

**Committee of Six Minutes
of Monday, March 5, 2007**

The twenty-eighth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2006-2007 was called to order by the President in his office at 3:00 P.M. on Monday, March 5, 2007. Present were Professors George, Parker, Schneider, Sinos, and Woglom, Dean Call, President Marx, and Assistant Dean Tobin, Recorder. Professor O'Hara was absent by prior arrangement. The minutes of February 19 were approved. Changes to the minutes of February 26 were given to the Dean.

As the President had suggested, Professor Woglom presented the President Marx with a box of general College mail received during the past week via campus mail. The President said that the contents would be reviewed.

Discussion turned briefly to the possible mechanisms that might be put in place to provide more flexibility for the Committee when minutes need to be approved on an accelerated schedule during the week before faculty meetings. The members agreed that the Dean should explore a viable option suggested by the Department of Information Technology.

In regard to the Committee's recent discussions about FTE allocation, some members of the Committee wondered whether the following language from the February 12, 2007, letter from the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) to department chairs might imply that there could be rewards (in the form of FTEs) given to departments for having large enrollments: "Since enrollment pressures are one consideration in CEP deliberations over FTEs, please give us your view of the demands on your department in terms of number of majors, average number of advisees, class sizes, and number of honors candidates and the extent to which the new hire would affect those numbers."

President Marx said that large enrollments are a relevant factor but should not be the lone incentive for allocating FTEs. Professor Woglom noted that some departments may seek large enrollments to "game" the CEP system, but that some departments face large enrollments due to student demand. He said that his department, Economics, and the Department of Psychology, among others, have been teaching overloads and bearing an unfair burden for twenty years and certainly did not create their enrollment pressures. If the CEP ignores enrollments in their deliberations, he said, it will ill serve the students who choose to elect these departments.

Continuing the conversation, President Marx agreed that, while the College should endeavor to provide resources to ensure that courses are not overwhelmed by enrollments, some courses are well suited to larger formats. For others, limiting class enrollments and increasing rigor might be appropriate. Professor Woglom responded that perhaps the admission office should accept students with a broader range of academic interests to avoid the bunching up of student interests. He said that it seems wrong to limit the size of classes, which amounts, essentially, to closing down areas of opportunity for students. President Marx noted that, in recognition of the need to support departments, the Committee on Academic Priorities (CAP) decided that about one-fourth of the anticipated new FTEs will be allocated to meeting existing department needs.

Professor Schneider said that the CEP should be able to tell the difference between "gaming" the system through enrollments and departmental enrollment pressures that arise based on student interest. For this reason, he feels that language about enrollments should not disappear from the CEP's annual letter. Professor Parker remembered that previous letters acknowledged that departments that had concerns about being short staffed should include this

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information in their FTE requests, but noted that enrollment pressures alone was not a sufficient rationale for an FTE award. The Dean commented that it is his recollection that the CEP states each year that, while enrollments are relevant to the discussion of FTEs, they should not drive the discussion by themselves. He said that he did not recall exactly how this idea has been articulated in previous letters from the CEP, but informed the members that he is confident, from the CEP's discussion in the drafting of their letter this year, that the committee did not intend to make (or signal) any change in the relevance of enrollments to their deliberations.

Continuing the discussion, Professor Parker reiterated the desirability of having long-term curricular planning inform the FTE allocation process, while at the same time noting the difficulties that are inherent in the lack of continuity of membership of the CEP from year to year. Professor Sinos asked if the presence of the Dean on the CEP has helped provide this more extended view of curricular needs. Dean Call responded that he believes that a number of factors, including, he hopes, his presence on the committee, are allowing the CEP to gain a greater understanding of departmental curricular needs on a longer-term basis. He cited the regular conversations and planning documents of departments that informed the CAP planning process, the addition of a researcher to support the committee and serve as its librarian, and the ongoing conversations between the CEP and departments that are considering FTE proposals.

On a different subject, the President asked the members whether they thought it would be valuable to consider including on Amherst transcripts the median grade for each course taken, as suggested by a faculty colleague. Professor Sinos asked if the proposal would cover all courses, even small ones. She questioned the value of such information for small advanced seminars. Professor Schneider asked who would be served under such a system. Professor George said that information about median grades in pre-medical courses is already provided as part of Amherst students' medical school recommendations. Medical schools find this information to be very valuable in making judgements about students' academic record, he said. President Marx suggested that sample transcripts be gathered from other institutions that include information of this kind on their transcripts. He asked the members which would be the appropriate body to consider this questions, and the Committee agreed that the College Council should be consulted on this issue.

The Dean next noted some upcoming agenda items and said that it is his hope that the Committee will return to its discussion of tenure procedures for creative and performing artists once all personnel business for the semester is completed. The Committee then considered sixty-seven course proposals and voted to forward them, after a few questions are resolved, to the Faculty for approval.

Turning to a different subject, Professor Parker asked if it might be informative for the Dean to gather those constituencies interested in film and media studies at the College to have more College-wide input into a proposal for an FTE in the study of film. The Dean recalled that, in the fall, the Committee had been concerned about privileging the study of film in the FTE allocation process when he and Professor Parker had suggested the formation of an Ad Hoc Committee on the Study of Film. Hearing no objection to this proposal, the Dean agreed to work with Professor Parker on gathering interested colleagues.

The Committee then turned to personnel matters.

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Conversation turned next to whether to have a Faculty Meeting on March 13. In considering the issues that might be future subjects of discussion this semester, Professor Woglom asked about the progress of the deliberations of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Evaluation and Improvement of Teaching and the Ad Hoc Committee on Writing. Dean Call said that the writing committee is in the process of putting together a draft report and plans to speak with the CEP. The Ad Hoc Committee on the Evaluation and Improvement of Teaching has met with the CEP and plans to meet with the Committee of Six in April.

President Marx wondered if it would be informative to put a resolution before the Faculty to see if the Faculty is in favor of changing promotion procedures, allowing for debate on that resolution—to include discussion of the promotion committee's proposal, if not specifics of *Faculty Handbook* language. Professor Woglom, who had suggested a similar plan which he felt the President had not supported, asked President Marx if he had changed his mind about using such an approach. President Marx said that it might be productive to get a general sense, through such a resolution, of whether colleagues feel that changes should be made to the promotion system, including whether the Faculty wants to make the timing of the promotion decision more flexible, in accordance with existing *Faculty Handbook* language, and the review more substantive. Professor Sinos pointed out that the *Faculty Handbook's* current language provides for just such flexibility. Some members suggested that the sentiment of the room at the last Faculty Meeting (February 20) suggested that colleagues would like to have more preliminary discussion of the report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Promotion.

Professor Sinos expressed the view that the Committee of Six should not move in a particular direction until more is known about the sense of the Faculty. Professor Woglom noted that, at the last Faculty Meeting, the Faculty seemed to be divided on the promotion question—individuals either said that they were embarrassed by the pro forma nature of the current promotion process or expressed the view that the proposals of the Ad Hoc Committee on Promotion would create another hurdle for the Faculty. Professor Parker noted that Professor Olver has offered the Faculty (in her email attached to the Committee of Six minutes of February 12) excellent guidance about how to structure the Faculty's consideration of the promotion report. Professor Woglom suggested that the Faculty could vote after discussion of the first part of Professor Olver's sequence (based on the cover letter and part II of the report), that is after the consideration of the following: "Would a more thorough procedure for the evaluation of candidates for promotion to full professor be beneficial to the institution and its faculty? What's wrong with the status quo? What are the positive and negative consequences of change?"

Dean Call noted that Professor O'Hara, knowing that the Committee would be discussing this issue and that she would be absent from the meeting, wrote to him to share her thoughts about how the Committee might best shape discussion at the next Faculty Meeting. She expressed her view that the report is a reasonable and measured one and said that it is her hope that the Faculty would adopt some of its recommendations. Faculty need to discuss the "should we" question before the "how should we" question, Professor O'Hara noted. She feels that a discussion of how the new system will explicitly allow the flexibility that Professor Sanchez-Eppler has said is necessary for faculty with families or other life issues should take place. Professor O'Hara said that it would be important to also acknowledge the "administrative

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burden” that is often placed on newly tenured faculty, but also to point out how those factors are explicitly mentioned as part of a successful promotion to full professor.

President Marx, referring to Professor Parker’s remarks at the Committee’s meeting on February 26, said that he was eager to hear more about the potential pros and cons of any changes, and how the recommendations would increase what Professor Parker had characterized as Amherst’s “already formidable bureaucracy.” Professor Sinos said that, under the proposals, departments would have to solicit student evaluations and evaluate the scholarship of candidates for promotion with at least as much care as at the time of tenure. Professor Parker noted that his department does so already. Several members said that there are clearly different norms in different departments. President Marx found this lack of standardization troubling, and several members agreed that having different procedures, depending on the department, was unfair. Professor Woglom said that he is not comfortable with the current process because it ignores accomplishment. Professor George suggested that, if departments and the Committee of Six are going to evaluate scholarship at the time of promotion, consideration should be given to having outside reviewers.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Parker asked why promotion should be one of only three moments during a faculty member’s career during which merit and accomplishment is recognized and wondered whether it would be valuable to have many such moments to sustain colleagues during their time at Amherst. Professor Woglom said that it would be best to have many other moments during which the community would recognize accomplishment, but noted that he fears that adding “moments” would be difficult and that he would be pleased, for now, if the review at the time of promotion was more substantive. Professor Sinos said that, in her experience on the Committee of Six, promotion review at the Committee of Six level was not an automatic process; the Committee had always scrutinized candidates carefully and felt there was good reason to promote those who were successful. Other members, the Dean, and the President asked how long it has been since the Committee of Six has turned down a colleague for promotion to full professor. The Dean said that he would research this question. Professor Woglom asked the Dean if it would be possible for the Committee to have additional history about promotion, and Dean Call said that he would provide some information.

Continuing the discussion, Professors Woglom and Schneider commented that having a greater communal understanding of what warrants promotion would be beneficial. Professor Woglom said that the proposals’s plan to include members from other departments on promotion committees might encourage this. Professor Sinos questioned whether, in most cases, someone outside the department would be able to join in discussion on an equal basis with department members. Such a system would increase the work involved in promotion by involving more faculty in it, with no clear benefit, she said.

Responding to remarks about the value of “many moments to recognize faculty accomplishment,” Professor Sinos expressed the view that campuses on which faculty members must devote constant attention to their vitae promote the appearance of industry rather than serious scholarship; she believes that Amherst is a better community for not encouraging faculty members to toot their own horns. Under the current system, faculty are free to undertake long-term projects, she said, and that she worries about any change that might encourage the faculty to work on smaller less substantive projects in order to be able to check off a series of

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accomplishments. Professor George said that he worries that, if promotion becomes more of a hurdle, there will be a decrease in the current high level of involvement of associate professors in the life of the College, since they would not feel able to take time away from their scholarship after tenure.

Professor Parker next asked whether the system is really broken. He wondered whether colleagues stop working after tenure. The Dean responded that he sees great variation in individual faculty member's priorities. When asked whether faculty salaries are adjusted based on accomplishment, the Dean said that salaries are only adjusted modestly and that it is not possible to make too large a distinction without having a process for the evaluation of accomplishment.

President Marx noted that it is useful not to look at this issue in isolation. He asked the Dean to outline CAP recommendations that would support faculty development. Dean Call said that the CAP recommended that faculty research be supported through 100 percent sabbatic leaves, encouraging year-long periods in which to concentrate on research. He noted that he has been discussing with the President the possibility of making leave clocks more flexible, allowing for the possibility of more frequent leaves with proportional salaries. He noted that, in recent years, the College has provided full-year leaves at 90 or 100 percent salary for tenure-track faculty upon reappointment, and the CAP has proposed that every tenure-track faculty member be entitled to a full year's leave at 100 percent salary after reappointment. Continuing his outline of enhanced research-related support, the Dean said that the CAP recommended increased support for the Faculty Research Award Program (FRAP) and having FRAP-type support for pedagogy as well as research. In addition, the committee recommended doubling support for the Amherst Academic Interns and student research funding, which has already increased substantially in recent years. In addition, the CAP recommended that a teaching and learning center be established, and plans are already moving forward for a center to support teaching, advising, and pedagogy that will provide, among other things, funding for faculty to host conferences and workshops. The Dean noted that the Copeland program has been expanded and now has a budget that is roughly two-and-a-half times greater than it has been in the past. The program is now organized around a theme put forward by the Faculty, and scholars will come to campus for a year, rather than for a semester, with the intent of scholarly collaboration among Copeland Fellows and Amherst faculty members. Finally, Dean Call said that the search for the new Director of Sponsored Research, a position that the CAP recommended in support of faculty research, is now well under way, and he anticipates that finalists will be brought to campus this spring.

Professor Woglom noted that, with all the support possible, faculty members have to be accountable at some level and should expose themselves to evaluation. He asked the Dean how many colleagues typically submit their CVs each year, in response to the Dean's request that they do so. Dean Call said that he thinks perhaps 50 percent of the Faculty does so.

President Marx asked whether the tenure-track faculty has felt free to participate in the promotion discussion so far. He asked the members for their advice about how to encourage assistant professors to make their voices heard and wondered whether it would be useful for the Ad Hoc Committee on Promotion or the Dean to meet with the tenure-track faculty, as he and the Committee of Six have done in the past. Professor Sinos said that she was told by some assistant

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professors that they did not feel free to express themselves in such a format and that some have felt that their views were not represented in what was reported to the Faculty as “consensus” of the junior faculty. Professor Schneider said that he feels that Associate Professors will be most invested in the issue of promotion to full professor.

Discussion returned to the question of whether to have a Faculty Meeting on March 13. Professor Sinos expressed her dismay that such a meeting would conflict with a Music at Amherst series concert. She worried that faculty members who have tickets for the series would face a difficult choice of whether to attend the concert or the meeting. She suggested that such conflicts should be avoided as much as possible and if, in the future, Faculty Meetings are to be scheduled at other than the typical times (the first and third Tuesdays of the month) the dates should be announced at the beginning of the academic year. The Dean and the President agreed that should be the goal. The Dean wondered if starting a Faculty Meeting on March 13 earlier than is usual and having a shorter meeting might allow for conversation and concert attendance. The members did not think that this would be a viable solution. Some members of the Committee expressed the view that a discussion of the promotion report alone was insufficient business for a Faculty Meeting and suggested that having a meeting in which the draft mission statement is discussed, as well as the report, would be best. After further discussion, the Committee decided not to have a meeting on March 13. The members agreed that it would be essential to have a meeting on March 27.

Discussion then turned to a departmental matter.

The meeting adjourned at 6:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory S. Call
Dean of the Faculty