

### **Committee of Six Minutes of Monday, October 2, 2006**

The sixth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2006–2007 was called to order by President Marx in his office at 3:30 P.M. on Monday, October 2, 2006. Present were Professors George, Hilborn, O’Hara, Parker, Schneider, and Woglom, Dean Call, President Marx, and Assistant Dean Tobin, Recorder. Corrections to the minutes of September 25 were given to the Dean, and the minutes of September 11 and September 18 were approved.

Dean Call introduced Attorney James Wallace, who participated in the meeting by speaker phone. Each fall, Mr. Wallace is invited to speak with the Committee prior to personnel discussions to provide general legal advice related to the tenure and reappointment processes. At the conclusion of the discussion with Mr. Wallace, the Dean, the President, and the Committee expressed their thanks.

Dean Call next reported to the members that he had shared the proposed enhanced charge to the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) (included in the minutes of September 18) with the members of that committee. The CEP was generally pleased with the new content, but would like to refine it further, Dean Call said. He will share the revised version of the charge with the Committee once it is completed.

The Dean then offered suggestions of colleagues to serve on the search committee for the Director of the Mead Art Museum. Dean Call said he would report back to the members once the search committee was finalized. In another committee matter, he reported that the Ad Hoc Committee on Writing has been formed. Its members are Professors Barale, Bosman, Brandes, Greenstein, and López. The Writing Committee is charged with recommending ways of implementing recommendation 18 from the CAP Report: “We recommend that all students be required to take at least one course designed as Writing Attentive, with pedagogical support to be provided for faculty engaged in such writing instruction.”

Discussion turned to a proposal (new language appears in bold capital letters) by Professor George that the section of the College Catalog on Examinations and Extensions (page 56) be clarified as follows:

Examinations are held at the end of each semester and at intervals in the year in many courses. At the end of each semester, final grades are reported and the record for the semester is closed. In conformity with the practice established by the Faculty, no extension of time is allowed for ~~intraterm~~ papers, examinations and ~~incomplete~~ laboratory or any other course work beyond the date of the last scheduled class period of the semester unless an extension is granted in writing by both the instructor and Class Dean. **LIKewise NO EXTENSION BEYOND THE LAST DAY OF FINAL EXAMINATIONS IS ALLOWED FOR SCHEDULED, SELF-SCHEDULED OR TAKE-HOME EXAMINATIONS TO BE TAKEN DURING THE FINAL EXAMINATION PERIOD, INCLUDING FINAL PAPERS DUE DURING THE EXAMINATION PERIOD, UNLESS AN EXTENSION IS GRANTED IN WRITING BY BOTH THE INSTRUCTOR AND CLASS DEAN.** Only for medical reasons or those of grave personal emergency will extensions be granted beyond the second day after the examination period.

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The members agreed that Professor George's revisions convey their understanding of current practice and suggested that the Dean propose to the CEP that these changes be incorporated into the Catalog. The Dean agreed, noting that a vote of the full Faculty is not required to revise this language since it is meant only to communicate current policy.

Under "Questions to the Administration," Professor George asked the Dean for a brief report about the Chairs meeting that was held on September 29. Dean Call said that the meeting had been very productive and had included a discussion about a proposal to change the Five-College academic calendar, which has been brought forward by UMass. The university wishes to start the spring semester two weeks earlier than it begins at present, moving the start date to just after Martin Luther King Day. The Dean said that the Chairs expressed little support for the proposal.

President Marx asked the members whether they thought that it might be worthwhile to start the spring semester earlier at Amherst so that the time in the summer during which students can pursue internships or research could be extended, allowing such experiences to become even more substantive and enriching for Amherst students. Such a change in the calendar would also lengthen the period in the summer available to the Faculty to pursue research and prepare their courses. Professor George said that he would not be in favor of such a plan, since shortening Interterm, an effect of the proposed change in the calendar, would reduce the time that science students would have to do honors work in January. Professor Woglom pointed out that the Faculty accomplishes a good deal of administrative work during Interterm. Professor O'Hara noted that Interterm is also a time during which academic support programs, such as the Phoenix Program and the calculus prep course for spring semester, are provided.

Acknowledging those counter arguments, President Marx noted that, since only about one-eighth of Amherst students do honors work during Interterm, and because there is insufficient programming during Interterm at present to utilize it fully as an educational experience, a change in the calendar might make sense. He said that, while he has been working to develop an Interterm Colloquium program, this program will not fill the entire time period devoted to Interterm, under the present structure. The President said that, while he could imagine other interesting programs that could be created for Interterm, they would be costly and would require fundraising. He suggested that time and resources might be more productively spent on other more essential educational projects at the College. Having a shorter Interterm and providing additional time for educational pursuits during three months in the summer might be a good alternative to the current model, the President noted.

Professor Parker agreed that there are merits to such an argument, noting that many Amherst students do not put the Interterm period to educational use. He said that he is aware of many institutions of higher learning that follow a calendar similar to that being proposed by UMass. Professor George noted that if the university changed its calendar and Amherst did not, Amherst students could still take classes at UMass, as long as spring break was moved. The President wondered if that approach is consistent with a spirit of Five-College cooperation. The Dean said that he would send the minutes of the Chairs meeting to the Faculty soon.

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“Under Questions to the Administration,” Professor Parker said that a colleague had brought to his attention an inconsistency between the letter (posted at <http://www.amherst.edu/alumni/future/letter22sep06.html>) that the President sent recently to all alumni, and the minutes of the September 22 meeting of the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP). Those minutes describe a discussion of whether there should be a writing requirement at Amherst. Professor Parker noted that President Marx states in his letter that the Faculty has “resolved to institute a new requirement: that all students select among courses specifically designed to improve writing and offered across the disciplines.” Dean Call said that some members of the CEP were on leave last year and were not present during the Faculty’s discussion of the Report of the Committee on Academic Priorities. He explained that the Faculty did vote in favor of instituting a writing requirement, but did not endorse a specific proposal. The Ad Hoc Committee on Writing has been charged with developing a proposal for a writing requirement, which will be brought before the Faculty for discussion and a vote.

The Committee returned briefly to the subject of admissions policy. The members continued their discussion of data-gathering and analysis as a means of developing a better understanding of the distribution of academic qualifications in classes over the last decade and the academic experiences of underprepared students at Amherst; informing considerations about how the College can meet the academic needs of all students; and guiding the development of admissions policy at the College. The Committee also focused on identifying what, specifically, the Faculty Committee on Admission and Financial Aid should be asked to explore in regard to these issues.

Considering each proposal individually and in the order in which they are listed here, the Committee next voted on the substance (having voted at the September 25 meeting of the Committee to forward the proposals to the Faculty) of the proposals for Five College certificates in: Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies; Asian/ Pacific/ American Studies; and Native American Studies. The members voted four in favor and two opposed (Professors Schneider and Woglom dissented) on the first proposal and three in favor (Professors George, Hilborn, and O’Hara), two opposed (Professors Schneider and Woglom), with one abstention (Professor Parker) on the second and third proposals. The Committee then reviewed the agenda for the Faculty Meeting of October 17 and voted unanimously to forward it to the Faculty.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory S. Call  
Dean of the Faculty