

The third 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, September 20, 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 Provost Epstein noting that the first ballot for the election of the faculty members who will serve on the Presidential Search Committee had launched several hours before the Committee of Six meeting. Professor Umphrey asked about the process that will be used to select staff members and students to serve on the search committee. President Martin responded that it is her understanding that the dean of students will work with the leadership of the Association of Amherst Students to select two students to serve, and that the Employee Council will make a recommendation for a staff member to serve. In addition, the president will consult with the senior staff to select an administrator who is not a member of the senior staff to serve. The hope is that the committee will be constituted next week, President Martin said.

Discussion turned to [the housing committee's proposal to revise the college's Home Purchase Program](#). Professor Clotfelter began the conversation by asking what the Committee of Six's role is in the decision-making process surrounding the proposal. Provost Epstein responded that the committee's advice will be taken into account when considering next steps. The members continued to express the same concerns that they had articulated earlier ([see the committee's minutes of September 13, 2021](#)) and recommended that a broader and more holistic discussion take place about needs and goals surrounding college housing. The committee agreed that, as a first step, consideration should be given to Professor Schroeder Rodríguez's proposal that a survey be conducted to learn more about the faculty's aspirations for the college housing program. In the members' view, the goal of any changes that are implemented should be to make housing more affordable, and available to more members of the Amherst community. Noting that many of the houses that are unoccupied at this time are quite large, the members proposed exploring ideas such as converting some houses into faculty offices and/or renovating some houses to create spaces for multiple individuals and families that could be rented to members of the college community, or sold as condominiums.

Other suggestions included expanding the rental housing program to include tenured faculty for a more extended time period (faculty must leave rental housing within two years of receiving tenure, under the current rules). Professor Umphrey wondered whether the board of trustees would support changes of this kind. She asked whether the housing committee's proposal originated in response to a request by the board to reconsider the Home Purchase Program or whether the housing committee or rental housing department may have made a request. Provost Epstein said that it is her understanding that the proposal came out of the housing committee, when it was brought to that body's attention that some college houses are unoccupied and that, over the years, most have been sold back to the college in a state of disrepair. President Martin said that the board has not been involved in conversations about the housing committee's proposal.

Continuing the conversation, Provost Epstein said that she worries that sending a survey about the housing program might raise expectations. As a way of addressing this concern, Professor Schroeder Rodríguez suggested adding some questions about the housing program to the Faculty COACHE (Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education) survey that colleagues already complete. The provost said that this could certainly be done, since the college is permitted to add some custom questions to the COACHE survey, but that the next survey is not until 2023–2024. Speaking further about not raising the faculty's expectations, Provost Epstein noted that the college has only twenty-six houses in the Home Purchase Program (twenty-one are occupied, and five are vacant at this time). There are no plans to buy additional houses, she noted, commenting, as well, that the college is meeting the demand for rentals. Professor Martini asked about the criteria for eligibility to participate in Amherst's rental program. The provost said that the college rents houses and apartments, at rates approximately 25 percent below

market value for the town of Amherst, to tenure-track faculty, visiting faculty, lecturers who have not received senior lecturer status, and coaches who have not received senior-contract status. Faculty hired at the senior ranks with tenure are permitted to rent from the college for two years. Professor Martini suggested broadening the parameters of the rental program and offering smaller units to all faculty who want to live close to campus. Professor Manion wonders whether a system might be imagined in which some faculty would live in college housing near campus as part of a role that would be akin to that assumed by faculty who are part of a house system at other schools. Such a model could help build community through programming and broader faculty engagement/involvement with student residential and campus life, she believes. Professor Vaughan found the proposal that owners of houses be permitted to stay in them for life to be a problematic feature of the housing committee's proposal. He argued for finding a reasonable middle ground, such as requiring owners to sell their houses back to the college five to seven years after colleagues retire. He expressed support for the idea of converting some houses to offices.

Provost Epstein commented that the costs of converting the houses to offices would likely be significant, noting issues surrounding compliance in regard to accessibility and zoning regulations. In addition, many of the houses are a distance away from the center of campus, she pointed out. At present, most faculty offices are in departments and near seminar rooms, the provost commented. She is not sure if alternative models for office spaces might be welcome. One idea might be to move offices at the core of the campus that are not student-facing to the houses in question, and to put faculty offices in the spaces that have been vacated. The provost said that she could ask Jim Brassord, chief of campus operations, about these ideas. Some members of the committee suggested that the college consider implementing some parts of the housing committee's proposal—specifically, the changes to the equity split and the matching grant and offering houses for purchase to include tenure-track faculty—and seeing if doing so results in more interest in the houses—while also engaging in a more generative conversation about the housing program.

President Martin commented that the college must consider competing priorities and trade-offs, as this is a complex matter with implications in a number of areas. She agreed with the committee, however, that it would be helpful to examine what may be possible and desirable at the level of strategy, before turning to details, and to have faculty weigh in on their priorities for the housing program.

At 3:00 P.M., Lisa Rutherford, chief policy officer and general counsel, and Professor Allen Hart, interim chief equity and inclusion officer, joined the meeting. L. Rutherford offered general legal advice related to the tenure process and answered questions posed by the committee. Prior to the meeting, the committee had been provided with a document titled "[Practical Advice regarding Tenure](#)," which had been written by former attorneys for the college, and "[Good Practice in Tenure Evaluation](#)," a document prepared by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). In her remarks to the committee, L. Rutherford emphasized the importance of applying consistently the criteria for tenure and of limiting the committee's discussion and consideration to the defined criteria of scholarship and/or creative work, teaching, and service. She advised the members to strive for consistency and to follow established procedures and answered the members' questions. Professor Hart spoke with the committee about approaches to mitigating bias when reading teaching evaluations, and in the tenure process more generally, and offered a theoretical framework for considering inclusive practices in relation to the evaluation process. He then responded to the members' questions. The members thanked L. Rutherford and A. Hart and they left the meeting at 3:43 P.M.

Conversation returned to the topic of the purpose and goals of reappointment, with a focus on the role of the Committee of Six. The committee also discussed the need to better align the practices of many years with the procedures in the *Faculty Handbook* ([III., D.](#)). Much of the conversation focused on whether the Committee of Six should review some or all of candidates' scholarship and/or creative work as part of its review at the time of reappointment. It was noted that, historically, a great deal more emphasis has been placed on evaluating teaching effectiveness at the time of reappointment; the committee receives substantial evidence to consider in the form of student teaching evaluations and

retrospective letters and the department's assessment of candidates' teaching. The members felt that the review would be more valuable to candidates and departments if the committee is provided with more evidence to consider about candidates' scholarship and/or creative work and scholarly trajectory. The committee agreed that it would be helpful for the Committee of Six to review some of each candidate's work as part of the reappointment review, as doing so would put the department's views on the work in context. Some members noted the possibility that requiring the submission of scholarship and/or creative work could increase pressure on untenured faculty and make them more anxious. While recognizing that this might be the effect, the committee felt that it is paramount that the committee be in a position to offer the best possible feedback and guidance to candidates at the time of reappointment. Reviewing scholarship and/or creative work would serve this goal, the members concurred.

Continuing the discussion, Professor Clotfelter commented that, in some fields the committee would be reading work that the candidate had completed before coming to Amherst, due to the time it takes to get established at the college, complete research, and publish and/or exhibit or perform new work. The provost responded that, in her experience, some tenure-track faculty in some fields make progress on new work by the time they stand for reappointment, and that reviewing work created before the candidate was hired, and offering feedback on this material, would be useful as well. The committee noted the importance of instructing departments to provide the committee with as much information as possible about the candidate's trajectory as a teacher and scholar. In regard to the latter, it is essential that, in their recommendations, departments offer information about the standards and expectations of the candidate's field and the ways in which the untenured faculty member is progressing toward meeting these requirements, the members agreed. In this regard, Professor Schroeder Rodríguez offered the example of the usefulness of having departments describe the quality of the journals in which the tenure-track professor has published, and/or the venues in which creative work has appeared. Having such information, in combination with reviewing teaching evaluations and some scholarly and/or creative work, as well as information about candidates' service contributions, will help the committee provide candidates and departments with the most helpful feedback.

Concluding their conversation about reappointment, the members agreed that it is necessary to propose revisions to the *Faculty Handbook* language about reappointment. The goal will be to provide more clarity about the purpose and goals of this process, as well as to better align the handbook language about reappointment procedures with the committee's practices. The members decided that Provost Epstein and Associate Provost Tobin would draft some changes for the committee's review. Ultimately, the faculty will need to approve any changes to the *Faculty Handbook* language, it was noted.

The meeting ended with the members considering Professor Manion's suggestion that the committee bring to the faculty a proposal to revise the procedure that Committee of Six members must follow when the tenure cases of faculty members from their departments are considered. 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.](#)), 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. Prior to the meeting, the committee was provided with the minutes of the Committee of Six and faculty meetings in which this matter was discussed. A range of views on this subject had been expressed by faculty members leading up to the vote on this question, with many differences of opinion expressed. One of the most prominent concerns brought forward at the time was that, if allowed to participate in deliberations for a departmental colleague, a Committee of Six member might advocate for that candidate. Another argument for adopting the procedure was to prevent a Committee of Six member from voting at both the department and Committee of Six levels when a departmental colleague is standing for tenure. Professors Manion and Umphrey noted that, in their experience, this procedure

does not offer any advantages, and, in fact, can create significant challenges. They noted, for example, that a Committee of Six member, having been present during the committee's deliberations, could not participate if the member's department were asked to have a discussion with the committee about the case. Such a Committee of Six member also could not contribute to the department's preparations for the discussion. In both cases, the Committee of Six member would be privy to information that could not be shared with departmental colleagues. The members agreed that, as a matter of equity, Committee of Six members should not participate in tenure deliberations for departmental colleagues at the Committee of Six level, including voting on these cases. At the same time, the committee did not see a purpose for having Committee of Six members remain present for these deliberations, while recognizing the disadvantages of requiring them to do so. The members agreed to bring forward a motion to put a requirement in place that Committee of Six members not be present when departmental colleagues' tenure cases are discussed individually by the Committee of Six. The members agreed that, as is true now, Committee of Six members, under these circumstances, should be present for the committee's final discussions of all of the tenure cases that the members had considered. These discussions take place prior to the members' final votes. It was further agreed that, as is also true now, during these final conversations, Committee of Six members should not be permitted to participate in the discussion of their departmental colleagues' cases and should not be permitted to vote on these cases.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein
Provost and Dean of the Faculty