

Committee on Priorities and Resources  
Meeting Minutes – November 10, 2020

In attendance: Professor Javier Corrales; Professor Jill Miller, chair; Professor Monica Ringer; Library Administrative Assistant/Bookkeeper Susan Bradley; Retail Dining Assistant Peter Charron; Director of Financial Planning Thomas Dwyer, *ex officio*; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Catherine Epstein, *ex officio*; Chief Human Resources Officer Maria-Judith Rodriguez, *ex officio*; Brooke Harrington '22, *ex officio*; Allie Ho '24; Sydney Ireland '23; Steven Hegarty, recorder

Not in attendance: Professor Andrew Dole; Chief Financial and Administrative Officer Kevin Weinman, *ex officio*

Guest: Dean of Admission and Financial Aid Matt McGann

The meeting came to order at 8:30 am.

Proceedings

Matt McGann from the Office of Admissions and Financial Aid led a discussion around current and anticipated trends in admissions and financial aid, and the emerging patterns from the pandemic.

1. Matt reviewed the organization chart for his division. Staff are grouped in three areas:
  - a. Admissions, the largest group;
  - b. Systems and Strategies, which bridges the other two groups and has been an area of growth in the office; and
  - c. Financial Aid.
2. Most years, Admissions is managing tour guides and visitors. This year, they have pivoted to virtual tours and information sessions.
3. Matt updated CPR on the fall class. Due to the need to de-densify campus, the first-year class was smaller than usual with 434 students enrolled. An additional 52 students deferred to next year. The goal for Fall 2021 is to enroll a close to normal size class as possible from the applicants to the Class of 2025 (typically, 473 incoming students) plus the majority of the gap year students, resulting in a larger-than-usual first-year class. Between the Classes of 2024 and 2025, the average would be two normal size classes. Admission & Financial Aid will continue to work with campus partners to ensure the optimal class size.
4. The Amherst College commitment to socio-economic diversity is demonstrated by its financial aid policies. In addition, due to the pandemic, there have been several enhancements to financial aid, including:
  - a. Summer work replacement;
  - b. Term-time work replacement;
  - c. A remote personal living allowance;
  - d. Expanded January review for families impacted by the pandemic;
  - e. A new Student Emergency Fund for acute, unanticipated expenses; and

- f. Funding distribution from the CARES Act, up to \$1,500 per eligible student. The federal money came with restrictions on eligibility, so the college provided matching funds to non-qualifying students.
5. These Financial Aid changes have a significant cost.
6. The Student Emergency Fund had been in the planning stages prior to the pandemic, and it was launched to meet the current need. This enhancement has been supported by fundraising.
7. Review of the ongoing Financial Aid program: Amherst College practices need blind admissions. The college has a commitment to racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity. Financial aid is need blind for all students regardless of citizenship, and the college is committed to meet the full financial need of every student. AC does not include loans with its financial aid packages. The college also does not offer “merit aid” (enhanced financial packages) as incentives to any admitted students; aid is based solely on a student’s financial need. These policies reflect the values of the institution.
8. In comparison with peer and Ivy League schools, AC shares the most generous financial aid policies with only Harvard, Yale, and Princeton.
9. Over time, the proportion of students receiving financial aid and Pell grants has increased.
10. In response to a question regarding the perception of Amherst during the pandemic, Matt noted that prospective students are trying to imagine the campus back to normal. The current testing and safety enhancements do not seem to be at the forefront of the minds of most prospective students. One vote of confidence is the largest number ever of mid-year transfer applicants, a small number of whom will be arriving for Spring semester.
11. A set of comparative data is available online at:  
<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/projects/college-mobility/>

Adjourned 9:30 am.

Respectfully submitted,  
S Hegarty