

The third meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2020–2021 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 4:00 P.M. on Monday, July 27, 2020. 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.

The meeting began with the provost discussing with the committee constituting the Ad Hoc Faculty Committee on the Implementation of the Workday Student Module. The ad hoc committee's charge, as shown below, was shared with the Committee of Six members prior to the meeting. Provost Epstein said that she would welcome suggestions of colleagues who might serve on this ad hoc committee.

### **Charge to the Ad Hoc Faculty Committee on the Implementation of the Workday Student Module**

With the goal of supporting Amherst's transition to Workday Student, a new student information system, the Ad Hoc Faculty Committee on the Implementation of the Workday Student Module will provide guidance on the implementation of the module's systems and tools at the college. In this role, the ad hoc committee will make recommendations to the provost on the ways in which advising, course registration, the creation of the course catalog, and the tracking of major requirements will be designed within the new system, and how these functions will operate. The guiding principle for these recommendations will be to make certain that these efforts, and the new system overall, reflect the academic policies of the college and serve the needs of Amherst's faculty, students, and departments and programs.

The ad hoc committee will be composed of eight members of the faculty, two each from the social sciences and natural sciences and four from the humanities, including two from the arts; two student representatives, drawn from the membership of the Committee on Educational Policy or the Committee on Priorities and Resources; and the following ex officio members: the provost and dean of the faculty, or the provost's designee; the director of institutional research and registrar services; the registrar; the chief information officer (CIO), or the CIO's designee; the chief student affairs officer (CSAO), or the CSAO's designee; a member of the Business Improvement Group (BIG) project management team; the Workday change management lead; and the ad hoc committee's researcher and secretary, a staff member appointed by the provost and dean of the faculty. The Committee of Six will appoint the faculty members of the ad hoc committee. The ad hoc committee will choose its chair from among its faculty members.

The ad hoc committee will begin work in August of 2020 and will continue to meet throughout the year 2020–2021 academic year. At the conclusion of this period, the ad hoc committee will recommend whether it should continue its work or whether another body should do so. Whichever course is taken, members of the faculty will be represented in the ongoing oversight of the Workday system.

Professor Kingston expressed concern about the prospect of having eight faculty members devote their time to service on the ad hoc committee for an extended period of time, and further concern upon being told that in future, some academic policies may be constrained by the need to be compatible with the Workday system, rather than the system being adapted to accommodate policies set by the faculty. He questioned the utility of faculty being a part of discussions that may largely focus on technical elements of the new system, and asked whether a more appropriate model might be to constitute a

faculty advisory committee that would be available to the ad hoc committee for consultation about matters of academic policy. Professor Kingston asked how often the ad hoc committee would be meeting. The provost responded that the intention is for the ad hoc committee to meet on a monthly basis over the next few years. If eight staff members serve on the ad hoc committee, then eight faculty members will be needed to balance its membership, she noted.

Professor Umphrey commented that she shares some of Professor Kingston's concerns, while also recognizing the importance of bringing faculty voices into the development stage of this very important project. She noted that the faculty will make heavy use of the new student module for advising and many other processes. Noting that the charge mentions that the ad hoc committee's recommendations will be forwarded to the provost, she asked Provost Epstein what the rationale is for this decisional pathway. Provost Epstein said that one of her roles will be to make sure that the process moves forward. Professor Umphrey expressed hope that the Workday student module can be modified to fit Amherst's needs as much as is needed, and that the chair of the ad hoc committee has experience enough to identify and assert those needs early in the process. Professor Trapani suggested that it would be helpful to have an academic department coordinator's perspective represented on the ad hoc committee. The provost thanked the members for their suggestions and said that the committee would return to the topic of the ad hoc committee at a future meeting, including suggesting colleagues who could serve.

Continuing her remarks, Provost Epstein informed the members that she had consulted with Norm Jones, chief equity and inclusion officer, about the committee's request that faculty members be asked to provide demographic information about themselves, to inform the college's efforts surrounding equity and inclusion. The plan to which she and N. Jones have agreed is to send a survey to all faculty and staff at the college, including a cover note that explains the importance of learning more about the demographics of the Amherst community. The provost said that she expects that the survey will be distributed this month or in September.

Under "Questions from Committee Members," Professor Leise, on behalf of a colleague, expressed concern about the level of IT support that has been available to faculty who are teaching during the summer. She noted that the colleague had offered high praise for the IT staff who are providing support at this time, while noting that the number of IT staff is insufficient, and that help is not available outside of regular working hours. Given the current shortage, the colleague is concerned about the level of support that will be available when students are back on campus, when the need for such support will expand. Provost Epstein noted that faculty who are mounting their online courses through 2U—about one-sixth of the faculty—will have access to IT support at all times, one of the reasons that Amherst decided to engage the services of the company. President Martin said that it is going to be a challenge to provide adequate staffing levels in IT during the pandemic, and that members of the community will need to recognize that IT will do the best that it can under these difficult circumstances. She said that she would check in with David Hamilton, chief information officer, to learn more about IT's efforts to try to hire additional staff, which, again, will be a challenge, she understands.

Turning to another question, Professor Manion asked how the committee should go about reestablishing communication with the student leadership of the Black Student Union (BSU) and how best to move forward with the anti-racism work begun by the previous Committee of Six. As she understands it, pressing issues include the need to engage the faculty in a discussion of the intersection of hateful and harassing speech and the college's [Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom](#), as well as the development and implementation of a bias-reporting and response protocol. Provost Epstein noted that the Committee of Six will consider the best approach for bringing these matters to the faculty. She explained that last year's Committee of Six had recommended that, before any proposals for change within the academic realm are brought to the faculty, faculty and students engage in discussion in small groups, laying the groundwork for shaping proposals that might later be brought to

the faculty. The committee had also proposed that members of the community come together to discuss writings that focus on issues surrounding race and racism, and specifically about what students of color experience on campus and in the classroom.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Manion suggested that the committee consider the issue of how to engage the faculty in mandatory anti-bias training—including ways that the committee could move a proposal forward. President Martin and Provost Epstein expressed support for this and other efforts that involve the faculty in the work of anti-racism, noting the faculty's pivotal role. In addition, they said that they are working with the senior staff to put anti-racism measures in place across the college. President Martin shared with the members that she has been informed and moved by communications from alumni and current students about their experiences with racism, both at the college and more broadly, including by a [letter](#) that Chaka Laguerre '08 had sent to her in June on behalf of Black alumni, the efforts of the Black Student Union, and contributions to the Instagram site *BlackAmherstSpeaks*—most recently by a post there titled "[Campaign to #ReclaimAmherst](#)." President Martin informed the members of her intention to write to the community soon about [a set of actions that Amherst will take to foster diversity, equity and inclusion at the college](#). Professor del Moral asked how her role as the Committee of Six representative on the Presidential Task Force for Diversity and Inclusion intersects with the work of the Committee of Six. President Martin said that the Committee of Six member who serves on the task force provides a link between the two bodies and enhances communication.

The members followed up on Professor Manion's earlier question with a brief discussion about possible approaches for moving forward with anti-bias training for the faculty. Professor Kingston suggested that the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ODEI) should take the lead in developing any such training, and that he hopes that any training would provide opportunities for shared conversations among faculty, staff, and students, rather than offering separate training for each group. He informed the members that he had just participated in one of the ODEI's restorative justice circles, and had learned a great deal, but remains unclear as to how a restorative justice bias-response procedure would function in practice. The committee expressed support for working with experts in this area to develop a program. President Martin informed the members that, on the staff side, she has asked all senior staff members to have everyone in their divisions take part in an educational project surrounding anti-racism work, stressing the need for all members of the Amherst community to commit themselves to such efforts.

Concluding the portion of the meeting devoted to the committee's questions, Professor Trapani expressed gratitude to all the facilitators, including colleagues in the Center for Teaching and Learning and Academic Technology Services, for their efforts to support the faculty through the programs that are being run in partnership with the Association of College and University Educators (ACUE) and 2U. Professor Trapani, who said that his experience with the program has been very positive, has been impressed with the excellent work that has been done under very challenging circumstances.

Provost Epstein next asked the members for their views on whether to grant tenure-line faculty who are new to the college this year an additional year on their tenure clocks. The provost, who expressed support for the proposal, explained that, last spring, the Committee of Six had supported the same extension for all tenure-track faculty at the college. In her view, those who are beginning their careers at Amherst may experience delays in their research progress and other challenges as a result of the pandemic. It seems reasonable to her to offer this option to new colleagues as a way of helping to alleviate some of the anxiety that many tenure-track faculty members are feeling. As was true for faculty who were granted the extension last spring, she explained, to ensure maximum flexibility, faculty would be asked to inform her and their department, no later than February 1 of the year in which they are now scheduled to stand for tenure, whether they want to extend their tenure clock by one year.

Professor Umphrey, who said she supports the proposal under these unusual circumstances, suggested that, as a more general matter, the committee discuss the possibility of the college adopting more flexible scheduling practices surrounding tenure. For example, colleagues could be offered a range of possible years in rank that would be permissible. Professor Kingston asked whether, perhaps, the committee should wait to see how the year unfolds before offering new faculty the proposed extension to their tenure clocks. Professors Manion and del Moral said that they supported granting the extension last spring and would support doing so again, noting that this fall, and possibly the entire year, will likely present challenges. The committee then agreed that the option to extend their tenure clocks should be offered to all new tenure-track professors who began (or will begin, in some cases) their positions during the 2020–2021 academic year. As was true last spring, the decision about whether or not to extend a tenure clock will have no bearing on tenure decisions, the provost noted.

Conversation turned to a question from a colleague that a member of the previous Committee of Six had shared with the committee. The colleague had asked whether [the policy governing classroom visits](#) (by tenured faculty to tenure-track professors' classes, at least one time per year) will be relaxed for this academic year, in light of the pandemic. The members agreed that it will continue to be important to have tenured faculty members observe untenured faculty members' classes, and that departments' views of candidates' teaching are an important part of the evidence of teaching effectiveness that is shared with the Committee of Six at the time of reappointment and tenure. Professor Manion expressed the view that, given the biases that are an inherent part of in-class evaluations, other forms of the evaluation of teaching take on even more importance—and should be enhanced rather than minimized. Professor Umphrey commented on the importance of continuing with regular institutional practices at this time, to the degree possible. On the topic of bias, Professor Kingston said that, while bias is an unavoidable aspect of any evaluation process, and in-class evaluations should be read with an awareness of this fact, it remains important for students' voices to be a part of the evaluation of teaching, balanced with tenured faculty members' observations during classroom visits. Professor Leise asked what classroom visits should look like during the pandemic and remote learning. The members agreed that possibilities include having tenured colleagues observe in-person teaching in the classroom, synchronously via Zoom, or via recordings of classes. Issuing guidance on this topic would be helpful, it was decided, and the provost said that she would develop a proposal and share it with the members at a future meeting. Professor Trapani commented that these student reflections on experiences in their courses are important, but that there are numerous ways of judging teaching effectiveness. He expressed support for considering ways of evaluating teaching beyond the mechanisms that are used currently at Amherst.

On a related note, Provost Epstein asked the members for their views on whether the college should continue last spring's policy of allowing tenure-track colleagues to decide whether they want to have in-class student evaluations for their classes and whether or not they wish to include them in their tenure dossier. The members agreed that it would be best to return to the regular practice of requiring in-class student evaluations for all tenure-track faculty members' classes. Professor Trapani, who agreed, also suggested that the committee remain open to revising the policy again, if the way in which the pandemic unfolds warrants doing so.

The provost next raised the topic of the risks and challenges associated with teaching politically sensitive content in a remote environment, an issue about which some faculty members have raised concern. The members agreed that it will be important for professors to inform their students of the risks that both they and the students may face in this context—and ways of mitigating these risks. Provost Epstein noted that it has been brought to her attention that, on July 23, 2020, the board of directors of the Association for Asian Studies published [a helpful statement on this issue](#), including recommendations for faculty and administrators and commentary about related matters touching on

academic freedom. It was agreed that Hanna Bliss, director of institutional student engagement, should be asked to speak with students from China about this issue.

Professor Umphrey next brought up the related issue of whether the college has a policy about recording classes without permission. Provost Epstein pointed the members to the college's policy on [Surreptitious or Unauthorized Observable Recording of Others](#), a part of the *Student Code of Conduct*. The members suggested that faculty be reminded to tell students that audio and/or video recording of classes without advance approval from the instructor or an approved disability accommodation is prohibited under *the Student Code of Conduct*. She also noted that any other audio and/or video recording of any individual without that individual's knowledge or permission (see Massachusetts General Law Part 4, Title I, Chapter 272, Section 99) is also not allowed under the code. Associate Provost Tobin agreed to include a reminder of the policy, and a link to it, in the provost's newsletter.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty