

Committee on Priorities and Resources  
Meeting Minutes – November 2, 2021

In attendance: Professor Nusrat Chowdhury; Professor Andrew Dole, chair; Professor Jill Miller; Professor Monica Ringer; Interim Director of Human Resources Chris Casey, *ex officio*; Retail Dining Supervisor Peter Charron; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Catherine Epstein, *ex officio*; Interim Director of Financial Planning, Ashley Travis, *ex officio*; Assistant Director of Family Giving, Emily Ziomek; Jae Yun Ham '22, *ex officio*; Allie Ho '24; Jaden Richards '25; Steven Hegarty, recorder

Not in attendance: Interim Chief Financial Officer Thomas Dwyer, *ex officio*

The meeting came to order at 8:00 am.

Proceedings

CPR heard from the student members of the committee on their sense of college priorities:

1. Residential Life

- a. AC needs either more student housing or fewer students. Currently there are “forced triples” to address the current housing crunch. Another possibility would be to allow more off-campus housing.
- b. Requesting the availability of basic supplies in the dorms at no cost, including items such as toothpaste, soap, and laundry detergent.
- c. Improvements to dorm quality, such as allowing air conditioning units, installing doors on showers for privacy, providing nicer mattresses, and adding more washer/dryers.
- d. Repair damage done to student housing and address maintenance issues such as no lights or missing signs, as well as damaged walls and bathrooms.

CPR questions/discussion:

- e. Spring term will be less crowded. The space crunch predates COVID to some extent, including limited use of “forced triples.” Lines at the dining hall are long due to a lack of capacity.
- f. The Greenway dorms have air conditioning and climate control, while others do not. AC summer students stay in Greenway, other programs in various dorms.  
If air conditioning in the dorms is not an option, the college could supply fans and explore other solutions. Efficient solutions for dorm cooling would be a great project for the new sustainability director.
- g. Better quality mattresses are an investment in student success. Currently, students buy their own mattress toppers to cover the springs and discomfort.
- h. Differentiating between dorm maintenance and damage, for example non-working lights vs. holes in walls. Repeated work requests are not being met in some cases, while there have been satisfactory responses in others. Damage caused repeatedly by parties is problematic. A policy to charge penalties exists through community standards, but the college is not currently employing it.

2. Financial Aid

- a. The recent announcement of enhanced financial aid is very welcome.
- b. An additional request is for dental and vision insurance to reduce the burden on low income students.

3. Student Life
  - a. Students would appreciate more spaces to be alone for study, or to concentrate. The new student center is a few years off, and there is a current need for private rooms.
  - b. A maker space, and free art supplies with open access to art studios to make stuff.
  - c. Greener practices, including reusable items in Val - noting some change is happening there. The new director of sustainability starts January 1 and will begin addressing aspects of this concern.
  - d. Requesting more menu options at Val, and a greater selection for students with food accommodations.
  - e. More IT/AV equipment available for sign out, including microphones/speakers and podcast equipment. AAS has been paying for these things.
  - f. CPR noted there will be a maker space in new student center. Currently, materials that are available on campus are hard to access.
4. Academic priorities:
  - a. Increased summer funding, including funds for summer study abroad;
  - b. Increased funding and credit for study abroad programs;
  - c. Access to 3D printers and applicable curriculum for the creation of larger scale art projects; and
  - d. Refresh of Amherst websites. Workday Student will soon replace AC data, however the college website is confusing for students and outdated in appearance.
5. AAS supports collaborating on the reparations initiative by the Town of Amherst for its black residents. Senior staff is monitoring this initiative carefully and thinking about how the college could contribute, as well as how to address its own racial history. Conversations are at the very beginning - both at the college and by the town. Students would welcome communication and engagement on the topic.
6. Structure/budget for AAS
  - a. Jae Yun is the AAS treasurer and walked through the budget. Annual budget, historically, is \$1.3M/year. While Amherst has among the highest student activity fees, AAS pays for more things than other schools. Expenditures include program and club budgets, plus discretionary awards. AAS is funded by 1% of the comprehensive fee, and generally runs a surplus.
  - b. For AY21-22, the budget was reduced to \$800k due to expectations of limited events. With travel restarting and other changes, costs have now more or less returned to normal.
  - c. Responding to a question of the adequacy of the current funding. returning to the pre-COVID budget level, yes, it is adequate. Surpluses gives AAS chance to do bigger projects, such as supporting supplemental financial aid in March 2020.
7. CPR thanked the students for their presentation. Andrew will forward the list of items to relevant departments on campus and report back to the CPR at a future meeting.

Adjourned 9:00 am.

Respectfully submitted,  
S Hegarty