

The seventeenth meeting of the Faculty Executive Committee (FEC) for the academic year 2023–2024 was called to order by Professor Call, chair of the committee, in the president’s office on Monday, March 25, at 4:00 P.M. Present, in addition to Professor Call, were Professors Follette, Gardner, Katsaros, and Polk; President Elliott; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The meeting began with “Topics of the Day.” President Elliott welcomed the members back from spring break. He noted that, prior to the break, a group of teachers and students from the Amherst-Pelham Regional School District participated in a protest in front of Converse Hall on March 12. The group was seeking the college’s support to alleviate a budget shortfall that may lead to budget cuts to the school district that amount to close to \$2 million. President Elliott spoke with the group and reiterated that, while Amherst College is interested in forming long-term partnerships with the Town of Amherst, the college is not willing to provide funding to resolve short-term budget deficits. After leaving campus, the group proceeded to Jones Library. The president shared that he has conveyed his openness to speaking with members of the group in the future, upon request. President Elliott said that he understands that the towns of South Hadley and Northampton are struggling with the same issues that the Amherst-Pelham district is facing, with costs increasing and revenues not keeping pace with inflation.

Continuing, the president informed the committee that the college has been working to reach a strategic partnership arrangement with the Town of Amherst for about two years, an agreement that he believes will increase direct annual funding to the public schools. He noted that the University of Massachusetts Amherst took four years to develop its arrangement with the town. President Elliott commented that the Town of Amherst was hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic and that there continue to be challenges that emerged as a result of the pandemic. In addition to the expertise that college faculty and staff can contribute to the community, he anticipates that one of the most substantial contributions that the college will be able to make to the town will be to play a role in economic development. Building housing on the college’s land could help with the tax base, for example. Professor Katsaros expressed support for doing so, commenting that the lack of housing that is affordable is preventing many families from living in Amherst.

The committee next approved the following faculty meeting dates and times for the fall 2024 semester: Labor Day, Monday, September 2, at 5:30 p.m.; Friday, September 27, at 3:00 p.m.; Friday, October 25, at 3:00 p.m.; Friday, December 13, at 3:00 p.m. The committee then considered nominations for the memorial minute committee for Allen Kropf, Julian H. Gibbs Professor in the Natural and Mathematical Sciences and asked the provost to invite the nominees to serve on this body.

Under “Questions from Committee Members,” Professor Gardner asked, on behalf of a colleague, why advising week and the first round of pre-registration do not occur at the same time. The provost noted that there is nothing precluding colleagues from engaging in both functions, but she thinks that most faculty need two weeks to complete these tasks.

Professor Follette next asked the president if it would be possible to provide an update on the search for the next provost and dean of the faculty. The president, commenting on the need to maintain confidentiality, responded that the process is proceeding, and that he is pleased by the number and quality of faculty candidates.

Conversation turned to [a communication from Professors George, Qiao, and Umphrey](#), with [another letter attached](#), on the topic of creating a space in the new student center that faculty and staff can use for dining together and other forms of social and professional engagement. The authors requested that the FEC find a “mechanism to secure input from members of the faculty concerning the planning of future space in the new campus [sic.] center.” The president noted that Mike Thomas, chief financial and administrative officer, and Kate Salop, chief strategy officer, have convened a group that includes Professor Rager, chair of the Committee on Priorities and Resources, and Professor Bishop, associate provost and associate dean of the faculty, that has begun meeting to discuss how the student center can support faculty and staff dining and engagement. The group welcomes faculty input, the president said, and encourages faculty to contact any of its members. The provost noted that she has asked M. Thomas, with support from Associate Provost Bishop, to convene a focus group to solicit additional faculty input. Professor Gardner commented on the success of the initiative to expand the hours

of operation of Lewis-Sebring Dining Commons, with many faculty and staff making use of the facility, she has observed. Professor Polk, who had previously not spent much time at Lewis-Sebring agreed, noted that he has been enjoying relaxing there after his class ends in the afternoon, including the espresso that is available.

The members next discussed [a note from Professors Douglas and George](#) asking for data related to the Identity-Based Harm Incident-Reporting procedure. President Elliott said that, in response to this request, Sheree Ohen, chief equity and inclusion officer, is preparing a memo for the FEC on the work of the Civil Rights Review Team (CRRT) and the Bias Education and Response Team (BERT). This will be a high-level summary, he explained, and the members agreed that the document should be discussed at the FEC's next meeting and attached to the committee's minutes.

The members then reflected briefly on the committee-of-the-whole conversation that had taken place at the March 8 faculty meeting. They agreed that Professor Hansen had given a compelling and informative presentation about the ways in which the TPC conducts its reviews for tenure and reappointment. Some members felt that some tenure-track faculty seemed reassured that disciplinary representation is not important to the TPC's work. Professor Follette said that some of the faculty members in STEM fields with whom she has spoken since the discussion remain concerned about the representation issue, but feel that this and other issues related to the pilot to divide the Committee of Six should be considered when the pilot concludes during the next academic year. There was also some discussion about the limitations of the election procedures and the possibility of moving to a new system. The FEC felt that this moment had represented a successful collaboration between the TPC and FEC for the purpose of addressing important governance questions that touched on the charges of both bodies. It was agreed that the fact that the committees had been able to work together effectively lent legitimacy to the new structure of having two separate committees. It was agreed that taking the step of having a committee-of-the-whole discussion had been positive and productive, and the members expressed hope that the two committees would come together again if a similar situation arose.

Turning to the topic of the College Council's proposal to revise the Honor Code, Professor Call said that he had met recently with Corey Michalos, director of community standards, and Professor Holleman, chair of the College Council. In anticipation of the April 26 faculty meeting, it had been agreed that they would share a preview of a presentation that they would give on the proposal at the meeting. Professor Call said that he had stressed that the purpose of having a committee-of-the-whole conversation would be to provide an opportunity for the faculty to learn more about the proposal and to offer feedback; the goal would be to avoid the possible scenario of having the student body approve the proposal and the faculty later vote it down. It was suggested that it might be helpful to gauge the faculty's support for the proposal by having a straw poll at the end of the conversation. Most members felt that this would be a helpful step to take. Some members continued to have concerns about the brevity of the language being proposed, particularly in regard to clarity around issues of academic integrity.

In the brief time remaining, the members discussed the committee's ongoing effort to consider faculty governance structures and agreed that they would focus on the issues of streamlining committees and invisible labor. Professor Call commented that the discussions that have taken place over the past several years have revealed that streamlining committees in radical ways is not what most faculty have been seeking; he feels that the committee should consider ways of tweaking the committee structure, if possible. In regard to invisible service, the committee decided to consider what service is not recognized, valued, or seen; mechanisms for tracking service beyond college-level service; and how invisible service could be evaluated. Acknowledging that invisible service is taking place is a good beginning, it was noted. Some members felt that it would be useful to have faculty members report annually on what labor is being done in their departments, creating a list of duties. The chair could then track who is doing these tasks. Professor Katsaros commented that a significant portion of the invisible service is student-driven, according to data shared at chairs' meetings by the Office of the Provost and Dean of the Faculty.

More broadly, and in conclusion, the members discussed approaches to evaluating the FEC/TPC pilot and the questions that should be considered. The committee considered whether perhaps this year's FEC should meet

with this year's TPC and/or next year's FEC this semester. Another option would be for next year's FEC to meet with this year's members next year. In addition, the committee thought it could be informative to invite past members of the Committee of Six to share their experiences serving on that body as well. The members agreed that it would be important for the committee leading this evaluative effort to consider questions such as what would indicate that the new structure is working and whether any changes should be made (and if so, what they should be). The committee agreed that considering what the problem was that the faculty was trying to solve by dividing the Committee of Six would also be useful. In the end, the members felt that the best approach would be for next year's FEC to invite colleagues who have served on the FEC and TPC for the first two years of the experiment to meet and offer feedback. It was agreed that a faculty vote should be required to continue to have two separate committees. The provost said that it is her impression that dividing the two committees has been positive. The only negative outcome has been that doing so has doubled the workload involved in supporting the committee for Associate Provost Tobin, and for Pam Korenewsky, who assists her in carrying out these responsibilities. The committee then asked Associate Provost Tobin to describe the ways in which the workload has increased, which she did in some detail. The members agreed that this issue should be considered as part of the evaluation of the pilot.

The meeting adjourned at 5:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein
Provost and Dean of the Faculty