

**Committee of Six Minutes
of Monday, March 26, 2007**

The thirtieth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2006-2007 was called to order by the Dean in the President's office at 3:00 P.M. on Monday, March 26, 2007. Present were Professors George, O'Hara, Parker, Schneider, Sinos, and Woglom, Dean Call, and Assistant Dean Tobin, Recorder. The President did not attend because he was traveling on College business.

Under "Announcements from the Dean," the Dean and the members discussed upcoming meeting dates for the Committee. Dean Call next asked the members for permission for Bill Barlow, Director of Development, to attend Faculty Meetings until a new Chief Advancement Officer is hired, and the members agreed to grant permission. He also informed the members that a meeting with the Committee of Six and the Ad Hoc Committee on the Evaluation and Improvement of Teaching has now been set for April 16. Professor Woglom commented that having this meeting so late in the semester would make it difficult to bring the ad hoc committee's report before the Faculty for consideration this semester. The Dean said that he shares this concern, but was aware that the ad hoc committee wants to have discussions with the Faculty prior to its meeting with the Committee of Six. He noted that other scheduling considerations made it impossible to have the meeting any earlier than April 16.

Dean Call next shared with the members information gathered by Marian Matheson, Director of Institutional Research, about possible ways to assess faculty productivity. She undertook this research at the request of the President and the Dean, in response to comments made at the Faculty Meeting of February 20 about the scholarly productivity of the Amherst Faculty at different ranks in relation to that of peers at other institutions. Those remarks prompted a colleague at the meeting to request the opportunity to consider additional data regarding the productivity of Amherst professors in comparison to their peers. Professors Schneider, Sinos, O'Hara, and Parker expressed the view that it appears from Ms. Matheson's research that there is no effective, sensitive protocol to assess the productivity of liberal arts faculty individually, although there may be some methods available to assess research productivity by department across institutions. Professor Woglom said that he would be interested in learning more about how research productivity might be assessed by departments. Most members agreed that the methods used by other institutions that Ms. Matheson's research uncovered would not get at the question at hand—which is whether the Amherst Faculty's productivity is enhanced, at least partially, from the renewal made possible under the current promotion system, with resulting changes in direction or experimentation with teaching in the years following tenure. Professor Sinos noted that the faculty member who commented on faculty members' productivity as associate professors was drawing on her personal experience, rather than on a more formal methodology, and was extrapolating from her experiences. Professor Woglom disagreed, noting that the question of comparisons among faculty at other institutions was raised. After further discussion, the Committee agreed that measures of faculty productivity were difficult to design and might not be worth the effort to develop.

Continuing his announcements, the Dean noted that a course that has already been approved by the Faculty for next year will not be offered because the colleague who would have been teaching it has asked for and been granted a leave next spring. He also informed the members that the Committee would consider the "roadmap" for the implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on Academic Priorities (CAP) at its next meeting and asked

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the members if they would review the report to determine if there are any items—beyond the twenty-two recommendations—that might require consultation by faculty committees.

Under “Questions from Committee Members,” Professor Sinos asked whether Five-College faculty members who participate in the new work-in-progress seminars, which will soon be piloted as an enhancement to the Faculty Research Award Program (FRAP) program, will receive an honorarium of \$1,000, as the Amherst participants will. The Dean said that Amherst, at least during the pilot stage of the program will provide honoraria, which will be drawn from faculty research funds, only to Amherst faculty members. He said that he plans to suggest to the Five-College deans that they compensate faculty members who participate from their institutions.

Professor Sinos said that she would feel uncomfortable being paid to present a paper when a Five-College colleague was not being paid for doing the same work. Professor Schneider commented that he views the compensation to be an incentive for colleagues to form work-in-progress groups, rather than payment for presenting a paper. He noted that faculty are not typically compensated when they give presentations in Five-College classes. Several members commented that individuals are not compensated for participating in Five-College seminars, unless they are from outside the area. Professor Schneider said that he nonetheless shares Professor Sinos’s concern about the awkwardness of not providing honoraria for Five-College colleagues. He wondered whether the College might establish a discretionary fund for the work-in-progress seminars that could be used to provide support for Five-College participants. Obviously, not every seminar would have Five-College members, he noted.

Professor Sinos asked the Dean if the other Five-College institutions have research funds, as Amherst does, that would support faculty participation in the work-in-progress groups. Dean Call said it would be up to the individual institutions to decide whether they would provide funding for their participating faculty members. Professor O’Hara wondered whether Five-College colleagues might be considered consultants in this instance and whether they might be compensated as such. The Dean said that it is not envisioned that Five-College faculty members would be serving as consultants. He noted that, under current FRAP guidelines, support is available for bringing small groups of scholars to Amherst for two to three days to share research findings, to criticize one another’s work, and to otherwise stimulate a faculty member’s research, writing, artistic, or performance development.

Professor O’Hara noted that the seminars will probably be most appealing to Amherst colleagues in disciplines that don’t have a large number of faculty on campus and who would be most desirous of reaching out to others in the area who are working on similar research topics. The inequity issue surrounding compensation could stunt the very conversations that the work-in-progress seminars are designed to encourage, she said. Professor Sinos agreed and suggested that it might be best not to provide honoraria at all, rather than providing them only to Amherst participants. Dean Call noted that, in the pilot phase of this program, funds to support the seminars are being drawn from his office’s regular budget, so resources are limited. He said that, at this stage, Amherst will only be able to support its own faculty members, but he agreed to share the Committee’s views with the Faculty Research Award Program (FRAP) Committee, which will be evaluating the seminar proposals. Professor Schneider asked if it would be possible for each funded participant in a seminar group to share a portion of his or her

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honorarium with a Five-College colleague. The Dean said that he would have no objection to such a practice.

Discussion turned to the Faculty's consideration, at the March 27 Faculty Meeting, of the Ad Hoc Committee on Promotion's report and the related motion put forward by the Committee of Six. Professor Schneider said that he had voted "no" on the substance of that motion because he believes that changing how promotion procedures are carried out in practice could be done less formally, at the Committee of Six level, for example. Professor Woglom said that he envisions that someone with the view expressed by Professor Schneider might vote "yes" to the motion, which asks the Committee of Six to produce resolutions to "revise current policies and *practices* regarding promotion to the rank of Professor." Professor Schneider said that he feels that it is rather odd to vote to take seriously procedures that are already in the *Faculty Handbook*. Professor Woglom responded that it would be important to clarify the interpretation of "yes" and "no" votes for the Faculty before the motion is considered. In his opinion, voting "no" on the motion could be viewed as a vote to continue the current practice regarding promotion, in essence to make promotion pro forma and, thus, automatic six years after the tenure decision.

Other members expressed the view that policy and practice are different things and that a "no" vote could be interpreted as a vote to take the current *Faculty Handbook* language more seriously. Professor O'Hara said that consideration of the report and faculty conversation regarding this issue might be sufficient in and of itself to prompt a cultural shift to take the moment of promotion more seriously. She feels that a "no" vote would express the sense that one was not happy with the recommendations of the promotion report; that the current language of the *Faculty Handbook* should stand; that practices regarding promotion have not been codified but are evolving; and that the Faculty and the Committee of Six should be more mindful of how the promotion process should be carried out. Chairs, for example, could advise candidates that it is premature for them to come up for promotion. Trust could be placed in the Committee of Six to exercise "no" votes when appropriate in promotion cases.

Professor George said that he feels strongly that the language of the report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Promotion should be brought before the Faculty in the form of motions. He noted the hard work and time that the ad hoc committee put into the report. Professor George suggested that the vote on the current motion should be viewed as a vote on whether the report should be parsed into motions by the Committee of Six for the Faculty's consideration. Professor Woglom expressed the view that the discussion at the March 27 Faculty Meeting should inform, depending on the sense of the Faculty, the Committee of Six's consideration of which, if any, parts of the report should be brought before the Faculty as motions.

Dean Call concurred that it would be important for the Committee to get a sense, based on discussion at the Faculty Meeting, of the Faculty's views on the discrete pieces of the report, which would inform decisions regarding future motions. Professor Sinos agreed that it would be best to consider the report in pieces, rather than as a whole. The Committee agreed that decisions about formulating future motions regarding promotion should be informed by the faculty discussion at the Faculty Meeting and the vote on the current motion.

The Committee turned to personnel matters.

The members next discussed the College Council Report on Changes to the Academic Calendar (appended). The Committee praised and thanked the Council for its excellent

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consideration of this issue and for the fine quality of its report. Professor Parker began the discussion by asking Dean Call for his sense of how the Council's recommendation that Amherst keep its current calendar would be received by the other three colleges and the University of Massachusetts. Dean Call said that it is the view of the presidents, the deans, and Five-Colleges, Inc. that there should not be more than two versions of the academic calendar, but that the consortium can survive having two calendar options. He has observed that some colleagues at other institutions appear interested in the calendar proposed by the university, while most clearly want to keep the present calendar, but are willing (as Amherst might be) to make a change in the timing of spring break (making it a week earlier than it is at present, to align it with the university's calendar). He noted that Professors Barale and K. Sweeney would be part of a four-college group that would inform the university, before its faculty votes on the calendar question, of the views of the other members of the consortium regarding the calendar issue. Dean Call said that most colleagues at the university with whom he has spoken believe that it is likely the university will decide, beginning in the spring of 2009-2010 academic year, to begin classes two weeks earlier in January and to end two weeks earlier in May. Spring break would then fall during a different week.

Professors Sinos and O'Hara expressed concern that changing the timing of spring break might have a negative impact on student-athletes because of the effect on scheduling within NESCAC and conflicts with mid-term exams. Professor Woglom also wondered about the effects on the seasons of some athletic teams and their training schedules. Dean Call noted that the Council had done some research on the possible effects on athletics of changing the timing of spring break and that this issue is discussed in the report. He noted that there is already variation among schools within NESCAC as to the timing of their spring breaks. He also said that the College Council had considered whether Amherst should consider a change to the length of the spring semester, in order to make the fall and spring semesters an equal number of weeks. It was agreed that this was not the time to consider such a change.

The Committee asked about next steps. It was agreed that the College Council Report should be distributed to the Faculty with these minutes and that the Council should be asked to keep the Faculty informed about the ongoing conversations with the university.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory S. Call
Dean of the Faculty

College Council Report
5 March, 2007

College Council members: faculty and administration: Michele Barale (chair), Charri BoykinEast, Ethan Clotfelter, Samuel Haynes, Ben Lieber, Torin Moore, Kevin Sweeney; students: Jonathan Borowsky, Channel Maynard, Michael White, Selena Xie

College Council Report on Changes to the Academic Calendar

I

Early this past Fall, the University of Massachusetts announced that it intends to alter the present academic calendar, beginning with the spring semester of 2009 - 2010. Five College Cooperation has mandated that we all begin classes within three days of one another, and that we co-ordinate Spring Break. The University proposes to begin classes two weeks earlier in January, and end two weeks earlier in May. Spring Break would necessarily fall in a different week.

Since September, College Council has been examining the impact on Amherst of the University's proposal. In order to assess the significance of a change, College Council spoke with a number of people: Gerald Mager (Registrar); Lorna Peterson (Five Colleges Inc.); Caroline Basset (Career Center); Michelle Morgan (Physical Education); Dan Campbell (Physical Plant); Peter Shea (Treasurer); and with Dean of Faculty Gregory Call. The student members of College Council were extremely helpful in our discussions, as well, articulating a wide variety of views and concerns.

We ultimately arrived at five possible responses to the university's proposal, and on 23 February voted on those options. By far, the College Council voted to keep our present calendar - while recognizing that this might necessitate a change in the date of Spring Break.' One other option placed a close second: that we begin and end our classes one week early. Nearly tied with this second place option was the possibility of beginning classes one week early, taking a two week spring break, and then ending classes at the normal time.

' Pressure for Spring Break alignment with the University might involve moving our Spring Break a week earlier - to the seventh week. The University, in turn, would move theirs one week later - to their ninth week.

Below, we outline the five options we considered and our reasons for rejecting or considering them with varying degrees of favor.

II

1. Follow UMass' lead and coincide with their calendar.

Although the University has made a strong case for its students' financial advantage in ending classes earlier in the Spring term (extra weeks of summer income), virtually all of us agreed that their advantages were outweighed by our difficulties in making such a change. Students and faculty alike saw the loss of the January term as greatly affecting senior theses; faculty wondered when second semester courses would be prepared; the Career Center saw the depletion of their January internships and workshops; athletics noted that spring sports regularly need rescheduling because of inclement weather; a shorter spring competitive season would put even more pressure on April, and an earlier Commencement would virtually assure that some athletes would be out of town the week of graduation, if not the very day. Moreover, changing Spring Break, even by a week, would affect the Conference schedule of NESCAC competitors, and might necessitate reshaping its schedule. Neither Physical Plant nor the Treasurer foresaw any economic advantages to the calendar change.

2. Continue our present calendar.

It works for us, despite our chronic lack of a real Reading Period in the spring semester.

The drawbacks would not be particular to our own campus but would result across the Five College Consortium if two calendars are in operation:

a) UMass students who take classes on our campus would find themselves in a difficult situation (it should be noted that Hampshire is the biggest importer of UMass students).

At present, UMass has said that it would allow its students who are enrolled on other campuses to remain on campus for those final two weeks, but it would not allow them to remain in their own rooms.

b) Approximately 50 plus faculty each Spring -joint appointments and borrows - would find themselves negotiating two calendars. This is especially difficult if Spring Breaks do not coincide. These faculty could teach a 16 week semester without any break.

3. Begin one week early, but end when we usually do, thereby extending the spring Reading Period by one week.

No one thought this was a particularly good solution, and even the students felt that partying rather than reading would be the result.

4. Begin one week early, end at our usual time, but increase Spring Break to two weeks.

This was the third most popular option. The two week break would restore time lost in January to thesis writers, and some felt that the loss of January internships and workshops could be made up at this time. Some faculty felt that it would allow them both to catch up with the semester and better prepare for its conclusion.

5. Begin and end one week early.

This was the second most popular option. It would better coincide with UMass - a one week calendrical disparity seems easier to manage than two - and would not greatly re-arrange our present way of doing things.