

Amended March 28, 2014

The eighteenth 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, March 10, 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 Dean," Dean Call asked for the Committee's advice about how best to move forward with a [proposal](#) from the Registrar and Librarian to collect, archive, and distribute student theses in electronic formats, which has been [endorsed by the Committee on Educational Policy \(CEP\)](#). Dean Call noted that the CEP had discussed this proposal at length. Professor Schneider suggested that the proposal be brought before the Faculty, which would allow for thinking through details and contributing to the formulation of the proposal, and providing a forum for questions or concerns. Professors Miller and Harms agreed that taking this approach would be best and raised concerns about making unpublished data within theses, which are often part of the faculty advisor's research, broadly accessible via the Internet. Another problem would arise if student thesis writers misinterpret data, which is then disseminated. Dean Call noted that, under the proposal, the faculty advisor and the student would sign off on making the proposal available electronically, and that they could opt out of posting the thesis if they wished. Professor Miller said that she could foresee having to opt out of the policy for every thesis, and that other scientists would likely do so as well to avoid distributing their data electronically prior to publication and/or including the material in a grant proposal. The need to opt out constantly would be onerous, in Professor Miller's view, and she said that she would prefer a policy that did not have opting in as its default. Professor Kingston noted that the proposal would require faculty members to provide a rationale for opting out of the policy, which raises questions surrounding who will evaluate the decision to opt out and the possibility that a faculty member's decision to do so might be questioned. Professor Kingston said that he finds the requirement that a rationale be provided to be inconsistent with the spirit of open access, which is to give authors full control over the dissemination of their work. Dean Call said that it is his understanding that rationales would not be evaluated; they would be accepted. Professor Schneider raised the point that the policy could force faculty members into awkward situations with students, having to inform them that problematic aspects of the thesis would necessitate an opt-out approach to prevent less-than-optimal work from being shared widely. At present, faculty members might inform students of shortcomings in more nuanced ways that would not be possible if a decision about distributing the thesis electronically were to be required. Professor Schneider suggested that, if the policy is approved, it might be helpful to consult with faculty in the Department of Music to determine which electronic formats would be best for audio files, which can be very large. Professor Schneider reiterated his view that the proposal should be brought to the Faculty for a vote, as the policy relates to teaching. Other members agreed, deciding that the first step would be for the Dean to share the minutes of the Committee of Six's conversation with the CEP, which might choose to revise the proposal in light of the concerns expressed. The Dean said that he would communicate the Committee's views to the CEP and share the minutes of the Committee of Six's conversation with the committee.

Conversation turned to [questions posed by Professor Wagaman](#) about Amherst students' participation in, and time commitment for athletics. These questions were prompted by the discussion about athletics at the Faculty Meeting of March 4, during which concerns had been expressed by a number of faculty members. Dean Call informed the members that he is aware that the Committee on Education and Athletics is gathering information for the Faculty that relates to Professor Wagaman's questions. He suggested that

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her email be forwarded to that committee in the hope that the “baseline information” sought might be part of the committee’s work. Professor Harms commented that Professor Wagaman’s questions are good ones. Professor Miller agreed, adding that, in addition to the official data requested by Professor Wagaman, she would also favor asking student-athletes directly about time commitments to athletics. President Martin concurred, noting that, in addition to learning more about student-athletes at Amherst, it will be important to collect relevant data from peer institutions. The Committee asked President Martin if the topic of athletics comes up during her conversations with other college presidents. She responded that the issue is discussed at least twice a year at meetings of the New England Small College Athletic Conference (NESCAC) presidents, and on other occasions. The President informed the members that she has asked Tom Parker, Dean of Admission and Financial Aid, to gather data surrounding athletics and admission practices. She noted that the academic qualifications of student-athletes admitted to the College have been improving over the last decade. Having teams with winning records is a big draw for these academically talented student-athletes, it was noted.

Professor Kingston commented that, while statistical data will aid any consideration of athletics, it will be equally important to take qualitative approaches to exploring this issue. The other members agreed. President Martin noted that the discussion at the Faculty Meeting about athletics indicates that there is a strong interest in having further conversation about this topic. She informed the members that she had recently become aware of a report, completed by the Special Committee on the Place of Athletics at Amherst in 2002 and titled “[The Place of Athletics at Amherst College: A Question of Balance](#).” Trustee Colin S. Diver ’65 had chaired the committee, and the report is commonly known as “[the Diver Report](#).” President Martin noted that the ad hoc committee had recommended that the President constitute an ad hoc committee similar to the Diver committee within a period of three to five years of the publication of the Diver Report to review the place of athletics at Amherst, and that the President appoint similar committees every three to five years. President Martin commented that she would welcome a thorough study of this issue and said that appointing an ad hoc committee, with a similar make-up, would be an approach that she would favor. The Committee expressed an interest in reading the Diver Report, and the President said that she would be pleased to provide it to the members.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Harms said that she would like to see the College take a leadership role in taking steps to limit the potential of repeated head injuries among student-athletes, including leading efforts to eliminate “headers” as part of soccer games. President Martin said that she would be willing to raise this issue with the NESCAC presidents, but does not believe that it will have traction. Professor Miller said that it would be helpful, in the context of problems that arise for faculty in regard to athletics, to consider structural approaches that might be put in place that support placing academics first at Amherst. For example, there could be a requirement that athletes cannot participate on an athletic team unless they maintain a minimum grade-point average. Another suggestion might be to expect that athletes attend a certain number of practices, rather than all of the practices that are scheduled. Several members of the Committee noted that athletes participating in games to which they must travel sometimes request to miss classes well in advance of the scheduled game. President Martin agreed that departures for games should be scheduled so that the amount of class time that student-athletes miss is kept to a minimum. Provost Uvin left the meeting at 4:00 P.M.

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Conversation returned to the possibility of creating a committee to undertake a study of the place of athletics at Amherst. Issues considered included the possibility of charging the Committee on Education and Athletics with this project, constituting a special committee, or making use of both structures. Noting the make-up of the Diver Committee, Professor Corrales expressed some concern about having trustees serve on a special committee, arguing that trustees might have a special interest in the outcome of the study of athletics at the College. Noting the Board of Trustees' fiduciary responsibility, President Martin said that she feels that it would be helpful to bring trustees into the discussion and commented that there are precedents for trustees serving on special College committees, including the committee that explored this issue most recently. Professor Miller said that, in addition to charging a committee to examine this issue, and to inform its work, it would be helpful to have a full discussion about athletics at a future Faculty Meeting. Professor Kingston suggested that it would be helpful to have more information about the role of athletics in admissions. Dean Call commented that the Faculty Committee on Admission and Financial Aid (FCAFA) could be charged with providing data on this area. Professor Schneider said that he favors charging the Committee on Education and Athletics with studying the place of athletics, as doing so seems to be the most efficient approach. The Dean said that he would be happy to review the history of the Committee on Education and Athletics with the members, noting that in 2003, the Faculty had voted changes to the committee's name, membership structure, and charge to strengthen its ability to address issues surrounding the intersection of academics, social life, admissions, and athletics at the College. The Committee, the President, and the Dean agreed that the time seems ripe for a discussion about athletics and that they would continue to discuss possible structures for exploring this topic. President Martin commented that she would favor the appointment, ultimately, of a special committee similar to the Diver Committee, the work of which could be informed by research done by the Committee on Education and Athletics.

At the conclusion of the discussion about athletics, which had arisen as a result of the conversation that had occurred at the March 4 Faculty Meeting, the members briefly reflected on that meeting. It was agreed that the committee-of-the-whole structure had led to a fruitful conversation about the initial work of the Strategic Planning Committee on the Integration of Curricular and Co-Curricular Learning and the Strategic Planning Committee on Diversity and Community. The members felt that it would be informative to have the other two planning committees (The Committee on the Integration of Research, Teaching, and Learning and the Committee on the Internationalization of Liberal Arts Education) report in the same format at Faculty Meetings on April 1 and April 15.

Dean Call next asked the members for their advice on how best to structure a search committee for the newly envisioned Dean of Students position. The committee will be aided in its work by the search firm of Isaacson, Miller, which will do a good deal of the groundwork and which is already helping to develop a pool of possible candidates, President Martin noted. Professor Harms said that, when she had chaired the search committee for the traditional Dean of Students position, she had read all of the applications that had been submitted, not just those that had been forwarded by the search firm. She recommended that the search committee chair follow this procedure again to ensure transparency within the process. The Dean explained that the Association of Amherst Students (AAS) had recommended the following in regard to student representatives: one senator, two at-large students selected by the AAS, one additional student chosen by Chief Student Affairs Officer Suzanne Coffey and the President of the AAS.

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After consultation with the Senior Staff, Ms. Coffey is recommending that there be four students, four faculty members, and one staff member. The Dean said that it is imagined that Ms. Coffey will chair the committee. Professor Schneider commented that a ten-member committee seems unwieldy. Professor Miller agreed. Since the position will largely focus on academic support, Dean Call suggested, and the Committee agreed, that having Ms. Coffey co-chair the committee with a faculty member would be appropriate. President Martin agreed. She noted that she had been thinking about the suggestion put forward at a previous Committee of Six meeting that a faculty member potentially serve as the Dean of Students. After consulting with colleagues at other institutions, she had come to the conclusion that, given the current legal and regulatory environment governing student affairs and the complex issues within the area of student mental health, for example, turning to a faculty member to assume this role does not seem viable. In her view, the College needs a Dean of Students with expertise and experience in the area of student affairs. After more discussion, the Committee of Six recommended that the search committee for the new Dean of Students consist of three faculty members, three students, a staff member, and Ms. Coffey. It was further recommended that one of the faculty members be asked to serve as co-chair of the search committee with Ms. Coffey. While this structure would allow for a committee of a more manageable size, in the members' view, the Committee stressed the importance of offering students opportunities for providing feedback on candidates for the position who come to campus. For example, the AAS could organize a committee of students that would meet with candidates and/or attend job talks and then offer feedback, as some departments do with faculty searches. The Committee next offered suggestions of faculty members who might serve as the co-chair, and as members, of the committee.

The members next reviewed a draft Faculty Meeting agenda for a possible meeting on April 1. To address concerns that have emerged over time surrounding the mentoring of tenure-track faculty members, the Committee developed the following two motions and voted six in favor and zero opposed on content and six in favor and zero opposed to forward the motions to the Faculty.

#### **Motion**

*To enhance the effectiveness of mentoring tenure-track faculty members, the Committee of Six proposes the following revision to the Faculty Handbook, as indicated in bold caps, to sections [III., D., 2](#) and [III., E., 4.,\(8\)](#), regarding annual conversations for tenure-track faculty members with the chair(s) of their department(s), effective immediately:*

#### **2. Annual Conversation with the Chair**

The Chair, **WITH AT LEAST ONE OTHER TENURED MEMBER OF THE DEPARTMENT ALSO PRESENT AND PARTICIPATING**, shall have at least one formal conversation per year with **EACH OF** the department's untenured faculty member(s) to discuss in detail performance and progress in teaching and research, **OR CREATIVE WORK** and evidence thereof. As to teaching, this evidence should include all semester-end evaluations by students with signatures removed, the testimony of colleagues who have observed the untenured faculty member's teaching, and such course materials as the untenured faculty member sees fit to submit for discussion (Voted by the Faculty, November 1998). **PRIOR TO THE ANNUAL CONVERSATION, THE CHAIR SHALL PROVIDE MATERIALS DOCUMENTING THE UNTENURED FACULTY**

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**MEMBER'S TEACHING AND RESEARCH OR CREATIVE WORK TO THE TENURED MEMBERS OF THE DEPARTMENT AND CONSULT WITH THEM TO REACH A SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT SHOULD BE CONVEYED IN THE ANNUAL CONVERSATION.**

**ANNUAL CONVERSATIONS ARE HELD EACH YEAR UNTIL THE TIME OF THE FACULTY MEMBER'S TENURE REVIEW.** A sum and substance letter about the conversation should be given to the untenured faculty member and be placed in the records of the department. (Voted by the Faculty, May 1995). **ON AN ANNUAL BASIS, THE CHAIR MUST NOTIFY THE DEAN OF THE FACULTY THAT THE ANNUAL CONVERSATION HAS TAKEN PLACE WITH EACH OF THE DEPARTMENT'S UNTENURED FACULTY MEMBERS AND THAT THE SUM AND SUBSTANCE LETTER HAS BEEN GIVEN TO EACH CANDIDATE.**

#### **4. Procedures Followed in Tenure Decisions**

(8) The departmental evaluation of teaching effectiveness should draw upon a representative range of teaching activities in addition to evidence described in (5). Evaluation should derive from, but need not be limited to, conversations about courses with some members of the department; attendance by some members of the department at a number of class meetings at mutually agreed upon times; assessment, by the candidate with at least one senior member of the department, of the accomplishments of at least one of the candidate's courses at the end of a semester. Evaluations of teaching effectiveness may also be included in the letters described in (2) and (7). (Voted by the Faculty, March 1999). **ANNUAL CONVERSATIONS WITH THE CHAIR ARE HELD EACH YEAR UNTIL THE TIME OF THE FACULTY MEMBER'S TENURE REVIEW. PROCEDURES FOR ANNUAL CONVERSATIONS CAN BE FOUND IN SECTION [III., D., 2.](#)**

#### **Motion**

*To enhance the effectiveness of mentoring tenure-track faculty members, the Committee of Six proposes the following revision to the Faculty Handbook, as indicated in bold caps, to sections [III., D., 4.](#), and [III., E., 4.,\(8\)](#):*

#### **4. Reappointment Procedures**

In preparation for recommendations concerning reappointment, the department will gather evidence concerning teaching effectiveness, scholarly or creative growth, and other contributions to the life of the College. (Voted by the Faculty, October 2004). Evaluations of teaching are to be requested of all students from every course, including every honors and special topics course taught by an untenured faculty member. These evaluations are to be signed and are normally to be solicited in essay format in all classes in the final week of each semester on a form to be devised by the instructor in collaboration with the department. After the submission of grades they will be made available to the instructor without the names of the respondents. In

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addition, all departments will be required to have solicited from all students confidential letters of evaluation at the time of reappointment review (Voted by the Faculty, October 1998). All student evaluations of teaching collected for purposes of reappointment are to be submitted to the Committee of Six with the department's recommendation. (Voted by the Faculty, May 1995)

The departmental evaluation of teaching effectiveness should draw upon a representative range of teaching activities in addition to evidence described above. Evaluation should derive from, but need not be limited to, conversations about courses with some members of the department; attendance by some members of the department at a number of class meetings at mutually agreed upon times; and assessment, by the candidate with at least one senior member of the department, of the accomplishments of at least one of the candidate's courses at the end of a semester. (Voted by the Faculty, May 1999). **EVALUATIONS OF TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS SHOULD ALSO BE INFORMED BY THE DISCUSSIONS OF THE TENURED MEMBERS OF THE DEPARTMENT, THE SUBSTANCE OF WHICH IS CONVEYED DURING ANNUAL CONVERSATIONS.**

#### **4. Procedures Followed in Tenure Decisions**

(8) The departmental evaluation of teaching effectiveness should draw upon a representative range of teaching activities in addition to evidence described in (5). Evaluation should derive from, but need not be limited to, conversations about courses with some members of the department; attendance by some members of the department at a number of class meetings at mutually agreed upon times; assessment, by the candidate with at least one senior member of the department, of the accomplishments of at least one of the candidate's courses at the end of a semester. Evaluations of teaching effectiveness may also be included in the letters described in (2) and (7). (Voted by the Faculty, March 1999). **EVALUATIONS OF TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS SHOULD ALSO BE INFORMED BY THE DISCUSSIONS OF THE TENURED MEMBERS OF THE DEPARTMENT, THE SUBSTANCE OF WHICH IS CONVEYED DURING ANNUAL CONVERSATIONS.** Annual conversations with the chair are held each year until the time of the faculty member's tenure review. Procedures for annual conversations can be found in section [III., D., 2.](#)

The members then voted six in favor and zero opposed to forward the Faculty Meeting agenda to the Faculty. The Committee requested that the Dean ask Provost Uvin to confer with the two strategic planning committees that have not yet reported to determine which would report at the April 1 Faculty Meeting and which would report at a Faculty Meeting to be held on April 15. It was agreed that the two committees should also be asked to provide information to inform the discussions in advance of the Faculty Meetings, which would be shared with the Faculty. Dean Call said that he would be happy to do so.

The Committee briefly discussed its recent recommendations regarding the Orientation Committee in light of concerns that have been shared with some members. It was noted that some colleagues have put forward the view that the Committee of Six may have exceeded its authority by supporting the proposal that the Provost work with the Orientation Committee to

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plan this fall's Orientation and that he coordinate its implementation. The members said that they continue to believe that, given the current situation in student affairs and the upcoming transition in the Dean of New Students position, they had given sound and appropriate advice. The Orientation Committee's role is an advisory one to the administration, which has a decision-making role, the Committee agreed. An alternative approach could have been to ask the members of the Orientation Committee to implement Orientation, which did not seem viable. Provost Uvin's status on the Orientation Committee, as a member or guest, should be less important than getting the job done, in the view of most. Professor Schneider said that much as he agrees with the Committee of Six's decision in this case, he can understand how the process that had been used to insert the Provost into the planning and implementation of Orientation could be seen as problematic from a governance perspective, and the desire to turn to the *Faculty Handbook* for guidance—particularly in a time of uncertainty. Other members noted that, in situations such as the one under discussion, common sense should prevail over a literal interpretation of *Faculty Handbook* language and added that changes in practice can occur that are not reflected in the handbook until the handbook is amended. The remainder of the meeting was devoted to personnel matters.

The meeting adjourned at 6:45 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory S. Call  
Dean of the Faculty