

Minutes of the Committee of Six of Monday, April 7, 2014

Amended April 11, 2014

The twentieth 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, April 7, 2014. Present were Professors Corrales, Kingston, Harms, Lyle McGeoch, Miller, and Schneider, Dean Call, and Assistant Dean Tobin, Recorder. Provost Uvin was absent.

The meeting began with President Martin commenting on the sudden death of Marian Matheson, the College's Director of Institutional Research and Planning, on April 4, 2014. The President, the Dean, and the members expressed deep sorrow over the loss of Ms. Matheson. President Martin noted that a memorial service would be held on April 12, at 11:00 a.m., in Johnson Chapel. The Committee agreed that thought should be given to establishing a memorial on campus, perhaps in the form of a bench or tree with a plaque in honor of Ms. Matheson. President Martin agreed that such a memorial should be created and said that she would move forward with making the necessary arrangements, consulting with Ms. Matheson's family.

President Martin reported on the meetings of the Board of Trustees, which had been held the previous weekend. The President said that the Board had supported the administration's proposed measures to address the budget shortfall; had met with consultant Richard Keeling, who had offered a superb report on the area of student affairs at the College; and had greatly enjoyed its meetings and dinners with members of faculty committees. President Martin noted that Dr. Keeling had conveyed to the trustees the extraordinary "ethic of care" that the Amherst Faculty practice with their students, a level of devotion that the consultant had commented is over and above that of the faculty at any other school, in the consultant's view. The trustees had agreed that this portrayal of the Amherst Faculty is consistent with their own experience and understanding. The Committee noted that the Faculty would be pleased to learn of these views of the trustees and the consultant.

Continuing, President Martin noted that Dr. Keeling, while commenting on the need to make significant changes in the ways in which the Office of Student Affairs is structured, and in the College's approach to student life, more generally, reassured the Board that making the necessary changes would not require a significant financial investment above what is budgeted now. President Martin said that some faculty members with whom the trustees had met had raised issues surrounding the burden of administrative duties and the need to explore the place of athletics. President Martin thanked the Committee of Six for meeting with the Board.

Under "Announcements from the Dean," Dean Call informed the Committee that the members of the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) had read the Committee of Six minutes on the proposal that had been brought forward regarding the electronic archiving of theses. The CEP will be discussing the Committee's feedback about the proposal, Dean Call said. The Dean next asked the members for nominations of colleagues who might serve on a Memorial Minute Committee for Gerald Brophy, Samuel A. Hitchcock Professor of Mineralogy and Geology, Emeritus, who passed away on April 2. Professor Harms said that she would continue to think about the constitution of the committee and would report back to the Committee, possibly offering additional suggestions of who might serve. Continuing his remarks, the Dean shared with the Committee the make-up of the search committee for the Dean of Students and thanked the members for their nominations. The members of the search committee are Amani Ahmed '15; Julian Boykins '15; Suzanne Coffey (co-chair), Chief Student Affairs Officer; Nicola Courtright (co-chair), Professor of the History of Art and chair of European Studies; Kat

Dominguez '16; Maria Heim, Associate Professor of Religion; and Paul Rockwell, Professor of French. President Martin noted that Professor Courtright has encouraged her to communicate with the Faculty background and plans for the area of Student Affairs. The President, noting her intention to distribute Dr. Keeling's report to the Committee of Six and the Faculty as a whole, asked the members if sharing that document would sufficiently inform the Faculty.

Professor Harms agreed that the Faculty would welcome having more information about plans to restructure the Office of Student Affairs, including the ways in which the Dean of Students position will be redefined. The President said that she would be happy to discuss with the Faculty the plans for changing the structure, which echo the recommendations outlined in Dr. Keeling's report and those of other consultants engaged by the College, as well as the contours of the redefined Dean of Students position. Dr. Keeling has suggested a tripartite structure within the office, which would be overseen by the Chief Student Affairs Officer. The health and wellness area would include the Health Center and the Counseling Center; the Dean of Students area would encompass academic and personal support for students under a class-dean structure that would retain close ties to the Faculty, and student activities; and a residential life area with greatly enhanced programming for students. Professor Harms asked if emphasis will be placed on creating an Office of Student Affairs that will focus on the full student experience and on building a healthy community at the College, helping all students to grow and thrive at Amherst—both those who are facing challenges and those who are not. President Martin responded that this is indeed the aspiration for the office. In regard to the Dean of Students position, President Martin commented that the individual chosen will be a leader who will be expected to think broadly and creatively in the role, and who will contribute to the implementation of the new vision for the Office of Student Affairs.

Continuing with the conversation, Professor Corrales asked if candidates for the Dean of Students position will be informed that the College may be facing a lawsuit by a former student, and whether that information might deter good candidates from applying. President Martin said that the College has been transparent with candidates about this situation, which is not dissimilar to that of other colleges and universities at present. Members of the Committee asked how candidates for the Dean of Students might feel about the envisioned structure, including reporting to the Chief Student Affairs Officer. President Martin said that candidates in this field would be accustomed to a structure with the divisions that she had described. It is imagined that candidates who seek the revised Dean of Students position will be professionals who are at an earlier career stage than those who might be seeking the more senior position of Chief of Student Affairs. The candidate may aspire, however, to head a Student Affairs office in the future. The redefined Dean of Students position, with narrower responsibilities, is expected to draw a high quality applicant pool that displays breadth and depth. Professor Schneider suggested that the Faculty would welcome having the President provide a synopsis of the Keeling Report, as well as sharing the report itself. President Martin said that she will share the redacted report and would be happy to offer a synopsis as well. Professor Harms reiterated that the faculty would welcome hearing from the President on the redefinition of the position of Dean of Students and on the restructuring that will constitute the Office of Student Affairs going forward.

Under "Questions from Committee Members," Professor Harms said that she has been reviewing the [report of the Special Committee on the Place of Athletics at Amherst \(2002\)](#), otherwise known as the [Diver Report](#). She asked the Dean if the coaches are now satisfied with the contract system that is in place, as the report suggests that the coaches at the time that the report had been done, had expressed the desire for a structure that resembled the one used for faculty tenure. Dean Call said the Diver Report was written before the current cohort of coaches

had been hired, at a time when three coaches had faculty status. This status has been phased out over time, and only one coach currently is a member of the Faculty. The Dean noted that, over the past eight or nine years, efforts have been made to clarify, regularize, and formalize the contract structure for coaches. The College has moved away from past practices, including the status of “associate coach,” which had been problematic. The current process of appointment and review offers the professionals in Amherst’s coaching ranks more clarity and consistency, Dean Call explained. He offered praise for the coaches who have been appointed under this structure. Dean Call stressed that the Diver Report’s description of some coaches’ feelings of isolation, and its accounts of the separation that existed between athletics and the academic side of the College, do not reflect the current climate at the College, in his view. It is the Dean’s impression that coaches now have more connections with members of the Faculty, for example, through the faculty liaison program, and no longer seem to be focused on seeking faculty status. Dean Call said that he has seen a similar change of perspective among the librarians at the College, as these colleagues also work with the Faculty in new and exciting ways that promote cooperation and collaboration.

Continuing with questions that had been prompted by the Diver Report, Professor Harms asked if efforts are being made to quantify the effects of conflicts between athletic events and classes and laboratories. She noted that the report states that “Each year the Athletic Director submits and the Dean of the Faculty approves an athletic playing schedule that shows how many class conflicts can be expected. (The term ‘class conflict’ signifies merely that an athletic contest or necessary travel to an athletic contest has been scheduled for a time when one or more classes are regularly scheduled...)” Professor Harms asked the Dean if such a schedule is still submitted. Dean Call said that he had at one time received a schedule such as the one described, but has not been provided with one in a number of years. He said that he would be happy to take steps to reinstate this practice. The members agreed that doing so would be helpful. Dean Call expressed the view that conflicts occur most often during post-season play. He also wondered whether newer coaches, in particular, realize the importance of minimizing the number of conflicts and suggested that this message should be reemphasized. Several members expressed frustration over the number of students who miss classes and labs on Friday because of athletic obligations. Professor Harms noted that it has been the practice of the Geology department to schedule weekend field trips on Sundays so as to avoid conflicts with athletic events, but that increasingly there are conflicts on Sundays as well. This is a hardship for both students and professors alike. Professor Kingston noted that, in his experience, some student-athletes may also refuse to consider classes that meet during times that conflict with their athletic obligations, which unfortunately limits their access to the curriculum.

Professor Kingston next asked the Dean how the success of coaches is evaluated and whether having a winning record is stressed. Dean Call said that the coaches have a formal evaluation process that is similar to that of the Faculty. The department submits dossiers to the Dean that include student evaluations, letters from colleagues and peers in the profession, from faculty (at times), and a departmental recommendation. Dean Call said that he knows of no instance in which a coach received a negative evaluation because he or she did not have a winning record. At the same time, the Dean noted that, coaches naturally want to have strong, competitive programs and want their student-athletes to succeed.

At the conclusion of the discussion about these issues surrounding the place of athletics, the members asked President Martin to bring their concerns to the attention of the New England Small College Athletics Conference (NESCAC) and to take the lead in advocating for change, which all agreed will be a long-term process. President Martin said that she would be happy to

work with the presidents of the NESCAC schools, but feels that the issues that Amherst would like to bring forward should be identified through a process of study conducted by an ad hoc committee modeled after the Diver Committee. The members agreed, while noting that proposing to lower the number of “athletic admits” would be one issue that they would like to see raised. President Martin said that, while she would pursue change on this front, push-back from other schools should be expected. The Committee urged the President to begin these and other conversations about athletics soon. The Committee agreed to have further conversation about the Diver Report at one of its future meetings.

Continuing with “Questions from Committee Members,” Professor Schneider asked the Dean about the schedule for the upcoming election for the Committee of Six. Dean Call said that the election would be held after the Dean of New Students is selected, as this appointment would have an impact on the make-up of the ballot for the election.

Discussion turned to the role of the Provost at the College, including the position’s place within the Committee structure. President Martin commented that, over the course of the past year, Provost Uvin’s portfolio of responsibilities has been clarified, but his areas of focus may still not be apparent to the community. Now that Provost Uvin’s duties are identified, and the experiment of having him serve on a number of committees has been ongoing for some time, President Martin expressed the view that motions should be brought to the Faculty to revise the membership of the committees on which the Provost will serve. The members agreed. His key responsibilities remain what was anticipated when he was appointed—planning, diversity and community, and initiatives that require coordination among offices for faculty, staff, and students. In addition, the Provost has responsibility for initiatives that involve partnerships with communities outside the College. For that reason, the Center for Community Engagement (CCE) reports to the Provost, and he will be given responsibility for overseeing relations with the Emily Dickinson Museum and the Folger Shakespeare Library. Continuing, President Martin encouraged the Committee to bring motions forward to add the Provost as an ex officio member of the Committee of Six, with the stipulation that the Provost would neither attend discussions of reappointment, tenure, and promotion cases or related procedures, or play a role in the decisions made about these matters; the Committee on Priorities and Resources (CPR); and, perhaps, the College Council. Since the portfolio of responsibilities that has emerged is not centered on academic units, which will remain within the oversight of the Dean of the Faculty, the President and the Provost would not propose that the Provost become a member of the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP). The Committee agreed that adding the Provost to the suggested committees seems appropriate, while noting that a vote of the Faculty would be necessary to do so.

Professor Harms noted that one argument for creating the Provost position had been to address the issue of an overburdened Dean of the Faculty’s office. President Martin responded that conversations with both Dean Call and incoming Dean of the Faculty Catherine Epstein about the possibility of shifting the reporting line of some academic units have not resulted in a viable plan, and the decision has been made that all such units will continue to report to the Dean of the Faculty. Professor Epstein has said that she will focus on evaluating and addressing the needs and organization within the Dean’s office, President Martin noted. Professor Harms asked if the Provost’s office might play a role in regulatory and compliance issues. The Dean said that his office has worked effectively with the Office of Foundation and Corporate Relations and the Chief Policy Officer, as well as some committees that have compliance roles, on such matters. He said that he anticipates that such a model will continue. In addition, the Associate Deans of the Faculty also work with individual faculty members in the area of sponsored research.

Professor Harms asked if Five-College collaboration might be an area that could shift to the Provost. Dean Call argued that the academic component of the collaboration is the most valuable and, in his view, is what works best—he feels strongly that Five-College efforts in the academic realm should remain within the Dean’s office. While Five-College collaboration is time-intensive, it has become an essential element in meeting the needs of the “trailing partners” of candidates for Amherst positions, Dean Call noted. A recent example of a success story is the arrangement that the Dean negotiated that resulted in bringing one-and-a-half positions in Astronomy to the College, by creating a joint appointment with the University of Massachusetts for the spouse of a candidate for an Amherst position. The negotiations resulted in a full-time appointment at Amherst for one member of the couple and a half-time appointment at Amherst and a half-time research appointment at UMass for the other. Both of these hires would not have been possible without Five-College cooperation.

Returning to the topic of adding the Provost to faculty committees, Professor Miller agreed that motions should be brought before the Faculty soon, since the Provost’s participation on committees was established on a trial basis only for this year. The Committee agreed that having a better sense of the Provost’s responsibilities would help clarify which committees would be appropriate. It was agreed that, at the April 15 Faculty Meeting, it would be informative for the President to make a presentation to the Faculty about the Provost’s portfolio of responsibilities, as well as the envisioned structure for the Office of Student Affairs. President Martin said that she would be happy to do so.

Conversation returned to the revision of the charge and membership of the Orientation Committee. After reviewing a draft based on the members’ last discussion of this matter, and a conversation about some details within it, the Committee voted six in favor and zero opposed on the substance of the following motion:

The Committee of Six proposes that the following language replace the current language for the Orientation Committee in the [Faculty Handbook at IV., S., 1., q.](#), effective immediately:

q. *The Orientation Committee.* The Orientation Committee consists of four members of the Office of Student Affairs, including the Dean of New Students, ex officio, who serves as the committee’s chair; two other members of the Faculty; the Provost (or his or her representative), who serves ex officio; and four students (two students selected by the student government and two selected by the Office of Student Affairs). The faculty members of the committee are appointed by the Committee of Six. The faculty and student members of the committee normally serve two-year terms.

The Orientation Committee acts in an advisory capacity to the Office of Student Affairs, which is charged with planning and administering orientation for new students and ongoing orientation programs. The committee approaches its work through broad consultation, drawing on the expertise of members of the Amherst College community. The role of the committee is to help develop and review the vision, policies, and programming of orientation, giving special attention to academic, social, and regulatory expectations for this experience.

As the proposed language reflects, the members decided that having a mixed model of selecting student members of the committee, with the Association of Amherst Students (AAS) selecting two students and the Office of Student Affairs selecting two, would be the best way of ensuring flexibility and diversity when creating student representation. The Office of Student Affairs, it was agreed, would be aware of students who would be effective in their role on the committee, given current needs, and who could be chosen to complement the experience and skills of the student members selected by the AAS. Giving the Office of Student Affairs the discretion to select two students will help to ensure that a range of student constituencies and interests will be represented and will provide a means of ensuring balanced representation, in the Committee's view. There was also a brief conversation to articulate the reasoning behind adding the Provost or his representative to the committee. The members reiterated the view that the Provost's role in the area of diversity and in other relevant areas of campus life would enable him to inform the work of the committee in valuable and important ways. The members agreed that, in advance of bringing this motion to the Faculty, they would share the proposed charge with the current Orientation Committee.

The members next reviewed a draft Faculty Meeting agenda for April 15. The Committee discussed proposed modifications to the language of the *Faculty Handbook* describing procedures surrounding the annual conversation of the department chair with untenured faculty. Professor Harms noted the imbalance between attention given to evidence of progress in teaching versus progress on other fronts. She was concerned, however, that the annual conversation should remain just that, and not become a mini-reappointment review. The Committee agreed, favoring language that makes clear the need to bring evidence of progress in teaching, research or creative work, and contributions to the life of the College to the tenured members of the department prior to the annual conversation without the prescribing the evidence. The Committee next discussed the schedule for Faculty Meetings for the remainder of the academic year, noting that a number of issues should be brought before the Faculty before the end of the year, if possible. The issues include the proposal that the program in Environmental Studies become a new department at the College, the electronic archiving of theses, a proposal to add the Provost to some committees, and the new charge to the Orientation Committee. The Committee noted that, at the time that Faculty votes on adding the Provost to committees, and when the President discusses the position of Provost at the Faculty Meeting, the Provost should not be present for the conversation. The members then voted six in favor and zero opposed to forward the agenda to the Faculty. The remainder of the meeting was devoted to personnel matters.

The meeting adjourned at 6:15 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory S. Call
Dean of the Faculty