

The twenty-sixth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2021–2022 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 2:30 p.m. on Monday, May 16, 2022. Present via Zoom, in addition to the president, were Professors Clotfelter, Martini, Schroeder Rodríguez, Umphrey, and Vaughan; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder. Professor Manion was absent.

Under “Questions from Committee Members,” Professor Umphrey commented that, when the committee had previously considered the letter sent by colleagues about their reservations about Workday Student, the members had not taken up the signatories’ request that the matter be discussed at the last faculty meeting this year. Commenting that this has been raised as a governance issue, she suggested that the committee consider putting a discussion of Workday Student on the agenda for the May 26 faculty meeting. Other members expressed a preference for waiting to have a faculty conversation about Workday Student until after a good number of departments have attended training sessions. It was also felt that faculty would be in a better position to assess the system after they had used the system for at least one advising round. A member reiterated the view that it would be helpful to advisors if students receive training in Workday Student over the summer, so that they are prepared for advising discussions. Provost Epstein said that staff members in the registrar’s office and a Workday project staff member conducted user testing in January with Amherst students and found that students were able to complete advising and registration using Workday Student, with only training materials to guide them. It is felt that students will not have a problem learning to use the system. There are plans in place, however, to include Workday training for students as part of pre-orientation and orientation. The members noted that, if the signatories wish to have a discussion at the faculty meeting, they can certainly raise the issue, but it was agreed not to include this topic as an item on the agenda.

The committee next reviewed a motion, based on the members’ previous discussions, to bring forward a proposal that evaluations from some research students (see the criteria in the motion below) supervised by tenure-track faculty be solicited in the form of confidential “annual” letters, as well as retrospective letters at the time of the reappointment and tenure review. The details are included in the motion below. A member asked how research students’ hours would be tracked to ensure that a tenure-track faculty member has supervised a research student for at least 240 hours over the course of an academic year (which, it was agreed, can encompass the fall and spring semester, January, and summer), the threshold for soliciting evaluations. Professor Clotfelter noted that, since research students are paid (or take an honors course with a tenure-track faculty member, in which case they would be asked to write retrospective letters as honors students, at present), their hours would be available in Workday. An academic department coordinator would have access to this information. The members then voted five in favor and zero opposed on the content of the motion below and five in favor and zero opposed to forward the motion to the faculty.

Motion

That the *Faculty Handbook* ([III., D., 5., 3.](#)) and [III., E., 4.](#)), be revised as shown below in red text and black strike-outs. If approved, the new process for soliciting confidential annual letters and retrospective letters from research students would be put in place in the summer of 2022 and would become part of tenure and reappointment cases beginning in the 2023–2024 academic year.

[Faculty Handbook III., D., 5., 3.\)](#)

3) Evidence of Teaching Effectiveness. For the reappointment review, departments are required to have solicited end-of-semester evaluations of teaching from all students from every course, including every special topics course, taught by a tenure-track faculty member, with the exception of honors students, since the time of appointment through the semester before the faculty member stands for reappointment. These end-of-semester evaluations are signed and normally solicited in essay format in all classes in the final week of each semester on a common evaluation form approved by the

faculty. After the submission of grades, they are made available to the instructor without the names of the respondents. In addition, on an annual basis, departments are required to solicit from all honors students advised by a tenure-track faculty member that year, whether the students complete their honors work or not, confidential "annual" letters, after students receive a final grade (after one semester, if students do not complete honors work, or after two semesters, if they do). **In addition, on an annual basis, departments are required to solicit from all research students who were supervised by a tenure-track professor for 240 hours (the equivalent of six weeks of full-time work) or more that year confidential "annual" letters. Departments solicit annual letters from research students at the end of the summer of the academic year in which the research experience took place and before the start of the next academic year.** Annual letters from honors and research students taught through the year before the reappointment review become part of the candidate's dossier at the time of reappointment. In addition, at the time of reappointment review, departments are also required to have solicited, after students have received final grades, confidential "retrospective" letters of evaluation from all students from every course, including every honors and special topics course, taught by a tenure-track faculty member from the time of appointment through the semester immediately preceding the semester in which the reappointment review takes place. **In addition, at the time of reappointment review, departments are required to have solicited retrospective letters of evaluation from all research students who were supervised by a tenure-track professor for 240 hours (the equivalent of six weeks of full-time work) from the time of appointment through the semester immediately preceding the semester in which the reappointment review takes place.** Annual letters from honors and research students and retrospective letters are summarized in the departmental recommendation, a redacted version of which is shared with the candidate. Candidates are not provided with the letters themselves. Students asked to write letters are informed that their responses will be treated as confidential by the college. Reviews and ratings from informal and commercial websites, or any other anonymous materials, are inadmissible as evidence.

[Faculty Handbook III., E., 4., \(5\)](#)

(5) For the tenure review, departments are required to have solicited end-of-semester evaluations of teaching from all students from every course, including every special topics course, taught by a tenure-track faculty member, with the exception of honors students, after the last semester considered as part of the reappointment review through the semester before the faculty member stands for tenure. These end-of-semester evaluations are to be signed and are normally solicited in essay format in all classes in the final week of each semester on a common evaluation form approved by the faculty. After the submission of grades, they are made available to the instructor without the names of the respondents. In addition, on an annual basis, departments are required to solicit from all honors students advised by a tenure-track faculty member that year, whether the students complete their honors work or not, confidential "annual" letters, after students receive a final grade (after one semester, if students do not complete honors work, or after two semesters, if they do). **In addition, on an annual basis, departments are required to solicit from all research students who were supervised by a tenure-track professor for 240 hours (the equivalent of six weeks of full-time work) or more that year confidential "annual" letters. Departments solicit annual letters from research students at the end of the summer of the academic year in which the research experience took place and before the start of the next academic year.** Annual letters from honors and research students that were reviewed at the time of reappointment and those received after the time of reappointment become part of the candidate's tenure dossier. In addition, at the time of tenure review, departments are also required to have solicited, after students have received final grades, confidential "retrospective" letters of evaluation from all students from every course, including every honors and special topics course, taught by a

tenure-track faculty member after the last semester considered as part of the reappointment review through the semester immediately preceding the semester in which the tenure review takes place. In addition, at the time of tenure review, departments are required to have solicited retrospective letters of evaluation from all research students who were supervised by a tenure-track professor for 240 hours (the equivalent of six weeks of full-time work) after the last semester considered as part of the reappointment review through the semester immediately preceding the semester in which the tenure review takes place. The department letters soliciting confidential annual and retrospective letters from students are included with their responses. Annual letters from honors and research students and retrospective letters are summarized in the departmental recommendation, a redacted version of which is shared with the candidate. Candidates are not provided with the letters themselves. Students asked to write letters are informed that their response will be treated as confidential by the college. Reviews and ratings from informal and commercial websites, or any other anonymous materials, are inadmissible as evidence. All written evidence used to evaluate teaching effectiveness assembled at the time of reappointment is also considered at the time of tenure review.

Conversation turned to a draft faculty meeting agenda for the final faculty meeting of the year on May 26. As noted on the agenda, reports from faculty committees were expected to be posted online in a written form, due to time constraints. The committee commented on the efforts of all faculty committees over the course of the year and expressed appreciation. While acknowledging the need to have most committee reports in a written format only, due to time constraints, the members suggested that the provost ask the chairs of the Committee on Educational Policy and Committee on Priorities and Resources also to offer very brief oral reports at the faculty meeting about the highlights of the work of these major committees. Provost Epstein said that she would be happy to do so, and the chairs later agreed to present brief reports. The members next considered nominations for the Jeffrey B. Ferguson Memorial Teaching Prize and selected a recipient for this year, noting how many colleagues had received impressive letters of nomination from current students, fellow faculty, and alumni. The recipient of the award will be announced at the final faculty meeting on May 26.

The meeting ended at 3:45 p.m., to allow for time to move to Johnson Chapel for a panel discussion in honor of the president. The members voted five in favor and zero opposed to forward the May 26 faculty meeting agenda to the faculty. Professor Manion, being absent, did not vote.

The meeting adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein
Provost and Dean of the Faculty