

**Committee of Six Minutes
of Friday, April 6, 2007**

The thirty-second 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 3:10 P.M. on Friday, April 6, 2007. Present were Professors O'Hara, Parker, Schneider, Sinos, and Woglom, President Marx, Dean Call, and Assistant Dean Tobin, Recorder. Professor George was absent due to illness.

Under "Announcements from the Dean," Dean Call reported that the members of the Ad Hoc Committee on Writing have informed him that they would be open to an invitation to meet with the Committee of Six, and the Dean said that he would schedule a meeting. He noted next that the Committee of Six's meeting with the Committee on the Evaluation and Improvement of Teaching (CEIT) would be on April 16 and said that some members of the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) also plan to attend. Dean Call said that it is his hope that the Committee would be able to take up this semester a review of the issue of attendance and voting at Faculty Meetings (see the *Faculty Handbook*, section IV; R., Faculty Meetings; 1., "Attendance and Voting"; 2., "Attendance without Vote."). He noted that, since the Faculty voted to add the relevant language to the *Handbook* in 1990, a number of administrative titles and/or positions have been revised and that a few new positions might be considered for inclusion, while other positions could be eliminated. The members agreed to review the matter after the Dean's office assembles background information.

Dean Call next responded to Professor Sinos's question, posed at a previous meeting, about the administration's policies regarding troubled departments. She had inquired as to whether the administration allows such departments to decide matters by a simple majority vote or whether the administration insists that consensus must be reached. Could a majority within the department determine departmental curriculum without having the minority on board? Could a majority make personnel decisions? Dean Call said that, generally, "majority rules" would be the standard procedure; however, in some cases of very troubled departments other ways of decision-making must sometimes be found, particularly when a department's own decisions cannot be realized. Dean Call said that the goal when working with departments that are in a state of sustained discord is to reach lasting consensus and that the approach used varies, depending on the success of interventions. In such cases, finding solutions can often be a difficult, complex, and multi-faceted process, he noted.

Professor Sinos asked whether troubled departments are prohibited from hiring faculty unless there is a consensus to do so. Dean Call noted that splits within departments sometimes prevent a department from creating an environment that is hospitable to faculty development. If there is significant departmental dissent over hiring and other personnel decisions, questions are often raised at various levels, including that of the CEP and the Committee of Six, he said. In addition, when competing for scant resources, including FTEs, the strength of the department's endorsement may be relevant to the level of success achieved. The Dean said that he would also worry about putting a new colleague into a contentious situation. It is desirable to find a way to stabilize a department before hiring takes place, he believes.

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Professor Sinos said that she fears that such a policy will tend to result in splitting departments rather than working with departments to keep them together. Dean Call said that the administration's view is that, through consultation with the department, the Committee of Six, and the CEP, or through mediation or other means, departments should be kept together and assistance given to remove the roadblocks that they face. The current administration has received two proposals for splitting a department, he noted, and in each case worked with the requesting department to keep it intact.

Professor Woglom said that he understands that, in general, majority rules but the aim is consensus. He asked what the consequences are when the view of the majority prevails and the minority within a department creates roadblocks and misbehaves in other ways. In his experience, the departmental curriculum is more often being held hostage by the minority now than it has been in the past. Dean Call said that such situations are addressed on a case-by-case basis. Professor Schneider asked, under what circumstances departments are put in receivership. Dean Call responded that, if a department is having difficulty, many approaches are tried—discussions with the department, mediation by colleagues within the College, and, sometimes, outside Amherst. The decision to appoint an outside chair (receivorship) is always made in consultation with the department, he said.

Under "Questions from Committee Members," Professor Schneider raised questions surrounding the special academic needs of transfer students. He said that transfer students have enriched his classroom and that, in his experience, they are excellent students and an asset to the College. It seems that in many cases, however, they need more time to navigate Amherst's curriculum. Like many first-year students, transfer students may, for example, change their minds about an envisioned major after a semester or two, he has noted. Such a change can mean that there will not be enough time for students to meet major requirements. Professor Schneider said that he knows that there are procedures, such as the option of petitioning for a ninth semester, for assisting transfer students, but he thinks that they may not be widely publicized or known.

President Marx asked if the difficulties described by Professor Schneider represent a new problem. Professor Schneider said that he does not think that the situation is new, but he anticipates that, as the College embarks on efforts to recruit additional transfer students from community colleges, the problem may become more common. Professor O'Hara added that the implications of this dilemma extend to less well-prepared students. As the College encourages such students to navigate the science and math curricula at a different pace, she noted, some students end up not having enough time to complete a major in the sciences in eight semesters. Professor Parker said that a current student he works with who transferred to Amherst petitioned for and received an additional year to complete her studies.

President Marx said that the College expects that students, with only very rare exceptions, should graduate in eight semesters. In particular, this regulation came up when he and others were exploring the idea of offering a fifth year of study for students who are less well-prepared for medical school. Dean Call commented that students are sometimes, although rarely, allowed

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to take a three-course-per-semester load (and that there is information about this provision in the catalog, see p. 60 in the 2006-2007 Catalog), which implies that they would need more time to graduate. He said that he is also aware that a very small number of students have been granted a ninth semester by successfully petitioning the Dean of Students. Some members also wondered about the implications for financial aid when students stay at Amherst beyond eight semesters. President Marx said that he and the Dean would consult with Ben Lieber, Dean of Students, and Joe Paul Case, Dean/Director of Financial Aid, about the questions raised and would report back to the Committee.

The Committee turned to the upcoming discussion of promotion at the Faculty Meeting of April 17. Professor O'Hara said that she is looking forward to learning more about what colleagues are thinking about this issue and the report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Promotion. Professor Parker noted that the Faculty should remember that, as Professor Zajonc mentioned at the last Faculty Meeting, it is possible to make amendments to motions, and he commented that colleagues have not been doing so lately. Dean Call said that he has this sense as well, and he wondered if concerns raised during discussions by the Committee of Six and at Faculty Meetings about legislating on the fly and the need to craft motions carefully might account for the reluctance to propose amendments at Faculty Meetings.

Professor Woglom asked Professor Parker how he would amend the Committee of Six's motion (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). Professor Parker said that he might propose to alter it in such a way that the language signals the direction of future motions that might be drafted by the Committee. President Marx asked whether the structure of asking the Faculty to consider whether the Committee of Six should make motions, rather than considering how those motions might take shape, has generated the type of conversation that the Committee had envisioned.

Professor Schneider said that he thinks that making use of an approach that resembles the series of non-binding votes taken during the March 27 Faculty Meeting for the purpose of getting a sense of the Faculty's views on the draft mission statement could be a more productive strategy. Professor Sinos commented that taking straw votes as questions arose during the mission statement discussion worked well because policy change was not involved. Professor O'Hara agreed, noting that the straw-vote approach was workable because a number of constituencies are responsible for the mission statement, while promotion is an issue of faculty governance. She said that discussion about whether the Committee of Six should develop motions would inform how the Committee of Six would go about drafting motions.

In light of the conversation, Professor Woglom raised concerns about how a "yes" or "no" vote on the promotion motion would be interpreted. After some discussion, most members agreed that it might be best, for purposes of clarity and to inform with greater precision the Committee's deliberations, to create a series of new motions, the first a substitute motion for the motion brought before the Faculty at the Faculty Meeting of March 27. The Committee then crafted motions and discussed possible outcomes.

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The members voted (5 yes, 0 no, 1 member absent) to substitute the following motion (Substitute Motion #1) for the motion (Motion #1) that the Committee brought to the Faculty at the Faculty Meeting of March 27, 2007. The Committee also voted (5 yes, 0 no, 1 member absent) to forward three additional motions (Motion #2, Motion #3a, and Motion #3b) to the Faculty. The members envisioned that, if Substitute Motion #1 passes, there will be no need to proceed to the other motions. If Motion #2 passes, the Faculty will be asked to consider Motion #3a. If Motion #2 does not pass, the Faculty will be asked to consider Motion #3b. The motions and votes are as follows:

Motion #1:

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.

(On 3-12-07 the Committee of Six voted 6 yes, 0 no, to forward to the Faculty;
4 yes, 2 no, on content)

Substitute Motion #1:

Should promotion occur almost automatically in the sixth year post-tenure (to take effect at the beginning of the seventh)?

(The Committee voted 0 yes, 5 no, 1 member absent, on content)

Motion #2:

Should practice regarding promotion conform to the current language of the *Faculty Handbook* (attached) and to the Dean's letter (attached) about promotion?

(Assuming that Motion #1 does not pass, the Committee voted 3 yes, 2 no, 1 member absent, on the content of Motion #2.)

Motion #3a:

Do you favor making any additions to the *Faculty Handbook* language regarding promotion?

(Assuming that Motion #2 passes, the Committee voted 2 yes, 3 no,

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1 member absent, on the content of Motion #3a.)

Motion #3b:

Do you favor changing the current language of the *Faculty Handbook* regarding promotion (attached) and the language of the Dean's letter regarding promotion?

(Assuming that Motion #2 does not pass, on 4-6-07 the Committee voted 2 yes, 3 no, 1 member absent, on the content of Motion #3b.)

The members then voted five in favor of forwarding the Faculty Meeting agenda to the Faculty.
The meeting adjourned at 5 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory S. Call
Dean of the Faculty

G. Promotion

A member of the Faculty appointed initially as an Assistant Professor and subsequently granted tenure will be promoted to the rank of Associate Professor, effective the start of the academic year following the tenure decision.

A member of the Faculty appointed initially as an Associate Professor without tenure and subsequently granted tenure will continue as an Associate Professor with tenure until a recommendation is made by his or her department(s) for promotion to the rank of Professor.

Promotion to the rank of Professor usually originates with the department and usually occurs between six and eight years after the tenure decision, although a department may present a candidate in the fifth year. A letter from the department Chair, and signed by all full Professors in the department, discussing the candidate's scholarly or artistic achievement, teaching performance, and College and professional service should accompany all recommendations for promotion to the rank of professor. In cases where there are fewer than two tenured full Professors in the candidate's department, the Dean of the Faculty and the Committee of Six will appoint an ad hoc committee of tenured full Professors from related departments to serve as the review committee. Should the department have one member at the tenured rank, he or she will also serve. The Committee of Six reviews all candidates for promotion. The President formulates the various recommendations and presents them to the Board of Trustees, together with his or her own views. All promotions must be voted by the Board of Trustees.

SAMPLE LETTER CONCERNING PROMOTION

May 2, 2006

Dear ,

Early in the second semester of the academic year 2006-2007, the Committee of Six will consider departmental recommendations for promotion to the rank of full professor. According to our records, is eligible for recommendation for promotion. Although our procedures are not legislated or rigidly established, most promotions from associate to full professor have occurred in or after the sixth year of service in rank as associate professor. I am writing to ask if you would please meet with the other full professors of your department in a timely fashion, and send to this office by noon on February 15, 2007, ten copies of your departmental recommendation, signed by all full professors in your department.

As you may recall, the Ad Hoc Promotion Committee will report to the Committee of Six and the Faculty at the end of the fall semester. Any changes that the ad hoc committee proposes will be discussed with the Faculty, so promotion procedures for spring 2007 are unchanged.

Promotion is not automatic. The Committee of Six will review each recommendation on its merits. A department's recommendation for promotion should affirm that the individual's achievements and qualifications have progressed beyond those noted at the time of the tenure decision (or beyond first hire as tenured associate professor). The bases for promotion to professor are essentially the same as those used for the tenure decision: teaching effectiveness, sustained scholarly growth, and contribution to the general life of the College community. With the department's letter of recommendation to the Committee, please include an up-to-date curriculum vitae (ten copies), and describe the evidence that leads you to affirm the individual's continued effectiveness and growth, both as a teacher and as a scholar. In the case of teaching, if the individual generated new courses or helped strengthen your department's curriculum, this should be addressed in the evaluation.

Promotion consideration is an occasion for a genuine review, in which all full professors of the department are expected to participate. Please give assurance in your letter that all have done so. If there are significant doubts about your colleague's progress in rank, you should discuss them candidly with the individual. If you have questions about these procedures, please let me know before submitting your recommendation.

Sincerely,

Gregory S. Call
Dean of the Faculty and Professor of Mathematics

cc: Academic Department Coordinator