of the Faculty. Dean Call said that he would continue to protect the interests of the Faculty.

Continuing with "Questions from Committee Members," Professor Frank said that she had been asked by a colleague to convey that the Ad Hoc Committee on Academic Support has questions about its charge. The Dean said that he believes that the membership and purview of the committee were broadened, as a result of conversations over the last couple of years, to include a focus on support in areas beyond the quantitative, including writing. Two faculty members from outside the sciences were added to the committee and are contributing to its work effectively, by many accounts. The Committee agreed that it would be useful to clarify the charge of the committee. The Dean noted that standing committees and their charge are voted into existence by the Faculty, with language included in the *Faculty Handbook*. If committees are ad hoc, they often receive a letter outlining their charge, he said. Several members wondered how the Committee on Academic Support is functioning in its expanded role. President Marx asked if the committee had any oversight role for both the writing center and the quantitative center, for example. Professor Servos said that it appears that it might be time to have a discussion about the Committee on Academic Support becoming a standing committee of the Faculty and developing a formal charge for it. Professor Frank agreed that the time appears to be ripe for such consideration. While there have been many informal efforts in regard to academic support, she said, a new standing committee could coordinate new and emerging initiatives and would be in keeping with the College's commitment to support as fully as possible the students who are admitted.

The Dean suggested that the Ad Hoc Committee on Academic Support could work on developing its charge. Professor Jagannathan recommended that Professor O'Hara, in her new role as Senior Advisor to the Dean for Academic Life (beginning officially in 2008-2009) might gather the many interested constituencies—those that are involved in the Summer Science Program or peer mentoring, for example—to consider the charge and the structure of the committee. The members, the Dean, and the President, agreed that having Professor O'Hara coordinate this effort would be beneficial, and she agreed to take on a leadership role in this effort.

Continuing the conversation, Professor George wondered if the reporting lines of the directors of the Quantitative and Writing Centers might be reconsidered. He noted that Susan Snively, Director of the Writing Center, recently announced her retirement. Several members agreed that consideration could be given to organizing these centers for academic support under the Dean of Faculty's office, rather than within the Dean of Students office, as recommended for the Writing Center by an external review team. Professor O'Hara commented that this was an issue in the hiring of the first Director of the Quantitative Center. At least one highly qualified

Amended October 29, 2007

candidate lost interest in the position once it became clear that the director would have duties as an Associate Dean of Students, in addition to his or her other responsibilities. Professor Jagannathan asked whether the new Senior Advisors to the Dean for Academic Life might play a role in overseeing these positions, if they were shifted to the Dean's office.

The Committee turned to personnel matters.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory S. Call  
Dean of the Faculty