

Committee of Six Minutes of Monday, February 3, 2014

Amended February 14, 2014

The fourteenth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2013-2014 was called to order by President Martin in the President's office at 3:30 P.M. on Monday, February 3, 2014. Present were Professors Corrales, Kingston, Harms, Lyle McGeoch, Miller, and Schneider, Dean Call, Provost Uvin, and Assistant Dean Tobin, Recorder.

Under "Announcements from the President," President Martin informed the Committee that James Larimore, the College's Dean of Students, has told her of his plans to step down from his position immediately. Dean Larimore will remain at Amherst through the end of the academic year, serving as an advisor to her, the President said. Continuing, President Martin informed the members that Dean Larimore would be sending an announcement of this news to the community later in the day, and that she would then send a communication to faculty, students, and staff about this change in leadership in student affairs, and plans moving forward. President Martin praised Mr. Larimore's contributions during his time as Dean of Students.

Continuing, President Martin discussed the opportunities and serious challenges now facing the College within the area of student life. She noted that last year two outside consultants had been brought to Amherst to review student services, including but not limited to the relationship of the Counseling Center to the Office of the Dean of Students.

Concurrently, Gina Maisto Smith had conducted an extensive review of the way sexual assault had been handled on campus. The findings and recommendations of all of these consultants were consistent. President Martin explained that there was a shared sense that the Dean of Students office needed to be reconfigured to become more effective in meeting the needs of Amherst students. Dean Larimore came to a similar conclusion, based on his experience here. President Martin noted that, while Dean Larimore has begun this important work, much remains to be done. She stressed that the needs are pressing, and that challenges on a number of fronts are serious. Among other things, they are creating barriers among students, and to the overall sense of community at the College. She feels strongly that action is needed now. For this reason, President Martin said that a lengthy search and/or short interim staffing would not be viable solutions to establishing new directions in student affairs.

President Martin informed the members that she has asked Suzanne Coffey to assume the role of Chief Student Affairs Officer for a two-year period, leaving her position as Director of Athletics to assume this new assignment. This change will take place immediately. President Martin informed the members that Don Faulstick, Associate Director of Athletics, has agreed to assume the position of Interim Director of Athletics. Dean Call praised Mr. Faulstick's experience and skills as an administrator and expressed the view that he has earned the respect of his colleagues in Athletics. President Martin agreed, noting that she has confidence that Mr. Faulstick will be effective, and that he will continue Ms. Coffey's excellent work. Professor Miller expressed the view that student life would benefit if the leadership programs that Ms. Coffey has put in place in Athletics were extended to the student body as a whole. The President and other members of the Committee agreed.

Continuing with the discussion, President Martin said that Ms. Coffey will be charged with making the organizational, personnel, and management changes that have been recommended by the outside consultants. The members of the Senior Staff, who work collaboratively, will continue to contribute their expertise and experience to aid this

Committee of Six Minutes of Monday, February 3, 2014

Amended February 14, 2014

work, President Martin said. The strategic-planning process will also continue to focus on addressing issues of student life. President Martin offered her highest praise for Ms. Coffey's abilities as an administrator, commenting on her depth of experience in many areas of student life and noting Ms. Coffey's integrity. In addition to the many contributions that she has made within her department, Ms. Coffey was extremely effective in her role as Title IX Coordinator, over the course of eighteen months, bringing the College into compliance with Title IX. President Martin noted that the policies and procedures that have been put in place with Ms. Coffey's leadership are now a model for other schools.

Professor Harms expressed her admiration for Ms. Coffey and her confidence in her abilities, while posing the question of whether the role that Ms. Coffey has played as Director of Athletics might lead some on campus to call Ms. Coffey's objectivity into question in relation to her ability to evaluate the role of athletics in the social life of the College. Professor Harms suggested that the administration prepare to speak to such concerns, if raised. President Martin said she has had direct discussions with Ms. Coffey about the importance of objectivity and ability to focus on the needs of the student body as a whole. She noted that the impact of athletics teams on student social life was part of the discussion and added that Ms. Coffey has the trust of the Athletics department and the student-athletes, which should help her in implementing changes that come to seem desirable. Professor Corrales asked if the President is envisioning an overhaul in regard to the place of athletics at Amherst. President Martin said that it is her expectation that Ms. Coffey's role will encompass an examination of the role of athletics in the social life at Amherst as part of her broader work. It was noted that none of the strategic planning committees has been charged with the specific task of examining athletics, but its role in social life is part of ongoing conversations in a variety of contexts. Provost Uvin commented that a change related to athletics will be made to Orientation beginning this fall. All first-year athletes will now be required to attend all of the programming.

Continuing the conversation about the new appointment, Professor McGeoch asked if the President expects that the model of having a faculty member serve as the Dean of New Students will continue. President Martin responded that many colleagues and consultants feel that the class dean model may be unsustainable, including Dean Larimore, but that it is important that a faculty member continue to be a part of the academic support offered through the Dean of Students Office. One idea is to have a staff member in the Dean of Students Office who would be responsible for triage, reviewing students' needs and directing them to the appropriate person to help them.

Discussion continued with the President noting that some Amherst faculty members have expressed concern over the leading role being played by the Five Colleges in the Northeast Regional Library Print Management Project, which is being funded by the Mellon Foundation. (See [email from Professor Sinos](#) and [response from Neal Abraham](#).) The focus of the project is to explore how libraries in the Northeast might collaborate to manage their print collections. Some Amherst faculty have indicated concern the Faculty has not been invited to engage sufficiently in the discussion of managing and housing print collections. Neal Abraham, Executive Director of Five Colleges, has responded to this concern by emphasizing that no action will be taken by the collective, or as a result of the work on this project, that would compel any individual library to manage its collections in a particular way. He has explained that collaborative projects will be launched only if particular libraries,

Committee of Six Minutes of Monday, February 3, 2014

Amended February 14, 2014

after consultation on their campuses, decide to participate in a particular endeavor. Mr. Abraham has noted that, while Five Colleges, Inc. is managing the grant that is funding the exploration of possible models, none of the five campus libraries (or librarians) has made any commitments to participate in any of the models being explored in the Northeast Regional project. Decisions to participate will be left to individual libraries, in consultation with their campus constituencies. Mr. Abraham has indicated that the project will be discussed at meetings of the Five-College deans, librarians, and presidents/chancellor. Dean Call reiterated that this project has not played a role in Amherst's collection policy, and it would not do so without extensive consultation with the Faculty and the Faculty Library Committee, in particular. While some of the Five-College institutions (most prominently UMass and Smith) need a central repository to store materials, Amherst's needs are being met by the current repository and the College is not involved financially in creating a central repository. The Dean indicated that Mr. Abraham and Mr. Geffert, Librarian of the College, plan to respond to the Amherst faculty members who have raised concern over this issue. Professor Schneider noted that, in the past, decisions made at the Five-College level would have had a profound effect on the Amherst library had Amherst faculty not spoken up, so it is a good idea to be informed and vigilant.

Continuing with her announcements, President Martin offered highlights of the winter meetings of the Board of Trustees, which had been held January 24 and 25. She noted that a preliminary view of the budget had been given, and that there had been a presentation about how Amherst manages its endowment, commenting that the Trustees favor a conservative approach to the endowment spend rate. The Trustees had also focused on student life issues, including the topic of off-campus fraternities. The Board continues to consider change in the organization and effectiveness of student affairs to be pressing matters. President Martin said that the Instruction Committee of the Board had had a robust conversation about the concept of the "research college," which had been informed by a discussion with Professor Bishop, chair of the Strategic Planning Committee on the Integration of Research, Teaching, and Learning, and Professor Sitze, a member of the committee. President Martin noted that the Trustees had also had pizza with students and had enjoyed their conversations.

The Board had expressed excitement and support for the proposal to establish a humanities center at Amherst, agreeing that the center could be an important resource for faculty and students that would stimulate intellectual exchange on campus. President Martin informed the members that she has decided to move forward with the center, with some revisions to the original proposal that will be made to address concerns that were expressed to her during conversations with faculty last semester. The President noted that some faculty had told her of their fear that the College would be investing in an initiative from which relatively few Amherst faculty would benefit directly, during a time when significant numbers of faculty feel the need for a greater sense of intellectual community across departments. Another concern that had been expressed was that funding for the center's postdoctoral fellows would leave the Dean without sufficient resources to support postdoctoral fellowships, which currently provide much-needed teaching in some departments. Some faculty had also told President Martin that they felt that a theme-

Committee of Six Minutes of Monday, February 3, 2014

Amended February 14, 2014

based program could prove to be of more of a benefit to the visitors (postdoctoral visitors and senior scholars) who would be affiliated with the center than to regular members of the Faculty. To address these concerns, President Martin said that funds have been added to the budget to insure that the present program of postdoctoral fellowships for humanities departments will be continued. In addition, all postdoctoral humanities center fellows will be jointly appointed between the humanities center and an academic department. There will also be a program of humanities center faculty fellowships for Amherst College faculty members who wish to affiliate themselves with the center. Office space will be available for one or two of these faculty fellows to be housed during their fellowship year in the humanities center. In addition, the central space of the humanities center will be designed to serve as an informal gathering place for Amherst faculty members to encourage broad use of the center as a venue for intellectual exchange. President Martin also noted that some faculty members had expressed concern about the name, "humanities center." The President said that the decision about the name of the center would be left to the Faculty.

Continuing with the conversation about the meetings of the Trustees, Dean Call noted that the Board had expressed support for a set of options that the College will now offer to assist eligible members of Amherst's Faculty and administration with the purchase of a nearby home. The new options will replace a second-mortgage program that has been in place for some time, which was no longer serving the needs of many colleagues, as the Committee had discussed. The new program was informed by a proposal brought to the President by the Faculty Housing Committee, and after consultation with the Committee on Priorities and Resources (CPR), as well as the Committee of Six. The new set of options went into effect February 1, 2014. Dean Call informed the Committee that the Board had voted to renew the Enhanced Faculty Phased Retirement Option for faculty age sixty-five and over, which had been in effect from 2008 to 2012, pending the anticipated award of a grant from the Mellon Foundation. That grant would provide support for this program.

Under "Announcements from the Dean," the Dean discussed with the members nominees to serve on the Committee on Discipline, and it was agreed that the Dean should invite two colleagues to serve, replacing faculty who are leaving the committee. Dean Call informed the members of a request that he had received from Denise Gagnon, Director of Fellowship Advising, that another faculty member be added as a sixth member of the Student Fellowships Committee, in order to relieve some of the workload of the committee. Dean Call noted that changing the membership of this standing committee on a permanent basis would require a vote of the Faculty, but that the Committee could consider doing so on a trial basis this spring. If the addition of a member is found to be of value, a motion to make the change permanent could be brought before the Faculty for a vote this spring. Dean Call said that Ms. Gagnon has told him that adding another member would enable committee members to divide into two groups of three members (possibly by disciplines or fields of interest), which would allow each of them to read fewer applications and interview and write for fewer applicants. The number of students applying for national fellowships has been steadily increasing, the Dean noted. In the spring, he has been informed, the committee is kept very busy reading and rating Amherst College fellowship applications, a task that must be completed by early-April. By late-February, Ms. Gagnon has already started promoting and advising juniors and alumni about the next cycle of national fellowship competitions with

Committee of Six Minutes of Monday, February 3, 2014

Amended February 14, 2014

early fall deadlines (the Marshall and Rhodes preliminary applications will be due on August 29 this year). Professor Schneider praised Ms. Gagnon for her excellent work and success in helping Amherst students garner fellowship awards. He endorsed adding another faculty member to the committee and devoting more resources to support and expand Ms. Gagnon's work. Professor Schneider said that he has served on the committee in the past and had found the experience to be interesting and rewarding. It was agreed that a member should be added to the Student Fellowships Committee this spring as a pilot, with the proviso that a permanent change to the membership of the committee would require a vote of the Faculty.

Continuing his remarks, Dean Call noted that he has received a request to invite Justin Smith, the College's new Associate General Counsel, to attend Faculty Meetings as a guest. The members agreed that doing so would be helpful to his work. The members anticipate a broader discussion this spring of the issue of attendance and voting at Faculty Meetings. The Dean then noted possible Faculty Meeting dates for the spring semester. They are February 18, March 4, April 1, April 15, May 6, and the morning of Thursday, May 22.

Discussion returned to the proposal from the Department of Physics, endorsed by the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP), to merge the Department of Physics and the Department of Astronomy to create a Department of Physics and Astronomy. After first reviewing this proposal in the fall, the Committee had asked for more information about the rationale for the proposal and the anticipated relationship between the Amherst department and the Five-College department. In an effort to offer greater clarity, the physics department provided the members with the FTE request for a position in Astronomy that they had submitted to the CEP (the position was later allocated, and a search is currently under way) and a [letter from Suzan Edwards](#), L. Clarke Seelye Professor of Astronomy at Smith College and Chair of the Five College Department of Astronomy. The letter outlines the current relationship between the Amherst department and the Five-College department, which is envisioned to continue in the same form under the new structure. Professor Harms said that, while she supports the merger, she feels that it is important to share with the Faculty a fulsome proposal, much of the substance of which could be drawn from the FTE request. Included should be an articulation of the department's intention for the Astronomy major going forward. Would the major continue to rely on the Five-College department? Dean Call agreed to ask the department to create such a document that could be provided to the Faculty in advance of the Faculty Meeting in which the proposal would be discussed. The members then voted six in favor and zero opposed to forward the following motion to the Faculty, and six in favor and zero opposed on the substance of the motion. (The [final proposal](#) and a [letter of endorsement from the Committee on Educational Policy](#) are provided with these minutes.)

Motion

That the Department of Physics and the Department of Astronomy combine to form the Department of Physics and Astronomy. They will retain their separate majors within the combined department.

Committee of Six Minutes of Monday, February 3, 2014

Amended February 14, 2014

The Committee next discussed the [Department of Mathematics proposal](#), which has been [endorsed by the CEP](#), that the Department of Mathematics be authorized to change its name to the Department of Mathematics and Statistics and to establish a major in Statistics in the renamed department. As a matter of context, Professor Corrales wondered about the separation of Mathematics and Computer Science, and the possibility that Statistics might want to be a department unto itself now or in the future. Professor McGeoch explained that Mathematics and Computer Science were combined at a time when the Computer Science curriculum could not yet stand on its own, since it was a small department with three untenured faculty members. The statisticians have a similar composition at present, with only one tenured professor, Professor Horton, and two untenured faculty members, Professors Liao and Wagaman. Professor McGeoch noted that, by the time of the amicable separation of Mathematics and Computer Science in 2008, there was no overlap in requirements for the two majors, the two parts of the department had managed their curricula independently for over a decade, and there was little holding the entities together. Professor McGeoch said that he sees the logic of Statistics and Mathematics being joined, and could also envision the possibility of two separate departments in the future. There is greater overlap in the fields and in the majors than there was between Mathematics and Computer Science, he noted. Professor Harms agreed that both Mathematics and Statistics would benefit under the proposed structure.

Continuing, Professor Corrales wondered whether there might be awkwardness in the tenure review process at the departmental level under the proposed structure, since pure mathematicians would be evaluating the statisticians' scholarly work, which would be far afield from their own. Dean Call said that the mathematicians would be involved in the assessment of statisticians' tenure cases whether or not Statistics is combined with Mathematics, simply because there is only one tenured colleague in Statistics at present, which would necessitate the formation of ad hoc committees that would inevitably include mathematicians. He noted that the mathematicians would be inclined to defer to the outside reviewers and Professor Horton in their assessments of the tenure-track statisticians' cases, because the disciplines are so different. Dean Call noted that the current tenure-track statisticians have been mentored within the Mathematics department for their entire careers at the College. Professor Miller said that she supports the proposal and expressed admiration for the way in which the proposed curriculum has been structured to address overlap in the Mathematics major and the Statistics major. It would be a challenge to double major, as doing so would require seventeen courses.

In response to questions about staffing the major, the Dean noted that, with the impending hiring of a lecturer in statistics who would teach five or six courses per year, it would be possible for the department to offer annually at least fifteen courses in statistics. Professor Harms wondered if mounting a Statistics major would be difficult because of the loss of courses due to sabbaticals. The Dean said that, with supplemental visitors, at times, there would be sufficient staffing to mount needed courses, even when some colleagues were on leave. Dean Call noted that the ability to teach the needed introductory courses, with the addition of the lecturer, will provide a needed relief valve. On principle, the President expressed concern about creating any new majors at the College before the necessary resources, particularly FTEs, are in place. Allocating FTEs to meet the needs of newly created majors and/or departments can result in an approach that can contribute to a narrow,

Committee of Six Minutes of Monday, February 3, 2014

Amended February 14, 2014

rather than a broader, way of conceiving and considering the curriculum, she said. It is inevitable that new entities that come into being without the necessary resources will want to grow. The Committee suggested making use of Five-College statistics courses and integrating statistics courses outside the Mathematics (and Statistics) department to augment the offerings that might count toward the major. Professor Schneider expressed the hope that the major would remain true to the liberal arts and not be structured as a pre-professional degree. In this vein, Professor Corrales expressed concern that students with weak backgrounds in statistics might be intimidated by the prospect of taking a course in statistics, if they saw an introductory course as a gateway to a major. Dean Call said that introductory statistics (“service”) courses will remain accessible to all students, as they are now, and that the greatest demand will be for statistics courses for non-majors. The Committee discussed the growing interest in statistics to inform research and teaching in the social sciences. Dean Call said that he could envision the College hiring a quantitative social scientist, which would enhance offerings in quantitative methods that are in demand across fields.

The members then voted six in favor and zero opposed to forward the following motion to the Faculty, and six in favor and zero opposed on the substance of the motion.

Motion

That the Department of Mathematics be authorized to change its name to the Department of Mathematics and Statistics and to establish a major in Statistics in the renamed department.

The Committee next reviewed a draft Faculty Meeting Agenda for a possible meeting of the Faculty on February 18. The members voted six in favor and zero opposed to forward it to the Faculty.

Under “Questions from Committee Members,” President Martin was asked about her attendance at a White House summit on January 16 that had been devoted to exploring ways to improve access and success for low-income students. President Martin said that the discussion had been interesting, and that she had been impressed with the commitment of the college and university presidents who had attended to doing more in this realm. She noted that Valerie Jarrett, Senior Advisor to President Obama, had informed the group that finding ways to address the problem of sexual assaults taking place on campuses was a top priority for President Obama and that enforcement would become more rigorous.

The meeting adjourned at 5:20 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory S. Call
Dean of the Faculty