

The thirteenth 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, February 5, 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.

Under “Questions from Committee Members,” Professor Polk asked if, in the future, the provost would consider spacing out the deadlines further for the submission of proposals for the Faculty Research Awards Program (FRAP) and Senior Sabbatical Fellowships (the senior sabbatical deadline was January 22, and the FRAP deadline was February 2). The provost said that, administratively, it would be simpler if faculty who need an extension on the deadline for the submission of Senior Sabbatical Fellowship proposals write to her to request for one.

At 4:30 p.m., the committee was joined by the following members of the College Council: Professor Hannah Holleman, chair; Corey Michalos, director of community standards; Angie Tissi-Gassoway, chief student affairs officer and dean of students; Professor Jason Robinson; Professor Ivan Contreras, Ankit Sayed ’24, Ayres Warren ’26, and Noah Turbes ’27. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss a proposal from the College Council to replace the current Honor Code with a new Honor Code that has been crafted to create a connection between integrity, respect, and wellbeing; to be accessible through the use of meaningful and concise language; and to help make it more practical for faculty to include the Honor Code on their syllabi and to discuss with their students. The proposed Honor Code reads as follows:

As a member of the Amherst College community, I will be honest in all of my academic pursuits, submit my own work, and fully acknowledge the ideas of others in my work. In words and deeds, I will engage others with integrity and respect. I will contribute to this community in ways that promote wellbeing and belonging.

C. Michalos explained that the Council is proposing that the *Honor Code* be accompanied by a preamble—in the form of a welcome from the leadership of the college, perhaps the president, the provost and dean of the faculty, and/or the chief student affairs officer—that introduces and provides context for the code. This document would be particularly helpful when sharing the Honor Code with new students. At present, according to feedback from some students, it seems that most often they don’t absorb the information in the current Honor Code, which is composed of four sections that total three pages, and do not internalize it when it is shared with them during move-in or orientation, Professor Holleman said; in fact, they often don’t recall that they were ever introduced to the code and remain unfamiliar with it during their time at Amherst. The student members of the College Council, over a period of several years, have confirmed this notion. Professor Holleman commented that the Council has listened carefully to the student perspective that the members of the College Council have offered. The student members in attendance expressed support for the proposed Honor Code. A. Tissi-Gassoway said that it is her impression that many students don’t know much about the Honor Code unless they violate it. She emphasized the importance of considering the ways in which the Honor Code is framed and ensuring that it represents the values of the Amherst College community, as the College Council has done.

Continuing, C. Michalos also informed the members that, while the college’s procedures call for the Honor Code to be reviewed every four years, and for students and faculty, separately, to vote on any revisions that are proposed, substantive changes have not been made to the honor code since 1985. After doing a great deal of research on honor codes at other colleges and universities, the College Council has confidence that the short and aspirational Honor Code that is being brought forward would be easily understood and absorbed and would serve the needs of the community. C. Michalos commented that the proposed Honor Code does not include a statement of how and when the code would be updated. Instead, if adopted, the Honor Code would be reviewed frequently, as the needs of the Amherst community evolve. He informed the committee that the proposed Honor Code is not designed to be a policy statement, and that the approach that has been taken in developing it emphasizes education and prevention, rather than fear and punishment. In the College Council’s view, the proposed code is also more closely aligned with the college’s values than the current code; it represents an attempt to create a clear and succinct access point for gaining an understanding of the core values and expectations of the student community. C. Michalos noted that the current Honor Code is a collection of

excerpts from college policy statements. While it is possible to infer what Amherst's institutional values are from these statements, the College Council believes that it is preferable to state Amherst's values explicitly. In regard to academic integrity, for example, instead of relying on a set of six rules, as is the case now, integrity, respect, wellbeing, and belonging are mentioned in the proposed Honor Code as part of academic integrity.

C. Michalos emphasized that no college policies have been lost by shortening the Honor Code, as the proposed code aligns with college policies that will continue to be articulated in the [Student Code of Conduct](#). All statements of values, policies, and rights (e.g., the *Statement of Intellectual Responsibility*, the *Statement of Respect for Persons*, and the *Statement of Freedom of Expression and Dissent*) remain—unaltered—in that document, he noted. C. Michalos explained that the process of reviewing, and then replacing, most of the language of the current Honor Code had the added benefit of eliminating inconsistencies and redundancies between the Honor Code and other college policies and community standards. Adoption of the proposed Honor Code would eliminate the inconsistency between the Honor Code and the college's nondiscrimination and harassment policy, C. Michalos noted.

The College Council then responded to questions from the FEC members. Some members initially expressed hesitation that the *Statement of Intellectual Responsibility* would not be part of the Honor Code, but were largely satisfied after it was explained the language of the proposed Honor Code is tied to the Student Code of Conduct, in which the statement remains. Some members said that they value the detail in the *Statement of Intellectual Responsibility* and feel that it is particularly important in an academic setting. C. Michalos said that, in the College Council's view, the Student Code of Conduct, which serves as the underpinning of the proposed Honor Code, is the venue in which such detail should reside. When there are violations of the standards, there needs to be a process beyond the Honor Code that stands alone, C. Michalos noted. Some members expressed some concern that the Honor Code would basically be serving only as a values statement and wondered why the community should care about it. A. Tissi-Gassoway reiterated that the preamble that would be sent to all faculty and staff would provide a welcome, set a tone, and explain that the Honor Code reflects who the Amherst community is, most prominently its values. Some members asked what this approach would mean in the context of faculty members' courses. C. Michalos said that this preamble would be emailed to the Amherst community.

The members asked about what would be done to educate students about the three core statements in the Student Code of Conduct (noted above). While it was agreed that faculty members shouldn't have sole responsibility for doing so, there is a sense that the faculty play a leadership role in matters of academic integrity. C. Michalos commented that, in the case of matters of academic integrity and AI, the faculty need to provide clear guidance, while the entire community must be educated about this new frontier. When the students were asked about the inclusion of wellbeing and belonging in the proposed Honor Code, the students expressed support for not limiting the Honor Code to language around academic integrity. The proposed code would provide a common frame of reference for how students should treat one another and other members of the Amherst community that centers around caring about everyone's wellbeing. The students supported the expectation there be a shared responsibility for safety and community. This would extend to how suboptimal behavior, for example, damage done to residence halls, threatens the wellbeing of all students, particularly those who live in the residence hall. The view was also expressed that students should feel safe inside the classroom environment as well as outside—as a matter of safety and to promote academic success by ensuring that the conditions are in place that support learning. For example, students should feel that they can ask questions and express themselves and should not feel uncomfortable if they don't know an answer. In response to the question of whether there is a definition of wellbeing as it relates to the proposed Honor Code, C. Michalos said that, while there is no definition, the idea is that wellbeing should be thought of in broad terms, as what it means to be well. He noted that, in regard to community standards, there would be a framework that would connect wellbeing to the proposed Honor Code. Some members of the committee and President Elliott expressed appreciation for the proposal that the college move to a model for the Honor Code that is centered on building community.

The committee expressed appreciation for the College Council's efforts, and some members said that they found the language in the proposed Honor Code to be compelling and saw value in having a clear and succinct honor code. The College Council thanked the committee for the opportunity to discuss the Honor Code proposal and left the meeting at 4:45 p.m.

The members next discussed how to move forward with the consideration of the proposed Honor Code. It was agreed that, as a first step, there should be a committee-of-the-whole conversation about the proposal at the March 8 faculty meeting. If there is a sense that the faculty would support the proposal, that next step, under the current procedures, would be to have the students vote on it, after which the faculty would vote.

Discussion turned to the February 16 faculty meeting, for which the members reviewed a draft agenda. At their meeting on January 29, all members had agreed to bring a motion forward to add another tenured member to the FEC; the purpose would be to bring the perspective of another colleague with significant experience at the college to the important work of the committee. Though they supported forwarding the motion to the faculty, upon further reflection, both Professors Follette and Gardner shared some concerns about the motion that proposes adding an additional tenured member to the FEC, though Professor Gardner commented that the argument that she finds somewhat compelling is that doing so could increase the possibility of continuity of membership among the tenured members. Overall, however, her view is that this proposal should be part of a larger discussion about faculty governance and the ways in which the faculty conducts itself. It is her hope that the FEC will have such a conversation soon, as originally anticipated. In addition, she suggested that any proposals of this kind should wait until the conclusion of the three-year pilot that was put in place when the faculty voted to divide the Committee of Six into two separate committees. That pilot will conclude in spring 2025. Professor Call expressed the view that incremental changes that could serve the committee well should be proposed as they arise, rather than delaying consideration of them until a time in the future during which the faculty can have a discussion that is likely to be broad and to have many moving parts.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Polk said that bringing this motion forward would allow the faculty to express its views about the question at hand, which would be helpful in his view. He is interested in learning more about what colleagues feel about the proposal. Professors Call and Katsaros, who favor adding an additional tenured member because they feel that making this change would strengthen faculty governance, agreed. In regard to the idea that the FEC should reflect the composition of the faculty, as some have suggested, Professor Call said that presently about one-third of the tenure-line faculty are tenure track and two-thirds are tenured, with the one-third proportion untenured representing a high-water mark over the last several decades. Thus, shifting the FEC's membership to be four tenured members and two tenure-track members would be more representative of the faculty; the current composition of the FEC, with 40 percent of the committee being tenure track, does not represent the composition of the faculty, he noted. Professor Follette asked the other members if they would offer an example of a topic considered by the FEC that would have benefited from having the perspective of another faculty member who has been at the institution for a longer period of time. Professor Call expressed the view that the question of whether to continue to have a provost and dean of the faculty or to separate the position into two parts—the dean of the faculty being one and the provost being the other—would be such an example. In the discussion of that issue, he observed the value of bringing institutional memory and experience with faculty governance of some length to the conversation. For example, some colleagues, including himself, experienced directly the results of having separate positions during the college's short-lived experiment with this model. For the same reason, in his view, the ways in which the current structure of the position benefits the faculty by placing a faculty colleague in a strong institutional role was clear. The provost commented that tenured faculty may feel more comfortable challenging the administration, which is desirable from the faculty perspective. In a similar vein, some members noted that some tenure-track faculty, by virtue of not having the protection of tenure, may feel that they cannot express their views freely about some issues. Professor Follette, while acknowledging what had just been said, expressed the view that faculty who are newer to Amherst, who were more recently at other colleges and universities, can bring fresh and valuable perspectives based on their experiences at these institutions. She suggested that one possibility might be to institute the criterion that some proportion of the FEC members must have been hired within the past ten years, rather than requiring that two members be untenured.

Concluding the conversation, the committee agreed to propose a change to the *election* section of the charge to make it clear that the goal is for service by the tenured members to be staggered (leave patterns could still result in a scenario in which all members would rotate off the committee in a given year, however). In addition, since the committee has now found that the most efficacious schedule is to meet on a weekly basis, it was

agreed that a proposal to revise the language of the FEC charge should be brought forward, in order to reflect current practice in this regard. The committee then voted three in favor and two opposed on the substance of the motion (on January 29, the members had voted unanimously to forward a motion to the faculty). The members then voted unanimously to forward the faculty meeting agenda for the February 16 faculty meeting to the faculty.

Professor Katsaros asked the president for his thoughts about Dartmouth College's decision to reinstate an SAT/ACT requirement. President Elliott said that conversations about standardized testing, which is a complex issue, will continue at Amherst, and that he foresees, for example, that the Faculty Committee on Admission and Financial Aid (FCAFA) will continue to discuss this topic.

Continuing "Questions from Committee Members," noting that the election for the Tenure and Promotion Committee is being conducted before the FEC election this semester, Professor Call asked if there is an expectation that these elections will always be conducted in this sequence. Provost Epstein responded that the TPC election is being conducted first this spring because of the upcoming consideration of the motion to add another tenured member to the FEC, which would affect the election for the FEC this year if the motion is approved. In the future, unless there is reason to shift the order, the expectation is that the FEC election will be conducted first.

Ahead of the meeting, the members were provided with the proposals that the president had received from faculty members as part of his *Serving the Greater Good Initiative*, through which he hopes that Amherst can encourage further experimentation and innovation that will enhance the focus on the greater good within the college's curriculum. In the brief time remaining in the meeting, the members offered advice to the president and provost on the principles that might guide them when selecting proposals for funding. Suggestions from the members included consideration of the following, after reviewing all of the proposals holistically: the long-term impact of the proposed course and the ability to sustain it, i.e., whether a course might be offered multiple times and be transferable to other faculty; whether a course will be taught by faculty from different disciplines; whether a course represents the revision of a foundational introductory course and has the support of the department; and whether a course is likely to draw enrollments that span class years and majors. The president, who noted that he is delighted with the response to the call for proposals and the quality of the submissions, thanked the members for their guidance. In response to whether there will be another call for proposals in the future, President Elliott said that this would be his hope, but that he would also like to see how the courses that will be supported in this first round unfold, before making a decision on having another round. He noted that Sarah Barr, advisor to the provost on campus initiatives and director of community engagement, is reviewing the proposals and will advise Provost Epstein and him about whether community-based learning opportunities that are being proposed as part of courses are feasible and sustainable. Professor Polk noted that such courses require a great deal of time and work on the part of the instructor and suggested that additional administrative support may be necessary for those faculty who undertake them.

The meeting adjourned at 5:40 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein
Provost and Dean of the Faculty