

Amended March 27, 2008

The twenty-first 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 25, 2008. Present were Professors Frank, S. George, Jagannathan, O'Hara, Servos, and Sinos, Dean Call, President Marx, and Assistant Dean Tobin, Recorder.

The meeting began with announcements from the President. President Marx said that he would like to respond to questions that had been raised at the Faculty Meeting of February 19 about his comments in the Committee of Six minutes regarding the diversity of political views represented within the Faculty. At the Faculty Meeting, several colleagues conveyed concern about the President's statement in the minutes that, in his view, while a political litmus test should clearly not be applied to the process of faculty hiring, it was his hope that ways might be found to encourage departments, when they make hires, to consider the aim of having a range of perspectives represented by their members. President Marx reiterated that he did not mean to suggest, nor does he believe, that the faculty hiring process should be purposefully politicized through the use of a political litmus test or through any other devices. His concern, which perhaps was misunderstood because of the way it was worded, is that the curriculum could be constrained as a result of politics, even inadvertently, entering into the hiring process; he trusts that the Faculty would share concern about any such constraint. The President said that he plans to speak with Professor Alex George, the College's American Association of University Professors (AAUP) representative, about this issue. Professor S. George said that it is critical that faculty autonomy in the hiring process and academic freedom be preserved. The President and the Dean agreed that doing so is of the highest priority. Raising a related issue, the President reiterated that he plans to explore further and to address complaints made to him by some conservative students that their political views are not being respected by faculty and other students.

President Marx expressed concern about progress on the Faculty's implementation of several recommendations of the Committee on Academic Priorities (CAP). He first discussed the CAP's recommendation that the College "further refine the capabilities of our online resources, both for purposes of self-assessment and advising, e.g., in software that tracks course distribution patterns of each student's course work so as to highlight and draw advising attention to those areas that may be missing from the student's learning..." (p. 25, CAP Report). He noted that, in 2006, the Committee of Six had discussed the report's recommendation that the College use software that tracks patterns of each student's course selections for purposes of advising and self-assessment and to encourage (but not require) breadth in course selection. The Committee of Six reviewed the six broad areas (outlined on page 61 of the College Catalog) within which students are currently encouraged to select courses, and which were approved by faculty vote. It was agreed that they would be used as a starting point for the advising matrix. After some discussion, the Committee of Six agreed in 2006 that the wording of one category, "knowledge of culture and a language other than one's own and of human experience in a period before one's lifetime" contains too many parts to track accurately students' course selections within this multi-faceted area. It was therefore agreed that this category should be subdivided graphically for purposes of clarity. The Committee of Six, in 2006, said that further consultation (beyond the

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Committee of Six) would not be necessary to undertake this project. That year, the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) had agreed to ask members of the Faculty to determine where each of their courses fit within the broad areas. Since that time, the CEP has returned often to a discussion of this project and has determined that, on balance, the categories in the College Catalog would be unworkable in practice. President Marx said that it is his hope that this project, which is still under consideration by the CEP, will move forward. He asked how the “keywords” notion put forward by the CEP might or might not meet the expectations of the Faculty in helping to guide advising or to provide data that could be aggregated and charted. Professor Sinos questioned the utility of providing the Faculty with an advising matrix, while Professor Servos said that he felt that it might be a useful advising tool. The President said that the Committee of Six had agreed to implement this recommendation and is gratified that the CEP will do so, using whatever categories are agreed upon as most useful.

On a related issue, the President said that he is grateful for progress being made on the issue of writing, through faculty leadership by Professors Gentzler and Barale and through various efforts, such as writing intensive courses. The President suggested that the Faculty needs a clear plan for moving toward developing a writing requirement for faculty debate and vote, as requested by the Faculty. He stated his belief that, as a matter of faculty governance, the Faculty’s will is best served if proposals are developed and acted upon.

In relation to the advising matrix, Professor Servos suggested that it might be beneficial to take an incremental approach. The Faculty might first focus on assigning their courses to one or two of the most important categories, for example. He felt that it might be best to start with designating as *W* courses those courses that offer some significant attention to writing. Doing so would be very useful for students and advisors, Professor Servos said. He noted that, in his view, the criteria for *W* courses that were developed by the Writing Committee a number of years ago should be used. While there may be no perfect answer to this question, the President said that, in his view, it would be best to choose some criteria that make sense and to move forward with designating as *W* courses those courses that meet those criteria, even though the criteria may be imperfect.

In regard to the matrix, Professor George said that he feels strongly that faculty function best, and engage most effectively in their work as teachers and advisors, without a high level of bureaucracy. Professor Frank wondered about the value of the measurement that would be provided by the advising matrix. Professor Jagannathan said that he believes that, in the aggregate over the long term, data provided by such a matrix might yield some useful information. He sees value in the project, as long as it is not a drain on faculty time and does not increase the level of bureaucracy.

Returning to the issue of writing, Professor Frank noted that substantial progress has been made on this front, and that steps are being taken that will prepare the way for the development and possible implementation of a writing requirement. Dean Call agreed. Professor Frank pointed to the fact that all of the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Writing Committee are being implemented. Faculty are learning how to teach writing through the special faculty writing seminar, and she feels that, once colleagues are more comfortable doing so, there will be more

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interest in bringing forward a proposal for a writing requirement. Professor Jagannathan suggested that it might be useful to develop a schedule and process for developing a proposal for a writing requirement. President Marx agreed.

Continuing the discussion, Professor Servos said that, while progress on the writing front is moving more slowly than he might, like progress is, in fact, being made. Professor O'Hara noted that the President may be expecting that the pace of change should be faster than what is actually desirable, from her point of view. She pointed to rapid progress on many fronts—from the decision to adopt the new environmental studies major, to the current review of the First-Year Seminar Program, to the creation of new courses for less well-prepared students—and suggested that the President should recognize that change is taking place and should have patience with the process. President Marx agreed that important changes are occurring, and said that he respects the Faculty's efforts. The President thanked the members for the perspective and said that he would take into consideration their views on the pace and range of curricular change at the College.

The Committee turned briefly to personnel business. Under "Questions from Committee members, Professor Frank noted that not a single male faculty member, other than two colleagues who are both faculty members and administrators, had attended the Teaching and Learning Lunch that was held on February 15. The lunch, which was organized by Amrita Basu, Associate Dean of the Faculty, and led by Gretchen Krull, Assistant Director of Health Education/Sexual Assault Counselor, focused on teaching disturbing materials (for example, readings and films that are sexually violent) in classrooms in which it is possible that there are women students who have been sexually assaulted, and who are vulnerable to post-traumatic responses—a topic that was broached at the November 6 meeting of the Faculty.

The Committee next reviewed briefly its recent informal conversation with Peter Schilling, Director of Information Technology, and Lyle McGeoch, Chair of the Faculty Computer Committee. The meeting was held in response to the Committee's questions about some of the recent practices and directions being taken by the College's Department of Information Technology (IT). Recommendations that emerged as a result of the conversation were that Mr. Schilling should increase communication with the Faculty via reporting at two Faculty Meetings annually and through regular targeted communication with the Faculty that should be limited to IT issues that would be of faculty concern, for example, online registration. It was agreed that creating faculty focus groups to provide feedback about new projects while they are in the development stages would also be very useful. Mr. Schilling informed the members that, despite rumors to the contrary, Blackboard will be retained and supported as a course management tool until the Faculty agrees that the new content management system (CMS) is meeting the Faculty's needs. The Committee agreed that it can be difficult for IT to recognize the impact that changes in technology have on the Faculty and that it can be difficult for the Faculty to recognize College needs in the realm of IT. At the conclusion of the discussion about IT, Professor Sinos expressed concern that the library, too, is sometimes not consulting sufficiently with Faculty about areas that are within the Faculty's domain or addressing faculty concerns when such concerns are conveyed. Could the Dean and President be

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helpful, she wondered, in fostering a stronger understanding on campus that faculty input is critical to decisions affecting resources for teaching and research? The Dean noted that the Faculty sets academic priorities through long-range planning conversations, such as the CAP process and the adoption of the College's mission statement, and develops those priorities through the work of individual departments and faculty committees (notably including the CEP). He encouraged all of his colleagues to communicate with their representatives on faculty committees whenever questions or concerns arise and, in particular, to participate in the conversations to be organized by the Library Planning Committee and for the campus academic facilities study over the next year.

The members turned to personnel matters.

The Committee next discussed the report (appended) of the Ad Hoc Committee on Study Abroad. Among other things, the report recommends that the ad hoc committee become a standing committee of the Faculty and be re-named the Committee on International Education, beginning in 2008-2009. The President noted that study abroad is an important area and that the College is supportive of it, and of its further growth, while being mindful of the constraints that particular departments have in terms of enabling students to study away from Amherst. President Marx said that it is important that the College ensures that a diversity of opportunities exists for study abroad and that Amherst takes responsibility for the quality of the programs in which our students participate. Professor Servos noted that he had hoped to see the committee address the topic of how best to integrate students' study abroad experiences into their coursework at Amherst. President Marx agreed and said that Janna Behrens, Director of International Experience, has sent him some information about how other institutions address this and other study abroad issues and that he would share this information with the committee, after checking with Ms. Behrens. Professor Sinos expressed the hope that programs would not necessarily have to be accredited to be considered appropriate for Amherst students. She noted the importance of the Faculty's role in evaluating the study abroad programs in which their students participate. At the conclusion of the discussion, the members agreed that the Dean should draft a motion, on behalf of the Committee, to approve a draft charge to the committee, to endorse the committee's change from ad hoc to permanent status (beginning in 2008-2009), and to change the committee's title to the Committee on International Education.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory S. Call
Dean of the Faculty

Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Study Abroad

Following the Report of the Special Committee on the Amherst Education of May 2003 the faculty created a Global Comprehension Working Group, which set about examining current practice at Amherst and elsewhere with regard to the issue of studying and engaging in the world beyond the U. S. In 2004 the working group recommended five initiatives, the first of which was "To provide more institutional support for students, encouraging them to engage in overseas learning, including studying, working, interning, and volunteering abroad." Specific recommendations under this initiative included establishing a faculty committee on "overseas learning" to provide oversight of study abroad. The Dean of the Faculty responded in the spring of 2005 by appointing an ad-hoc committee on study-abroad to begin work in the fall, asking that we report to the faculty in the fall of 2007, at which time the faculty might decide whether or not to establish such a committee on a permanent basis.

Based on our experience of the past two and a half years, the ad hoc committee recommends that the faculty create a permanent committee on international education beginning in the 2008-09 academic year. This committee should consist of three faculty members, each from a different department, one of whom should serve as chair, together with the registrar and the director of international experience, ex officio. The committee should be charged with 1) maintaining and reviewing a list of approved study-abroad programs; 2) reviewing student petitions for study-abroad programs that are not already approved; 3) reviewing student evaluations of all international educational programs; 4) facilitating communication between the faculty and the director of international experience to aid in advising; 5) consulting with the director in the effort to identify new opportunities for international experience and facilitate student participation in them. In support of the recommendation to establish a permanent

committee, we offer a brief history of study abroad procedures, an account of our activities, and some specific recommendations concerning how the college might work through this committee to expand the global experience of our students.

History of Study Abroad Advising and Oversight

In the past, policy and procedure were in the hands of the registrar and a staff member in the Career Center under the Dean of Students office who served as the study abroad advisor. These two consulted informally with faculty concerning programs and courses about which they might have some expertise and some opinion. There was an approved list of programs, all of which were clearly liberal arts-oriented and provided a cultural context for the courses offered. Programs not already on this list were vetted by the study abroad advisor, who surveyed advisors at other liberal arts colleges about their experiences with those programs. When reports were favorable and the programs were judged to be sufficiently rigorous academically, the registrar usually granted those programs provisional approval and then scrutinized the students' evaluations when they returned. If several Amherst students had satisfactory experiences on a "provisional" program, it joined the approved list. Overtime more than two hundred study abroad programs were approved. When student evaluations indicated that a program had deteriorated academically or administratively, it was removed from the approved list.

Beginning in the 1980s, the study abroad advisor and the registrar sought input from faculty members and urged that a faculty committee be established to provide oversight. Some of the foreign language departments provided occasional input, but faculty involvement was minimal. Individual students and advisors who sought approval for untested programs often questioned the procedures. In 1998 an ad hoc committee on study abroad recommended a

number of new procedures designed to "help bring more shape and coherence to the process" used by students in planning study abroad. The recommendations included setting earlier deadlines for filing intent to study abroad, requiring students to declare majors and submit formal applications with signatures of their advisors, and establishing regular liaison between the study abroad advisor and appropriate departments. All of these recommended procedures were implemented, but an additional recommendation that "the *ad hoc* committee be reconstituted to consider their effectiveness in addressing both the academic and financial issues" appears to have been ignored.

In 2001 William Hoffa became Amherst's official study abroad advisor on a part time basis, bringing a new level of experience and expertise to the enterprise. Students were now invited to petition for acceptance of new programs with the support of an academic advisor. By the time the Global Comprehension Working Group began its study in 2003-04, it was clear that Amherst needed a better institutional structure to help integrate study abroad into the academic programs of its students. The procedures implemented after 1998 have helped in providing some "shape and coherence" to the process, but in so doing they have only clarified the need for more faculty attention to the academic issues involved in study abroad.

In the fall of 2005 the current *ad hoc* committee, consisting of three faculty members from three separate departments, the study abroad advisor and the registrar, was established and charged with "shaping policies and procedures for evaluating and approving study-abroad programs," as well as "working to expand the range of countries and linguistic opportunities offered." We understood this charge to follow upon the recommendation of the Global Comprehension Working Group that Amherst "provide more institutional support for students,

encouraging them to engage in overseas learning," and especially to take advantage of opportunities in non-traditional areas such as Africa, Asia, and South America. In addition, we continue to be informed of the administration's concern for balancing the number of students who study abroad in the fall and spring semesters.

Finally, on the occasion of William Hoffa's retirement in 2006 the college decided to create a new position - Director of International Experience - on a full-time basis, but with some additional duties in the Career Center under the Dean of Students office. During that fall we participated in the search for the new director. Janna Behrens was hired and began her work in February of 2007. It is only now - in the fall of the ad hoc committee's third year - that we are able to proceed with the full_ benefit of her expertise in this area.

Activities of the ad hoc committee on study abroad

In pursuing the ad hoc committee's charge we have been cognizant of concerns expressed by several members of the faculty about the academic merit of some varieties of the study abroad experience. While we strongly agree with the Global Comprehension Working Group's defense of the general academic value of study abroad, we feel that improved faculty oversight of study abroad might address possible problems and strengthen the general faculty's confidence in the enterprise. Accordingly, we have established procedures for our committee's oversight of student applications to study abroad, their proposed courses of study while abroad, and requests for college credit. We have also explored new procedures for adding and removing programs from the existing "approved list" and for encouraging and evaluating student petitions to participate in programs not on this list. More generally, we have sought to improve the information and advising that students receive from the administration and the faculty. We have been interested

in ways to help students prepare themselves for study abroad - for example, encouraging them to take courses in the relevant language, history, or culture of their region of interest - and to integrate their study abroad experience into their program of study at the College. To that end we have introduced very well attended sessions on study abroad at the departmental information sessions hold during Orientation. We also have thought about how to keep the general faculty informed about study abroad issues, deadlines, and procedures as they advise students.

The focus of our work in the fall of 2007 was on improving communications, streamlining procedures, and analyzing current data concerning how, why, where, and when our students choose to study abroad. With the committee's advice, Janna is redesigning the study abroad web site to make the variety of geographic, cultural, and linguistic opportunities clearer and easier to access. We are urging departments to discuss, clarify, and post their policies about credit for the major from study abroad programs and we are working to see that information about deadlines, etc., reach all second-year students and their advisors during the fall semester. We are implementing improvements in student evaluations of programs with regard to the value of specific courses, tutorials, field work, and linguistic opportunities and their integration into individual students' academic plans. These evaluations, which are available for viewing by students and advisors on the web site, are intended to encourage other students in planning for study abroad. We are also discussing ways to increase institutional commitment to study abroad and to international experience more generally. Such discussions inevitably extend to opportunities for language study, internships, summer programs, and other opportunities that might be linked to study abroad and have a positive impact on the local academic environment.

This committee should both represent the faculty as a whole with regard to such matters and provide information to the faculty as new opportunities and problems arise.

Specific Recommendations

1) The first step in providing "more institutional support for students, encouraging them to engage in overseas learning" is to make the institution's commitment clear and visible. A quick study of Amherst and nine New England institutions with whom we like to compare ourselves shows that in 2006-07 we were unique in having no faculty committee for oversight of study abroad (**Figure 1**). Perhaps the most influential factor in encouraging study abroad at other institutions are the roles of the study abroad advisor - now called on this campus the director of international experience - and the faculty committee. The advisor is generally charged with marketing the study abroad experience to the college community. The faculty committee facilitates communication with departments and reviews programs for *academic quality*. We recommend that the permanent committee work to provide all means to enhance the academic quality of study abroad for our students and encourage them to engage in it.

2) In addition, although a commitment to international experience does appear in our mission statement, on the college web site the entry point for information concerning study abroad and other opportunities is hidden behind "Offices & Administrative Services" > "Career Center".> "International Study & Work" > "Study Abroad". We recommend that the profile of study abroad change so that prospective students and current students, as well as faculty, are encouraged to understand that providing international experience is a significant part of the *academic* mission of the college.

3) The number of students studying abroad on programs for which they have petitioned the committee has increased from 14 in 2005-06, to 27 in 2006-07, and to 33 in 2007-08. Not all petitions are approved and not all of those who petition successfully follow through. Those who do end up studying abroad on these programs tend to be highly motivated and academically engaged. The study abroad advisor and the committee have focused not so much on increasing the numbers as on matching students to appropriate opportunities. The increase in numbers nonetheless suggests that our current procedures are succeeding in encouraging qualified students to pursue new opportunities. We recommend that the committee continue to develop the communications that encourage such petitions and, after sufficient review, to move the most academically sound programs to the approved list.

4) Working to "expand the range of countries and linguistic opportunities offered" necessarily requires encouraging foreign language study, both in preparation for and during study abroad. A careful reading of the statistics shows that, by and large, the number of our students who choose to study abroad in places where the primary language spoken is not English, and where study of the native language is either required or offered as an option, has increased in the past three years (**Figure 2**). Over the past three years an alumnus has donated funds for two summer fellowships for Chinese language study in China, providing six students with a variety of academic interests an opportunity to study there. Given the success of this model, we support the Global Comprehension Working Group's recommendation "*that the College establish and provide funding for ten Summer and five Post-Graduate Global Fellowships.*" Some of these Fellowships could be targeted for the study of languages that are not currently represented in the Amherst College curriculum, or for travel to those areas of the world that are not often visited.

" We believe the Chinese summer fellowships provide a model for an attractive and academically appropriate form of international experience and recommend that the college seek funding for summer language study abroad in connection with academic programs at the college more broadly. Such an effort would enhance both the visibility of language study opportunities and the commitment to international experience as a significant part of the college's *academic* mission.

5) A quick glance at the figures shows that the number of Amherst students who depend on financial aid and study abroad as part of their academic program has increased over the past five years (**Figure 3**). The decision to replace student loans with grants for financial aid means that some students may be able to afford continuing their education internationally after graduation. Support for summer language study before graduation would further enhance this opportunity. We recommend that the college make the connections among these developments a more visible part of its mission, and that the committee explore how they can be applied to expanding opportunities for study abroad.

If we truly wish to encourage our students to engage in overseas learning as an integral part of their academic experience we - the whole college community -- will need to address several issues over the coming years. First and foremost, we will need to encourage, enable, and provide support for intensive language study. Second, we will need to explore opportunities for overseas experience beyond those study-abroad programs that occur during the regular academic year. Third, we will need to highlight the importance of global awareness and overseas learning more clearly in recruitment, admission, orientation, advising, pre-registration, and support for advanced academic work. The director of international experience and interested faculty can

identify good programs and encourage students to apply to them. We can encourage students to study appropriate languages and make students aware that their experience will be greatly enriched by taking the language in advance and studying the language while there. Or we can help to find summer language programs and internships abroad. But we cannot simply assume that students are willing or able to commit themselves to such programs without institutional encouragement and support. It should be the job of this committee to facilitate efforts in this direction without burdening advisors unnecessarily with administrative tasks.

FIGURE 1.

Permanent faculty committee for study abroad?	
Amherst	No
Bowdoin	Yes
Brown	Yes
Harvard	Yes
Smith	Yes
Vassar	Yes
Wellesley	Yes
Wesleyan	Yes
Williams	Yes
Yale	Yes

* Not called a faculty committee on study abroad at all institutions. For example, at Williams College study abroad is reviewed by the Committee for Academic Standing.

FIGURE 2.

English-speaking and Non-English-speaking countries & European and Non-European Countries for Amherst College Study Abroad Students

	% of students from the total studying abroad			
	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007
English-speaking Countries	40%	24%	21%	30%
Non-English Speaking Countries	60%	76%	79%	70%

FIGURE 3.

Study Abroad Summary 2002-2007[^]

	Total students abroad	Fall & Full Year Study Abroad Students with Aid	Spring Study Abroad Students With Aid	Total Study Abroad Students Aided	% of Aided Study Abroad Students	% Aided Overall
2006-07	155	46	37	83	54	50
2005-06	163	41	28	69	42	49
2004-05	148	27	44	71	48	48
2003-04	163	31	44	75	46	48
2002-03	155	23	30	53	34	48

[^]From Amherst College Financial Aid Office