

Committee on Priorities and Resources
Meeting Minutes – February 8, 2022

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

Not in attendance: Jae Yun Ham '22, *ex officio*

The meeting came to order at 8:30 am.

Proceedings

1. CPR welcomed Kate Harrington to Amherst College and the committee
2. Kate updated CPR on the ongoing salary review
 - a. Review is in response to Massachusetts equal pay legislation, to ensure that comparable work receives fair and equal pay. Seniority, merit, and various other factors can be considered, but the law does not allow for market analysis.
 - b. AC was last assessed in 2018, and resolved any discrepancies at that time. Currently, the college is in a second audit process. The ongoing review provides a three-year safe harbor for the college.
 - c. Generally, there is no transparency to audit findings due to the confidentiality of the information. Any discrepancies found during the process will be resolved. Kate will keep CPR informed of the process and questions from outside counsel conducting the review. [After the meeting it was determined that faculty salaries will not be part of the review. The minutes have been edited to that decision.]
3. Report on the January Trustees Meeting (Tom)
 - a. The preliminary FY23 Operating Budget, Comprehensive Fee, and Capital Budget estimates were presented at the meeting. The FY21 endowment return of 52.2%, with smoothing curve, will add resources to the budget over the next three years. The return will allow for some strategic investments; however, the budget must also absorb inflation in salary and non-salary spending.
 - b. Strategic investments were announced in the Fall:
 - i. Financial aid enhancement;
 - ii. Targeted wage increases for front line staff;
 - iii. Conversion of casual employees to benefitted positions;
 - iv. Investment in faculty research and lab technicians; and
 - v. An additional 1% salary pool.
 - c. The college is considering various options to manage the current challenges while maintaining the smoothing formula and staying within the target range for endowment spending.

- d. Discussion of preliminary comprehensive fee increase. AC is committed to meet the financial need of its students and their families.
- e. Capital update. This is a ten-year planning process, and includes the student center/dining commons and climate action plan projects. Funded through gifts and debt issuance. The college is planning and setting aside quasi-endowments for operating costs and future debt principal repayment. This includes \$100m endowment carve out and a \$95m reserve redesignation. Project costs have escalated due to rising costs of building materials and construction.
- f. There will be time to ask Tom follow up questions at the start of the meeting next week.

Adjourned 9:30 am.

Respectfully submitted,
S Hegarty