

Toward Amherst's Third Century

REPORT TO THE FACULTY
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC PRIORITIES

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The Committee on Academic Priorities

The faculty members and the Trustee-appointees of the CAP were appointed by the Committee of Six; the staff member, by the Advisory Committee on Personnel Policies (ACPP); and the student members, by the Association of Amherst Students. Our charge is contained below as the first appendix (p. 34). We met in executive session from December, 2004, to January, 2006, on a weekly or bi-weekly basis during the semester and held seven all-day or multiple-day retreats. The recommendations in this report come forth with the unanimous support of the committee.

More than previous planning committees, the CAP has operated within a network of other entities that include: the Special Committee on the Amherst Education (SCAE) and the five working groups that have continued its work; standing committees of the faculty; all academic departments and programs; the administrative units that report to the Dean of the Faculty; various President's Initiative Fund (PIF) groups; and a range of *ad hoc* groups formed among faculty, staff, students, and alumni. In over fifty formal planning documents, none of them perfunctory, these groups articulate their missions with a depth and creativity that capture the vitality of Amherst's academic cultures, as well as their individuality. We thank the colleagues who labored on these reports, often on two or three, and to those who attended our open meetings (of faculty, over 90 percent).

Earlier stages in this many-sided initiative have already resulted in new courses, workshops on innovative pedagogies, new divisional working groups, a program of academic advising in New Student Orientation, a pilot committee to oversee study abroad, and the creation of an Office of Institutional Research. Since most of these collaborating groups remain on the job, this report comes to the faculty at a moment when it is easier to cite progress than to claim closure. Our aim has not been to end, but to focus the process of self-assessment and experimentation that began with the SCAE in 2002. For this reason we recommend strengthening the policy-making powers of the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) so as to encompass our committee's planning function and to make continuing use of what has been reported to us.

The CAP received more than 60 proposals for new faculty appointments and has tried to map a general strategy for meeting those needs within a range of growth that is fiscally responsible and appropriate to Amherst's culture. Similarly we received proposals for half-a-dozen new standing committees of the faculty, alongside equally compelling pleas to cut back on the burden of committee service. As with new faculty positions, we assess institutional needs rather than ranking specific proposals, so that the CEP may make a more careful assessment after the faculty has expressed its will about the College's central academic priorities.

We send this report on to the faculty, from whom the ideas and proposals have come. We hope that the faculty will recognize here the culmination of much individual and collective effort. We also look forward to the deliberations of the faculty on this report, anticipating that many of the proposals set forth here will continue to evolve in the years ahead. We welcome that on-going process, as we look forward to working with the College's trustees, alumni, and friends in ensuring that Amherst's aspirations can continue to be made real.

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I. Introduction

1.1 What Amherst Can Be

Amherst College was founded by the town to serve the world. Our mandate has traditionally been to produce leaders who think critically and who value honesty, responsibility, and sincerity. We expect much of our students, and they expect much of the College as a leader in higher education. In a troubled world our motto, *Terras Irradiant*, “Let Them Give Light to the Lands,” calls for even larger aspirations.

Every member of the Amherst community will describe our ideals differently, but none would deny how powerfully the character of our graduates reflects and molds the character of the school. Over the generations, this larger community has coalesced around commitments to inclusion, excellence, and service. In ways that would astonish the founders, the town’s college has grown into a national institution that broadly, if still imperfectly, represents American society and contributes to the arts and sciences at the highest level.

Our current mission is not less visionary than what has come before, and we share it with only a handful of institutions: to join the research excellence of a university with the intimacy and accountability of a small college; to achieve intensity without insularity; and to forge responsible leaders by professing and practicing the union of intellectual and ethical engagement. This daunting endeavor calls for and creates students unusually capable of educational self-direction.

To fulfill this mission, the College summons its enduring strengths. Amherst thrives by the convergence of independent-minded students, a talented and productive faculty, a dedicated staff, and an alumni body of unrivalled commitment to our educational values. Students’ face-to-face encounters with faculty bear constant witness to a rare synergy of teaching and scholarship. Distinguished artists and scholars keep an open door for all students, without asking whether they come out of curiosity or disciplinary vocation. We are a small campus that offers through the Five Colleges the academic and cultural reach of a university. We occupy the geographical center of higher education in New England and live in proximity to the worst urban and rural poverty in Massachusetts. Among liberal arts colleges, Amherst may be the most fortunate and the most obligated.

As we look to the College’s third century, we have much to do. Even to stay essentially the same, by 2021 we will need to replace more than a third of the faculty; rebuild a third of our academic facilities; and renovate the remaining third of our dormitories. If current trends continue, by 2021 the comprehensive fee at schools such as Amherst will exceed the US median family income, and growing numbers of the most talented students will not even consider private education as a possibility.

And we cannot stay the same. For Amherst graduates will inhabit a global culture ever more connected by the circulation of people and information and, we fear, yet more unbalanced through poverty, disease, and war. On some estimates, a third of our students are training for jobs that have not yet been conceived. Twenty-first century society will need the intellectual versatility, informed judgment, and sense of civic obligation fostered by liberal arts colleges, but only 3 percent of American undergraduates now attend such institutions, and the ranks are at risk of thinning. The concentration of resources in first-rank research universities and their continuing growth raise the stakes for small colleges that aspire to stay on the frontiers of knowledge. We must find ways to innovate without incurring unsustainable cost.

No college is better positioned than Amherst to meet these challenges. By virtue of our size, we can be nimble, adaptive, and well-attuned to our students' evolving needs. Where larger institutions have often fragmented into collections of isolated research institutes, learning centers, and departmental fiefdoms, Amherst has retained the ethic that students should be guided by teachers who are researchers and also the institution's planners—at once specialists and full citizens of a cohesive and contentious community responsible to the world beyond. Despite the centrifugal pressures of increasing specialization and professionalization, Amherst faculty have organized across departments for curricular inquiry and experimentation. Starting with the Special Committee on the Amherst Education (SCAE) in 2002, a score of groups has investigated practices on dozens of peer campuses, arranged consultation on teaching and curriculum, and launched experimental courses with new pedagogies and in new fields. Almost half of the faculty have formed themselves into interdisciplinary groups under the President's Initiative Fund (PIF). Mobilization at this level typically occurs only in institutions struggling for survival. Amherst's willingness to struggle for excellence and to weave disciplinary ambitions into a common project has particular resonance for students who seek moral compass as they foresee careers that are nomadic, networked, and unpredictable.

Any curriculum is a work in progress, and we have learned much since 2002 about our strengths and weaknesses. Our curriculum demands that students take responsibility for their education as preparation for a lifetime of self-determination and intellectual engagement. Its flexibility and responsiveness to students' interests allows faculty and students to put intense demands upon one another and serves us well in a time of rapid change. But in giving students unusual latitude to find and develop their strengths, we can also make it too easy for them to hide from their weaknesses. Their independence necessitates effective advice and support that not all of them receive. Because of diverse learning styles and levels of preparation in writing and quantitative reasoning, not all students are prepared to make full use of our curricular offerings. Attention is needed to supporting students' breadth in foreign language fluency, the arts, natural science, and global comprehension, despite strong programs in these fields. Though disciplinary boundaries contain knowledge less and less well, in recent years Amherst has fallen from the vanguard of interdisciplinary innovation back into the ranks of followers. And we have not kept pace with students' growing interest in inquiry and service beyond the classroom or developed ways to integrate such experiences with course work.

Our academic culture needs solutions that come from within the faculty. However, Amherst's departments report that, acting alone, they cannot fully assess, let alone meet, the challenges mentioned above. We need mechanisms that fulfill the faculty's corporate responsibility for the entire curriculum and for the needs of all students, and that support the networks of faculty experimenting with innovative pedagogies and new ways of integrating knowledge. We have such a structure in the often unrealized policy-making mandate of the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP). That structure should be strengthened to take up and continue the planning function of our committee. A great adaptive strength of the small college is that it is still possible to see the big picture.

From our consultations with students, faculty, staff, and alumni, we offer a set of goals for the College as we look to our third century. These four goals correspond roughly to Sections II to V of this report:

! To set the standard for higher education in choosing a student body for talent and potential, without exclusions for race, creed, national origin, or the ability to pay.

The intelligence of our students and the range of their backgrounds, talents, and ideas are fundamental to everything we do here. As a national leader in admissions and financial aid, Amherst has the responsibility to take the next steps to ensure that the pool of talented applicants is not narrowed in any way. To the extent that the price of an Amherst education diminishes the diversity of our student body, the education we offer will not be worth the price. Through uncompromising equity in offering opportunity to the next generation of leaders, the College offers our students an example of institutional responsibility and demonstrates the public good of private education.

! To develop a model of curricular integration for the research college. Amherst can demonstrate that a small college can contribute to rapid developments in knowledge and technology without becoming a mini-university or losing its focus on the core values of the liberal arts. In order to attract and retain first-rate faculty who work and teach in the forefront of their scholarly and creative fields, Amherst can expand our range of ideas by integrating and coordinating, not merely adding, new specializations, and provide faculty with the flexibility and resources they need to explore new fields and develop new pedagogies.

! To expand and deepen opportunities for learning beyond the classroom and link them more effectively to course work. Increasingly, students seek experience and responsibility beyond the classroom in laboratory research, the arts, public service, community-based learning, study abroad, and summer internships. Such experiences enrich and are informed by classroom learning. Combining knowledge with action may inoculate students against the sense of entitlement that too often afflicts graduates of elite institutions. Amherst can set the standard in making such engagement both possible for all students and securely anchored in the curriculum.

! To provide foundations that respond to the evolving needs of students. As students' interests, learning styles, and disparate skill levels rapidly change, Amherst can demonstrate that the specialists best capable of meeting their needs are the regular faculty who know the demands of academic concentrations and of graduate education. The faculty can meet this challenge through stronger academic advising and through concerted attention to students' verbal, visual, and quantitative literacy, not only in classes devoted to these separate skills but also across the curriculum. Students can meet their individual ideals of the broadly educated person by having access to a full range of innovative courses in the arts, scientific reasoning, and cross-cultural learning.

Amherst has the chance, then, to prove that a small college can lead the way in undergraduate education, even in the face of accelerating disciplinary, technological, and social change and of a deepening crisis in the financing of higher education. We can forge the vital links between knowledge and action, faculty research and student learning, intellect and moral courage, mental and physical vigor, and thereby sustain in a disrupted age the liberal arts ideal of education for the whole person and the whole life. By virtue of the talent on this campus and the remarkable sense of ownership of all participants, Amherst can have a faculty that is far more than the sum of its departments and offer curricular opportunities that realize the full potential of all students.

To do so, we must shape a strategy of disciplined growth and innovation, bringing together a widening mix of ideas, people, and experiences. The objectives outlined above will require some expansion of the student body and of the faculty, as well as of the resources devoted to financial aid and faculty development. But that increment can amplify the investment that generations of alumni have made and will make, and thereby fully realize their expectation that Amherst will produce leaders by showing leadership as an institution. As the College has grown in scope, from a provincial school to a national institution broadly representing and serving American society, we have grown in strength as well. The small college that can manage the yet steeper task of encompassing a global range of ideas within a principled and productive community will have rendered a crucial service to the future of liberal education. No school has a better chance than Amherst; it is a worthy goal for our third century.

1.2 Summary of Recommendations

The CAP unanimously puts forward the following recommendations:

Excellence in the student cohort by achieving the broadest possible applicant pool:

- We recommend that talented students from less affluent backgrounds be more vigorously recruited (recommendation 1), that our proportion of non-US students enrolled be increased from about 6 to 8 percent (recommendation 3), and that entering classes be increased by 15-25 students to accommodate these changes (recommendation 5).
- We recommend that the Trustees seek funds to meet the additional aid burden of matriculating less affluent students (recommendation 1) and of need-blind admissions for non-US students (recommendation 4), and that they consider significant reductions in the loan burden of all our students (recommendation 2).

Curricular innovation:

- We recommend that the faculty be gradually increased by at least 18 full-time equivalents (FTEs) to meet the priorities explained in this report, and that those FTEs be allocated upon recommendation by the CEP, possibly in halves or quarters (one FTE is roughly equivalent to 4 courses), primarily to departments committing to offer courses that meet the following college-wide curricular needs:
 - New interdisciplinary ventures and other forms of cross-departmental collaboration [5 FTEs] (recommendation 6);
 - Global or transnational studies [2.5 FTEs] (recommendation 7);
 - Targeted “opportunity” hires that invigorate or enrich the racial, cultural, gender, and/or intellectual diversity of the faculty [2 FTEs] (recommendation 9);
 - “Intensive writing” courses [2 FTEs] (recommendation 17);
 - Initiatives aimed at improving the quantitative literacy of students, particularly “intensive” sections of gateway courses in quantitative disciplines [2.5 FTEs] (recommendation 19).
- We recommend that 4 of the 18 FTE increase be reserved to strengthen the ability of some departments to contribute adequately to Amherst’s current curriculum, including in the creative and performing arts (recommendation 8).
- We recommend that all students be required to take at least one course designated as Writing Attentive (recommendation 18).

Co-curricular program enhancement:

- We recommend increased funding for the Amherst Academic Interns program and for student research through the Office of the Dean of the Faculty (recommendation 13).
- We recommend significantly expanding opportunities for community service and for summer and January internships and developing ways of linking that experience to curricular work (recommendation 14 and 15).
- We recommend that the College provide need-based support to encourage students to enroll in intensive summer language programs in the USA and abroad (recommendation 16).

Excellence in faculty scholarship and pedagogy:

- We recommend that the faculty formally adopt a policy that requires the soliciting of teaching evaluations from all students in all classes (recommendation 20).
- We recommend that all assistant professors be assured of a year of sabbatical leave at full salary after reappointment (recommendation 10), and that the existing program of Senior Sabbatical Fellowships be expanded to: cover as much as two semesters of leave at full after six years (recommendation 11); accept proposals for contributions to pedagogy; and support all qualified faculty who apply (recommendation 11).
- We recommend that a faculty innovation fund be created to support pedagogical projects of faculty at all ranks (recommendation 22).
- We recommend that the College create a staff position to support sponsored research and to assist faculty in grant applications (recommendation 12), and that the administration devote more resources and staff time to supporting programs in pedagogy, including programs to help teachers at all ranks (recommendation 21).

II. Access to an Amherst Education

Students come to Amherst to learn with and from the best talents of their generation. The students the College admits to that exchange provide the clearest statement possible of the value we place on diversity of background, viewpoint, and voice. We must live up to the standard of intellectual and ethical reach we hope to instill in our students. Although challenges remain, over the past several decades Amherst's student body has been diversified to the point that half of our students are women and a third or more are students of color. The benefits of this inclusion are clear; it would be unthinkable to turn back the clock.

Time has stood still in one respect, however. While the College has, without fanfare, led higher education in developing and maintaining need-blind admission and full-need financial aid, the socio-economic profile of the student body remains much the same today as it was twenty-five years ago. Though we compare favorably with our peer institutions, we still enroll less than a quarter of our students from below the top quintile of family income. As a result students from households earning up to the US median family income find themselves part of a small economic minority at the College.

Amherst's current socioeconomic imbalance undermines our historic mission and puts artificial constraints on the learning community that we form here. Consistent with the College's charter to educate bright, indigent young men, Amherst should aspire to strengthen our leadership position among selective private colleges and universities in admitting talented low-income students (e.g., those eligible for Pell grants). Recent initiatives by the Office of Admission suggest that this portion of the applicant pool can be expanded while maintaining the College's high academic standards, a finding that we hope will be validated by further cycles of admission.

1. We recommend that talented students from less affluent backgrounds be more vigorously recruited and that the Trustees seek funds to meet the additional aid burden.

We also urge the Trustees to explore alternative models of pricing and financing an Amherst education. We are concerned that the present model has placed us in an untenable position, where the "sticker shock" of our costs scares away potential applicants unfamiliar with our "full need" aid formula while the substantial subsidies received even by "full payers" go unrecognized.

We recognize that students and their families already borrow to cover their parental contribution and that further borrowing exacerbates the disparity between wealthier students, who graduate free and clear of financial obligations, and less well-off students, many of whom graduate with debts that can limit their choices after graduation. We do not see the justice of that

outcome, even as we appreciate that students and families should expect to help pay for college education.

2. We recommend that the Trustees consider significant reductions in the loan burden of all our students, as has been done for our highest-need students, in particular to avoid the limit that loans may impose on future career aspirations.

A second underused pool of first-rate talent also merits attention. Some of Amherst's most distinguished students have been international students, who currently constitute some 6 percent of the student body. In the present era of globalization, they bring to the campus an indispensable range of perspectives and experience.

3. We recommend that the proportion of non-US students admitted be increased from about 6 to about 8 percent.

International students are currently not eligible for need-blind admission, though many of them receive financial aid. We see the fiscal rationale, but not the justice of excluding international students from need-blind policies and are concerned that this exclusion implies or teaches a double standard at a point when Amherst is striving to inculcate global cohesion. The experience of peer institutions is that need-blind admission can markedly increase the quality of the applicant pool. Amherst's pool of talented international students is already strong; however, to ensure that the College has the broadest range of the most talented international students from which to choose, we urge that there be more active and targeted recruitment of such students from a wider range of countries, particularly those in Africa and Latin America.

4. We recommend that admission for non-US students be made need-blind.

Broader inclusion of international students and less affluent students inevitably puts pressure on the limited number of places in entering classes. We emphasize that this further diversity should not come at the expense of any of our valued constituencies, array of interests, or racial, ethnic, or cultural diversity. A modest increase in the size of the student body can comfortably be accommodated by existing facilities and by the expansion of the faculty recommended in this report.

5. We recommend that entering classes be increased by between 15 and 25 students.

We recognize that, as in the past, further diversification of our student body brings with it additional responsibilities for ensuring that the needs of all our students are met. Other recommendations of this report and ongoing programs address this challenge. We also note the continuing and possibly heightened need for fostering greater community cohesion among students. The re-establishment of the first-year quad is an important step in this direction, though

not, by itself, sufficient. We encourage the First-Year Seminar Committee to consider how that program could further encourage commonality through intellectual engagement. We also encourage the College Council to remain open to other proposals for community building, including the possibility of common campus work experiences for all students. Students should be engaged in such planning. We also note the important role athletics can play in building such commonality.

III. Expanding Our Reach in Ideas

To keep Amherst at the forefront of higher education, we confront the escalating challenge of new fields, new ways of organizing knowledge, and new information technologies. These pressures have led to expansion and often a centrifugal proliferation of specializations in the universities and colleges with which we compete for students and faculty. The CAP believes that Amherst can best maintain its stature and distinctive character through modest growth governed by more robust processes of integration. At a time when college faculties are perceived to be less and less capable of attaining such cohesion and therefore less capable of self-governance, the spirit and energy with which the Amherst faculty has supported the current planning process convinces the CAP that they will continue to show leadership in this direction.

In an open curriculum, it is the composition of the faculty that determines the landscape of courses available, the distribution of courses taken, and ultimately the shape of each student's education. Faculty appointments are our principal means of defining and refreshing our identity and our educational goals. Maintaining an innovative, broad, and deep curriculum is essential if we are to continue to attract and retain high-caliber teacher-scholars in critical fields. The CAP proposes a change in Amherst's academic culture in which innovation has come largely through academic departments' exclusive attention to their own needs. Departments have reported to us a range of needs—in integrating knowledge between disciplines and in responding to students' evolving interests, learning styles, and disparities in preparation—that are beyond their individual capacity to meet.

The CAP therefore recommends that growth in the faculty occur primarily, though not exclusively, in response to college-wide needs and that departments receive added staffing in return for the commitment to provide courses that meet these needs. If we understand faculty full-time equivalents (FTEs) to be equal to four courses a year, it becomes possible to allocate FTEs by halves or quarters. To anticipate a discussion from Section V, the 2 FTEs recommended for writing pedagogy are equivalent to 8 courses a year, which might be offered by a range of departments and taught by humanists, social scientists, or natural scientists who have undertaken to develop writing pedagogies in their disciplines. That undertaking would over time strengthen the integration of the curriculum and send a powerful signal to students about the capabilities and responsibilities of the liberally educated person.

In what follows we make recommendations about general areas of curricular need. These include attention to areas supporting new interdisciplinary ventures that strengthen departments too small at present to contribute to college-wide curricular needs, that broaden transnational study, and that otherwise diversify the faculty's ranks. Later in the report we also make recommendations about specific pedagogical goals related to writing and quantitative reasoning as well as global and community-based learning. Before we do so, however, it is vital to address issues of governance upon which any distribution of resources depends.

3.1 Faculty Governance

Our mission remains to bring the most talented students and faculty into a colloquy that will inform critical thinking, lifelong learning, and responsible action in the world. To achieve this result, we must rededicate ourselves to expanding the universe of ideas in this exchange by seeking first-rate faculty and supporting them in their scholarship or artistic creativity. The allocation of appointments is the most enduring investment the College makes in its future and requires the faculty's best professional judgment of the needs of the College as a whole. The recommendations outlined below include devoting substantial resources, particularly in the form of new faculty positions, to a wide range of educational goals, most of which transcend the mission of any single department or program. In order to achieve these vital goals, the College will need to integrate these new undertakings with the programs of the individual departments that will house the faculty. A strengthened mechanism for deliberating upon and implementing collective decisions is essential to sustain Amherst's academic excellence in future years.

This mechanism should be compatible with the needs of our departments, the self-governance of the faculty, and the values of the institution as a whole. The faculty shows resolve to tackle difficult decisions straightforwardly, even as students are expected to take responsibility in navigating the open curriculum. By modeling such responsibility, we also inculcate it.

The mechanism we propose is, simply put, that the faculty establish academic priorities to guide the allocation of additional faculty positions and that departments make formal agreements with the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) to teach courses serving those priorities in return for additional allocations of faculty lines. The CEP will serve as the central body for assessing curricular needs and recommending the allocation of FTEs. Working in close collaboration with the CEP, the Dean of the Faculty will be charged with monitoring the system to ensure that departments live up to their commitments.

For example, if a department is granted an FTE of which one-half is for a new specialization and one-half to meet needs that are not strictly departmental (e.g., in writing, quantitative reasoning, or community-based learning), the department will agree to provide two courses a year in the latter. The new person hired will have no special responsibility unless that function is incorporated into the profile of the position. The department will benefit from the addition of a full-time colleague and from the ability to teach the specialization needed, but with the concomitant obligation to provide two courses a year that serve the designated purpose.

Our aim is to stimulate departments to apply their energies to the broad educational needs of students by bringing departmental interests into close alignment with the interests of the College as a whole, as determined by the faculty. In this way, the faculty will commit itself to creative solutions for stubborn pedagogical problems and untenured faculty will be protected from bearing the brunt of this burden. The system also helps departments make the case for additional faculty lines where only a partial FTE can be justified to support a new specialization. The proposed mechanism will give departments clear understandings about their college-wide

obligations and allow the faculty to maintain its central deliberative role in overseeing its expansion and in determining the shape and vitality of Amherst's liberal arts curriculum.

We expect that our recommendations, if adopted by the faculty, will guide the CEP over the foreseeable future as it assesses new curricular initiatives and weighs proposals for new faculty lines. Nevertheless, we can be confident that the future also holds ideas and challenges that cannot be anticipated today. It is equally important to realize that even without expansion, the College is entering a period of greatly accelerated hiring because of retirements, during which the recommendations of the CEP will reshape the faculty for decades to come. To conduct informed oversight of the curriculum and the continuing renewal of the faculty, the CEP will need to sustain the same kinds of ongoing dialogues with Amherst's departments, programs, and interdisciplinary groups, as the CAP has over the past year. The CEP will need access to institutional research on students' pathways through the curriculum. And it will also need access to information about departments' short- and long-term needs on a par with the synoptic information provided to the CAP. A recently appointed half-time researcher/coordinator will help the CEP manage these tasks. We also urge that departments and programs keep on file with the CEP planning documents that outline their current and anticipated needs, with the option to revise and replace these documents as often as needed. The CAP was specially created to study the long-term needs of the College and strategies to meet them; such planning is and ought to be an on-going and central mission of the CEP.

3.2 New Interdisciplinary Ventures

Academic disciplines, useful as they may be for ordering experience and providing tools for inquiry, should not encapsulate. It is important for students to understand this as early as possible in their education, since the structures of the academy tend to channel our imaginations and construct all too easily the image of a world that fits our inherited categories. The liberally-educated person should be alert to the opportunities that exist at the fault lines between traditional disciplines, confident in his or her ability to follow questions across boundaries and alive to the implications of what is done in one field for the development of others. These are among the reasons that Amherst has historically stressed interdisciplinarity in its First-Year Seminars, collaborative teaching across disciplines in its colloquia, and joint appointments of faculty who bridge two or more fields. They have also been motives in selectively developing formal programs and departments with interdisciplinary charters.

Amherst's record as an incubator of interdisciplinary programs is remarkable. It showed imagination and leadership in creating programs in such fields as American Studies; Black Studies; Law, Jurisprudence, and Social Thought; Neuroscience; and Women's and Gender Studies – all much admired pioneers. Currently one-fifth of the faculty hold appointments in two departments. But the most recent programmatic initiatives of this sort date to the early 1990s; over the past decade or two Amherst has lagged behind many of its peer institutions in providing students with opportunities in fields such as environmental studies, biochemistry, film studies, and the interface between digital electronics and the arts.

Both the broad response to the President's Initiative Fund and the departmental reports prepared for the CAP testify to the faculty's pent-up ambitions in such areas. We are encouraged by the PIF-funded progress toward curricular innovations in environmental studies, public education, and human rights, as well as in other areas where classroom teaching is reinforced by experiential learning through service or internships. In some cases, the College is very close to being able to mount effective programs, up to and including a major. Where faculty already are on the ground, all that may be necessary is provision of modest support services and release from departmental commitments to ensure appropriate coverage and continuity in course offerings. In other cases, on-site constellations of faculty may require a full-time linchpin appointment or one or two new part-time collaborators to bring a well-shaped program into being. Recommending these choices remains within the purview of the CEP.

Where programs already exist and where one or two individuals with joint appointments represent entire areas of interdisciplinary study, planning for the future would be much eased should resources be available to reduce the penalties paid by departments for inter-departmental cooperation.

6. We recommend that 5 new FTEs be devoted to new interdisciplinary ventures and the support of other forms of cross-departmental collaboration.

3.3 Global Comprehension

To be an educated person in our interdependent world demands of students and faculty that we increase our global literacy. Our students must be more adaptable and better informed about the world than they were a generation ago in order to become responsible international leaders and citizens. This learning comes in multiple ways: through the diversity of our student body (Section II), mastering foreign languages, immersion in other cultures, and studying the dynamics of diasporas, immigration, trade and investment, and other transnational phenomena. The faculty has heard a vigorous debate about the virtues of all these approaches, anchored in a widely-shared consensus about the urgency of understanding ourselves and our times from a global perspective.

The meaning of global comprehension has taken exciting new forms. The greater ease with which ideas, commodities, and capital flow through the world has eroded the significance of the national boundaries around which an earlier generation of scholarship in "area studies" defined itself. While global comprehension continues to comprise the study of the economies, societies, and polities of diverse regions of the world, it has also come to address the multiple ramifications of border crossings.

Language study retains its claims as a fundamental way of knowing. As one of our colleagues has put it, "language frames the way in which we live in the world. It shapes, perhaps even determines, the perceptual, affective, and cognitive filter through which we engage with

reality.” The CAP has heard impressive testimony from alumni about how their undergraduate experience of learning to learn languages was crucial to the range of their careers and the richness of their lives. In terms of the depth of departmental programs and the numbers of majors, Amherst is for the most part the envy of peer institutions. An understanding of the United States in relation to the rest of the world is predicated on an ability to engage the study of languages. Foreign language study gives students access to the riches of other cultures and reveals the parochial nature of many of their assumptions about what is “natural” or “obvious.” It also alerts them to the diversity of an America that is already multi-cultural and ever-more integrated into international intellectual and social life.

However, too few of our students arrive with or subsequently attain fluency in a foreign language. Amherst can and should do more to enhance the visibility and reach of our foreign language departments, including enhanced support for study abroad and language immersion (Section IV) and improvement of the facilities for language learning (Section VI). We anticipate that these measures will increase the number of our students who elect to take courses in our foreign language departments. Some of these departments are currently too small to offer the range and depth of courses adequate to serve both their majors and a larger population of students and may need additional appointments. We also note that consideration of further language appointments would be facilitated by collective decisions on the relation between language and cultural studies and on the potential for interdisciplinary linkages. A small college cannot teach the same variety of languages as a major research university, but those it teaches ought to be supported vigorously.

Most of our students take one or more courses on global issues. However there are large areas of the world that are underrepresented in the curriculum and that individual departments are keen to address. Greater attention to Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America is especially important, as are longstanding interests in Latino/a and Asian American studies. It has become ever more difficult to understand the United States adequately without placing it in a global framework.

Given the pressures of our historical moment, some of the curricular growth in the field of global comprehension may occur as retiring faculty are replaced by new appointments geared toward the current global circumstances. However, since such migration of appointments will not be sufficient to our needs, further resources will be needed:

7. We recommend that 2.5 new FTEs be devoted to global comprehension, their distribution to be made by the CEP among departments that are willing to commit themselves to teaching courses with this focus.

3.4 Strengthening Existing Departments

Our departments must be strengthened to support curricular innovation in established fields and to ensure that Amherst continues to attract outstanding students and faculty. The nature and complexity of the demands placed on instructors have changed significantly since the faculty was capped at 165 FTEs in 1987. All areas of study have expanded and new areas of study have emerged. Students have become more heterogeneous in their preparation. New technologies have multiplied occasions of contact between teachers and students, and students have availed themselves of growing opportunities to work with faculty outside the framework of regular courses and semesters. The College has high expectations of the scholarly and creative contributions that faculty should make to qualify for advancement to tenured rank. And the burden of administration, largely borne by the faculty, has expanded dramatically as we have sought to make our procedures more equitable and to enlarge the opportunities available to members of our community. The combination of intensive teaching, research, and service that is the norm here is exceptional and has steadily encroached on the ability of departments to cover essential courses and provide expanding breadth in offerings. Some departments report that they adequately address only the needs of relatively specialized students. Others have been relying for protracted periods on non-tenure-track appointments to cover essential courses. In some fields, faculty are left to teach more students at incompatible levels of skill and motivation than can credibly be done.

Some of these needs will be met as departments go through the normal renewal process and evaluate the merits of incorporating new lines of specialization rather than retaining old ones. In addition, the allocation of new FTEs for college-wide purposes will create opportunities for departments to add new faculty lines. So, for example, a department willing to accept the obligation of teaching four courses to serve the college-wide needs described above might thereby “earn” a new FTE to enrich its own curricular offerings. Nevertheless, we do not believe that all needs can be met by reallocating existing resources. In particular, we note that additional faculty would be needed to reduce the size of some of our largest courses, including introductory or “gateway” lectures, or to offer more science classes for non-scientists to help ensure that all Amherst students graduate with additional exposure to the sciences.

We also anticipate additional investment in faculty positions in the studio arts, theater and dance, film, and/or music. Discussions of priorities in these fields have been particularly complex because the traditional arts departments are not the only ones that address these subjects. The tenor of campus-wide discussions of these challenges makes us confident that there is vigorous support for our colleagues in the arts as they work to reach agreement on their collective priorities. We assume that these efforts should soon be augmented by at least one faculty position. In addition, we hope that such efforts can be coordinated with an enhanced integration of the Mead Art Museum into the academic life of the College.

8. We recommend that 4 new FTEs be reserved to meet existing departmental needs.

3.5 Enhancing Faculty Diversity

Opportunities for reflection, analysis, and intellectual exchange are enriched when faculty bring a diversity of critical perspectives, social and cultural backgrounds, and intellectual preparation to the community. Even with respect to a broad definition of diversity in terms of race, gender, and culture, as well as new areas of scholarly interest, research methods, or divergent intellectual views, efforts to enhance diversity within the faculty are constrained by the slow rate of turnover and the limits imposed by the pace of production of new PhDs among scholars who belong to underrepresented groups or who study in emergent fields. Opportunities for such hires often come at moments when a department will not have a slot until the next retirement or departure. The College will benefit if the Dean, in consultation with the CEP, can provide resources to move swiftly at such moments.

Full or fractional FTEs for diversity purposes should be allocated to departments as “bridging” appointments until a retirement or departure occurs, at which time the department will revert to the size it would have been without the diversity hire, and the FTE can be reassigned.

9. We recommend that 2 FTEs be reserved to allow accelerated hiring to take advantage of targeted “opportunity” hires that invigorate or enrich the racial, cultural, gender, and/or intellectual diversity of the faculty.

3.6 Support for Scholarship and Creative Work

The great liberal arts colleges differ from their university counterparts in the sustained commitment of those colleges’ faculties both to scholarly or artistic activities and to hands-on teaching responsibilities. The freshness of ideas in the teacher's classroom or laboratory or studio is correlated with the vigor of his or her professional engagement outside them. Colleges serve their constituencies best when they ensure that such engagement receives continued and creative support, even as college service demands more and more time because of technological advances, the changing needs of a diverse student body, and the growing pressures of advising, mentoring and evaluating. As the College has shown sensitivity in tending to the internal pedagogical needs of the faculty, so it must continue to enhance opportunities for exposure to those creative stimuli by which its teaching staff thrives.

Amherst has made progress in supporting the development of faculty in their probationary period. As a consequence of recent changes in Amherst’s system for reappointment, assistant professors now receive regular feedback on their professional development from both department chairs and the Dean before they stand for tenure. Departments have developed new methods of mentoring, formal and informal. As is traditional at Amherst, team-teaching, both within and beyond departments, is central to such mentoring, and we urge the administration to ensure that all departments have the resources to allow for such collaboration. The administration

has pledged to seek funding for a year of sabbatical leave after reappointment for all assistant professors; such funding should become permanent.

10. We recommend that all assistant professors be assured of a year of sabbatical leave at full salary after reappointment.

The College expects its faculty to engage in scholarship and other forms of creative work outside the classroom and consequently should ensure that they are able to do so without financial penalty. Some faculty delay or forego leaves because their households cannot meet their financial obligations on the normal sabbatical compensation of 80 percent of regular salary. The competitive Senior Sabbatical Fellowship program grants the additional 20 percent, but only for one semester, even if the applicant is eligible for a year's leave, and the number of such supplements is limited.

11. We recommend that the existing program of Senior Sabbatical Fellowships be expanded to cover as much as two semesters of leave after six years and that the College make every effort to secure sufficient funds to support all qualified applicants.

We envision that application will be made through the existing program, in which proposals (including the names of two outside referees) are reviewed by the Committee of Six. Such proposals have the added benefit of providing a starting basis for crafting applications for outside funding to sustain faculty research and creative work.

Amherst puts faculty at a competitive disadvantage in gaining external funding by providing less staff support for grant seeking than most peer institutions.

12. We recommend that the College create a staff position to assist faculty in applying for grants to support their research and creative work.

Such a position would also serve to help faculty and the College monitor compliance with the protocols of the government and other granting agencies.

Guided by our colleagues we have chosen to prioritize sabbatical leaves as the most equitable way to nourish faculty scholarship and other forms of creative work. Nevertheless, we also see substantial opportunities to enrich intellectual life by bringing larger numbers of visiting scholars and artists into the College.

Both Amherst and the broader Five College community have been extremely successful in attracting first-rate scholars to the area to lecture, perform, and participate in conferences. The Pioneer Valley has numerous centers and institutes in which Amherst faculty have been actively involved. They include the Center for Crossroads in the Study of the Americas, the Five College African Studies Program, and the Five College Women's Studies Research Center. We support the consideration of a center, based at Amherst, for the study of international conflicts, perhaps

under the theme of “America and the World,” as discussed with colleagues in the Five Colleges. Such a center would bring together students, faculty, activists and policy makers around thematic and geographically designed programs.

We also endorse the further study of proposals to create a more broadly defined research center to bring to campus post-doctoral fellows and senior scholars who would share their work with the college community. We would hope that its activities would reflect the broad range of faculty research interests and that faculty might take turns directing the center and proposing annual themes to coordinate the work of the fellows. Discussions concerning the creation of such a center are under way within the Copeland Committee, and we endorse directing existing resources in this way, where practicable.

3.7 Broadening Our Information Resources

Amherst’s ability to innovate and lead in higher education will rely at every step on the depth and currency of our information resources, which range from an extraordinary million-volume library to data bases, networks, laptops, and, most important, the talented librarians and IT specialists who guide students and professors through the shifting knowledge landscape. A hallmark of new pedagogies is the increasing reliance on IT specialists and librarians, as well as escalating expectations about the information resources to which they give access. Recent years have seen the promising development of both archives-based and Web-based courses at Amherst. Through the Web, the campus and the larger Amherst family are linked together as never before, and we have scarcely begun to explore the possibilities for interaction.

With the rapid adoption of new technologies, what we understand as mastery of a field of study is changing. A twenty-first century graduate must know how to find, evaluate, and contextualize information in numerous formats—text, audio, video, graphic, and numerical—and to function within a worldwide cohort of students, faculty, alumni, and content-area experts. Activities such as developing and using spatial databases, simulations, models, and virtual reality environments are essential forms of literacy for our time. The instructional mission of librarians and IT specialists grows rapidly, including guidance to what numerous types of tools can and cannot do for users and what constitutes legal and academically honest use of information. Given the rate of technological change, “learning how to learn” is a fundamental survival skill. We cannot have a first-rank college with second-rate information resources.

We welcome the current, broadly consultative planning initiatives of both the Library and the Department of Information Technology and their active participation in the larger process of setting academic priorities. We recognize that additional staffing resources in this area may well be needed to ensure that Amherst can achieve its goals; the facilities needs of the Library and the Department of Information Technology are addressed below in Section VI.

IV. Learning Beyond the Amherst Classroom

In recent decades, liberal arts education has increasingly emphasized hands-on work beyond the classroom. The identities and commitments that we all have beyond the campus energize the on-campus community and give a small school global reach. Experiences outside the classroom can inform and enrich classroom discussions, while more academic analysis can also guide and inspire undertakings in the world, in an iterative process that refines critical thinking and moral consideration. More than in past generations, the curiosity and drive that students bring to liberal learning come from real-world experiences, which may range from archeological digs to tutoring to Web page design. Students' restlessness within the ivory tower of academe is also stirred by uncertainties about how many careers they each will have on how many continents. Channeling this energy will deepen their intellectual and ethical development.

These forms of learning have proliferated at Amherst, though not fast enough to keep pace with student interest or the initiatives of peer campuses and not coherently enough to ensure that co-curricular activities always enhance course work. Students come to us with much broader exposure to the world through the media than through direct contact. Although many list community service as part of their high school resumé, few have had opportunities within the classroom to engage critically with the history, policies, and cultural practices that have shaped those communities. As is equally true of foreign language acquisition, experimental science, and the performing arts, we lose an important learning opportunity when we fail to integrate direct experience into learning. Students underestimate the ethical ambiguity and sheer real-world messiness of the problems we examine only in the classroom. Amherst needs to increase opportunities in all of these areas and provide ways to integrate off-campus experience with academic work that is intellectually compelling to both faculty and students.

4.1 Research and Internship Opportunities

Student collaboration with faculty on projects of intellectual import plays a central role in pedagogy in the natural sciences and attracts talented future scientists to the College. Amherst lags behind peer institutions in the quantity, though not the quality, of the opportunities that we provide. The vagaries of government-driven grant funding create an element of unpredictability that our peers have increasingly mitigated through endowed funding for summer science research. We urge that such funding be increased at Amherst. The College should also explore ways to expand opportunities for student research at partner institutions, including the Whitehead Institute, Sloan-Kettering, and the University of Massachusetts. We welcome the new options for students to participate in research with our own faculty in the sciences and other areas envisioned through the Schupf Scholars program.

Support for semester and summer internships through the Amherst Academic Interns program and the Dean of the Faculty's grant program for student research has proved to be increasingly popular over the last three years. Some of these internships have provided assistance to faculty research in the sciences and other areas; others have supported course development, as

have the Curricular Computing Summer Interns. The College's libraries, museums, and outreach programs provide other locations beyond the classroom for students to work closely with faculty and staff on projects related to their academic interests. We look forward to the creation of additional internship opportunities in these areas.

13. We recommend that funding for the Amherst Academic Interns program and the Dean of the Faculty's resources to support student research across the disciplines be enhanced.

4.2 Civic Engagement

Our students' engagement with ideas, as they think through pressing issues and ethical dilemmas, is vitally informed by experiences outside of the College, through both public service and courses with a community-based learning component.

By providing well-organized public-service opportunities, the College demonstrates the sort of engagement we seek to inculcate in our students. Indeed, Amherst has an obligation to work for the good of our surrounding communities and to model and foster students' sense of civic obligation. The ability of the numerous cultures within the student body to cohere and learn from each other relies on encounters with cultures beyond the campus.

In some cases the College may enter into reciprocal partnerships with local organizations that will provide training and substantive service opportunities. For instance, service within the public schools can bring a deeper and more realistic grasp of the politics, economics, sociology, anthropology, and history of public education and add substance to the debates about these topics on campus and beyond. Much the same holds for environmental studies, human rights, and other emerging subjects of inquiry.

Because of the limits of geography and time during semesters, our students may also seek such experiences elsewhere during the summer and January. We believe that the current and growing demand for these types of meaningful internships should be met with increased funding, so as to ensure opportunities beyond organizations that can pay salaries and to ensure access to internships among students who may not have connections or who cannot afford to volunteer. The aim should be to ensure internships are available for all students, or at least all students who also engage in related service activities.

We also note that the alumni have been a crucial network for internships and for insight based on a lifetime of work. We hope that they can be inspired to increase their interactions with the campus community, for instance through electronic networks, by hosting Amherst interns in their workplaces or community organizations, and through increased interterm programs that bring together alumni, faculty, students, and visitors with common interests and productively divergent views.

A purposeful combination of all these efforts can engage our students in thinking critically about pressing contemporary issues. Their encounters with varied viewpoints and disparate life chances can stimulate the moral reckoning that we aim to nurture.

14. We recommend significantly expanding opportunities for community service and for summer and January internships.

Amherst has done too little to connect public-service experience with the curriculum, despite both a distinguished tradition of producing social entrepreneurs and the current high level of participation – about a third of the student body. Students who participate in such programs should have opportunities to prepare intellectually and reflect on the implications of their involvement, as well as to examine scholarship that takes aspects of such engagement as its point of departure. The few courses with a dimension of community engagement have been received by our students as energizing and valuable. We encourage the faculty to develop more courses that allow students to integrate their observations and experiences in the communities they serve into a larger analytical framework (e.g., in the context of public education, the environment, or the legal system). We concur with the Experiential Education Working Group that leadership in developing such courses should come from within the faculty, as can be made possible by relieving an experienced colleague of two courses a year through a half-time visiting appointment (not reckoned in the FTE count). We expect that community-based learning will be an important component of courses proposed under Interdisciplinary Initiatives (Section III).

15. We recommend that a visiting appointment be made to allow a faculty member to serve half-time as coordinator of community-based learning.

Both public service and community-based learning rely on the complex and time-consuming process of maintaining reciprocal partnerships that work to the benefit both of the community organizations and the College. At Amherst that responsibility falls to a handful of faculty and to the understaffed Office of Community Outreach. Although the Five Colleges have implemented some programs, their staffing cannot meet the level of student interest or maintain effective partnerships. Therefore, we urge that more staff and financial support be provided to support both public-service efforts and faculty interested in pursuing community-based learning and that consideration be given to bringing all such support under a single administrative structure.

We commend the College's current efforts to secure significant additional funding for the expansion and coordination of such efforts and hope that these partnerships can inspire peer institutions to do more of the same.

4.3 Study Abroad and Language Immersion

The CAP believes that students would benefit from a wider range of study-abroad options and from more opportunities to build on the knowledge and experiences that they acquire abroad. Following the recommendation of the Global Comprehension Working Group, the Faculty Committee on Study Abroad has been appointed on a trial basis to monitor the approval of programs. We urge this committee to explore ways to strengthen academic advising about the choice and use of programs abroad, to improve the linkage of study-abroad to work done back at Amherst in subsequent semesters, and to provide study-abroad options for students in all disciplines, including the natural sciences. In addition, we urge this committee to explore ways to assure that the study abroad constitutes a substantial intellectual challenge by virtue of language and/or cultural immersion. The report of the Working Group also made a persuasive case for the need to provide for language immersion experiences that offer students a realistic opportunity to attain fluency in a foreign language by the time they graduate.

16. We recommend that the College provide need-based support to encourage students to enroll in intensive summer language programs in the USA and abroad.

In addition, we urge that the College re-emphasize foreign language study as a consideration for admission to the College and enhance the role of the Study Abroad Office in encouraging and coordinating foreign study, especially in languages other than English. Some faculty have also expressed interest in mounting a study-abroad program of their own design or in teaching in reciprocal arrangements at foreign universities. Such requests demand more scrutiny and discussion; we request the study abroad committee to keep all such options open as they try to establish the best practices for faculty and students at Amherst who wish to engage with the global community.

V. Supporting the Open Curriculum

Students' curiosities and capabilities within the classroom are evolving rapidly. The emerging generation learns impressively but, year by year, differently. They are caught between the competition to specialize to attain career goals and the knowledge of how quickly specializations can mutate and disappear. They are wary of the ivory tower, but interested in the dialogue with their teachers as specialized researchers and artists who have a broader vocation. They have grown up with social institutions in decline, including public education, but are not less willing than earlier generations to trust the College if we live up to our end of the bargain.

That bargain—or, better, moral compact—is struck within the matrix of the open curriculum, which is a complex dynamic of trust, communication, and experimentation on the part of both students and faculty. The open curriculum imposes one overriding requirement: that students take full responsibility for the courses they elect and that faculty take full responsibility for the courses they offer. The intensity and spirit of courses taught to passionate learners by passionate teachers promote active learning and deep interactions between faculty and students. More than three-quarters of Amherst students are graduated having had one or more tutorial courses (special topics or honors). The open curriculum allows faculty to adapt course offerings rapidly to developments in their fields and to students' evolving interests. Educational self-determination and the quality of instruction that it fosters are central reasons that students choose Amherst. New students commonly report that, after strategizing for years to attain admission to a first-rate school, they are invigorated by the chance to take charge of their education, while being supported in their choices, rather than having to check off another set of requirements. From alumni we hear testimony about the enduring impact of learning to use such freedom, which includes learning from making bad choices as well as from taking great courses.

Ambitious students with active minds typically use the latitude afforded by the open curriculum to acquire the skills and breadth of comprehension that will fit them for leadership. Inevitably there are costs to this freedom, and not all students are equally well served, as we shall discuss below. The CAP is convinced that such problems are best addressed by providing more guidance and equitable opportunity within the flexible terms of the open curriculum rather than by imposing content requirements that would compromise our current—and thriving—culture of student self-direction guided by faculty advising.

One area of concern is students' breadth in course election over the four years. From the SCAE working groups and other groups of faculty and students, the CAP has heard persuasive descriptions of widespread gaps among our students in foreign language competence, global comprehension, familiarity with the methods of science, and exposure to the arts. In all of these areas, departments are left to work around students' deficiencies or, frustratingly, to know that students are narrowing their educations by avoiding their courses. To give every student the opportunity to commence a broad general education, Amherst must provide a sufficient distribution of courses in these areas, a need that can be addressed under the proposals for new FTEs in Section III.

A second area of concern, to be discussed below, is the adequacy of our response to the disparate levels of preparation that students receive in secondary schools, where the gaps between the best and the worst widens. Students of equal potential may arrive with multiple years of a natural science and of summers doing research or with a single year of course work and no meaningful laboratory work. Writers of equal talent may range from published authors to those who have never had a decent writing course. All students are well served by the chance to craft an individual program that will allow them to pace and balance their address to their strengths and deficiencies. But we serve them badly if we do not provide a sufficient bridge from areas of weak preparation to the threshold expectations of course offerings or if we allow students to avoid addressing their weaknesses. Here we must not proceed by formula, but at the level of the individual student with the individual advisor, who must be able to direct the student toward courses that will meet the students' particular needs. This section addresses the need for additional courses in writing and in quantitative reasoning, as well as for more support for teachers in developing pedagogies to address changing needs of students. Advising comes first as the key to entering our curriculum.

5.1 Advising

Engagement with informed advisors, who can challenge and contextualize students' intellectual choices, ought to be the foundation of a liberal education and especially at a school with an open curriculum. Yet advisors and advisees alike often come away with unfulfilled expectations—expectations possibly not well known to each other. The most frequent dissatisfactions expressed by our students and faculty pertain to pre-major advising. Some students complain that advisors lack adequate knowledge about the full range of Amherst course offerings and majors; some faculty complain about students' cavalier attitude toward conferences and the entire process of planning a course of study. Both find that consultations too often have the character of a bureaucratic formality. We may take some consolation in knowing that surveys rate Amherst near the top among our peer institutions in levels of student satisfaction with academic advising. But the open curriculum both engenders a greater sense of purpose and urgency in and imposes a heavier responsibility on Amherst's undergraduate advising program in comparison to our peers.

Amherst has already begun to experiment with ways to make the pre-major advising program more effective. At the urging of the Office of the Dean of Students, the College made significant changes in our system of advising first-year students this fall. Some fifty faculty volunteers began their semesters a week early so as to consult with incoming students during New Student Orientation with the goal of opening a broad dialogue about the meaning and value of a liberal education from each student's first day on campus. This program signals Amherst's core values to students and has the dual benefit of helping students make a better informed initial election of courses and helping faculty acquire a fuller understanding of their role as advisors and of the resources available to students. We are heartened by the positive responses these

modifications elicited from students and faculty and anticipate that the program will be fine-tuned and enriched over the coming years.

Our review, informed by advice from the Dean of Students, Dean of New Students, and Director of Institutional Research, leads us to endorse the central principles of our current system: Pre-major advising is a responsibility of all members of the faculty after their first year of teaching, and first-year advisees are assigned to the degree possible to instructors whom they are seeing in class. We have a small cohort of specialized advisors for particular concerns (pre-med, students at academic risk, international students, etc.); their availability should be made more widely known to other academic advisors.

We also note, with enthusiasm, that the new on-line course catalogue and the Career Center's Web sites about graduate school, teaching, law, and the health professions give advisors and advisees access to useful information. We urge that the College further refine the capabilities of our online resources, both for purposes of self-assessment and advising, e.g., in software that tracks course distribution patterns of each student's course work so as to highlight and draw advising attention to those areas that may be missing from the student's learning (e.g., in the languages, natural sciences, and the arts) or that provides up-to-date information on whether a course is open to further new enrollment. Students suggested several programmatic options to us in their discussion of advising, including peer advising by students, mentoring relationships with recent alumni, and more reliable access to departmental representatives during pre-registration. These merit investigation.

It is vital to ensure that all students admitted to the College enjoy access to the curriculum, but we have struggled to find ways to address deficiencies in the preparation of some students, especially in skills vital to their development at and after Amherst. These same skills are fundamental to the liberal education of all of our students, and even our best-prepared students must hone their ability to articulate the distinctions between concepts and information as the material they encounter in the classroom increases in complexity. We design our individual courses to accommodate some aspects of this learning curve, but we have only begun to give institutional attention to writing and quantitative reasoning attention at a level that is commensurate with their importance.

5.2 Writing

The faculty shares a responsibility to ensure that all students benefit from close attention to writing. The first requisite of good prose, of course, is that an author have something to say, and it makes little sense to divorce writing from the study of particular subjects. The ability to write cogently typically develops in relation with learning and critical thought about specific objects, concepts, and texts. While it may make good sense to identify particular moments in the collegiate years as meriting special attention, it is a mistake to think that a single course, no matter how carefully taught, will turn novice writers into expert wordsmiths.

These convictions are widely shared among those who have studied how students learn to write well. Several of our peer institutions have developed programs, some quite elaborate, to assess and improve their students' composition. Faculty members at Amherst, as a matter of course, provide the challenging assignments, criticism, and advice that students need to hone their writing. In addition, the College has established a Writing Center to advise students who seek help with composition. Nevertheless, ample evidence exists to show that the College may be failing some of our students, not only among those who come to Amherst with significant deficiencies in composition but also among that much larger category of students who believe "they write well enough" and who are not pressed to test and improve their performance.

The Working Group on Writing has recently completed thoughtful reports that call attention to these issues and provide sensible suggestions about ways to address them, including the formation of a Committee on Writing, the designation of "writing attentive" courses and their identification in the course catalog, and provision for the teaching of up to ten "writing intensive" courses a year, especially but not exclusively for students who need additional preparation. We urge that resources be allocated to ensure that such courses can be mounted across the curriculum. The Working Group further recommends that all students be required to take at least one "writing attentive" course, although opinions differ as to exactly how this is best accomplished. This new requirement would not curtail the open curriculum, since students will still be able to choose the subject area within which they will address their writing. Rather, the adoption of such a requirement and the allocation of resources to offer more such courses across the curriculum would signal the value that the faculty places on cogent composition. We believe that this requirement can meet the needs of all our students and not stigmatize any.

We believe that the reports of the Working Group on Writing form a sound basis for planning over the coming decade, bearing in mind that much remains to be learned about the relationship between specific measures and outcomes.

17. We recommend that 2 new FTEs be reserved to support the development and teaching of "intensive writing" courses, their distribution to be made by the CEP among departments willing to commit themselves to teaching additional courses for this purpose.

18. We recommend that all students be required to take at least one course designated as Writing Attentive, with pedagogical support to be provided for faculty engaged in such writing instruction.

The CAP also welcomes the ongoing deliberations of the CEP and the First-Year Seminar Committee on how those seminars could be enhanced, and we look forward to their future recommendations, mindful that those may also have implications for additional resource needs and faculty appointments.

5.3 Quantitative Reasoning

Students' engagement with scientific methods and quantitative reasoning presents the College with some of the same challenges as the teaching of writing. Our entering students, although among the best in the nation, vary widely in their preparation to study higher mathematics, to use quantitative reasoning in other courses, and perhaps even to understand arguments built on quantitative evidence. The clearest signs of this heterogeneity appear in introductory courses, especially Math 11, Chemistry 11, and Economics 11, the "gateways" to higher level work in the natural and social sciences. Every year a significant number of students enroll in these courses only to discover that they are unprepared to keep pace with classroom instruction and problem sets. Their lack of preparation does not imply a lack of ability or motivation, but the range of student needs within any one of these gateway classes presents a serious challenge for the teachers committed to their success. Only a little less obvious is the "math anxiety" that leads some students to avoid subjects involving quantitative reasoning and scientific methods through their entire tenure at Amherst. Students who have had limited exposure to the analysis of quantitative evidence, a skill fundamental to liberal education, find their access to our curriculum limited. Unless they are guided to address this deficiency and thoroughly supported in their efforts, their opportunities to contribute to our larger society throughout their lives will be curtailed. It is the College's responsibility to help each student achieve his or her potential and to encourage all students to challenge themselves.

Amherst has dedicated considerable thought and energy to assisting students who wish to study math-rich subjects. The Summer Science program helps incoming students adjust to the pace of college-level work; the Quantitative Skills Center provides advice on study strategies and tutoring in specific subject areas. These efforts have paid dividends and merit continued support. They have not, however, materially altered outcomes among students who enter "gateway" courses with deficiencies in quantitative reasoning. Here, the most promising approach appears to be one developed by the Quantitative Working Group during the past year, to wit, teaching "intensive" sections that provide underprepared students with extra attention and an enriched curriculum while teaching the same range of concepts as other sections of the same course. Although at this time "intensive" sections have been used systematically for only one semester, early indications suggest significant improvements in the performance of students with weak preparation and a remarkable increase in enrollments among these students at the next level of math and science courses. These results and similar results achieved elsewhere through "intensive" teaching of introductory mathematics and science courses surely justify the continuation and expansion of this pilot program.

The broader goal of encouraging greater exposure to quantitative forms of reasoning and the scientific method among all students has no simple solution. Courses in many disciplines engage students in the analysis of quantitative arguments and evidence, and most science departments have developed topical courses that provide options to those wishing to study science outside the hierarchical structure of classes intended for majors. There are not enough of these courses, primarily because the departments offering them are stretched too thin. We believe such courses serve a college-wide need and merit every encouragement. Nevertheless, further

refinements may be necessary to foster the “quantitative literacy” that a thoughtful citizen must deploy in quotidian judgments about such matters as risk, reward, equity, correlation, and causation.

The Quantitative Working Group has done much to define these issues in recent reports to the faculty, and we look forward to learning more from this group in the coming years. For now, it appears prudent to develop instruments for assessing the quantitative reasoning of our students and for stimulating new approaches to improving their quantitative literacy, including the support of pilot programs such as were run so successfully in the Fall semester of 2005-2006.

19. We recommend that 2.5 new FTEs be reserved for improving students’ quantitative literacy, their distribution to be made by the CEP among departments that are willing to commit themselves to teaching “intensive” sections or new courses for these purposes.

5.4 Pedagogy

We cannot meet the needs of our students simply by increasing the number of faculty and courses. Our recommendations call upon the faculty to teach new material in different ways, to build bridges between disciplines and explore the ground between disciplines, and to find innovative ways to make their subjects accessible to all Amherst students. Evaluations by students are extremely useful in providing instructors with the feedback they need to determine what is working in the classroom and what is not. It seems especially appropriate to learn from such evaluations as we make major pedagogical changes. All untenured faculty benefit from a regular process of student evaluation, and many tenured faculty employ similar methods less formally. All faculty at Amherst would undoubtedly benefit from their students’ assessment. Regularizing this process would also send an important signal of our commitment to excellence in teaching both to students and untenured faculty. At present, Amherst is almost alone in not requiring teaching evaluations of all its faculty, a subject of concern in our last reaccreditation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges.

20. We recommend that the faculty adopt a policy that requires the soliciting of teaching evaluations from all students in all classes.

In light of our increased college-wide expectations for teaching in composition and other areas of pedagogy that are not the expertise of all the faculty who are so engaged, the faculty would also benefit from additional support, advice, and mentoring in pedagogy.

Over the last three years the Teaching and Learning Project has demonstrated the faculty’s interest in discussing problems and innovations in pedagogy. Where some campuses have programs to “teach teaching” to new faculty, our academic culture has a strong preference for collaborating across ranks and disciplines and for taking full advantage of the experience and technological skills that new colleagues bring from elsewhere. Nevertheless, these discussions

have also reflected a desire for more sustained follow-through in programs to support teaching and for more support for course development.

21. We recommend that the administration devote more resources and staff time to supporting programs in pedagogy, including programs to help teachers at all ranks.

It may in time prove advantageous to consolidate these functions into a teaching and learning center or, with additional services to support research, a center for faculty professional development. In small colleges, such centers are typically run by a faculty member, with some staff assistance, and thrive if the right director is found. We urge both sustained attention and caution in considering this option in order to ensure that an organized program complements departments' mentoring of their assistant professors. We also urge that the administration consider adding another Associate Dean of the Faculty position, in part to help coordinate these expanded areas of support for pedagogy, as well as many of our other recommendations.

To support the development of innovative courses that demand resources unavailable at the College, the CAP recommends that the model of the Faculty Research Award Program be adapted to create a separate fund to support teaching innovation by faculty at all ranks, including lecturers. Awards would be based on competitive application and would be directed toward the support of pedagogical projects requiring modest subventions, such as participation in summer workshops, the development of software for teaching purposes, and the incorporation of experiential learning in a course. We also recommend broadening the objectives of the Senior Sabbatical Fellowship program to include projects that make substantial contributions to pedagogy of use beyond the College.

22. We recommend that a faculty innovation fund be created to support pedagogical projects of faculty at all ranks and that eligibility for Senior Sabbatical Fellowships be expanded to include proposals for contributions to pedagogy in the broadest sense.

VI. The Responsive Campus

The recommendations in the body of this report, if adopted, will have a profound impact on our facilities. An expansion of the faculty and the addition of new programs will require new offices for faculty and support staff. New pedagogies will accelerate the growing demand for more “smart” and flexible classrooms, labs, and studios with better acoustical insulation, lighting controls, wireless amplification, and networking because of the increased use of digital information. Library and IT resources will have to expand to cover new disciplines and to take advantage of new technologies.

As Amherst embarks on a new era of intensified hiring and accelerated retirement, the present distribution of faculty across a variety of career stages is likely to change dramatically. Programs and facilities that aid junior faculty with young families will experience greater demand and will be increasingly important in attracting and retaining the best faculty. Practices that incentivize retirement while helping emeritus faculty to stay productive and connected to the College will be essential.

It was beyond the charge to the Committee to assess such impacts, but we urge the College to recognize that they are implied in our recommendations and hope the College will begin now to plan to respond to the needs we have outlined and remain permanently responsive to the needs that will follow upon them. We offer the following observations.

6.1 Instructional and Office Space

The current condition and future needs of Amherst’s physical plant are naturally beyond our expertise to judge. We are aware that some necessary renovations to buildings with obsolete systems will create large opportunities. Merrill Science Center and Converse Hall, both in need of renovation, together contain almost a third of our classrooms. The renovation of Merrill offers the opportunity for re-programming its space in light of the momentous changes in science research and teaching that have happened in the four decades since Merrill was built. Because of Barrett Hall’s small size and structural limits, the options for re-programming are constrained, such that media-intensive foreign language pedagogy may need to be accommodated elsewhere. Chapin Hall presents similar, if less severe, challenges.

We urge the administration, especially, in considering further reallocation of space, to use the same careful attention to scholarly and teaching functions that has been evinced in the planning of the new Earth Sciences and Natural History Museum building and the renovation of Fayerweather Hall, and Cooper House. Our conversations with the directors of Frost Library and the Department of Information Technology, for example, suggest that substantial pedagogical gains may be realized by considering renovation of our language learning facilities in tandem with plans to integrate the IT department more centrally into the academic life of the College.

Similarly, it may be useful to keep in mind suggestions for carving out classroom space within the library as we contemplate upgrading classrooms and offices. Such ambitious restructuring will require careful thought and visionary planning at a level beyond the expertise of this committee. However we encourage the administration to maintain a holistic view of our academic priorities as it balances the demands for infrastructure against the needs for new personnel. We also commend the College's commitment to model environmental care in construction projects.

6.2 Library and Information Technology Facilities

We must provide a state-of-the-art infrastructure for learning, research, and creative work. The historical character of Amherst's campus should be preserved, but our ability to recruit and retain first-rate students, faculty, and staff will erode if we fail to establish a dynamic environment to support new technologies and disciplinary interconnections.

The re-visioning of how the Library and the Information Technology Department support the information resources of Amherst College may require substantial reconfiguring and/or expansion of existing physical facilities. The Library Planning Group believes that there is a broad consensus on campus that Frost Library in its current form under-serves the academic community; their preliminary report (December 2005) outlines exciting possibilities. Similarly, wireless, podcasting, Internet 2, computational clusters, digital video on demand, and other technologies are now expanding on campus. The College will need to upgrade facilities as well as the skills of the Library and IT staff to support these services. Current resources, such as cable TV, DVD borrowing, and data sharing, may be delivered in new ways.

Thus, the development of additional library and information technology facilities should be carefully studied. Much is at stake, since these spaces shape the ways that students gather and interact among themselves and encounter faculty. The first-year quad presents one effective way of helping a sense of community to form; the potential for creating thriving environments for intellectual activity outside the classroom presents another. The information commons and the town common are centuries apart as sites of civic interaction, but both should be parts of the experience of Amherst students as they prepare for citizenship in the world.

6.3 Community Facilities

The faculty will undergo demographic change over the coming decade, with a bulge in retirement and commensurate bulge in hiring. This change will affect a wide range of practices and policies and change the distribution of faculty across career stages.

Many of our new colleague will have younger families who will need access to childcare services. The present scarcity of satisfactory childcare facilities puts the College at a disadvantage in recruiting and retaining first-rate faculty and staff. **Although the Committee has**

chosen to take no position on faculty benefits, we do urge that the College provide substantially increased resources for the provision of childcare.

The spate of anticipated retirements and the influx of a relatively large cohort of junior faculty will also create new challenges for the faculty in sustaining a sense of its own corporate identity. For an interim period, at least, there are likely to be fewer faculty in mid-career with the institutional experience and flexible family commitments to devote themselves to administrative tasks. This is another reason that the time may have arrived for the College to consider establishing new spaces or programs to encourage formal and informal collegial interaction, especially across faculty cohorts.

Finally, senior faculty who are ready to retire may find themselves unwilling to do so, because of the difficulties associated with relocation and the limited facilities available at Amherst for emeriti to continue their scholarly work. We urge further exploration of how emeriti faculty can be provided with ongoing study space.

VII. Conclusion

What we offer here is meant not to end the process of assessment, planning, and experimentation that began intensively with the SCAE in 2002, but to provide guideposts and mechanisms for them to continue. We encourage colleagues who are still devising or implementing innovations to persevere. We have tried to steer a course between advocating business as usual (but more expensively) and a too radical break with our well-developed ways of doing things. In foregrounding college-wide needs, we propose a change of culture that will have profound effects over time, but one that, as we look forward to a time of rapid turnover in the faculty and what they teach, will maintain the integration and energy of our common educational project.

Appendices

Charge to the Committee on Academic Priorities September 2004

The Committee on Academic Priorities (CAP) is charged by the President after consultation with the Committee of Six to deliberate with the campus community to develop proposals to meet the academic needs of the College over the next decade and beyond. The Committee is asked to submit its recommendations to the President and the Committee of Six in December, 2005, for consideration by the Faculty, in the understanding that the outcome of the discussion will inform the stated goals of a comprehensive fundraising campaign and be a resource for other kinds of institutional planning.

Within the College's continual process of planning and self-assessment, there have been and should be regular comprehensive reviews of priorities. A decade has passed since the last such review; proposals are maturing from numerous sources. This year the four working groups that are furthering the work of the Special Committee on the Amherst Education (SCAE) will report. Reviews of the administrative departments that support academic work are underway or completed. A report is awaited on the three-year Mellon Foundation Faculty Career Enhancement Grant. The projects under the President's Initiative Fund have begun their work. To draw together these and other initiatives, we need a process of consultation and deliberation beyond what any standing committee can undertake, if we are to set academic priorities that will responsibly guide us over the next phase of our history.

Among the questions that the Committee might address are: Is the education that the College offers effective for the students it currently admits and for those it may wish to admit in the next decade and beyond? Is Amherst keeping pace with technological and other developments in research and teaching? In light of the Trustees' stated willingness to consider an expansion of the Faculty, in what areas can we justify such an expansion, and serving what needs? If there should be an increase in support for scholarship, what form(s) should that support take? How can we attract outstanding faculty members and foster their development over the course of a career?

In addition to soliciting the views of faculty, students, and staff, the Committee should consult with the governing committees of the College, academic departments, the SCAC working groups, the Advisory Committee for Personnel Policies (ACPP), the Association of Amherst Students (AAS), and other groups organized to address academic areas and institutional needs. The Committee is charged to consider as well the practices and ideas of peer institutions.

Members of the CAP

Amrita Basu (*Dominic J. Paino 1955 Professor of Political Science and Women's and Gender Studies*)

Gregory Call (*Professor of Mathematics , Dean of the Faculty*)

Rhonda Cobham-Sander (*Professor of Black Studies and English, Special Assistant to the President for Diversity*)

J. Mark Fiegenbaum (*Technical Services Associate, Acquisitions Department, Frost Library*)

Frederick Griffiths, Secretary (*Class of 1880 Professor of Greek and Professor of Women's and Gender Studies, Associate Dean of the Faculty*)

Tekla Harms (*Professor of Geology*)

Mary McMahan (Spring 2005) (*Director of Curricular Computing Services, Department of Information Technology*)

Anthony Marx, Co-Chair (*Professor of Political Science, President*)

Stanley Rabinowitz (*Henry Steele Commager Professor and Professor of Russian*)

John Servos, Co-Chair (*Anson D. Morse Professor of History*)

Michael Simmons '06

Margaret Stancer (Fall 2005) (*Director of Desktop Computing Service, Department of Information Technology*)

Jacob Thomas '07

Patrick Williamson (*Edward H. Harkness Professor of Biology*)

CAP Meetings with Faculty, Administrators, Staff, and Students

January 7, 2005: Trustees, concerning facilities
January 27, 2005: Tom Parker, Dean of Admission and Financial Aid
February 8, 2005: Writing Working Group
February 15, 2005: Quantitative Working Group
February 22, 2005: Global Comprehension Working Group
March 1, 2005: Experiential Education Working Group
March 1, 2005: Faculty Committee on Admission and Financial Aid
April 1, 2005: Meeting on financial aid with Trustees, Committee of Six, CEP, CPR, and FCAFA
April 7, 2005: Meeting on support for research and teaching and for research institutes with humanities and social science faculty
April 19, 2005: Recently tenured faculty
May 10, 2005: Open meeting with untenured faculty
May 17, 2005: Committee on Educational Policy
May 20, 2005: Trustees, concerning academic issues
May 24, 2005: Representatives of quantitative departments
June 14 and 21, 2005: Representatives of natural science departments
September 9, 2005: Representatives of arts departments
September 21, 2005: Meeting on advising with Ben Lieber, Dean of Students; Allen Hart, Dean of New Students and Associate Professor of Psychology; and Marian Matheson, Director of Institutional Research
September 27, 2005: Open meeting with faculty
September 30, 2005: Open meeting with faculty
October 5, 2005: Open meeting with faculty
October 6, 2005: Open meeting with faculty
October 19, 2005: President's Large Staff
October 19, 2005: Foreign language faculty
October 19, 2005: Film studies and arts department faculty
October 20, 2005: Executive Committee of the Advisory Committee on Personnel Policies
November 28, 2005: Open meeting with students
December 14, 2005: Sherre Harrington, Librarian of the College, and Peter Schilling, Director of Information Technology

Planning Documents Submitted to the CAP

Academic departments:

American Studies
Anthropology/Sociology
Asian Languages and Civilizations
Astronomy
Biology (plus supplement)
Black Studies
Chemistry (plus supplement)
Classics
Computer Science (plus supplement)
Economics
English
European Studies
Fine Arts
French
Geology (plus supplement)
German
History
Law, Jurisprudence, and Social Thought
Mathematics (plus supplement)
Music
Neuroscience (plus supplement)
Philosophy
Physics (plus supplement)
Political Science
Psychology (plus supplement)
Religion
Russian
Spanish
Theater and Dance
Women's and Gender Studies

SCAE working groups (with the date of discussion in a faculty meeting):

Experiential Education (October 18, 2005)
Global Comprehension (December 20, 2005)
Quantitative (Parts 1 and 2) (November 1, 2005)
Writing (Parts 1 and 2) (November 1, 2005)
Visual Understanding (December 20, 2005)
Working Committee on the Arts (December 20, 2005)

Other faculty groups:

Ad Hoc Committee on Biochemistry/biophysics
African Studies
Culture and Politics PIF
Environmental Science/Environment Studies PIF
Faculty Committees on Admission and Financial Aid
Film and Video Arts Advisory Committee (plus supplement)
Natural science department representatives

Other groups of staff members and administrators:

Ad Hoc Committee on Advising and Registration
Ad Hoc Committee on Interterm
Advancement
Amherst College Library
Community Service, Community- Based Learning, and Civic Engagement
Department of Information Technology
Foundation and Corporate Relations
Library Planning Group
Mead Art Museum
Mellon Faculty Career Enhancement Grant
Physical Education/Intercollegiate Athletics
Quantitative Skills Center
Writing Center Self-Study

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We would like to thank Marian Matheson, Director of Institutional Research, who gave us access to, and guidance through, internal and comparative data on a scale never before available to a college committee. Robyn Piggott, Director of Foundation and Corporate Relations, was a scribe and editor of rare gifts. Special thanks are owed to Richard Todd '62 who generously interceded as perfect reader and deft editor in the final stages of framing this report.

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Finally, we can only gesture to the large debt we owe to Nancy Ratner, Assistant Dean of Admission and Researcher/Committee Coordinator in the Office of the Dean of the Faculty, who kept us on track throughout as recorder, researcher, and omniscient consultant.

Abbreviations

CAP	=	Committee on Academic Priorities
CEP	=	Committee on Educational Policy
CPR	=	Committee on Priorities and Resources
FCAFA	=	Faculty Committee on Admission and Financial Aid
FTE	=	Full-time equivalent
FYS	=	First-Year Seminar
IT	=	Information Technology
PIF	=	President's Initiative Fund (2004-)
SCAE	=	Special Committee on the Amherst Education (2002-2003)