

The tenth 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, November 15, 2021. Present, 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 “Questions from Committee Members.” Professor Martini commented that she had been disheartened to learn at the meeting of the Science Faculty Steering Committee earlier in the day that the implementation of the climate action plan has been put on hold. She asked if the pause is primarily due to increases in cost, delays in obtaining materials, or both factors. President Martin responded that it is the combination. It was learned recently that the costs of the plan would be almost 50 percent more than originally estimated by engineers. The college is evaluating the cost estimate and discussing how best to move forward. There is a possibility that advances in technology may make it possible to move to air-sourced heat pumps, without needing to drill wells on campus, a step that is expensive and disruptive, the president said. This is not certain at this time, she noted, while informing the members that it is still anticipated that the plan will be completed by 2030. President Martin said that a letter about the climate action plan will be sent to the community soon. ([See the letter that was later sent.](#))

Continuing with questions, Professor Vaughan, after first commenting on the extraordinary efforts of the staff in Information Technology to meet the community’s needs during the pandemic, while dealing with staffing shortages, noted the challenges of obtaining some IT support services. He asked whether vacant positions in IT are being filled at this time, stressing the importance of technology to the educational mission of the college. Provost Epstein noted that some very experienced staff in IT took advantage of the college’s voluntary retirement program, while others left Amherst to pursue career opportunities elsewhere. Professionals with IT skills are very much in demand and have many options, the provost commented. She said that it is her understanding that David Hamilton, chief information officer, has made some hires recently, and she agreed to ask him for an update on progress in this area, and to report back to the committee.

Professor Umphrey next asked the provost about plans for the committee to discuss some questions that had been raised at the meeting of the chairs of departments and programs that had been held the previous Friday. During the meeting, the committee’s draft of a template for departmental tenure expectations had been discussed. Provost Epstein informed the members who had not been present at the chairs’ meeting that the primary issue that had been raised was whether tenure-track faculty members should be included in discussions about documenting their department’s expectations for tenure, or whether the tenured members of a department should document these expectations without the input of tenure-track faculty, or some models in between. In addition, the question of whether current tenure-track faculty members should be grandfathered when it comes to these documents, or whether the expectations that will be articulated will simply document what pre-tenure colleagues have been told by the department since the time of hiring—in which case the expectations should apply to current and future tenure-track faculty. 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