

The twenty-ninth 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 12, 2007. Present were Professors George, O'Hara, Parker, Schneider, Sinos, and Woglom, Dean Call, President Marx, and Assistant Dean Tobin, Recorder. The minutes of February 26 were approved. Changes to the minutes of March 5 were given to the Dean.

Professor George asked to make a comment on the minutes of February 19, which had been approved previously. At that meeting, the Committee of Six discussed the proposal to increase the size of the student body by eighty students, prior to the February 20 Faculty Meeting vote on that issue. Professor George had made critical comments, accurately reported in the February 19 minutes, about allocating half of the proposed new places to international students. Based on those comments, some colleagues later inferred that Professor George disapproved of admitting any international students to Amherst. Professor George said he could understand how his remarks could have been interpreted that way, and he wanted to make clear that he was questioning only the increase, i.e., the allocation of 50 percent of the increased places to a group that now makes up only about 6 percent of the student body. He said he strongly supports having some international students at Amherst.

Under "Announcements from the President," President Marx asked the members to consider several possible ways to bolster some of the structures of faculty governance, with the aim of ensuring the most robust consideration of complex issues. He said that he feels that it might be useful, in the interest of continuity and institutional memory, to have the chairs of some committees (particularly, the Committee on Educational Policy) serve for two years. He also suggested, for the same reasons, that department chairs might serve for more than one year.

Professor Parker noted that he had served for two consecutive years as the chair of the College Council and of the Copeland Committee, due to unusual circumstances, and that he feels that having some committee chairs have greater longevity could be useful. Several members commented that, when serving on some committees (the example of the Faculty Committee on Admission and Financial Aid was offered) it can take at least a year to understand the workings of a committee and the issues being considered. Professor Sinos said that chairing committees can be onerous and that extending the duty might make it more so. She also wondered whether leave patterns might narrow the pool of potential chairs who could serve for more than one year in that role. Professor George agreed. Professor Woglom said that he feels that having chairs of departments and some committees serve for longer periods is an idea that is worth considering, but that he was unsure of what the best process would be to decide this question and whether now was the best time to consider this question.

Continuing the conversation, President Marx suggested that departments and committees might be contacted and asked for their views on this question. Perhaps the committees could be asked to report back at the Commencement Faculty Meeting on their consideration of whether having chairs serve for more than one year would be preferable. In terms of departments, it was noted that there is great variation regarding how many years a chair serves. Some departments have them serve for one year, while others have them serve for extended periods. The President asked Assistant Dean Tobin to provide information to the Committee on the number of years that each department has its chair serve, and she agreed to do so.

Professor Schneider commented that he feels that it is important to enhance the amount of institutional memory within committees and that longer terms for chairs could accomplish this. President Marx said that he feels that having longer terms for committee chairs might facilitate the consideration of issues. In terms of department chairs, Professor Parker said that, because of practices at other institutions, there seems to be a phobia at Amherst of having chairs who wield a great deal of power and control serving for many years. Professor Woglom commented that there should be a middle ground between having a chair who serves for only a year and is merely a paper-pusher—with no authority and no continuity—and having chairs who control everything.

Turning to another question, the President informed the members that he often receives suggestions and funding requests for speakers in the sciences who might engage our students. He typically forwards such requests to department chairs. The President believes that a more efficient and coordinated process should be put in place. He said that he is considering isolating monies from his discretionary funds to support such speakers and having the chairs of the Departments of Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and Geology consider requests for speakers and make decisions about which ones to fund and bring to campus. He asked the members for their views about this idea.

Professor Sinos expressed concern that funds overseen by the Faculty Lecture Committee might be used for this purpose. President Marx said that it was not his intention that those funds be used; he had been alluding to Presidential discretionary funds, he said. Professor Schneider commented that there are so many events that it is easy to become saturated and to ignore them all. He wondered if there might be some way of elevating the most important events so that they would stand out. Professor Parker responded that he did not think that the administration should prioritize events in this way and that having a wide range of events is part of the mission of colleges and universities. Professor O'Hara, who felt that the sciences would be privileged under the plan outlined by the President, suggested that each department be asked to organize one lecture a year, funded by the President, that would be accessible to a general audience and would focus on an interdisciplinary topic. Professor Woglom commented that it is disheartening when audiences are very small for lectures. The President and the Dean thanked the members for their thoughts.

The Dean next discussed with the members upcoming items for the Committee's agenda, including the College Council's calendar report, proposals to revise the charges of the Faculty Computer Committee and the Committee on Education and Athletics, and tenure procedures for creative and performing artists. The Dean asked the members if they would like to meet on March 26, even though the President would be traveling on College business. The Committee decided to meet on that date. Dean Call next asked the members whether the dates of April 10 and 17 should still be held for Faculty Meetings, and the Committee agreed there may be a need to hold meetings on one or both of those dates. The Dean next noted that, as the Committee had requested, he had asked those colleagues who attended the January 17 lunch on science teaching whether they would be willing to give their permission for the notes (see attached) of their meeting to be appended to the Committee of Six minutes. They said that they would be pleased to have the notes appended.

Reminding the Committee that the Ad Hoc Committee on the Evaluation and Improvement of Teaching has asked to meet with the Committee of Six in April, the Dean asked the members if they felt that it would also be informative to meet with the Ad Hoc Committee on Writing. As the Dean recently informed the members, the writing committee is in the process of putting together a draft report and plans to speak with the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP). Professor Woglom said that he thought that it would be useful to meet with the writing committee if that group would be bringing a proposal forward during the spring semester. The other members agreed, and the Dean said that he would speak with the writing committee to get a sense of their plans.

Dean Call informed the members that the Faculty Computer Committee soon plans to propose adding a fourth faculty member to the committee on a permanent basis. The Dean informed the members that, in the interim, Professor Morse had been asked by the committee to join it for the semester and that he had agreed. The members next reviewed statistical information (with the names of candidates removed) about past promotion decisions by year.

The Dean next announced that he planned to write to the Faculty in the next several days to inform them of a series of initiatives designed to support faculty scholarship and teaching, among them increased professional travel support for the Faculty, a pilot version of the Faculty Innovation Fund (FIF) (curricular and pedagogical innovation), and an enhancement to the Faculty Research Award Program (FRAP) program (work-in-progress seminars). He said that, while some programs await further consultation by faculty committees and/or the raising of funds, he wanted to inform the Faculty about new opportunities and changes in policy that would go into effect immediately. To encourage faculty to develop and share their research interests within the Amherst community, the FRAP will be extended to support work-in-progress seminars over the course of a semester or a year. A seminar will consist of six to eight faculty members, each of whom will present a paper that he or she is preparing for publication. Ideally, groups of faculty who would like to work together would apply jointly for these funds. Up to half of the participants could be Five-College colleagues. Up to three faculty seminars will be funded for the fall and spring semester next year, the Dean said. Each Amherst participant will receive an honorarium of \$1,000, with the exception of a designated facilitator who would receive an honorarium of \$1,500. Proposals for work-in-progress seminars will be evaluated by the FRAP committee. To support innovation in new and underrepresented areas of the curriculum, the Dean said that he plans to announce a pilot version of the Faculty Innovation Fund (FIF). As recommended in the Report of the Committee on Academic Priorities (CAP), the Faculty Innovation Fund will support a broad range of curricular and pedagogical initiatives, including both departmental and interdisciplinary projects.

Professor Sinos asked if FIF would support faculty who might want to innovate within an existing course in order to introduce students to new developments or debates in the field. The Dean said that FIF could indeed support such work. Other examples of projects that could be supported by FIF would include having two or more faculty members undertake a critical examination of a department to which they are appointed and then propose curricular revisions based on their appraisal of the relationship between disciplinary trends and the particular composition, interests, and strengths of their department, the Dean said. Their assessment might

result in the development of new courses and possibly in refashioning the major. Faculty who apply for these grants would discuss their projects in advance with their department chair and share the results of the study with the department.

In addition, Dean Call said that grants will also be offered to develop courses that explicitly compare disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives on a given issue. Courses that add to the curriculum greater understanding of the world and engage in comparative cross-cultural analysis represent another important priority. Grants will also be available for faculty to develop experiential learning courses, the Dean said. Faculty may request an honorarium of \$1,000 and a budget of up to \$1,500 for course related expenses, which may include funds for purchasing materials, hiring research assistants, or attending summer training institutes. Faculty who teach collaboratively or develop a collaborative department assessment will also receive \$1,000 honoraria and additional research funds in amounts to be determined on the basis of their requests. Proposals to the FIF will be evaluated by the CEP the Dean said.

President Marx said that he worried about the CEP having yet another responsibility placed on the committee. The members of the Committee of Six felt that the CEP was the appropriate committee to consider these proposals, which represent innovation within the curriculum. This review would overlap with the CEP's charges in the area of FTE allocation and course proposal review, the Committee agreed. President Marx concurred, but said that he would be open to considering that another group review proposals if the CEP becomes overwhelmed. Professor O'Hara wondered if a committee such as the Ad Hoc Committee on Teaching and Learning, which has overseen the Mellon Faculty Enhancement Program, might review proposals. Professor George commented that it would be unusual for an ad hoc committee to take on such a role. The members agreed that, for the time being, the review should be done by the CEP. The members next reviewed two course proposals and, after some discussion, voted six to zero in favor of forwarding them to the Faculty.

Under "Questions from Committee Members," Professor Sinos asked the Dean and the President whether the administration has a policy on how discord within a department is handled. She wondered whether the administration would insist on departments coming to consensus or would respect majority votes, when decision-making is necessary. She asked, for example, if normal hiring procedures would be suspended if there was extreme dissension within a department. She wondered if the administration would be protective of junior faculty at the expense of a department, holding it hostage. Professor Sinos suggested that insisting on having a consensus is a poor strategy and could lead to destroying a department.

Professor Woglom argued that Professor Sinos had raised important questions about faculty governance, and he felt the Faculty would benefit from hearing the administration's view. In particular he noted that the *Faculty Handbook* (section II.C. The Faculty, Academic Departments) states the following: "Departments are expected to reach decisions in a collegial fashion." What is the administration's interpretation of "collegial"; does it mean consensus or is it consistent with majority votes? How should department business be conducted when decisions cannot be achieved collegially? Professor Parker commented that every case of departmental discord is different and for reasons that are difficult to generalize from. The Dean noted that last year, both the Committee of Six and the CEP considered general questions, as well as specifics,

about these issues. The Committee of Six also played a consultative role in a specific case, he said. The President and the Dean said that they would consider Professor Sinos's question and would respond at a future meeting.

The Committee then turned to personnel matters.

Dean Griffiths joined the meeting at 5:15 to discuss with the members the work of the Ad Hoc Faculty Group on Reaccreditation and the process of adopting a mission statement. Dean Griffiths noted that, after broad on-campus consultation about the first draft (November 28, 2006), all on- and off-campus constituencies were asked to comment on a second draft (January 28, 2007). A revision of that statement was then done. Dean Griffiths said that it is the hope of the ad hoc group to discuss the statement at the Faculty Meeting of March 27 and to report on that discussion to the Board of Trustees at their meeting of April 23-24. After that conversation, the statement would be brought back to the Faculty for a vote, he said. The final draft would be brought to the Board for approval at their meeting of May 25-26.

The Committee discussed how best to get a sense of the Faculty's view of the mission statement. Dean Griffiths said that it would be important to avoid radical changes in the statement, since doing so would result in another round of consultations with all on- and off-campus constituencies and would delay an initial review by the Board. He noted that revising in the Faculty Meeting is also risky, since the statement is tightly woven. Professor Woglom said that the Faculty should not be committed to final language if amendments are not allowed. The members agreed that a committee-of-the-whole format would allow for straw votes on issues that emerge within the discussion to guide the ad hoc committee in revising the statement, as well as for a general vote to affirm that the statement expresses the Faculty's sense of the College's mission. Professor Parker said that he believes that the statement should not be controversial because of the fine job that the ad hoc committee had done in crafting the statement and in soliciting and incorporating input. He feels that the statement is both quotable and memorable. Professor Parker said that he would substitute "learning" for "knowledge" in the first sentence. After some discussion, it was agreed that such wordsmithing should be avoided at this point of the process, if at all possible. The Committee agreed that the ad hoc group had done an excellent job and thanked Dean Griffiths for the group's hard work. He left the meeting at 5:35.

The Committee next voted six in favor and zero opposed on content and six in favor and zero opposed to place the following resolution before the Faculty for consideration in the committee of the whole and by straw vote:

The attached draft of the mission statement broadly reflects the Faculty's understanding of the mission of the College.

The members next returned to a discussion of the topic of promotion to full professor. Professor Woglom noted that for the past nineteen years, no candidate has been denied promotion to full professor. Before that time, it seems that there was a substantive process. Professor Schneider commented that it certainly seems as though there is some agreement that the current system is not serving us well, but there is less agreement about how to change the

system. Most members of the Committee agreed that the Ad Hoc Committee on Promotion feels strongly that changes should be made.

Discussion turned to how best to structure the Faculty's consideration of the promotion issue at the March 27 Faculty Meeting. The Committee decided to put the following motion before the Faculty:

The Faculty asks the Committee of Six to produce, for a Faculty Meeting this spring, resolutions to revise current policies and practices regarding promotion to the rank of Professor.

The Committee voted four in favor and two opposed on the content of this motion and six in favor and zero opposed to forward it to the Faculty. Professor Parker suggested that it would be useful to append to the Faculty Meeting Agenda the *Faculty Handbook* language on promotion, and the members agreed that doing so would be informative.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory S. Call
Dean of the Faculty

Amherst College

Meeting on Science Instruction
January 17, 2007

Attending: Carolyn Bassett, Charri Boykin-East, Greg Call, Ethan Clotfelter, David Cox, Peter Crowley, Steve George, Caroline Goutte, David Hall, David Hansen, Jennifer Innes, Jagu Jagannathan, Joe Kushick, Tanya Leise, Ben Lieber, Ron Lembo, Tony Marx, Billy McBride, Pat O'Hara, Tom Parker, David Ratner, Nancy Ratner, Steve Rivkin, and Rick Griffiths (recorder).

Are we ready to move to institution-wide solutions to bringing less well prepared students into the sciences? (With the Q Center and the oversight of the Committee on Academic Support we have some already.)

In particular:

Do we need a Science Executive Committee (or such) to coordinate curricula, instructional technology, facilities, liaison with Admission, and other common concerns? (Such a committee has worked well at Williams.) **What should be the duties of the administrator (Dean of Instruction?) in charge?** (E.g., recruitment of faculty to teach courses, providing support for pedagogy, supervising selection and counseling of students into science.)

Should we have non-departmental "gateway courses" for less well-prepared students to prepare them for the current entry-level science and Economics courses? (The Dean is willing to pay for staffing; the President is willing to take the political heat. Departments can decide on the criteria for entry into current courses. We already have information from reader ratings and other admission information to counsel students, as we do into Math 5 and the intensive sections. With current admission directions, the pool of students in these courses will be increasingly heterogeneous. With tact and assurance that their goals are attainable, such conversations can convince students without demoralizing them. Students would need to know about the mechanisms for placement in advance; such transparency would also be helpful also the high-school guidance community. These courses might be topic-centered [e.g, HIV, global warming]. A single generalized course in quantitative reasoning is unlikely to prepare for sciences and Economics.)

How deep into course-ladders and major programs should multiple entry points lead? (Is there a risk of a soft start with the gateways and a hard landing with existing courses? To what extent will departments want to redesign their programs?)

What would we consider success? (Is survival with C's sufficient? How do we reckon with the reality that those with weaker preparations rarely catch-up with the forward advance of their better prepared peers? We will probably want to include early and frequent consultation with the Office of Institutional Research for any assessment.)

In May we are planning a workshop to bring together representatives of Wellesley, Williams, Bowdoin, and perhaps Harvard to talk about these issues. We have a budget for outside consultants and speakers; suggestions welcome, as well as for speakers during the semester.

Other options and concerns were mentioned.

Should students be allowed to take course more than once?

Should we be willing to offer a fully subsidized post-bac fifth year so that students on a slower track can complete premed requirements?

Small experiments have the risks of blocking large solutions and broad, meaningful feedback. It was also argued that in scheduling Math 5 and Chem I 1 simultaneously we have already started the experiment of adjusting tracking, and therefore need science courses to meet the needs of Math 5 students.

The presence of less-well-prepared students holds down the level of instruction for stronger students.

Changes in courses may not get at the full pattern of students' adjustment to college, including dorm life, their summers, and their experience in non quantitative courses. We need more evidence about students' experience (e.g., from focus groups).

Indignation may have subsided, perhaps because the cohort of sufferers has expanded, with more support provided, but the problems may be as acute as 20 years ago, and involving more students.

As ever, the disadvantage of less-well-prepared students cannot be reduced to a skill set: not being able to think like a scientist/economist, difficulty integrating concepts and adapting to new contexts, lack of critical thinking.

There was discussion of the famous success of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, which gets minority science students into labs early, allows students to repeat courses (C or lower), requires study groups, and provides ample mentoring (and where a designated cohort of minority students are the stars). Wellesley is adopting this model. See (thanks to David Ratner): <http://www.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/full/311/5769/1870?eaf>
<http://www.umbc.edu/meyerhoff/prospective.html>

Steve George forwarded this site from Wendy Raymond (Biology, Williams) which compiles action plans of peer institutions (including Amherst) re diversity in the sciences.
<http://www.williams.edu/biology/divsciences/?n=Action+Plans>