

The fourth 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, October 4, 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.

Under “Questions from Committee Members,” Professor Vaughan asked for an update on the search for the position of chief student affairs officer (CSAO). President Martin responded that a decision about the leadership structure in the student affairs division will likely be made by the end of the semester. For this interim period, Dean Agosto will continue to serve both as dean of students and interim chief student affairs officer. The president plans to consult with staff in the Office of Student Affairs, faculty, and others before making a final decision, she said. President Martin informed the committee that she is leaning toward adopting a structure in which there is a dean of students, but not a CSAO, and using the funding that had been allocated for the CSAO position to support positions at other levels in student affairs where there is the greatest need.

Continuing with questions, Professor Umphrey commented that, given what the provost said recently about the challenges of implementing Workday Student ([see the Committee of Six minutes of September 13, 2021](#), for these comments), Professor Umphrey was surprised to learn recently that the college has decided to launch a Workday Student pilot. Since the tools within Workday Student are important to the work of the faculty, she asked if colleagues have been consulted about decisions that are being made about moving forward with this module. Provost Epstein responded that the focus of her recent remarks had been on the advising tools within Workday Student, which are not adequate at this time. The Ad Hoc Faculty Committee on the Implementation of the Workday Student Module has talked at considerable length about this issue, and two members of that body (Professor Ishii and Jesse Barba, director of institutional research and registrar services) have spoken about the Workday Student advising tools with the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP). The CEP is considering the information that was provided and will discuss the matter again soon, the provost noted. The pilot will involve other features of Workday Student that are expected to be very helpful in time, for example the registration process, which will be run through Workday this spring. Provost Epstein also noted that Sarah Barr will give an update about Workday Student to the staff in the provost’s division on October 7, as part of the division’s all-staff meeting.

Professor Clotfelter next asked about the status of the Consultative Group for Tenure-Track Faculty, specifically, whether a process is under way to appoint members, and whether plans call for the group to become a standing committee of the faculty. Provost Epstein responded that, in the past, the members of the consultative group have worked to appoint the membership as transitions take place. She said she would reach out to Professor Edwards, who is now on leave and who was a member of the group last year, to ask for recommendations, learn if anyone has expressed interest, and to offer assistance, as needed. Last year’s Committee of Six considered a proposal from the group for a charge, the provost noted. Ultimately, it had been decided that the best approach would be to fold a discussion about this body into broader deliberations about service and governance, as part of the effort that consultant Susan Pierce is coordinating. Provost Epstein commented that a vote of the faculty is required to create a standing committee.

Conversation turned to a draft faculty meeting agenda for a possible October 19 meeting. The committee discussed reports by administrators that might be placed on the agenda. Suggestions included the faculty equity and inclusion officers, the dean of admission and financial aid, the dean of students and interim chief student affairs officer, and the director of the counseling center. In the end, the majority of members felt that it would be most important to have an update on student well-being at this time, given the concerns that [the Ad Hoc Committee on Student Success had shared with the committee on September 2](#). It was agreed that the provost should check in with Dean Agosto about giving a presentation on student well-being. Turning back to the agenda, the provost said, the class deans and J. Barba would like the opportunity to discuss with the faculty some concerns that they have surrounding advising, particularly for sophomores and juniors. The members concurred that this should be an agenda item as well. It was agreed that it would also be helpful for President Martin to offer brief remarks about the presidential search process as well. Professor Clotfelter asked if the CEP would be ready to share its views about remote teaching. Provost Epstein responded that the CEP is not yet

ready to do so. The members agreed that a meeting should be held and that the agenda should be finalized and approved via its shared drive, as the committee would not be meeting on October 11, due to fall break.

The members next reviewed [the Committee of Six's proposal](#) of last year to revise the first paragraph of the *Faculty Handbook* language about the criteria for tenure ([Faculty Handbook, III., E., 3.](#)), with the goal of enhancing clarity and achieving greater alignment with practice. Some members proposed some revisions, each of which was discussed in turn; it was agreed the committee would review another draft of the proposal at the members' next meeting. Ultimately, any changes to the *Faculty Handbook* will require a vote of the faculty, it was noted.

A conversation then ensued about a related issue brought forward by last year's Committee of Six. The members had proposed that the college adopt a tenure system that combines this broad set of college-wide criteria for tenure—with these criteria continuing to take precedence in the tenure process and being included in the *Faculty Handbook*—and complementary departmental expectations for tenure, the articulation of which could provide helpful context for the president, the provost and dean of the faculty, the Committee of Six, the department, outside reviewers, tenure-track faculty, and prospective hires. This year's committee had expressed support for this approach when the provost had described it at the beginning of the semester. It had been agreed then that it would be helpful to provide departments with a template to guide their efforts to articulate their expectations for tenure, drawing on the standards of excellence in their disciplines. The committee reviewed a draft template and offered some revisions, and the members agreed to consider another iteration of this document at their next meeting. Once the Committee of Six approves a final draft, the provost said that she would share the document with the chairs of academic departments. Once departments complete the templates, the Committee of Six will be asked to review them and to offer feedback, as needed, Provost Epstein noted. It will be important for departments to share what they value and what is given the greatest weight in their disciplines, while not being so specific that flexibility cannot be preserved.

The members next discussed a draft motion to revise the procedure that Committee of Six members must follow when the tenure cases of faculty members from their departments are considered. Currently, in accordance with the procedure voted by the faculty in 1986 (see [Faculty Handbook III., E., 4., e.](#) and [Faculty Handbook, IV., S., 1., a.](#)), under these circumstances, members must remain present during all tenure deliberations, but cannot participate in the committee's discussion or vote in the case of a colleague from their department. (See [the Committee of Six minutes of September 20, 2021](#), about the proposed revision, which, if approved, would result in members being absent when the committee considers the departmental colleague's case individually.) The members suggested some revisions to the draft and agreed to review the motion again at their next meeting. Once there is consensus on the language of the final motion, it will be brought forward to the faculty in the spring, the committee agreed.

The meeting ended with a very brief discussion about issues surrounding the college's academic calendar for the next academic year, including the alignment of Amherst's calendar with UMass. Provost Epstein said that UMass is planning to have a six-week January term session that will run from December 15 to January 31. It is her hope that Amherst will start next year on August 29, which will make it possible to end classes earlier in December, allowing students to finish exams and leave campus well before the holidays. Alignment with the university in the fall would be possible, the provost said, while noting that she will be learning more about whether the start date of the spring semester of 2023 will allow for alignment as well. The CEP will be considering these and other parameters of the calendar and will bring a proposal forward for a faculty vote, Provost Epstein noted.

The meeting adjourned at 4:35 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty