

**Committee of Six Minutes
of Thursday, April 26, 2007**

The thirty-fifth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2006-2007 was called to order by the Dean at 4:00 P.M. on Thursday, April 26, 2007. Present were Professors S. George, O'Hara, Parker, Schneider, Sinos, and Woglom, President Marx, Dean Call, and Assistant Dean Tobin, Recorder.

The Committee turned first to personnel matters.

The Dean next distributed to the members a letter (appended) from Professors Damon and Ratner, on behalf of the Ad Hoc Committee on Promotion. Their purpose, they wrote, was to raise concerns about the process that the Committee of Six had used in evaluating and framing the debate on their committee's report. Agreeing with some of its criticisms and suggestions, the Committee agreed to discuss the letter at its next meeting.

The Dean informed the members that the College has been invited to nominate two Amherst emeriti faculty members for Mellon Foundation Emeritus Fellowships, and that he had solicited proposals from emeriti faculty members who met the criteria for the fellowship. These fellowships support the research activities of outstanding scholars in the humanities and humanistic social sciences who, at the time of taking up the fellowships, are retired but remain active and productive scholars. Emeritus Fellows receive funds for a year for research and other related expenses. The Mellon Foundation stipulates that the nominees be selected through an internal competition. Noting that Mellon Emeritus Fellowships require that the institution provide an office, Professor Schneider emphasized the need for more offices on campus.

The members then returned to personnel matters.

At the Committee's request, the President reported on the Trustee meetings of April 23 and 24, which he described as productive and informative. The meetings were held in Washington, D.C., in celebration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Folger Shakespeare Library. President Marx said that the Trustees focused on issues related to student debt burden and on other topics relating to the recommendations of the Committee on Academic Priorities (CAP). The Trustees, according to the President, were impressed with the ways in which a number of FTE proposals made by the Faculty have been tied to College-wide priorities such as interdisciplinarity, strengthening existing departments, and global comprehension.

In the brief time remaining, the Committee discussed a motion from the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) to establish a major in Environmental Studies at the College and a description of that major (CEP letter of April 9, 2007, to the Committee of Six and supporting materials, appended). The President, the Dean, and the members considered how best to move forward with the establishment of such a major. The Dean said that, in order to present the strongest case to the Board for the allocation of new FTEs, it would be his hope that the Committee of Six would issue a statement of support and, in May, the CEP would recommend that new FTEs be allocated, if the Board approves an addition to the FTE cap. He anticipates that the proposal for the major would come before the Faculty this fall. He noted that the proposal is not to create a department, but that faculty in current departments, and new faculty, also appointed to existing departments, would be affiliated with the program.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory S. Call
Dean of the Faculty

AMHERST COLLEGE
Department of Biology - McGuire Life Sciences Building

April 24, 2007

Dean Greg Call
Secretary, Committee of Six

Dear Colleagues:

We write to bring attention to aspects of the of the process you followed in evaluating the report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Promotion, a process which strikes us as ill advised.

As you know well, it was the Committee of Six that charged four of us faculty with examining current promotion practice and considering whether changes in practice or statute were advisable. Our report was submitted to the Committee of Six in December, as required. It would appear, from comments in the minutes of the Committee of Six, that members of your committee took exception to the changes we proposed. Certainly Committee of Six members, both as individuals and collectively if you so decide, have every right to disagree with the conclusions of our report; and that is not the concern here. Rather, we note that, despite the passing of three months during which the report, at least nominally, was subject to consideration at four faculty meetings, at no point did the Committee of Six invite our participation in your deliberations. (At the same time we read of your consultations with other faculty committees including the CEP, CPR, CEIT, and the Committee on Writing.) Had you ever discussed the report with us, we might have been able to avoid misinterpretations of our analysis, suggested changes, and presumed motives. We would also have been given the opportunity to present our point of view as part of the Committee of Six minutes distributed to faculty colleagues, countering the opinions and conclusions reached therein by your members in our absence. Was the subject not sufficiently important to be worthy of a conversation? We suggest that, especially if a significant fraction of the Committee of Six disagrees with a faculty committee report that the Committee of Six commissioned, collegiality and common courtesy require a meeting between that committee and yourselves.

Our second concern is with the procedure you fashioned for the faculty's discussion of our proposal. While it is not unreasonable to attempt to get a sense of the Faculty's overall desire (stay put, or change?) before trying to craft detailed changes to the Handbook, so as not to waste the valuable time of hard-pressed members of the Committee of Six, we suggest that the procedure at which you arrived wasted not only the time of us ad hoc committee members but, of far greater importance, much time of the Faculty as a whole. That is, despite the many minutes spent over several meetings, it was evident from various professors' comments that they would have preferred a simple discussion of the components of the changes we proposed. Should the candidate initiate the promotion evaluation, thus affording more flexibility to the timing of the affair? If teaching is to be part of the evaluation, should there be an opportunity for student input in the form of retrospective student letters? Might it ever be helpful to have senior colleagues not in the candidates' department participate in the evaluation? Importantly, would the proposed

requirement for self-evaluation by the candidate lead to reflection and conversations that encourage continued growth in both teaching and scholarship? Instead of focusing debate on these issues, the Committee of Six presented the Faculty with a withering phalanx of "Substitute Motions" and "Alternative Motions" that made it virtually impossible for colleagues to discuss the merits and shortcomings of our proposal. "Straw motions" put forward by the Committee of Six, but of which the Committee unanimously disapproves, are unlikely to be helpful; neither was the choice offered by your Motion #2, in response to which one colleague observed that either vote, "yes" or "no," could be construed as an attempt to discuss the ad hoc committee report. Moreover, the focus of the discussion was almost exclusively on the question of whether or not there are problems in the current system, although our charge asked us to consider whether changes might improve that system. One can improve a system even if its problems are not crippling. By one assessment, it was 9:10 pm of the final meeting before any of the changes we had proposed finally were discussed. Clearly the Faculty expressed their sense in the end, and by a wide margin, that modest or no change to the Handbook was preferable to the changes we'd suggested. That may well have been the outcome had our proposed changes been discussed, but, at least to our way of thinking, the Faculty decision would have been better informed.

Consideration of our ad hoc committee's report is concluded, and we have no intention of reopening that debate. But as the Committee of Six examines the reports of future faculty committees, we urge you to give those committees the opportunity to examine the issues with you, in person; and to give the Faculty as a whole full opportunity to discuss the particular concerns their appointed colleagues have raised. There is no need to formulate motions to preserve the status quo.

Please share this letter with members of the Committee and append it to the relevant minutes.

Sincerely yours,

Cynthia Damon
Department of Classics

David Ratner
Department of Biology

AMHERST COLLEGE
Department of Anthropology and Sociology

April 9, 2007

The Committee of Six
Greg Call, Dean of the Faculty
Tony Marx, President

Dear Colleagues:

The Committee on Educational Policy is forwarding to you with our unanimous support a motion to establish a major in Environmental Studies along with a description of that major. We urge you to put this motion on the agenda for consideration by the Faculty as soon as feasible.

Rationale for the Major

The rationale for a major in environmental studies is clear.

First, knowledge of environmental issues is important for the full and thoughtful engage in civic life for which we educate our students.

Second, Environmental Studies is an established area of inquiry in a number of disciplines with its own journals and professional associations.

Third, Amherst College now has a critical mass of faculty committed to the major. They have provided the CEP with a clear set of requirements for the major and a list of courses that would fulfill those requirements.

Fourth, an Environmental Studies major would have an exceptionally broad interdisciplinary reach. In particular, it would build bridges between the sciences and the rest of the curriculum. As such, we believe that it should be a priority among the new interdisciplinary ventures recommended by the CAP Report.

The Motion

The motion that Jan Dizard and his colleagues in Environmental Studies submitted to the CEP and which we now forward to you reads as follows:

THE FACULTY ENDORSES THE CREATION OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES MAJOR, A WORKING DRAFT OF WHICH IS APPENDED, TO BE PHASED IN AS FTEs BECOME AVAILABLE AND SPECIFIC FTE REQUESTS RELEVANT TO ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES ARE SUBMITTED BY DEPARTMENTS TO AND APPROVED BY, THE CEP.

This motion does two things. First it establishes the major. Second, it specifies the conditions under which the major will start. Those conditions are left somewhat vague, for good reason. Providing a specific date for starting the major and/or enumerating specific positions that need to be filled would place unacceptable constraints on the CEP. We need the freedom to evaluate the relative merits of each proposal for an FTE. Instructing the CEP to recommend a specific FTE by a specific date would set a bad precedent.

The CEP understands from our colleagues in Environmental Studies that an environmental historian and an environmental economist would provide the additional staffing necessary for a major. We will take this into account as one factor among many in assessing the FiE proposals in front of us.

We also assume that our colleagues in Environmental Studies will decide when the major is ready to start and will make a recommendation accordingly to the CEP and the Committee of Six.

Finally, we recommend removing from the motion the phrase "a working draft of which is appended" and simply forwarding the relevant materials to the Faculty.

Sincerely,

Jerome L. Himmelstein
For the Committee on Educational Policy

AMHERST COLLEGE
American Studies - Sociology

JAN E. DIZARD, Charles Hamilton Houston Professor of American Culture

3 April 2007

Professor Jerome Himmelstein, Chair
The Committee on Educational Policy
c/o Nancy Ratner
Campus Box 2231

Dear Jerry and Colleagues on the CEP:

The faculty who have been working for the past four years toward the goal of establishing a major in Environmental Studies are very near being able to come before the CEP and, then, before the Faculty with a detailed proposal for an Environmental Studies major.

It would help us move forward if the CEP would be willing to bring to the Faculty, hopefully this spring but no later than the fall of 2007, a motion asking the faculty to endorse establishing a major in environmental studies.

The motion we have in mind is:

THE FACULTY ENDORSES THE CREATION OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES MAJOR, A WORKING DRAFT OF WHICH IS APPENDED, TO BE PHASED IN AS FTEs BECOME AVAILABLE AND SPECIFIC FTE REQUESTS RELEVANT TO ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES ARE SUBMITTED BY DEPARTMENTS TO, AND APPROVED BY, THE CEP.

Needless to say, we will happily consult with you to modify this draft motion as your committee thinks best.

I am including here a brief "background" and the proposed catalog copy/course list (the latter you have already seen). We anticipate including these with the motion so that the faculty will have a clear sense of what they are being asked to approve.

Sincerely,

Jan

Background. For the past four years, sixteen faculty members have been meeting, drawn together by a shared sense that the College has an obligation to its students to prepare them for a world in which environmental issues will loom large. In order for students to sort through the claims and counter-claims that have dogged discussions of climate change and threats to biodiversity, students will need a strong interdisciplinary grounding in the sciences, social sciences and humanities.

Many of the elements for a major in ES are already in place. Faculty in several departments are already teaching courses that focus on environmental issues. For the past two years, some members of our group have collaborated in teaching a colloquium that could readily serve as an introductory course in the new major. In addition, both the economics and history departments are seeking approval for appointments in fields (environmental economics and environmental history) that would fill important gaps in our coverage. With the addition of the courses that these new appointments would bring to the College, we would be able to offer students a robust major, as sketched below.

Proposed catalog copy for an Environmental Studies Major.

Advisory Committee: Professors Clotfelter, Cox, Crowley, Delaney, Demorest, Dizard, Hagadorn, Harms, Lopez, Martini, McKinney, Miller, J. Moore, Reyes, Servos, and Temeles.

For thousands of years, our ancestors were more shaped by than they were shapers of the environment. This began to change, first by hunting and then, roughly ten thousand years ago, with the invention of agriculture. Since then, humans have had a steadily increasing impact on the natural world. Environmental Studies is a major program that explores the complex interactions between humans and nature. This exploration will necessarily require taking courses in the sciences, humanities, and social sciences. The six required courses reflect this interdisciplinary commitment. Beyond these required core courses, majors will take at least four electives. The required capstone seminar will be taken in the fall of the senior year, the successful completion of which will constitute passing the comprehensive requirement. For those seniors who wish to write a senior honors essay, the required seminar will be an opportunity to turn seminar-work into an honors essay to be completed in the second semester of the senior year.

Required Courses.

1. A team-taught intro (presently taught as Colloquium 22)
2. Biology 23 ("Ecology")
3. Math 9 or 17 (statistics)
4. Environmental Economics
5. Environmental History (a survey course)
6. Capstone Seminar (to be taken in the first semester, senior year) Team-taught

Electives: (In alphabetical order)

1. Biology 18 (Adaptation and the Organism)
2. Biology 32 (Evolutionary Biology)
3. Biology 39 (Animal Behavior)
4. Biology 48 (Conservation Biology)
5. Chemistry 3 8 (Atmospheric Chemistry)
6. Environmental Economics (different from the required course stipulated above)
7. Geology 9 (Environmental Science: Case Studies)
8. Geology 21 (Surface Earth Dynamics)
9. Geology 28 (Hydrogeology)
10. Geology 45 (Seminar in Biogeochemistry)
11. History 54 (Environmental History of Latin America)
12. History (one or two additional courses depending upon new hire)
13. UST 35' (Law's Nature: Humans, the Environment, and the Predicament of Law)
14. Philosophy 24 (Environmental Philosophy) To be introduced by Professor Moore
15. Pick Colloquia (one each semester-topics change from year to year)
16. Psychology 46 (Environmental Psychology)
17. Sociology 40 (The Social Construction of Nature)