

The sixteenth 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, January 31, 2022. Present via Zoom, in addition to the president, were Professors Clotfelter, Manion, Martini, Schroeder Rodríguez, Umphrey, and Vaughan; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The meeting began with President Martin posing the following questions and asking the members to take a few minutes to record their responses: What are you doing when you are doing what you consider to be your best work? What is happening at the moments when you think Amherst is at its best? What excites and/or inspires you in those moments? Once the committee had completed this exercise, President Martin explained that she is requesting that everyone who leads meetings at the college in the coming weeks ask these same questions of those who attend. Plans call for responses to be provided, perhaps via a Google drive or another mechanism, without individuals' names, and for the submissions to be compiled and made available to the community. The purpose of undertaking this simple exercise, the president said, is to encourage students, faculty, and staff to take time to reflect on positive experiences as a way of getting at what members of the community value. This, she believes, will also help in the upcoming transition. The president thanked the members for participating in this effort.

Conversation turned briefly to the academic calendar for 2022–2023. Provost Epstein informed the members that, as they may have observed, she had not forwarded the Committee of Six's proposed calendar to the faculty for an electronic vote, following the committee's meeting of December 16, the last of the fall semester, when the calendar had been discussed. The provost reminded the members that the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) had expressed concerns about the Committee of Six's modifications to the CEP's proposed calendar, specifically the idea of having Monday classes running on the Wednesday start date (August 31) and not holding classes on Labor Day. The CEP continues to feel that this schedule would be disruptive, the provost explained. If it were to be adopted, some classes (in particular, Monday seminars and labs) that would meet on the first Wednesday (August 31) would not meet again until September 12, the last day of the add-drop period. The members of the CEP feel that the Committee of Six should have referred the calendar back to the CEP, so that the Committee of Six's proposed modifications could be considered. The CEP has now discussed this matter again and continues to feel that [its calendar proposal](#) should be brought to the faculty for a vote.

The provost noted that, in response to the Committee of Six's concern about staff members working on Labor Day, Kate Harrington, chief human resources officer, convened a group of staff members from across the college to discuss this issue. Provost Epstein noted that the number of staff members who work on Labor Day is not insignificant, and that many staff colleagues would need to work on Labor Day—supporting students and preparing for the start of classes—whether classes are held on the holiday or not. Thus far, feedback from staff members suggests that individuals recognize that there are reasons that they need to work on Labor Day, including the need for the semester to end early enough for students to get home for the holidays, and are not opposed to doing so. Frustration seems to arise, however, when staff are not recognized for working on Labor Day or other holidays. Currently, non-exempt staff (who are paid hourly) are paid double-time on holidays, but it is often not otherwise acknowledged that they are working on holidays. Provost Epstein said that the college is assessing ways to acknowledge exempt staff (who are salaried) and are required to work on holidays, as well as employees who take on additional work assignments, as there are financial implications associated with various approaches to doing so. K. Harrington will make a recommendation about the issue, Provost Epstein expects; in the meantime, she suggested that classes be held on Labor Day and that the CEP's calendar proposal be forwarded to the faculty. It was agreed that a faculty meeting should be held on February 15, and that the calendar proposal should be on the agenda.

The members next considered some committee nominations, including those for a memorial minute committee for Jim Maraniss, Professor of Spanish, Emeritus, who died on January 9, 2022. The members then approved the following faculty meeting dates for spring: February 15, March 1, April 5, April 19,

May 3, May 17, and May 26 (9:00 A.M.). Provost Epstein noted that degrees will be voted electronically, due to the semester ending later than is typical because of changes to the academic calendar necessitated by the pandemic.

Under “Questions from Committee Members,” Professor Manion said that it has been brought to her attention by several students that there were incidents of assault, harassment, and stalking on campus, and that they felt Amherst was unsafe and the institution was not responsive. They further alerted her to posts on Instagram of anonymized descriptions of incidents of sexual harassment and assault that they say have been committed at the college by Amherst students against other Amherst students. These postings are heartbreaking, she commented. Professor Manion asked the president if she could provide more information about what is taking place and how the college will respond, including what faculty can do to support students. President Martin said that she has also read these devastating narratives of dating violence, stalking, rape, and other forms of abuse. Laurie Frankl, Title IX coordinator, has reached out on Instagram, but the students using the page have not, to her knowledge, responded to her suggestion of including a posting from the college about resources and support that is available. The president informed the members that she would soon be announcing that there will be a comprehensive review of the issue of sexual misconduct and assault on campus. ([This communication was sent on February 3.](#)) President Martin explained that the seriousness of the accounts on social media and concerns that have been conveyed in other venues necessitate action. She noted in this context that she has been informed that the upcoming report of the [Campus Safety Advisory Committee](#) will include serious concerns about sexual misconduct on campus. The president commented that, in 2012, she had commissioned a report on sexual misconduct at Amherst, in response to numerous student accounts that resembled those that have been posted on social media recently. At that time, students described major problems in the college’s response to their reports. Since then, significant changes in staffing, policies, procedures, and practices have been implemented, and additional resources have been provided. Still, sexual misconduct continues to occur and often goes unreported, the president noted. She stressed the importance of bolstering efforts in the realms of prevention, education, self-assessment, and of holding individuals and the community accountable for upholding a culture of respect and responsibility at Amherst.

Continuing, President Martin said that the college has once again engaged Gina Maisto Smith and Leslie Gomez, leaders of a national practice dedicated to improving institutional responses to sexual misconduct, who led the 2012 review. At that time, the president said, she had also formed a committee of faculty, staff, students, and trustees, which was chaired by Margaret Hunt, a professor of history and women’s, sexuality, and gender studies, who has since left the college. In 2013, that committee submitted a report titled [Toward a Culture of Respect: The Problem of Sexual Misconduct at Amherst College](#). All of the recommendations from that report were implemented. President Martin informed the members that, as part of the upcoming review, [G. Smith and L. Gomez](#) will hold listening sessions with students and review policies and practices relating to sexual misconduct and Title IX at the college (more details are included in the president’s announcement). The members thanked President Martin for her vigorous response to this critical issue. They also expressed the view that faculty members would welcome having additional training on the requirements surrounding reporting, which is mandatory, and how to approach this sensitive issue when they learn of incidents of sexual misconduct at the college. Continuing to gain greater clarity about their role and responsibilities, and the processes and support that are in place, would be most helpful to colleagues, the committee agreed.

At 3:00 P.M., consultant Susan Pierce joined the meeting. As a follow-up to her discussion with the committee on December 15, 2021, she has developed a preliminary proposal for a possible committee structure for the members’ consideration, as requested. The goal of this effort, it had been agreed, should be to streamline the committee structure, recognizing that faculty time should be allocated to matters where the faculty has primary responsibility, and where the faculty’s contributions are most

consequential. Any new structure should lead to more impactful, satisfying, and efficient uses of faculty time—taking into account the best practices of shared governance, all concurred. S. Pierce noted that information gleaned from the faculty survey about service, which was administered in October of 2021, as well as from her many conversations with faculty, staff, and the Committee of Six, guided her efforts to develop the proposal she would discuss today. The consultant informed the members that both of these mechanisms for gathering feedback had revealed that a significant number of Amherst faculty—particularly associate and assistant professors—view service as a burden that reduces the time they have available to devote to teaching and scholarship.

Continuing, S. Pierce reviewed the definition of *shared governance* (see the Committee of Six minutes of December 15 for an earlier discussion of this topic). She reiterated that *shared governance* is conventionally defined as the relationship among the board of trustees, the president, and the faculty and noted the following: that the board has ultimate fiduciary responsibility for the governance and welfare of the college and delegates primary operational responsibility for the college to the president; that the president recommends primary, albeit often recommending responsibility, for academic matters to the faculty; and that this responsibility generally includes teaching, scholarship, advising, the curriculum, educational policies, academic standards, faculty hiring, tenure and promotion. The standing committees of the faculty, S. Pierce explained, should focus on these areas. She noted that the president also delegates operational responsibility for administrative matters to the senior administration and commented that members of the faculty should also serve in a formal consulting role to the president and, in some instances, to the board in matters of institutional importance such as changes in the institutional mission; strategic planning; operating and capital budgets related to the academic programs; diversity, equity, and inclusion work; student academic support services; the design of academic buildings; the academic calendar; and student retention and graduation rates. In other areas, S. Pierce said, faculty may be asked to play an informal advisory role. These might include policies relating to admissions and financial aid; the library; educational technology; athletics; appointments of senior academic administrators; course scheduling; and fundraising for academic programs, faculty, and facilities. Finally, she noted, there are areas about which the faculty (as well as the staff and, in many instances, students) should be informed.

In elaborating on *faculty governance*, S. Pierce commented that the faculty has responsibility for conducting the business of the faculty. As an example, she noted, the faculty creates appropriate committees to conduct faculty business and develops charges for these bodies. The elected leadership of the faculty ensures that faculty meetings and faculty committees are focused on significant matters, such as ensuring that the quality of teaching, scholarship, and academic support services are of the highest quality.

S. Pierce then turned to the role of staff in college governance. She noted that Amherst has appointed senior leaders with high levels of expertise in their areas of responsibility. As a result, some faculty have expressed the view that the college no longer needs standing faculty committees in those areas that are not the primary responsibility of the faculty, and where there is significant administrative expertise. These areas include, for example, admission, financial aid, the library, technology, and benefits. The consultant said that some members of the faculty have expressed the view that the major value of service on these committees is that professors are informed about some key aspects of the college; several suggested, however, that senior administrators might—once a year or maybe once a semester—hold informational sessions for faculty and staff who are interested in learning more about these areas. In addition, interested faculty could offer to serve in a more informal advisory role to administrators who would turn to them when they wanted faculty input. S. Pierce told the committee that she had numerous conversations with members of the faculty and the administration to learn their views about the aspects of faculty service that are consequential and which areas are ably handled by members of the administration and staff. The members thanked S. Pierce for her recommendations,

which they supported for the most part, and then discussed her proposal, which she had shared with them prior to the meeting.

A centerpiece of the consultant's recommendations, based on the Committee of Six's own recommendation, is to replace the current Committee of Six with two new committees—a committee on reappointment, tenure, and promotion and a faculty executive committee. Under the proposal, the responsibilities of the Committee on Priorities and Resources (CPR) would be folded into the new executive committee, as would some other work that currently falls under other committees. The new structure would also feature four standing committees (the Committee on Reappointment, Tenure, and Promotion; the Faculty Executive Committee; the Committee on Educational Policy; and the Committee on Adjudication), a small number of committees that would include faculty members in an advisory role, and a number of specialized committees (largely in the sciences), most of which must be in place as a matter of compliance with external regulations. A significant number of committees would be decommissioned, under the plan.

As a general matter, the members expressed enthusiasm for S. Pierce's bold approach to bringing about a transformation of the committee structure, preferring it over a more cautious and incremental proposal that might place emphasis on refinement. It was agreed that ensuring that the committee structure is built around the areas in which the faculty has primary responsibility, and/or on areas in which academic interests warrant that the faculty be assured a role in any related conversations. The committee noted that the proposal relies on establishing a sense of clarity about these areas of responsibility, which is very important. S. Pierce concurred. She noted that, in regard to decision-making authority, the faculty may choose to vote on anything it wishes to, but the faculty may play a deciding role only in areas of primary responsibility, for example, surrounding the curriculum. Faculty input may also be sought on other questions that require institutional decisions, but the faculty may not have the prerogative to vote on these matters.

S. Pierce asked whether the members would like to suggest changes to the proposal. Referencing the proposal to decommission the Committee on Education and Athletics and the Faculty Committee on Admission and Financial Aid, Professor Umphrey commented that, over many years (most recently through the efforts of the Ad Hoc Faculty Committee on Athletics in 2018), the faculty has taken a great interest in matters that fall under the charges of these two committees—which touch upon the academic mission and the faculty's role in setting policies surrounding the standards for admission. She asked how the faculty will be able to weigh in and have an impact on these matters if these standing committees are decommissioned. S. Pierce noted that charging ad hoc committees that include faculty will allow for this, as will strengthening the role of the faculty athletics representative (FAR).

Continuing, Professor Umphrey commented that, with the Supreme Court taking up the issue of affirmative action in the fall, she anticipates that there will be very serious questions to consider on the horizon. Decommissioning these two standing committees could leave a gap in the faculty's ability to do so effectively, she suggested. S. Pierce commented that an ad hoc committee can have the same standing as a permanent committee and often has more visibility. As an example, an ad hoc committee could be charged with exploring the implications of a Supreme Court decision and making recommendations to the faculty executive committee and the president, S. Pierce noted. Some members wondered how—if there were no standing committees involved—there would be oversight over the implementation of any recommendations that might be adopted. S. Pierce said that such oversight would be the responsibility of the faculty executive committee, with support from the provost's office, in regard to keeping track of where recommendations stand. Professor Martini expressed support for this idea, noting that, if the Committee of Six is freed from considering personnel matters, it would have time for this work.

Concluding the discussion about the role of ad hoc committees, S. Pierce acknowledged that she heard from some faculty that ad hoc committees at Amherst do not seem to have as much impact as standing committees. Her own experience has shown her that this is often not the case, however. President

Martin agreed that ad hoc committees can bring a great deal of focus and thought to the examination of an issue, without becoming bogged down with quotidian matters, and that these bodies have had an impact at the college. She noted, for example, that the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Faculty Committee on Athletics helped lead to athletics teams at the college becoming somewhat more diverse and to a limited reduction in the number of recruited athletes. S. Pierce noted that the college could always try the approach of reducing the number of standing committees and charging ad hoc committees, as needed, for several years. Changes in the committee structure could always be made, and the executive committee could monitor the effectiveness of this approach over time.

Continuing the conversation about S. Pierce's proposal, the members discussed how student input could be solicited if committees that now have student representation are decommissioned. It was agreed that it is important to think further about this issue. Provost Epstein suggested that, perhaps, the Office of Student Affairs (OSA) could consider establishing a student advisory committee that could serve as a sounding board for faculty and administrators. She agreed to consult with the OSA about this issue. The members discussed whether the Community Standards Review Board should be decommissioned, as S. Pierce proposed, given that the body addresses cases of those accused of academic dishonesty. It was noted that some faculty prefer not to be part of adjudicating these cases, as they may have a student who has been involved in one in their classes after the resolution of the case. Another possibility is relying on the class deans, the provost noted, though they may also face the same issue of having students who are accused of academic dishonesty in their classes at a later time. Provost Epstein, who commented that all appeals regarding such cases go to the provost, ensuring faculty oversight, said that she would discuss the matter of faculty representation and input in regard to cases of academic dishonesty with colleagues in the OSA. After the members raised similar concerns about the proposal to decommission the Committee on Academic Standing and Special Majors, the provost said that she would discuss this issue with the OSA as well. It was agreed that it is important to have a college-wide policy regarding plagiarism, rather than leaving this topic to departments. Provost Epstein commented that there should be a faculty discussion about this issue more broadly, as it is a longstanding concern.

Moving forward, the members agreed that it is important to remember that faculty responses to the survey on service that was conducted in October—including the expression of dissatisfaction with the current system—have shaped S. Pierce's proposal. The members decided that it would be helpful to share with the faculty more information about the survey responses, while continuing to protect those of individual faculty. The committee agreed that it would be most useful to get the faculty's feedback on the committee-structure proposal, particularly on the idea of splitting the Committee of Six into two separate committees as a first step. The committee decided that a committee-of-the-whole discussion about the proposal, which would include a presentation by S. Pierce, should be on the agenda for the February 15 faculty meeting. The members agreed that after learning the faculty's views on the question of whether the Committee of Six should be split, the committee could then think about specifics in regard to how a tenure, reappointment, and promotion committee should be selected, and its make-up, to inform a future motion that would be brought to the faculty. The members asked S. Pierce to provide information about the features of tenure and promotion committees at peer institutions, and she agreed to do so. She also agreed to prepare a memo to the faculty that, along with an expanded summary of survey results, could accompany the faculty meeting agenda. The members thanked S. Pierce and she left the meeting at 4:00 P.M. The members turned briefly to a personnel matter.

Returning to "Questions from Committee Members," Professor Clotfelter asked a number of questions that were prompted by [an opinion piece, titled "Forging a Partnership between Amherst College and Amherst Schools,"](#) that appeared in the *Daily Hampshire Gazette* on January 27, 2022. He noted that some members of the Amherst college community have signed a petition to request that the college provide greater financial support to the local public schools. Professor Clotfelter asked the president if the college is considering doing so. The president responded that the college provides financial support

to the public schools on an annual basis. She noted that, as a non-profit institution, Amherst faces a number of complexities and limitations when it comes to making gifts to other non-profit organizations. Separate and apart from these issues, which revolve around the college's status as a non-profit entity, Amherst must consider the views that donors and those paying tuition hold about using Amherst College funds for purposes other than to support the college. She noted that the recent donations that the college made to the Jones Library and the Drake were one-time gifts that were made in honor of Amherst's bicentennial. Professor Martini wondered if, by providing some funding to support the construction of a local public school that will be highly energy efficient, Amherst would benefit by offsetting some of the college's carbon footprint—which is keeping with the college's climate action plan. This would bring benefits both to the college and the town, she noted. The president said that this is a possibility and that the college has been considering it.

The committee next discussed whether to constitute an ad hoc committee to evaluate January term. The provost noted that, in addition to [the note sent in early December by a number of faculty signatories requesting that the faculty discuss adopting a January term as part of the academic calendar](#), she has received a number of notes from individual faculty members expressing enthusiasm for January term, as well as commentary from staff members, noting the challenges surrounding January term. Professor Vaughan expressed support for charging an ad hoc committee to evaluate the January term, while Professor Manion wondered whether the CEP or the Committee of Six should undertake this evaluation. Provost Epstein conveyed that the CEP has a full plate this semester, and also suggested that the Committee of Six might also be too busy to undertake this work. Other members agreed and felt that it would be best to charge an ad hoc committee with conducting a comprehensive review and assessment of January term and considering the question of whether January term—in the current or an alternative form—should be adopted as a feature of Amherst's academic calendar going forward.

The committee noted the support of some faculty for adopting a January term, as well as the challenges that staff members have faced during January term and the general lack of infrastructure at the college to support this endeavor. The members agreed that the ad hoc committee should be asked to evaluate the opportunities that January term affords in such realms as teaching and learning; the curriculum and co-curriculum; student life; community engagement; and faculty and staff workload, as well as any disadvantages associated with January term in these and other areas, including whether the college has the infrastructure in place to support students, faculty, and staff during January term, in its current form. The experiences of students, faculty, and staff during the January terms offered in 2021 and 2022 should be used as an important measure of the benefits and limitations of January term, the members noted. It was agreed that questions that the ad hoc committee will address include January term's impact on the availability of courses in the fall and spring semester because of shifts in faculty teaching loads; the format of January term (hybrid, in-person, fully remote); issues surrounding academic credit and other academic policies; and the possible compression of the academic calendar. The committee also decided to request that the ad hoc committee consider the feasibility of offering January term in the current form, in the future, from an administrative and resource perspective. The committee also felt that the ad hoc committee should consider other options for offering an intellectually vibrant experience for students and faculty during some or all of the period between the fall and spring semesters, including offering courses that are shorter in duration and less intensive that would not be credit-bearing.

Continuing the discussion, the members also decided, that in undertaking its work, the ad committee should be tasked with consulting broadly with faculty, students, and staff members across the college—including but not limited to students who took courses, engaged in research on campus, and/or were employed and/or remained on campus to meet other purposes or needs during January term; faculty who taught and/or supervised honors students during January term; and staff in the Office of Student Affairs, the Office of the Registrar, the Office of Institutional Research, the Center for Teaching and

Learning, academic departments, the science center, the Office of Admission; the Finance Office, and Campus Operations, among other areas. The members noted that the ad hoc committee should also be asked to gather the views of the community via surveys and feedback gleaned from interviews with individuals and groups and to seek information from peer institutions that offer January terms.

Conversation turned to the membership of the committee. The members expressed a preference for having the following make-up: three faculty members; one member of the instructional staff who supported faculty during January term, the chief student affairs officer, or her designee(s); the interim chief financial officer; the director of institutional research and registrar services; and two students, each of whom took a January-term course. It was agreed that the ad hoc committee should meet weekly during the spring 2022 semester and should be asked to share its report, which will include its recommendations, with the CEP by May 1, 2022. The CEP would then be asked to forward its views on the ad hoc committee's proposals to the Committee of Six by May 15, 2022. The members agreed to bring a motion regarding January term to the faculty by the conclusion of the 2021–2022 academic year. Provost Epstein noted that, if a proposal to have January term in the next academic year is accepted, the calendar being proposed would allow for this. The committee agreed to consider nominations for faculty to serve on the ad hoc committee at its next meeting, noting that it might be helpful to have a former member of the Ad Hoc Faculty Committee on Academic Structures during COVID-19 serve, as that body proposed having a January term during the 2020–2021 and 2021–2022 academic year.

President Martin left the meeting at 4:45 P.M. The members then turned briefly to committee nominations. With little time remaining, the members discussed a [Statement on Remote Teaching and Learning](#) and [letter about this statement](#) that was forwarded by the CEP. Professor Umphrey commented that she finds the statement to be thoughtful and compelling, particularly its second and third points, which she sees as supporting an equalizing infrastructure of the college. Professor Manion said that she found the statement to be backward-looking and reactionary and said that it places restrictions on academic freedom, commenting that many of the key issues raised by the faculty signatories in [the letter that was sent to the Committee of Six in the fall](#) have been ignored in the CEP's document. She is not in favor of the statement for these reasons. Provost Epstein commented that it would be helpful to have a statement on online learning that would represent the consensus of the faculty on this matter. Ideally, the faculty would vote on such a statement. With its statement, the CEP is essentially acknowledging that the statement and ideas expressed in the faculty signatories' letter are incompatible with CEP's own views about the place of remote teaching at a residential liberal arts college, the provost said. She noted that policies allowing for remote teaching were developed during an emergency under highly unusual circumstances, and that they have not been formalized via regular faculty governance processes. With the hour growing late, the members agreed to return to this issue at the committee's next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty