

The thirty-fourth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2020–2021 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, April 12, 2021. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors del Moral, Kingston, Leise, Manion, Trapani, and Umphrey; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

Under “Questions from Committee Members,” the members discussed briefly the concerns that Professor George had raised during the April 6 faculty meeting surrounding attribution in the committee’s minutes. It was agreed to continue to strive for clarity and concision in the minutes and to make use of individual attribution, as needed.

Attention turned to a review of the most recent iteration of a draft charge for the Ad Hoc Committee on the Enhancement of the Procedures and Practices Used for the Assessment of Teaching Effectiveness. This group will be asked to conduct a comprehensive review and assessment of the ways in which Amherst supports the professional development of faculty as teachers, especially with regard to the support, mentoring, and evaluation of tenure-track faculty members. The ad hoc committee will consider the evaluation of classroom teaching, as well as other forms of teaching such as academic advising, thesis advising, and the creation of research experiences for students. The committee agreed that the most recent changes to the charge enhanced the document and decided to nominate faculty to serve on the ad hoc committee at the same time that the Committee of Six considers other committee nominations. This annual task will take place in early May. The ad hoc committee is expected to begin its work in fall 2021 and to make recommendations in the spring 2022 semester. The charge for the ad hoc committee will be shared via a link in the minutes of the Committee of Six’s meeting, after the committee reviews the document one more time—once the most recent revisions have been incorporated.

In the time remaining, discussion returned to the topic of developing a proposal to bring greater clarity to the criteria for tenure that appear in the *Faculty Handbook*. Prior to the meeting, the committee was provided with information about the tenure criteria used by some peer institutions. The members were attracted to a system that combines the articulation of a broad set of college-wide criteria for tenure, which appear in the faculty handbook and complementary departmental expectations for tenure. Based on a review of several examples of one school’s departmental standards, the members inferred that templates and/or rubrics must have been shared with departments to guide the process of laying these expectations out—so as to create some general consistency with college-wide standards and among departments, while also allowing for a level of specificity. The members agreed that it would be helpful to propose some changes to the *Faculty Handbook* language about tenure criteria, with the goal of achieving greater alignment with practice. In addition, the committee felt that it would be informative and useful for each department to undertake the exercise of clarifying its standards in regard to scholarship and creative work, teaching, and service. All departments might be asked, for example, to describe how different kinds of publication venues are viewed in their fields and what constitutes engagement in the profession. In interdisciplinary departments, it would be important to articulate expectations for the different disciplines that are represented by the faculty/tenure candidates in the department.

The committee noted that the approach that was just described could create greater transparency and consistency in departments and thus in tenure deliberations, and that candidates, department chairs, outside reviewers, and the Committee of Six could all benefit from this information. If this system is adopted, however, it would be important that departments not be too specific and explicit at the department level and take care not to create standards that are inconsistent with college-wide criteria. In other words, differential bars for tenure cannot be set, and there would need to be Committee of Six oversight in this regard. The members decided that the provost’s office should gather more information about the system from the institution that uses it to inform the committee’s deliberations. In the meantime, and as a first step in clarifying the tenure criteria process, it was agreed

that the committee should begin thinking about a proposal for new *Faculty Handbook* language. The members decided to have a discussion to specify the committee's expectations surrounding overall quality and accomplishment in regard to scholarship and creative work, effectiveness in teaching, and contributions made through service to the department, the college, and the profession. Professor Umphrey agreed that, following that conversation, she would draft some new *Faculty Handbook* language for the committee's consideration. The remainder of the meeting was devoted to personnel matters.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein
Provost and Dean of the Faculty