

The first meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2019–2020 was called to order by President Martin in the president’s office at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, September 9, 2019.

Present, in addition to the president, were Professors Basu, Brooks, Goutte, Horton, Schmalzbauer, and Sims; Provost Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The meeting began with a conversation about ways in which the Amherst community might engage in the [Global Climate Strike](#) movement, an initiative that is being led by youth around the world to raise awareness about the threat posed by climate change, and to stimulate action, particularly among politicians. As part of the strikes, which will take place on September 20 and September 27, individuals will “walk out” of their jobs, schools, and homes, interrupting the rhythm of daily life. President Martin said that it is her understanding that some Amherst students are planning to participate in the Global Climate Strike by walking out of their classes. Other events may also be planned on campus. The members expressed support for the global initiative and for the college continuing to take a strong stand on this issue.

The committee then discussed briefly possible approaches that would allow faculty, staff, and students to participate in the walk out and/or educational events. It was agreed that individual faculty members will need to consider how they will respond to their students walking out of a class. Professor Horton suggested that faculty take a flexible approach if students miss classes for this purpose, likening the response to that used when students miss class in order to observe religious holidays. In regard to the possibility of cancelling classes, Professor Goutte expressed particular concern about the challenges of making up cancelled labs. Professors Schmalzbauer, Basu, Brooks, and Sims expressed support for finding ways to make it possible for faculty, students, and staff to participate. The president, and the provost agreed. Professor Sims suggested that a possible approach might be to designate a limited period of time when a campus gathering might occur, and staff members could be released from their work. This approach would allow the college to support these important global efforts, she said, while minimizing disruption in regard to labs and maintaining faculty autonomy with regard to holding or cancelling classes.

At the conclusion of the conversation, it was decided that Provost Epstein should consult with Jesse Barba, director of Institutional Research and Registrar Services, to learn how many classes and labs would be affected. Provost Epstein agreed to gather these data and to report back to the committee; President Martin said that she would try to learn more about students’ ideas, as a number of students have reached out to her about the events they are planning.

Provost Epstein next reviewed issues of confidentiality and attribution in the committee’s minutes, noting that the public minutes should be used as a guide in regard to questions of whether matters discussed by the committee can be shared with others. She also discussed the circumstances under which the committee would communicate via email. It was agreed that email will not be used to communicate about personnel or other confidential matters, and that the use of email to address Committee of Six deliberations should be kept to a minimum in general.

Continuing with her remarks about the ways in which the committee will work, the provost discussed with the members the long-standing policy of appending letters to the minutes when the committee has discussed the matters contained within them. Colleagues are informed by the provost’s office as to when their letters will be appended. If colleagues state at the outset that they do not want the contents of a letter discussed in the public minutes, the committee will decide whether it wishes to take up the matter in question. The members decided that, for reasons of transparency, comments by committee members should be attributed by name in the

minutes. It was agreed that the committee's regular meeting times will be 2:30 P.M. on Mondays this fall.

Turning to the schedule for faculty meetings this fall, the members decided that the following dates should be held for possible faculty meetings: October 1, November 5, December 3, and December 17. The provost informed the members that Janet Tobin, associate provost, will continue to serve as the recorder of Committee of Six minutes. Nancy Ratner, director of academic projects, will serve as the recorder of the faculty meeting minutes. The committee agreed that there should be a faculty meeting on October 1 and decided that Matt McGann, dean of admission and financial aid, should be invited to give a presentation. Topics could include information about the first-year class and the work that Dean McGann is doing to gather data about admission trends, with time left for questions. Provost Epstein agreed to contact Dean McGann about the presentation. The committee then turned briefly to a personnel matter.

The next topic of discussion was potential agenda items for the Committee of Six for the fall of 2019. Provost Epstein reviewed a list with the committee and invited the members to propose additional items. It was agreed that major issues for discussion by the committee will include recommendations of the Ad Hoc Curriculum Committee surrounding advising and a sophomore seminar; a continuation of the committee's work to clarify the criteria for tenure, aligning language with practice; the implementation of the common teaching evaluation form for tenure-track faculty; possible changes to the process for soliciting teaching evaluations for tenured faculty; and a review of the policy regarding consensual sexual relationships between faculty and students. Some of the other possible topics include recommendations surrounding student writing that were forwarded to the committee by a faculty member; recommendations of the Consultative Group for Untenured Faculty; and a recommendation, forwarded to the committee by a faculty member, that a comprehensive plan be developed for the future of the college's housing program. Continuing the conversation, Professor Horton asked if adopting background checks will be discussed, as a follow-up to a conversation that had taken place last year. Provost Epstein responded that the college has established a Minors Task Force, which is currently considering background checks and other issues in relation to faculty and staff who interact with minors, for example during summer programs held at Amherst. The question of whether background checks must be conducted for others will likely need to be addressed in the near future, she noted. Professor Horton asked about the status of developing a proposal for an alternative time for faculty meetings. Provost Epstein said that J. Barba has been developing a proposal, while noting that he is overburdened at present (he is acting as the interim registrar and leading a search for a new associate registrar), so he may not be able to complete this work for some time. The related issues of the class schedule, teaching slots, and enrollment patterns, were raised. Provost Epstein noted that the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) is examining the issue of courses that have five or fewer students and that she is interested in looking at course-enrollment patterns across the college as well.

Professor Basu reiterated her suggestion of last year that, as a follow-up to the Committee of Six's open meetings with tenure-line faculty, during which a number of issues were raised, research be undertaken to inform the Committee of Six about whether the distribution of service activities is equitable across such factors as faculty rank, departments/fields, gender, and race. Professor Sims agreed, and commented that this issue was raised repeatedly during conversations in which she had participated as a member of the strategic planning committee that had focused on the integration of research, teaching, and learning. Professor Basu noted that, since service extends beyond participating in college committees, it would be helpful to know how much time

colleagues are spending on college and major advising; informal mentoring of students; departmental activities such as searches, chairing, mentoring of pre-tenure colleagues, summer teaching, staff supervision, and personnel processes; office hours; and writing student recommendations. The members suggested asking department chairs to gather data from their colleagues. Provost Epstein, agreeing that it would be helpful to find ways to measure service, while also noting the challenges of being able to do so for forms of service that may be “invisible,” said that she would consult with colleagues in her office about the efficacy of an approach that would rely on self-reporting. Professor Horton suggested that there might be some information that has already been gathered that could prove useful, for example, records of committee service. Provost Epstein commented that J. Barba, who ordinarily would be asked to assist with gathering and analyzing data, cannot focus on this project this term because of the obligations noted above. Professor Sims suggested that it would be useful to articulate the key concerns about service burdens to determine what types of data would be needed. Professor Basu noted that last year the Committee of Six had discussed the increased service demands placed on faculty after they receive tenure, and she wants to follow up by gathering information about college service for assistant, associate, and full professors, and by gender and race for faculty of all ranks.

Turning to another issue, Professor Horton raised questions about the shortage of classrooms that are suitable for team-based learning for classes of twenty-five to thirty students and other issues surrounding the availability of classrooms. Provost Epstein responded that Professor Cheney, associate provost and associate dean of the faculty; Jim Brassord, chief of campus operations; and J. Barba, in consultation with an outside consultant, have been monitoring classroom needs and identifying areas of concern, and are gradually making improvements, as space and the budget permits. Solving classroom needs will take some time, she noted. One problem is that many faculty members prefer to teach in the same teaching slots (largely classes taught from 10:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M., two days a week), which means that classroom use often can be bunched. Provost Epstein noted that the FTE cap has now been reached, and having more faculty teaching is probably also contributing to classroom-related issues. Some departmental practices may also be playing a role. Professor Sims suggested that it would be helpful to look at projections of demand for classrooms, given the current and expected increase in faculty and corresponding smaller class sizes, in order to assess the need for classrooms. Professor Brooks raised the issue of the constraints surrounding time slots in which to teach and the availability of classrooms, asking if the committee could later discuss possible revisions to the schedule of available class times. The members wondered if changes in the class schedule and/or other areas might help to address the situation or if new classrooms would be needed. The related issue of a shortage of faculty offices was also raised as a serious concern. The new student center, which may include a small number of classrooms, and the reuse of Keefe Campus Center for faculty offices, should help with both the classroom and office issues, but these spaces will not be available for a number of years, Provost Epstein noted. It was agreed that Associate Provost Cheney, J. Brassord, and J. Barba should be invited to meet with the committee to discuss these matters. Concluding the conversation, Professor Basu suggested that two other topics be placed on the committee’s agenda—the refinement of the processes used for the nomination of “endangered scholars,” as part of the college’s participation in the [New University in Exile Consortium](#), and the criteria for selecting recipients of the Jeffrey B. Ferguson Memorial Teaching Prize.

Provost Epstein next informed the committee that the search for a new director of the library is now under way. The following members of the community are serving on the search committee, which is working in consultation with a search firm: Luis Hernandez, associate chief information officer for IT services and outreach; Karu Kozuma, chief student affairs officer; Mariah Leavitt, archives and special collections preservation specialist; Este Pope, head of digital programs; Sara Smith, arts and humanities librarian; Olufemi Vaughan, professor of black studies and American studies; Kiara Vigil, assistant professor of American studies; and Chimaway Lopez '20. Provost Epstein noted that she and Joe Moore, professor of philosophy, are co-chairing the committee. The members then nominated colleagues to serve on the memorial minute committee for Professor of Mathematics, Emeritus, James Denton, who died on July 14, 2019.

Under "Questions from Committee Members," Professor Schmalzbauer asked President Martin if there was any update regarding the Amherst student who was prevented from reaching the college this fall because of a visa denial, as reported at the September 2, 2019, faculty meeting. The president responded that, if that student is able to enter the country before the start of the second semester, the college will consider whether the student could begin studies at Amherst this spring, which would be an exception to regular practice. Professor Schmalzbauer thanked President Martin for the advocacy work she is doing on the student's behalf.

Continuing with questions, Professor Basu thanked President Martin for organizing the visit of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg to Amherst and asked if it would be possible for Five-College faculty to attend the October 3 event in Johnson Chapel, or to view the live-streamed conversation between Justice Ginsburg and President Martin. The president said that there is tremendous enthusiasm surrounding Justice Ginsburg's visit, and that the details of the event are still being worked out. Attendance at the conversation itself will be limited to Amherst College students, faculty, and staff who request a ticket. Depending on interest, there may have to be a lottery to select attendees from this group. No public or guest tickets will be available. The college will live-stream the conversation on campus and is exploring options for streaming the event more broadly. A video, which will be available to the public, will be posted on the Amherst website soon after the visit.

Professor Sims next asked if the president would provide further detail about the summer retreat of Amherst's board of trustees, which President Martin had mentioned at the faculty meeting held on Labor Day. President Martin said that the retreat provided an opportunity for the trustees to learn more about the admission and financial-aid processes at Amherst. The purpose was to convey information. Plans for the student center were also discussed at the retreat, but no decisions were made.

The questions portion of the meeting concluded with the committee expressing thanks to the provost for making it possible to bring thirteen Hampshire College faculty to Amherst. The provost said that these appointments were the outcome of searches that had been authorized, and that departments viewed the Hampshire faculty as the strongest candidates in their pools. Provost Epstein said that she is delighted with this result. Discussion turned to a small number of committee nominations. The members then reviewed a proposal for the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Summer Stipend competition and selected a nominee.

Turning to another topic, Provost Epstein discussed with the committee the process for revising the *Faculty Handbook* to reflect the change to the title of the position of *dean of the faculty*, which is now called *provost and dean of the faculty*. The provost said that a notation about the change, including the date that it became effective (July 1, 2019), could be referenced

at the beginning of the handbook, and she suggested that the current title be substituted for the former throughout the document. Professor Goutte expressed some hesitation about changing the title in the handbook, commenting that, in this context, the responsibilities and roles that are discussed are consistent with those of the dean of the faculty, a position that has traditionally supported the faculty and academic mission. The provost title suggests a broader set of responsibilities, in her view. Provost Epstein noted that the title of the position of chief academic officer at the college was changed to convey with greater clarity the central role this position plays in the academic and administrative life of the college. All functions and areas of the college that have traditionally been within the purview of the dean of the faculty continue to fall under the position with its new title, she said. The other members agreed that, since *the dean of the faculty* is now called *the provost and dean of the faculty*, the *Faculty Handbook* should adhere to this nomenclature when referencing Amherst's chief academic officer. A simple substitution of the new language seems appropriate, in their view. Professor Sims noted that it might still be good to bring this matter to a vote by the faculty, since it involves changing *Faculty Handbook* language, but deferred to the consensus.

Conversation turned to some revisions to the charge of the Ad Hoc Committee on Student Learning, a body that will focus on issues that touch on Amherst's environment for teaching and learning, the provost noted. The ad hoc committee's chair, Professor O'Hara, has proposed that staff members serve with vote. It has also been suggested that the director of academic projects be a member of the committee. The members asked Provost Epstein whether the committee will be advisory, that is, whether it will make recommendations to other governance bodies. Provost Epstein said that this is the case. She also informed members that, at times, she will serve as the chair's designee from the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP), when the CEP chair cannot attend some of the ad hoc committee's weekly meetings. Under those circumstances, she will fill the chair in on what has transpired during the meetings that are missed. After some conversation, the members agreed that staff members should serve with vote. The committee also decided that another faculty member should be asked to serve on the ad hoc committee. The committee agreed that the following changes (in red) should be made to the charge to the ad hoc committee:

### **Charge to the Ad Hoc Faculty Committee on Student Learning**

The Ad Hoc Faculty Committee on Student Learning seeks to understand and enhance students' education at the college. Its activities include identifying the most effective methods of assessing student learning, pedagogical approaches that appreciate diverse learning styles, and best practices at Amherst and other institutions. The ad hoc committee supports the work of college departments and programs and other faculty committees, especially the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP). It is charged with undertaking this work for up to three years. At the conclusion of its term, the members will make a recommendation to the Committee of Six about whether a proposal to create a standing faculty committee on student learning should be brought to the faculty. The ad hoc committee consists of ~~three~~ **four** members of the faculty distributed across the arts, humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences, who are appointed by the Committee of Six; the chair of the CEP or the chair's designee (another faculty member of the CEP); and the following ex officio members: ~~who serve without vote~~ the provost and dean of the faculty; the

director of Institutional Research and Registrar Services; the director of the Center for Teaching and Learning; the chief diversity and inclusion officer (or that individual's designee); ~~and~~ the chief student affairs officer (or that individual's designee); **and the ad hoc committee's researcher and secretary, a staff member appointed by the provost and dean of the faculty.** ~~The provost and dean of the faculty appoints a researcher, normally the director of academic projects, to inform and support the work of the ad hoc committee ad to serve as its secretary.~~ The ad hoc committee selects one of its ~~three~~ **four** faculty members to serve as its chair.

Discussion turned to [recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee for the Development of a Common Form to Evaluate Classroom Teaching](#) regarding the implementation of the common teaching evaluation form (these recommendations appear on pages eight and nine of the ad hoc committee's report) and the ad hoc committee's recommendation that teaching evaluations become fully anonymous (a topic discussed on pages nine through eleven of the report). Professor Sims began the conversation by commenting that she supports developing a consistent process that would be used across departments to introduce the purpose and importance of teaching evaluations. The message, she noted, should be presented in class on the day in which evaluations will be completed. The other members concurred. Professor Brooks commented on the importance of the tone of the language that is developed to frame this process, noting that the tone can have impact on students' responses. The committee agreed that the provost should ask Professor Gentzler, faculty director of the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), and Riley Caldwell-O'Keefe, director of the CTL, to draft a script that could be read by faculty members to students before they complete the evaluations. The committee will review the draft and then invite commentary on it by the chairs of academic departments and programs and the Consultative Group for Untenured Faculty. Based on the members' conversation about the ad hoc committee's recommendations surrounding the implementation of the common teaching evaluation form, the committee also decided to develop some guidelines for implementing the form, and to share this document with the chairs and the consultative group.

The committee discussed whether the guidelines should indicate whether it should be permissible for a tenured member of the department or the pre-tenure colleague being evaluated to read the script to students in the class during which the evaluation is done, or whether there should not be a preference or a prohibition. Professor Brooks stressed the importance of not adopting a practice that would disempower or undermine pre-tenure faculty members' authority or position in their classrooms. She suggested soliciting feedback from the consultative group about what would be preferable, an idea supported by the rest of the committee. At the same time, the members concurred with the ad hoc committee's recommendation that the faculty member being evaluated speak very briefly, or not at all, about the purpose and importance of the evaluations. The committee agreed with the ad hoc committee's recommendation that faculty should not be present while students are completing evaluations. The committee also supported the ad hoc committee's recommendation that students complete evaluations in class, in order to ensure the best return rate. Time (about twenty minutes) for the evaluation process should be allocated at the start of class, rather than end, whenever possible, the two committees agreed, and students should be reminded to bring computers to class. It was further agreed that, if a student misses the class in which evaluations are done, the department should try to ensure that the student completes the evaluation outside of class. A paper form should be available as a back-up for students who do not have computers.

Continuing the conversation, some members of the committee also agreed with the ad hoc committee that it is preferable if evaluations are not done during the last class of the term. (It was noted that, by faculty vote, “Evaluations of teaching are to be requested of all students from every course, including every honors and special topics course taught by a tenure-track faculty member. These evaluations are to be signed and are normally to be solicited in essay format in all classes in the final week of each semester on a common evaluation form approved by the faculty.”) If treats are given out on the last day to celebrate the end of a class, students may feel that they are being incentivized to offer a positive evaluation. As a guideline, the committee agreed with the ad hoc committee that, during the time that students are completing evaluations, no treats (donuts, cookies, etc.) should be provided. Some members pointed out that, in order to incentivize students’ completion of evaluations in large courses, some departments currently offer a small fraction of a percentage point to students’ grade (so minor that the final grades are not affected), and others withhold grades until students complete evaluations. Professor Goutte noted that, in her view, without such actions, other efforts will be necessary to ensure high response rates. Some members said that they agreed with the ad hoc committee’s recommendation that students not be rewarded for completing the evaluations or penalized for not completing evaluations.

Turning to the points raised in the ad hoc committee’s report that touch on evaluations in relation to the tenure and reappointment process, the members favored having training on how to read and interpret evaluations, with the goal of identifying and mitigating bias, take place at the department level. The members were less comfortable with the ad hoc committee’s recommendation that the CTL only offer training to tenured faculty and members of the Committee of Six on these topics, preferring that the training become part of the broader program of faculty development. Professor Brooks suggested that workshops be scheduled as part of department meetings in the spring before the fall in which a tenure case will be reviewed. In anticipation of the next conversation on the committee’s agenda, Professor Goutte noted the importance of avoiding viewing the issue of anonymity in isolation. In her view bias training can help departments better understand evaluations that are outliers within a pre-tenure colleague’s teaching record, without knowing the identity of the student who wrote the evaluation. Already department members read evaluations within the context of their experience with the ways in which students respond to particular courses required outside of the major, for example. Professor Sims noted that there are potential sources of bias in both anonymous and signed evaluations. Given this, she feels that, on balance, it is most important to protect pre-tenure faculty by collecting signed evaluations.

At a more specific level, Professor Goutte commented that she agrees with the ad hoc committee’s recommendation that it would be valuable for departments and the Committee of Six to have access to in-class evaluations for each course that are provided in two formats—both by question and by student—as it would be useful to consider the responses in both formats. The provost’s office will consult with colleagues in Information Technology about this recommendation, the provost said. The discussion about guidelines ended on a specific note. It was noted that faculty members who will stand for tenure in the fall of 2020 must be given the option of choosing whether to use the new common evaluation form, or continue to use the form that they have been using in previous years.

The meeting concluded with a brief discussion of some of the benefits and disadvantages of not having students identify themselves on teaching evaluations. Those who served on the committee last year noted that the ad hoc committee’s recommendation that the evaluations become fully anonymous had been discussed in depth. Most members had indicated that they prefer that students continue to be asked to sign their evaluations. Under this, the current system, the department and the Committee of Six are aware of the identity of those who provide

evaluations. Professor Basu said that she hopes that those on both sides of this issue will have a fair hearing, while expressing support for the current system.

Continuing, Professor Basu argued that, at a small college, knowing the identity of the authors of student evaluations can help departments and the Committee of Six place evaluations in context and makes the process of evaluation more human. She feels that it is sometimes useful to read evaluations knowing about the racial, class, and gender composition of the class as a whole and of the students writing evaluations. She said that she has also found that it is sometimes useful for departments and the Committee of Six to know the names of students who submit negative evaluations. Professor Horton expressed the view that having students identify themselves is valuable, agreeing with the argument that they are held accountable for their views in this way. Professor Basu also expressed the view that students feel more of a sense of responsibility for evaluating faculty if they must sign their names, and that departments and the Committee of Six might not give as much weight to anonymous student evaluations.

Professor Schmalzbauer said that, after listening to the arguments about this issue last year, she is torn on the complex question of whether to move to a system that is fully anonymous, though ultimately she feels the argument for anonymity to be more compelling. She continues to feel that it is important to recognize the implicit power dynamic at play in the evaluation process. As such, some students may feel inhibited and may not always offer honest reflections when they have to sign their names, and the literature about the question of anonymous vs. signed teaching evaluations supports this view, she said. Professor Schmalzbauer expressed concern that students from underrepresented backgrounds and first-generation students may feel uncomfortable being candid in evaluations when they must sign their names, while students from more privileged backgrounds may feel more comfortable doing so. She suspects that low-income students might feel more comfortable, and thus hopefully be more forthcoming, if their responses were anonymous. Professor Schmalzbauer also pointed to the trend toward more anonymity in faculty decision-making, and suggested that the same reasoning applies; anonymity helps to equalize an unequal power field and makes respondents feel more comfortable in voicing honest responses. On the other hand, she is moved by the aspirational notion that, by signing their evaluations, students learn accountability.

At the conclusion of the discussion, Professor Basu suggested that a pilot be undertaken. Some tenured colleagues could be asked to have students evaluate their courses using unsigned forms, so student identities would not be available. Other tenured colleagues could be asked to have their classes evaluated under the current system. The results could then be reviewed to try to determine if anonymity has an impact on whether the evaluation is more or less critical, for example. The committee agreed that a pilot of this kind could be informative. Before undertaking such an experiment, the members decided, as recommended by last year's Committee of Six, that there should be a committee-of-whole conversation about the proposal that teaching evaluations become fully anonymous. Ideally, members of the ad hoc committee would make remarks both for and against this proposal. The members agreed to finalize the faculty meeting agenda at their next meeting.

On a final and separate note, the members concurred with the ad hoc committee's view that the purpose of the common evaluation form is summative (evaluating teaching). Faculty should gather formative feedback (suggestions for improvement) throughout the semester, in order to improve the learning experience for students, including by making adjustments in real time.

The meeting adjourned at 5:20 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The second meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2019–2020 was called to order by President Martin in the president’s office at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, September 16, 2019. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors Basu, Brooks, Goutte, Horton, Schmalzbauer, and Sims; Provost Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The meeting began with President Martin sharing additional information about the October 3 visit to campus of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. The president informed the members that the high demand for tickets has prompted the decision to use a lottery system to select those who may attend. Faculty, staff, and students will have the opportunity to log on to a page on the college’s website on September 19 to apply for tickets. The names of those who will receive tickets will later be selected at random from all among those who apply. President Martin said that the event will be live-streamed on the college’s website, without password protection. The conversation will also be broadcast to a venue or venues on campus, and a video will be available on Amherst’s website a day or two after the event. Both the live-stream and video will be available to the public. The members thanked President Martin for her efforts to expand access to the event beyond the Amherst community.

Continuing with “topics of the day,” Provost Epstein informed the committee that more details have emerged about students’ plans on September 27, as part of the Global Climate Strike. She said that some students may walk out of their classes, and that teach-ins and a rally are being organized. Provost Epstein expressed concern that some students might protest in front of academic buildings and prevent other students from entering. President Martin commented that the students with whom she has met about the event have indicated that they plan to stand near the entrances to buildings and to encourage other students to walk out, but not to block anyone from going to class. Professor Horton commented that the college’s [Protests, Demonstrations, and Peaceful Dissent policy](#) outlines what is acceptable behavior under these circumstances.

Professor Brooks informed the members that, in her role as chair of the American studies department, student organizers had contacted her to request that faculty members in American studies support the strike by not penalizing students for walking out. Since no American studies classes are held on Fridays, the request was moot. Professor Basu said that a student organizer had reached out to her with the same appeal. She hopes that faculty will support students’ request and consider walking out with them to a location where staff could join them. Professor Brooks concurred and also suggested that it would be wise to consult with the student organizers about what they are planning and what they are asking of faculty and the college.

While expressing support for students’ commitment to raising awareness and calling for action, and hope that staff and faculty will also participate in the strike events, the members noted that it should be made clear that faculty members may exercise their discretion with regard to delaying or cancelling their classes or excusing students from classes. As for consequences for students who choose to miss a faculty member’s class, it is also up to the faculty member to decide, Provost Epstein commented. Professor Basu suggested that consideration be given to adopting a policy that students not face consequences for participating in the walk out. Provost Epstein said that she does not believe that the Committee of Six has the authority to make such a policy unilaterally. Professor Brooks commented that, given the gravity and impact of climate change, she would not penalize her own students for missing class.

Professor Horton, reflecting on the 2017 day of dialogue, commented on how valuable the event had been. He expressed regret that the lack of flexibility in the academic schedule makes it difficult to create space for engaging in such community conversations about important issues. Professor Goutte agreed; the structural barriers that are making it difficult to bring faculty, students, and staff

together to discuss climate change highlight the need for a community hour, she noted. It is her hope that this dilemma may create some momentum for making changes that will allow Amherst to set aside time for a community hour.

The committee agreed that the provost would send an email to faculty and staff later in the week to inform the community that some Amherst students are planning a number of activities on campus as part of the Global Climate Strike. The members decided that Provost Epstein's note should also convey that, as always, faculty should use their discretion with regard to delaying or cancelling class or excusing students from class. In addition, the members agreed, she should emphasize that the college has taken a strong stand on the issue of climate change, and express hope that faculty will choose not to penalize students for their participation in this effort. The provost said that she will also recommend that students speak with their professors about the consequences of missing class. In addition, she will communicate that supervisors should make every effort to make it possible for staff to participate in the activities on September 27. President Martin informed the committee that she has asked the senior staff, as much as possible, to facilitate the participation of those who report to them, in accordance with staff members' interest.

At 3:00 P.M., Justin Smith, associate general counsel, joined the meeting to discuss [a proposal from the CEP for a Military Activation Policy](#), suggestions for revisions to the document that were made by last year's Committee of Six, and subsequent responses from J. Smith to the Committee of Six's proposed revisions. Since Amherst is enrolling veterans in increasing numbers, this policy is needed to clarify procedures for students whose studies are interrupted by service obligations in the U.S. military. This policy is intended to comply with applicable law and to bring Amherst into alignment with other colleges. The policy is intended for students, such as reservists, who might be called to active duty in the middle of a semester. While recognizing the need for the policy to reflect the law, last year's Committee of Six emphasized the need to create a tone in the policy that conveys a sense of welcome and support.

J. Smith began the discussion by informing the members that he had not been involved in drafting the initial policy three years ago, but had later been asked to review an early iteration to ensure that the college's legal obligations were being addressed fully in the document. With compliance concerns in mind, he had suggested some revisions. In some cases, last year's Committee of Six had suggested that the college go beyond legal requirements in its practices. In this vein, this year's committee wondered whether there might be different policies for students who are called to active duty and for those who volunteer to go on active duty, regarding transcript notations surrounding withdrawal from courses after the add/drop period. J. Smith expressed some concern about having different policies for those who volunteer and those who are called to duty and noted that the college may or may not be aware of individual circumstances. He stressed that the decision about whether to go beyond the legal requirements is up to the college, while commenting that exceptions to standard policies about readmission that might be granted to veterans would create precedents for all students, which could have unanticipated consequences.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Schmalzbauer expressed the view that the way in which the policy is implemented, i.e., the degree to which the college offers support to the veterans who come to Amherst, is perhaps more important than the language used in the policy to describe details. All agreed that Amherst should have structures in place to provide the most robust support possible, making every effort to provide the advice and resources that veterans need, and to facilitate re-enrollment. After reviewing some of the proposed edits to the policy with these ideas and the legal advice of J. Smith in mind, the members decided that the best course would be to have J. Smith and Associate Provost Tobin create a "clean" draft of the document for the committee's review. It was

also agreed that they should draft an introductory paragraph for the policy, which would describe the college's investment in the continuing academic success of veterans at Amherst, including the support that is offered. The paragraph should have a welcoming and supportive tone, the committee advised. The members recognized the necessity of using the language from the law within the policy, as needed, and ensuring that the college is in compliance with the legal requirements, which offer protections to veterans, it was noted. Professor Brooks suggested citing the law within the policy, so that it is clear that most of the focus of the policy is on compliance with legal requirements. The members thanked J. Smith, and he left the meeting at 3:30 P.M.

Provost Epstein next informed the members of a request that she has received to continue the Lewis-Sebring pilot that the Committee of Six launched last year. Under the program, faculty and staff who want to bring between four and eight students as guests to the Lewis-Sebring dining room can do so if they reserve a table for this purpose at least two business days in advance of the meal, and if Dining Services staff confirm that space is available. The number of guests allowed when reserving the Mullins Room or the Faerber Room, or both, to host students is limited only by the rooms' seating capacity. The members decided to continue the program, and that this decision should be announced in the provost's newsletter.

Under "Questions from Committee Members," Professor Schmalzbauer asked if progress has been made on providing IDs to family members of Amherst employees so that they can charge meals at the dining hall. Provost Epstein responded that there are currently technical issues that make it challenging to do so. She has been informed that the new Workday system should make it possible to provide IDs to family members.

Continuing with questions, Professor Goutte reiterated her view that the Global Climate Strike should be an impetus for moving forward with a proposal to revamp the class schedule and create time and space for a community hour. Provost Epstein said that the faculty would need to embrace changes to the schedule in order to effect change, for example teaching more courses on Fridays. Professor Goutte commented that she understands the hurdles involved, but at the same time she feels that it would be helpful for faculty to consider the benefits of having a community hour in place. Professor Horton feels that the best way to move forward is to prepare a proposal with examples of changes in the class schedule that might make a community hour possible. He noted the advantages of finding a new ninety-minute teaching slot and said that he has [found the chart created by Professor McGeoch](#) to be a useful tool. It illustrates effectively where the bunching of classes occurs. In regard to teaching on Fridays, Professor Sims commented that, when she has taught classes on Friday afternoon, in particular, students have often missed class in order to participate in athletic events and to interview for jobs. She supports these opportunities, she noted, and suggested that any new schedule proposals involve input from colleagues in the Loeb Center and the athletics department. Provost Epstein thanked the members for this feedback and said that Jesse Barba, director of Institutional Research and Registrar Services, will work on a proposal, based on an examination of the data that have already been gathered, as soon his schedule permits.

Before turning to a discussion about a committee assignment, Professor Goutte asked what criteria are used when nominating faculty members to serve on particular committees. She wondered if the primary reasons for choosing a colleague might be expertise in matters relating to a particular committee's charge and/or distribution of service responsibilities across the faculty. Provost Epstein said that the Committee of Six has taken different approaches. For the most part, an effort is made to appoint tenured faculty members to serve on major committees; to try to have representation across

different disciplinary areas; to try to create a balance in regard to demographics, as much as possible; and to have pre-tenure faculty serve on committees that have a lighter workload. In the spring, in accordance with the regular practice of the committee, the members will receive a spreadsheet of committees that require new members and a list of faculty who are available to serve, as well as a history of faculty members' previous service. The provost's office makes suggestions of colleagues for each committee, but the Committee of Six makes the final recommendations about whom to invite to serve. Professor Basu said that she would be interested in having the committee examine the issue of the unevenness of service burdens among faculty members and to think together about the amount of service that is valuable and/or necessary during faculty members' pre-tenure years. Professor Brooks expressed support for this proposal. She said that it is her understanding that many faculty members who have been tenured recently are uncertain whether there is an expectation that faculty will do more service after receiving tenure. She thinks it would be helpful to have more clarity on this point. Provost Epstein said that the expectation is that tenured faculty members will serve on a committee every year when they are not leave.

Continuing the discussion, Professor Goutte asked if senior lecturers with particular expertise could serve on faculty committees that would benefit from their insight. Provost Epstein responded that senior lecturers do not serve on faculty committees, though they sometimes serve on college-wide committees. Professor Sims noted that, although senior lecturers indeed offer considerable expertise of value to committees, senior lecturers also have additional teaching responsibilities that the committee should be mindful of when considering new committee responsibilities. On a related note, Professor Horton inquired about efforts that he understands are under way to eliminate some of the distinctions that exist between lecturer positions and tenure-line faculty positions. Provost Epstein said that her office is in the process of examining the position of lecturer and senior lecturer at the college, with this goal in mind. She hopes to have changes in place by July 1. It is her hope to regularize these positions and to have them more closely resemble tenure-line positions in some ways, in regard to sabbatic leaves and other benefits, for example. However, lecturers and senior lecturers will still not have all the rights of tenure-line faculty, she noted.

The members reviewed a draft of a faculty meeting agenda for a possible meeting on October 1, 2019, and voted six in favor and zero opposed to forward it to the faculty. The committee then turned next to a review of several senior sabbatical fellowship proposals. Following a brief discussion, the committee voted to forward them to the board of trustees for approval.

Conversation turned to the first draft of the Committee of Six's guidelines for administering the common teaching evaluation form, a document based on the committee's discussion of [the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee for the Development of a Common Form to Evaluate Classroom Teaching](#). Riley Caldwell-O'Keefe, director of the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), recently wrote to the committee about the ad hoc committee's recommendation that a short video be used as a way of introducing the purpose and importance of teaching evaluations. She had shared the ad hoc committee's rationale for advising that a video be used, rather than having a script read, and had offered more details about the video. R. Caldwell O'Keefe had informed the members that the CTL's pedagogical research associates, who had facilitated focus groups with students on the ad hoc committee's behalf, suggested the idea of the video, based on students' responses; the ad hoc committee favored an approach that was developed by and for students. The ad hoc committee also held the view that a video would offer consistent messaging in a format that students might prefer over a listening to a script. In addition, R. Caldwell O'Keefe had noted that the ad hoc committee's outreach efforts had revealed that some faculty members are not comfortable with administering

course evaluations. A video, it was felt, could help set the stage, especially for those faculty who feel uncomfortable discussing the role that evaluations play in the reappointment and tenure processes. Touching on the substance of the video, R. Caldwell O'Keefe had noted that faculty members and students would discuss why student feedback is important. Examples of helpful and less helpful kinds of feedback would also be offered in the video, she said. The Film and Media Studies Program has offered to provide support and facilitate filming and editing with students, in order to produce a video of professional quality. Finally, R. Caldwell O'Keefe had explained that the video could be coupled with some standard bullet points to prompt faculty about how they might talk with students about why the individual cares about student feedback.

Most members found this additional information to be compelling and expressed support for using a video. Professor Sims reiterated her concerns surrounding the use of this format to frame the evaluation process, and her preference for a written script. She did express support for making a video that could be available to students outside of class. Professor Sims said that she understands that one option discussed by the ad hoc committee was that, before the start of the evaluation period, an email would be sent to all students. The purpose and importance of teaching evaluations would be described, and a link to the video would be provided in the email and, could be included on each course's Moodle page, if desired. Provost Epstein suggested that, perhaps, the video could also be shown in first-year seminars. Professor Sims worries that, if students are required to watch the video on numerous occasions, it will lose the gravity it is intended to convey. Professor Goutte suggested that such fears should be balanced with the overarching concern that the ways in which the evaluation process is framed for students are inconsistent at present, varying by department. Professor Sims agreed that ultimately consistency is the most important aspect of the new process, and that if a video is felt to be best, she would support it. Other members agreed, also favoring the use of the bullet points, as described.

The members next discussed a draft of the Committee of Six's guidelines for administering the common teaching evaluation form and decided to make some revisions. After the committee finalizes the document, the members decided to seek the input of the chairs of academic departments and programs and the Consultative Group for Untenured Faculty. The members also discussed the possibility of adding an introductory statement from the Committee of Six to the document.

In the brief time remaining, the members began a conversation about the process that is being used for soliciting teaching evaluations for courses taught by tenured faculty. The current system is described in the [Faculty Handbook \(IV., B., 2.\)](#) as follows:

**2. Teaching Evaluations of Tenured Faculty Members.** On behalf of the faculty, written evaluations will be solicited from students in each course taught by a tenured faculty member. These responses will remain anonymous. Students will not be able to submit a response after they have seen their final grades for the course; faculty members will not be able to see the responses until after final grades have been submitted. An automated system of response solicitation will direct students to an online evaluation form that offers a default template of questions (periodically reviewed by the Committee on Educational Policy) that will be customizable by each member of the faculty. All student comments will remain confidential, will be at the complete disposal of, and will be accessible only by the faculty member for whom the evaluations have been solicited (voted by the faculty, May 2007; amended, November 2014, effective 2015-2016).

Provost Epstein shared some aggregated data about low student response rates under the current system. The committee discussed the purpose and value of having teaching evaluations for tenured faculty, possibilities for making the process more meaningful and efficient, and approaches that might increase response rates, most notably having students complete the evaluations in class and perhaps moving away from the automated system. (It was noted that many tenured faculty members do not use the automated system to evaluate their courses, in some cases distributing paper evaluations in class. Professor Horton noted that the aggregated data indicate that some thirty-four courses taught by tenured faculty were evaluated using a customized form. The committee agreed that, ideally, the evaluation process should be a tool for helping all faculty members improve their teaching, while recognizing that, for tenure-track faculty, teaching evaluations create pressures, carry consequences, and play an evaluative role that is unique. Professor Brooks suggested that, for some tenured faculty members, the evaluation process continues to evoke negative associations and memories for years after the tenure decision. Tenured faculty may feel the need to take a break from the process in their post-tenure years. She wonders if it might even be helpful not to use the word *evaluation*. *Mid-semester feedback*, for example, creates a very different tone. Professor Sims said that she hopes tenured faculty will be encouraged to use the new form developed by the ad hoc committee. This could provide a valuable point of comparison to help understand student responses to the new form, she noted.

To inform the committee's deliberations, Professor Basu suggested that the provost provide the committee with some information about the debates that have taken place over the years about requiring evaluations for tenured faculty, noting the long-standing resistance to the idea at Amherst. She also raised questions about whether the evaluations should only be read by the tenured faculty member (as is the case now), or whether it could be desirable for other tenured members to read them. Professor Basu posed the question of whether the bar should be higher for promotion to full professor and whether teaching evaluations should play a role in the evaluation of associate professors at the time of promotion. Provost Epstein recommended that the promotion process not be part of the discussion about trying to make the evaluation process more meaningful for tenured faculty, including garnering more feedback from students. Commenting on the issue of the low response rate, President Martin noted the respect and admiration that Amherst students have for their professors; she wonders whether students might feel particularly uncomfortable evaluating senior scholar-teachers whom they hold in such high regard.

Noting the expectation at most other institutions that faculty members continue to have their courses evaluated after they are tenured, Professor Schmalzbauer said that she would be interested to learn more about why there was so much resistance to adopting a system of required course evaluations for tenured faculty members at Amherst, particularly given faculty members' commitment to excellence in teaching at the college. For tenured faculty, she considers the evaluations to be a responsibility to individuals and to their students and can inform professors' deep thinking about teaching. Professor Goutte suggested that, ideally, the culture at the college should shift, so that evaluation is the norm for all faculty. President Martin posed the question of whether there is a strong argument for not requiring teaching evaluations. Professor Brooks commented that, prior to tenure, the evaluation of teaching can sometimes inhibit pedagogical experimentation and innovation because of concern for the possible consequences in relation to promotion. Professor Horton commented that pre-tenure faculty members should be encouraged to be innovative, and he noted that, when evaluating teaching, the Committee of Six and departments do not rely only on end-of-semester evaluations. Candidates' statements about their teaching philosophy, retrospective letters from students, and observations by departmental colleagues are also valuable ways of assessing a

teaching record. Given the considerable recent focus on end-of-semester evaluations, Professor Sims suggested that it would be useful to emphasize to pre-tenure colleagues that these other forms of evaluation are also important.

Concluding the conversation, the members agreed that making the new common teaching evaluation form for tenure-track faculty the default form for tenured faculty, without requiring that it be used, could be a useful first step in improving the current automated process. Seeing how students respond to their own courses using the form could help tenured faculty understand how students are responding to their untenured colleagues' teaching, the committee agreed. It might also be valuable to make use of the same guidelines for administering the common form, once they are approved, the members noted. The provost agreed to bring this proposal to the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP). The members decided that there should be further conversation about the purpose and importance of teaching evaluations for tenured faculty, and about exploring ways of improving the process of soliciting the evaluations. The provost agreed to raise this topic at a meeting of the chairs of academic departments and programs this semester.

The meeting ended with the provost asking the members if they wish to consider changing the college's policy regarding consensual sexual relationships between faculty members and students. Prior to the meeting, she shared [a letter from Professor Sanderson](#) requesting that the Committee of Six review the policy and propose a new one. Professors Basu and Brooks also provided [some relevant articles](#). The current policy in the [Faculty Handbook, \(IV., A., 3.\)](#) reads as follows:

*Consensual sexual relationships between faculty members and students* (voted by the faculty, 1993). Experience has shown that consensual sexual relationships between faculty members and students can lead to harassment. Faculty members should understand the potential for coercion in sexual relationships with students with whom the faculty members also have instructional, advisory or supervisory relationships.

Even when such relationships do not lead to harassment, they can compromise the integrity of the educational process. The objectivity of evaluations which occur in making recommendations or assigning grades, honors, and fellowships may be called into question when a faculty member involved in those functions has or has had a sexual relationship with a student.

For these reasons, the college does not condone, and in fact strongly discourages consensual sexual relationships between faculty members and students. The college requires a faculty member to remove himself or herself from any supervisory, evaluative, advisory, or other pedagogical role involving a student with whom he or she has had or currently has a sexual relationship. Since the absence of this person may deprive the student of educational, advising, or career opportunities, both parties should be mindful of the potential costs to the student before entering into a sexual relationship.

In cases in which it proves necessary, the provost and dean of the faculty, in consultation with the dean of students and the chair (or head) of the relevant department, will evaluate the student's situation and take measures to prevent deprivation of educational and advising opportunities. The appropriate officers of the college will have the authority to make exceptions to normal academic rules and policies that are warranted by the circumstances.

Provost Epstein noted that Amherst is an outlier in strongly discouraging consensual sexual relationships between faculty members and students. Most institutions prohibit such relationships between undergraduates and faculty, and sometimes between graduate students and faculty, as well. The members agreed that Amherst's current policy is inadequate and antiquated, and that the time has come to change it. Professor Basu said that she would want to know what procedures Amherst would follow in investigating alleged violations of college policy. The committee also agreed that, in drafting a proposal for a new policy, it would be helpful to draw on the policies of other institutions. The provost agreed to provide the members with the policies of some peer schools. The college's attorneys will also be available to assist with the proposal, she noted. With the hour growing late, the members decided to continue their discussion of this topic at their next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 5:18 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The third meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2019–2020 was called to order by President Martin in the president’s office at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, September 30, 2019. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors Basu, Brooks, Goutte, Horton, Schmalzbauer, and Sims; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The meeting began with Provost Epstein informing the members of the Committee on Educational Policy’s decision to make the common teaching evaluation form that was approved by the faculty for tenure-track faculty last year, the default form for the automated system for tenured faculty members as well. Use of this form will not be a requirement for tenured faculty.

Provost Epstein next shared the news that the college has received a generous gift that has as its goal fostering further interaction among humanities disciplines at Amherst. The funds will support the transformation of a home to create new spaces that will house some of the college’s humanities departments, seminar rooms, and performance and other common areas. Already owned by Amherst, the home is located at 197 South Pleasant Street. The provost said that she has spoken with the members of several humanities departments, and that some of them are enthusiastic about the prospect of moving to the new space, which will include an addition to the original home. Professor Goutte asked whether relocating some departments would generate additional spaces for faculty offices in the spaces that will be vacated. Provost Epstein responded that the net gain would likely not be too great. For example, if the history department were to move, it would leave behind offices in the basement of Chapin Hall that would likely not be attractive for reuse, due to the diluvial history of the building. Professor Basu asked if all humanities departments will be invited to consider the possibility of moving to the house. The provost said that she welcomes expressions of interest from all humanities departments, while noting that, when considering relocation, departments that face significant challenges in their current spaces will be the priority. Expressing enthusiasm for the project, Professor Sims suggested creating a path adjacent to the house, which would enable students going to the Cadigan Center for Religious Life to have a more direct route. Provost Epstein concluded her remarks by informing the members that the response to her invitation to apply for the college’s new Mellon-funded faculty leadership seminar has been robust among associate and full professors; twenty tenured colleagues will participate in the seminar, which will begin this month, she noted.

At 2:55 P.M., Lisa Rutherford, chief policy officer and general counsel, and Norm Jones, chief diversity and inclusion officer, joined the meeting. Ms. Rutherford offered general legal advice related to the tenure process and answered questions posed by the committee. Mr. Jones spoke with the members about approaches to mitigating bias when reading teaching evaluations, and in the tenure process more generally. At the conclusion of the conversation, the members thanked Ms. Rutherford and Mr. Jones, and they left the meeting at 3:30 P.M.

Under “Questions from Committee Members,” Professor Sims thanked the president and provost for their support of the recent Global Climate Strike on campus. She then turned to the topic of the college’s plans to renovate Gooding and Hills fields, raising concerns surrounding the conversion of Hills Field from grass to an artificial surface, the impact of the projects on intramural and club sports, and the possible environmental repercussions. Professor Sims asked about the process of engaging with student groups when considering options. Provost Epstein explained that Gooding Field, the artificial-turf field just west of Pratt Field, was intended to have a lifespan of ten years, but has already been in use for thirteen. Colleagues in athletics anticipate that it will no longer be possible to play on the field after this fall’s field hockey season concludes. The provost said that she has been told that, at the time of its installation, the type of turf used for Gooding served field hockey, and a range of other sports, well. Over the past decade, however, field hockey has moved to a much tighter and shorter-nap surface (Astro-turf or its equivalent). As a result, field hockey is now the only varsity sport at Amherst that is not played on its preferred surface, which presents a number of issues, including concerns about equity.

Continuing the conversation, Provost Epstein noted that the result of replacing Gooding’s current surface with Astro-turf would be that the field would no longer serve the broad range of sports, including clubs and intramurals, that it currently hosts. She understands that Astro-turf is a very hard and fast surface that is not conducive to sports such as lacrosse and soccer, and recreational activities. As an alternative, the college has decided to pursue a “two-field” approach. The narrow Hills Field, which has a natural-grass surface and is

situated on the lower tier adjacent to and west of Gooding, will be expanded to accommodate an Astro-turf surface that will meet the needs of field hockey. With a dedicated location for field hockey in place at Hills, the current outdated surface on Gooding will be replaced with a surface that is ideal for a full range of club and intramural sports (with occasional use by varsity sports teams). While some recreational club and intramural athletes enjoy playing on a natural-grass surfaces, colleagues in athletics believe that the year-round access to a new multi-sport surface on Gooding (which will be made possible by the conversion of Hills) will be appreciated by students. They will benefit from a predictable surface that will be available for extended use even during the winter, when snow can be removed. Snow removal is not possible on natural-grass fields. The provost said that a good deal of grass-surface fields (Memorial, Hitchcock and the lawn in front of athletics) will continue to provide a natural surface for those club and intramural teams that prefer to play on grass.

Professor Sims expressed support for expanded playing opportunities, but said that she hopes this could be balanced with concerns about the environmental and health impacts of shifting to a greater number of fields with artificial surfaces. These include the loss of drainage, habitat, and cooling provided by vegetated surfaces, as well as the potential health impacts from volatile organic compounds, crumb rubber, and the transmission of bacterial infections associated with artificial turf. These health concerns remain under study by the EPA and other organizations, she noted. (Following the meeting, the provost consulted with Jim Brassord, chief of campus operations, about some of Professor Sims's concerns. He noted that there are numerous peer-reviewed studies that establish the safety of artificial fields. The sports architect who is working on this project is assembling a list of these studies and will forward it to the college.) The provost noted that the architect who is working on Hills Field has designed a system (a subsurface detention reservoir) that will collect surges of rainwater and ensure that the run-off amount and rate of flow to the storm water system will not increase. In addition, the field's "geo-tech" design will allow for the water in the new system to percolate into the ground in the same way a permeable natural field does. While the Astro-turf requires watering to optimize conditions for field hockey, the low-flow irrigation system has been designed to minimize water use. Professor Sims wondered about the possibility of building additional fields or indoor space, as she agrees that there are substantial wellness benefits to athletic activities. J. Brassord later commented that the option of building a fieldhouse, which could be designed with an indoor artificial playfield, albeit of limited size, is considered in the college's campus framework plan. Provost Epstein said that the college considered numerous alternatives to the two-field option described above, including building a field at the Dakin Estate or along Snell Street, but determined that these locations are too remote from campus, would require clear cutting of large wooded areas and other significant changes to the landscape; posed potential security risks for students; and would not provide the benefit of the other sports-related services offered by the Pratt Field complex (e.g., Conway Field House). These options were also significantly more expensive than the two-field option that includes conversion of Hills Field, she noted. Provost Epstein said that she has not heard complaints from students about the plans for the fields and noted that there have been two community meetings about the project, which were sparsely attended, she believes. The provost encouraged Professor Sims to attend another community meeting that would be held in the evening (September 30). Provost Epstein suggested that Professor Sims and anyone else who has questions contact Don Faulstick, director of athletics, or Gregg DiNardo, associate director of athletics. (Professor Sims later noted that she did attend the September 30 meeting.)

Turning to another topic, Professor Sims asked how the committee would prioritize its work of the semester. Provost Epstein said that she and Associate Provost Tobin have assembled a list of possible agenda items, noting that the list has been shared with the committee. Included are items that are being carried over from last year, as well as new topics for discussion. No doubt this list will grow over the course of the year, as new issues are brought to the committee, the provost said. Members are also welcome to suggest topics at any time. Professor Sims noted that some issues are time sensitive and suggested that the committee review the full list of topics and establish a schedule with this factor in mind. Provost Epstein said that time sensitivities, among other factors, are taken into account when setting the committee's weekly agenda. Professor Goutte suggested that the committee raise questions about agenda items under "Questions from Committee Members." Professor Sims inquired about two issues that she thought might be time sensitive. She asked about a proposal to develop a comprehensive housing plan for the college, citing the need to take action because of decisions being faced by some members of the community. She also wondered if issues relating to the new student center

and plans for additional classrooms will need to be addressed sooner rather than later because of pressing needs surrounding these projects. President Martin said that no decisions will be made about the student center until an architect is chosen for the project. Once an architect is selected, which should be soon, consultation with the campus community about the student center, a process that has already begun, will continue, she noted. The addition/renovation of classrooms will occur incrementally over many years, Provost Epstein commented, and there are no pressing issues beyond the consideration of the teaching schedule at this time, she noted.

The members next reviewed a revised draft of guidelines for the administration of teaching evaluations, and finalized the document, which they decided should be shared with the chairs of academic departments and programs at their meeting on Friday, as well as with the Consultative Group for Untenured Faculty.

Prompted by Professor Sitze's questions about the role and authority of the position of provost and dean of the faculty, which he conveyed in [a letter to the committee](#), as well as the committee's own conversation about this topic at an earlier meeting, the members suggested that President Martin share her rationale for changing the title of Amherst's chief academic officer, and the implications of this decision. The president responded that, as she had announced in an email to the community last March (restating in her remarks here some of what she had written then), she decided to make the change, after consultation with last year's Committee of Six and the board of trustees, to convey with greater clarity the central role that the position plays in the academic and administrative life of the college. The president pointed out that the only position that is more senior within the college's administration is that of president, a status as "number two" that the title of the position should reflect, in her view. She noted that the chief academic officer at nearly all of Amherst's peer institutions is called either provost and dean of the faculty, provost and dean of the college, or vice-president of academic affairs.

Continuing the conversation, some members asked how the current role of the provost differs from the earlier one, which the president had established and which did not appear to be successful. President Martin responded that, when she had decided to create the position of provost at Amherst in 2013, she had felt that the college needed a position at a very high level that would help build a capacity for integrated administration and planning. Over time she came to understand, that for the provost model to be effective at Amherst, the position would need to have a focal role in Amherst's academic life. Given the preeminence of the position of the dean of the faculty at the college, it had been difficult for the provost to fulfill the responsibilities of the job, as it had originally been conceived. The provost position created in 2013 was useful in catalyzing and organizing important strategic planning efforts of Amherst faculty and staff; however, as structured, the position did not ultimately work for Amherst, and the needs identified by President Martin remained. Over the past several years, the responsibilities that she had once envisioned residing with the provost had shifted to the dean of the faculty, and Amherst essentially then had a provost structure, but without the formal title. Areas ranging from study away, to career planning and development, to international partnerships, to data-gathering and reporting have benefited from closer ties to the chief academic officer of the college, and to the vision and perspectives of the faculty, President Martin reiterated. In response to emerging needs and goals, the reporting lines of a number of administrative offices that support Amherst's academic mission directly—some entities of long-standing at the college and some newly established—are now positioned under the provost's office. These areas include the Loeb Center for Career Exploration and Planning, the Center for Community Engagement, the Office of Fellowships, the Grants Office, the Office of Global Education, the Office of Institutional Research, the new science center, the Emily Dickinson Museum, and the Center for Humanistic Inquiry, and the Center for Teaching and Learning. The centrality and breadth of the administrative work of the dean of the faculty has also expanded, with the dean's responsibilities extending to areas of student life, advancement, and finance.

In conclusion, President Martin commented that the position's new responsibilities were undertaken at the same time that the dean of the faculty continued to oversee all functions and areas of the college that have traditionally been within the purview of Amherst's chief academic officer. Though in recent discussion, some faculty have suggested that the dean of the faculty and provost roles are separate, the president explained that they are actually one integrated position. The returning members of the committee noted that they had supported the idea of renaming the position last year and remain in favor of the decision now. Professor Goutte, who had raised some questions about the decision during the last conversation about changing the title, said that she had found the president's explanation for changing the title of the chief academic officer to be compelling and reassuring. Professor Sims, who had raised the question of whether changes to the handbook

should go before the faculty, also found the explanation helpful. The president was encouraged to present this information to the faculty. At the committee's request, President Martin agreed to discuss this matter with the faculty at the faculty meeting the next evening. The members decided to consider at one of their future meetings the process for revising the *Faculty Handbook* to reflect the change to the title.

Discussion returned to the college's policy regarding consensual sexual relationships between faculty members and students (*Faculty Handbook*, (IV., A., 3.)). The committee reviewed the policies of some peer institutions assembled by the provost's office, agreed that several would serve as good models to emulate, and asked to be provided with some additional policies from liberal arts colleges within the New England Small College Athletic Conference (NESCAC) and several other elite liberal arts colleges. The committee agreed that reviewing the policies in hand is helpful and affirms that Amherst is an outlier in not prohibiting faculty members from engaging in consensual sexual relationships with students. Professor Basu, who said that she is in favor of re-thinking Amherst's policy, said that, in discussions about any proposal for change in the direction of prohibition, it will be important to be attentive to issues of process and procedure. For example, what would the mechanisms be for reporting such relationships? Should the penalty be greater if a faculty member doesn't report the relationship? Through what mechanism would a third party make a report? Professor Schmalzbauer wondered if faculty would become mandated reporters under a new policy that prohibited these relationships. Continuing, Professor Basu raised some additional questions. What are the appropriate penalties or range of penalties for having a sexual relationship? In her view, any sanctions should be greater for the faculty member than for the student. The other members concurred. The question was also raised as to whether any new policy should extend to relations between staff and students and/or between tenured and untenured faculty. The members agreed that having a committee-of-the whole discussion about these and other issues would be informative.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Brooks commented that she would hope, and prefer, that the faculty's discussion of this topic would focus less on procedures to address complaints and violations, including possible penalties, and more on the reasons for changing and implementing the policy, including the evidence drawn from policies of peer institutions and social science research that demonstrates the detrimental effects of these relationships on education—both for those students who may be directly involved in a relationship with a faculty member, as well as other students. In regard to the reasons for a reconsideration of the current policy now, she wonders if it might be informative to present at the faculty meeting the latest research on the impacts of faculty-student sexual relationships on the teaching environment. Professor Schmalzbauer said that she would also like to learn more about the arguments that led the faculty to adopt the current policy and to retain it as other schools moved in the direction of prohibition. Provost Epstein said that her office would gather and share the minutes of previous discussions by the Committee of Six and in faculty meetings on this topic.

Professor Sims asked who else beyond faculty should fall under a prohibition of these relationships. The members agreed that, based on the important mentoring and personal development roles that coaches play, they should fall under any new policy that is adopted, and that there might be other staff members to which the policy should, perhaps, apply. Professor Horton suggested that consideration be given to how the issue at hand should apply to students who grade the work of other students. Some members wondered if staff members, including recent graduates who are in authority roles in relation to students, as well as current students who grade student work, should be required to notify the college about a relationship with a current student. Such situations might require notification and recusal for roles involving structural authority over a student. The provost noted that, under a prohibition policy, if a relationship between a faculty member and a student were to be reported, informal resolutions to the matter could be sought first. Depending on the success of that approach and the seriousness of the issues involved, it could be necessary to engage in the current grievance process for faculty as a next step. It was agreed that the provost should be able to exercise some discretion in these cases, as is true in other circumstances. Provost Epstein said that there may not be a process in place for staff that is comparable to the faculty grievance process, and that she would see if there are any plans to develop both a policy about sexual relationships between staff and students and a process for addressing such relationships if they should occur.

At the conclusion of the conversation, the members agreed to draft a policy that would prohibit sexual relationships between Amherst College faculty and Amherst College students and between Amherst College coaches and Amherst College students and to seek the faculty's feedback via a committee-of-the-whole conversation at a faculty meeting. At that meeting, the members agreed that it will be particularly important to hear the views of faculty who are relatively new to the college. The members then discussed whether the prohibition should extend to sexual relationships between Amherst faculty members and Five-College students who enroll in classes at Amherst. It was agreed that it should.

The committee then turned briefly to a personnel matter.

The meeting adjourned at 5:18 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The fourth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2019–2020 was called to order by President Martin in the president's office at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, October 7, 2019. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors Basu, Brooks, Goutte, Horton, Schmalzbauer, and Sims; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The meeting began with the committee, the president, and the provost noting, with great sadness, the loss of Lyle McGeoch, Brian E. Boyle '69 Professor of Mathematics and Computer Science. Professor McGeoch died suddenly and unexpectedly on October 5, 2019. President Martin informed the members that details about arrangements would be shared with the community as soon as information becomes available. She said that she has spoken with Cathy McGeoch, Professor McGeoch's wife, and has expressed the college community's deepest condolences and support during this very difficult time. President Martin informed the members that a memorial service for Professor McGeoch will take place on December 14 in Johnson Chapel. The president also discussed the resources that are being provided to support students.

Under "Questions from Committee Members," the members thanked President Martin for her efforts surrounding the October 3 visit to campus of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, which all agreed had been a wonderful event. President Martin applauded the teamwork of the many staff members who had worked with such enthusiasm, generosity, and diligence on the complex logistics that had contributed to the visit's success. She informed the members that Andrew Nussbaum '85, chairman of Amherst's board of trustees and the justice's former clerk, had spoken with Justice Ginsburg after she had returned to Washington. She expressed to him how much she had enjoyed her time at Amherst, including the performance by the Choral Society and the memento that she had received from the college, which was crafted by members of Amherst's Building Trades Shop. The committee, the president, and the provost noted the poise of the students who had asked questions during several events with the justice.

Professor Basu next raised the topic of the range of departmental criteria for students undertaking honors work at the college; some departments allow all majors to write theses, while others require a minimum GPA for prospective thesis writers. The minimum grade also varies across departments. She said that she is concerned about inconsistencies in college policies around this issue. One consequence, Professor Basu noted, is that a student who is majoring in two departments may be allowed to write a thesis in one department, but not in the other. She is conflicted about what policy is preferable. While attracted to the principle that all students should have the opportunity to do honors work, she is also concerned that students whose prior academic performance has not been strong may be less likely to succeed in the honors program. On a related front, it was noted that some departments may use a GPA cut-off when determining which students can become majors. Provost Epstein said that it is her impression that departments no longer take this approach, which prevents access to the full curriculum for some students. The provost expressed support for having consistent practices across departments. The committee agreed that it would be helpful to learn more about the range of departmental practices regarding honors work and majoring. The members suggested that the provost have a discussion about this topic with the chairs of academic departments and programs at an upcoming chairs' meeting. The committee also asked that the current system of Latin honors be discussed by the chairs. The provost agreed to include these topics on the agenda of a chairs' meeting.

Continuing with questions, Professor Brooks inquired about the college's policy regarding the use of *Indigenous Peoples Day* as the name for the October holiday that has traditionally been called *Columbus Day*. She noted that some students have asked her if the college plans to stop using Columbus Day, commenting that both names for the holiday appear in the printed calendar that is distributed on campus. It was noted that Columbus Day is also the name used in the default holiday calendar that Google provides as part of its standard "G Suite" tool kit for the United States. (Information technology staff later noted that it is possible to turn off the holiday feature or to subscribe to another holiday calendar in which the holiday is called *Indigenous Peoples Day*.) Provost Epstein commented that the college's academic calendar does not include any references to Columbus Day or Indigenous Peoples Day.

Discussion turned to the conversation that took place at the October 1 faculty meeting about the recommendation of the Ad Hoc Committee for the Development of a Common Form to Evaluate Classroom Teaching that the faculty vote on whether to retain the current system used for teaching evaluations for tenure-track faculty members or to adopt a fully anonymous system see ([the report of the Ad Hoc Committee for the Development of a Common Form to Evaluate Classroom Teaching](#) (pages nine through eleven). Professor Horton commented that the conversation at the faculty meeting had been productive, though it appears that a specific proposal did not emerge. The other members agreed, while commenting that arguments for moving to a fully anonymous system seemed to revolve around the possibility that some students would respond more freely; arguments for retaining the current system seemed to revolve around protecting tenure-track faculty—in particular, protecting faculty members of color and women faculty members from potential bias.

Continuing the conversation, the members concurred that they had found Professor Kingston's comments at the meeting, which had focused on holding students accountable as the best way to address bias, to be compelling. The committee did not find the research that was discussed to be convincing, noting there seems to be very little research on the implications of having a system of evaluation that is fully anonymous. Professor Brooks expressed concern that the research that has been cited seems to make large claims that do not seem to be supported. Professor Schmalzbauer agreed, while commenting that there is a great deal of relevant research that may be generalizable when it comes to the teaching evaluation process and the power dynamic that is inherent in it. Seminal sociological research that has compared youth from underrepresented backgrounds, namely, working-class backgrounds, with those from middle- and upper-class backgrounds, suggests that those from privileged backgrounds are much more likely to be comfortable challenging their teachers than are those from less privileged backgrounds. Those in the latter demographic are likely to have been socialized to defer to their teachers out of respect. This suggests to Professor Schmalzbauer that low-income students may feel uncomfortable being candid in evaluations, especially when being candid entails being critical, when they must sign their names. Students from more privileged backgrounds may feel more comfortable doing so. Professor Schmalzbauer summarized that this research suggests to her that anonymity could help equalize the student experience of evaluating their professors. Professor Sims said that she agrees with Professor Schmalzbauer that it is important to elevate the voices of students from underprivileged backgrounds. In her view, though, the current system helps to protect students because it allows tenured faculty to check that there are no apparent patterns of bias toward particular groups of students that emerge from the evaluations. As she had suggested previously, Professor Basu wondered if it might be helpful to launch a pilot in which some tenured

colleagues could be asked to have students evaluate their courses using unsigned forms, so student identities would not be available. Other tenured colleagues could be asked to have their classes evaluated under the current system. The results could then be reviewed to try to determine if anonymity has an impact on the extent of critical comments different groups of students provide. In the end, the committee decided that the faculty should be asked to vote on whether to retain the current system used for teaching evaluations for tenure-track faculty members or to adopt a fully anonymous system. The majority of the committee expressed a preference for retaining the current system.

The next subject of discussion was also informed by a matter addressed at the October 1 faculty meeting, that is, the change in title of the *dean of the faculty* to the *provost and dean of the faculty*. The members agreed that President Martin's remarks about her rationale for changing the title of Amherst's chief academic officer, and the implications of the decision, had provided the clarification that was needed. Professor Horton suggested that care should be taken when shortening the new title to *provost*, and the committee agreed that the full position title should appear in the *Faculty Handbook* whenever the title of the chief academic officer is referenced. Since the role and responsibilities of the position have not changed, the members decided that changing the title in the *Faculty Handbook* does not require a vote of the faculty, as doing so simply updates the title to the current title of Amherst's chief academic officer. The members considered a personnel matter.

Conversation turned to the committee's draft of a policy to replace the college's current policy regarding consensual sexual relationships between faculty members and students ([Faculty Handbook, \(IV., A., 3.\)](#)), which the members had agreed to draft following their previous conversation about this topic. Prior to today's meeting, the provost's office had provided the members with [the policies of some additional liberal arts colleges within the New England Small College Athletic Conference \(NESCAC\) and several other elite liberal arts colleges](#), as well as the minutes of past discussions of this topic that have taken place over the years at faculty meetings and within the Committee of Six, per the members' request. The committee did not find past arguments for the current policy, which "strongly discourages" consensual sexual relationships between faculty members and students, to be convincing. The members were struck, once again, by the fact that Amherst is an outlier among its peers in not prohibiting sexual and romantic relationships between faculty members and students.

Continuing the discussion, the members agreed that the best approach in regard to the policy would be to rethink it, rather than to revise the current handbook language, since a stronger statement is required. The committee decided that the following tenets should serve as the underpinning of the new policy that the committee would propose: that the integrity of the faculty-student relationship is at the core of Amherst's educational mission, and that, because of the unequal institutional power inherent in this relationship, the college prohibits sexual or romantic relations between faculty and students, even if both parties consider the relationship consensual. The members also agreed that, in its draft policy, it would signal that, even when such relationships do not entail harassment, they compromise the integrity of the educational process. Also stressed would be the importance of creating a healthy learning environment. The committee considered having the policy also apply to coaches, teaching assistants, and associates, and staff in instructional roles, as well as students who evaluate other students, but decided that other policies should be developed to cover these constituencies. It was agreed that consideration should be given to developing a policy for staff. The provost said that she

would consult with Lisa Rutherford, chief policy officer and general counsel, about policies that might govern other members of the community.

Beyond the policy itself, the committee noted the importance of exploring training, including bias training, that could be offered to faculty and coaches about the topics covered under the policy. The members asked the provost to seek more information about the ways in which a new policy that prohibits sexual and romantic relations between members of the community (as described above) may intersect with college's compliance with Title IX, including, whether faculty would become mandated reporters. The members also wondered about possible overlap with Amherst's policies regarding sexual harassment. The provost agreed to consult with L. Rutherford about these questions too. Professor Brooks asked whether it might also be helpful to consult with the Sexual Respect Task Force.

As the meeting drew to a close, the members also discussed issues of process and procedure in relation to its proposed policy, continuing to explore what the mechanisms might be for reporting relationships; how complaints might be adjudicated; how to protect confidentiality in the case of false accusations; and the range of penalties that might be applied if a faculty member or coach is found to have engaged in prohibited behavior. Provost Epstein explained that the existing grievance procedures ([Faculty Handbook, III., I.](#)), which, depending on the circumstances, may include an informal resolution to a grievance, would apply if the proposed policy were to be violated. The members agreed that it would be important to preserve informal ways of resolving violations of the policy. The committee felt that it would be helpful to know the range of possible ways of addressing violations of the committee's proposed policy. For example, do most schools address violations through their standing grievance processes? Are there alternatives to this model? Does the chief academic officer always play a central decision-making role? The members wondered about the degree to which the proposed policy should describe possible penalties, as well as ways of achieving resolution without penalty. The provost said that she would consult with L. Rutherford about these questions, as well.

At the conclusion of the conversation, the members agreed that, after making some refinements to their draft policy, they would seek the faculty's feedback via a committee-of-the-whole conversation at the next faculty meeting. At that meeting, the members agreed that it will be particularly important to hear the views of faculty who are relatively new to the college.

The meeting adjourned at 5:18 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The fifth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2019–2020 was called to order by President Martin in the president’s office at 1:45 P.M. on Wednesday, October 16, 2019. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors Basu, Goutte, Horton, Schmalzbauer, and Sims; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder. Professor Brooks participated in the meeting via speaker phone. The majority of the meeting was devoted to personnel matters.

The committee reviewed a draft faculty meeting agenda for a meeting that the members agreed should take place on November 5. The members finalized a motion that would be brought forward to allow the faculty to vote on whether to retain the current system used for teaching evaluations for tenure-track faculty members, or to adopt a fully anonymous system. Members felt that the faculty should vote on the matter, as the Ad Hoc Committee for the Development of a Common Form to Evaluate Classroom Teaching recommended. (See [the report of the Ad Hoc Committee for the Development of a Common Form to Evaluate Classroom Teaching](#) (pages nine through eleven). After some conversation, the committee decided not to include in the motion the ad hoc committee’s language about retroactively removing the names of students from existing evaluations. As an overall matter, Professor Sims said that she is concerned about putting forward a motion that could change the tenure process in such a substantial way. She noted that the ad hoc committee did not reach consensus on this issue and that, in her view, the committee-of-the-whole discussion did not seem to indicate broad support for anonymity. The ad hoc committee report details the advantages of the current system of signed evaluations in terms of student accountability and protection of tenure-track faculty, Professor Sims pointed out. The report also cites research that anonymous course evaluations are significantly less positive for those faculty most vulnerable to bias, she noted. Most other members, while also opposed to moving to a fully anonymous system, felt that the faculty should decide this issue. The committee then voted one in favor and five opposed on the substance of the following motion and six in favor and zero opposed to forward it to the faculty:

**Motion**

That all end-of-semester teaching evaluations for tenure-track faculty members be made anonymous, beginning with courses taught in spring 2020, and that revisions be made to language within the common teaching evaluation form and within the *Faculty Handbook* at [III., D., 4.](#) and as [III., E., 4., a., 5.](#) ([The proposed revisions are shown in red online.](#))

The members agreed to finalize the faculty meeting agenda at their next meeting, following a conversation about the committee’s revised draft proposal for a policy to replace the college’s current policy regarding consensual sexual relationships between faculty members and students ([Faculty Handbook, \(IV., A., 3.\)](#)).

The meeting adjourned at 3:11 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The sixth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2019–2020 was called to order by President Martin in the president’s office at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, October 21, 2019. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors Basu, Brooks, Goutte, Horton, Schmalzbauer, and Sims; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The meeting began with President Martin informing the members that the meetings (October 17–19) of the board of trustees had gone very well, as had the fall festival held on Sunday of that weekend. The president noted that the NGO Mighty Earth had contacted Amherst’s Food Justice Alliance group and had encouraged the students to hold a protest while David MacLennan ’81, chairman and chief executive officer of Cargill and an Amherst trustee, was on campus. The students organized a demonstration outside the Mead Art Museum. Mr. MacLennan offered to continue a dialogue with students whenever he is at Amherst, the president said.

Under “Questions from Committee Members,” Professor Schmalzbauer asked about the trends suggested by statistics quoted in an article titled “Uptick in Sexual Assaults Reported on Area Campuses,” which appeared in the *Daily Hampshire Gazette* on October 16, 2019. The author had noted that, as required by the Clery Act, local colleges had released their “annual reports of on- and off-campus crime,” defined in the piece as crimes that either occurred in or were reported in 2018. The figures quoted for the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and Amherst College represented increases in the number of “fondlings” and rapes in comparison to 2016 and 2017, the author reported. The committee expressed concern over the number of assaults and the rising numbers. The members wondered whether the number of crimes is rising, or whether the increases might be a reflection of an increase in reports of assaults. President Martin and Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein said that they would seek more information from Lisa Rutherford, chief policy officer and general counsel, and Laurie Frankl, Title IX coordinator.

Continuing with questions, Professor Sims noted that, in response to concerns she had voiced, the sports architect who is working on Hills Field sent her some research about the possible impact that exposure to artificial turf has on health. She plans to review these articles soon. Professor Sims asked if any future plans call for putting artificial turf on Hitchcock and Memorial Fields. Provost Epstein said that she does not believe that there are any plans to convert these grass fields to artificial turf, but said that she would confirm this understanding with Jim Brassord, chief of campus operations. Professor Sims next asked about the move of some staff members to offices in Hadley, space that the college is renting. She shared that some staff who will not themselves be part of the move have conveyed concerns to her that this change may have an impact on staff morale; those who move may feel removed from the campus community, it is feared. She wonders whether the distance will prevent staff from having lunch with colleagues and using the gym, for example. Attention to these issues would be particularly important, Professor Sims noted, as the college has been seeking to address staff concerns and improve morale in recent years.

Provost Epstein responded that the move that Professor Sims referenced will bring together some staff who are presently situated within the Office of Human Resources and the Office of the Controller, in order to create a new Department of Shared Services. This new entity, led by Ralph Johnson, director of procurement and shared services, will handle the day-to-day work associated with payroll, accounts payable, procurement, and human resources information systems, and benefits administration. President Martin commented that the consolidation is part of the transition to the Workday system, and will help improve the efficiency of college business processes. Provost Epstein noted that space constraints on campus are making it necessary for

the new department to move to the McKesson office facility, which is located about two miles away from campus on Route 9. The provost informed the members that the college explored some spaces in downtown Amherst, but that renovation costs were prohibitive. Some members wondered whether the move is temporary or permanent. The provost said that this is not known at this time. Professor Sims suggested that those who are being asked to move be asked about their experiences in the new space.

Continuing the conversation, Provost Epstein reiterated that the space challenges that the college faces are serious. Professor Horton wondered about planning efforts that may be under way to address these challenges. He commented that he had found the conversation of last spring about the need for a student center and [the campus master plan](#) to be informative. The president and provost said that the framework plan continues to guide planning efforts, including those surrounding the student center. The provost explained that the Committee on Priorities and Resources (CPR), in accordance with its charge, often has conversations about space needs, including the budgetary impact of potential solutions that are proposed. Provost Epstein noted that, through projects such as the renovation of 197 South Pleasant Street, which will create additional faculty offices and seminar rooms, the college is trying to make incremental progress on space issues in the near term. Professor Goutte commented that it appears that the new science center project did not produce many additional faculty offices or classrooms. Provost Epstein said that the science center was designed to provide more offices than were available in Merrill Science Center, in the computer science department when it was located in Seeley Mudd, and in McGuire. Since that time, additional faculty and staff have been hired and are now occupying some of these science center offices, in accordance with plans and growth in STEM fields. The provost noted that there has been discussion of constructing a building at the periphery of the campus that could house some administrative functions and free up space at the core of the campus. She said that she would check with J. Brassord about the status of this idea.

The members asked how the shortage of classrooms on campus is being addressed. Provost Epstein reiterated what she had said at an earlier meeting, that Professor Cheney, associate provost and associate dean of the faculty; J. Brassord; and J. Barba, in consultation with an outside consultant, have been monitoring classroom needs and identifying areas of concern, and are gradually making improvements, as space and the budget permits. Solving classroom needs will take some time, she noted. One problem is that many faculty members prefer to teach in the same teaching slots (largely classes taught from 10:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M., two days a week), which means that classroom use often can be bunched. She noted, as an example, that for next semester, sixty faculty members requested to teach two days a week at 10:00 A.M. Having more faculty teach on Fridays would also help with space problems, as would a willingness to teach in classrooms outside their departments. Professor Goutte commented that the science departments carefully coordinate the scheduling of classes that pre-medical students must complete as part of the hierarchical curriculum that they must complete, which spans departments. The departments are then told that there are not appropriate classrooms during the times in which these courses must be taught. Provost Epstein noted that the FTE cap has now been reached, and having more faculty teaching is probably also contributing to classroom-related issues. Some departmental practices may also be playing a role. The members wondered if changes in the class schedule and/or other areas might help to address the situation or if new classrooms would be needed. The provost noted that the new student center, which may include a small number of classrooms, and the reuse of Keefe Campus Center for faculty offices, should help with both the classroom and office issues, but these spaces will not be available for a number of years.

Provost Epstein next offered congratulations, joined by the president and the other members, to Professor Brooks on winning three awards recently, two from the Western History Association and one from the Tomaquag Museum. The association awarded Professor Brooks the John C. Ewers Award, which is “given annually for the best published book on the North American (including Mexico), Indian Ethnohistory,” and the Donald L. Fixico Award, in recognition of “innovative work in the field of American Indian and Canadian First Nations History that centers Indigenous epistemologies and perspectives.” The Tomaquag Museum’s Princess Red Wing Arts and Culture Award was given to Professor Brooks “for service to the community as a culture bearer, sharing an Abenaki perspective through scholarship, authorship, and activism for aboriginal rights and land preservation.”

Conversation returned to the committee’s most recent draft of a proposal for a policy to replace the college’s current policy regarding consensual sexual relationships between faculty members and students (*Faculty Handbook, (IV., A., 3.)*). Professor Basu said that she feels that the current draft seems ready to share with the faculty at the November 5 faculty meeting, during which a committee-of-the-whole conversation will take place. Taking into account the faculty’s feedback, the committee will then finalize the policy. Beyond the policy itself, she wondered what the best mechanisms would be to engage and inform the community about the policy and the issues it addresses. In her view, the rationale for a policy that prohibits sexual and romantic relations between faculty and students is that it ensures the best possible educational environment for Amherst students, and protects the integrity of faculty-student relationships. She expressed the view that compliance with the policy will be encouraged if opportunities for informal resolution are provided, and if the steps in the process that will be used to investigate alleged violations are clear. Professor Basu suggested that it might be helpful to have alternatives to making a report to the provost, as this process might make some faculty reluctant to come forward. This process might also lead to allegations that the provost has excessive discretionary authority in handling these cases and may handle them differently. Provost Epstein noted that, while the provost could arbitrarily dismiss alleged violations and not bring them forward to the Committee on Adjudication, the provost could not impose a serious sanction on a faculty member; that would be the task of the Committee on Adjudication. An alternative might be to suggest that individuals can consult with other college offices. The provost said that she does not think that bringing matters of this kind to other offices as part of a formal process is appropriate, but said that she would seek the advice of the college’s attorneys on this point. Professor Basu expressed the view that it would be helpful to decide who should address questions about the policy. Professor Horton expressed support for having the provost receive reports and to initiate information-gathering when allegations come forward. The college’s existing grievance procedures would then be followed. The committee suggested that it would be helpful if L. Rutherford is prepared to review the details of the grievance procedures, which are complex, with the faculty.

Continuing the discussion, Professor Basu suggested that, in the future, the committee should also bring forward a proposal (see her suggestion below) to revise the first paragraph of the *Statement on Respect for Persons* (*Faculty Handbook IV, A., 3.*) to communicate the concepts that serve as the underpinning of the proposal policy and to send a consistent message. The other members agreed.

Respect for the rights, dignity and integrity of others is essential for the well-being of a community. Actions by any person which do not reflect such respect for others **OR IMPAIR THE INTEGRITY OF THE FACULTY-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP** are damaging to each member of the community and hence damaging to Amherst College. Each member of the community should be free from interference, **VIOLATIONS OF TRUST**, intimidation or disparagement in the work place, the classroom and the social, recreational and residential environment.

The members finalized [a draft proposal](#) to bring forward to the faculty for discussion. The committee then reviewed a draft faculty meeting agenda and voted six in favor and zero opposed to forward the agenda to the faculty.

Conversation turned to the [recommendations of the Ad Hoc Curriculum Committee](#) regarding advising. Provost Epstein noted that these recommendations had been forwarded to the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) for consideration during the last academic year. The CEP had then forwarded its views about these ideas to the Committee of Six via [a letter on April 24, 2019](#), but since it had been late in the semester and the Committee of Six had had other pressing matters on its agenda, conversation had been postponed until this fall.

The members discussed first the curriculum committee's recommendation that the administration make the advising load across faculty and departments more equitable, so that advisors with eighteen or more major advisees are not assigned new college advisees and are not asked to do orientation advising, unless these faculty express interest in participating. The CEP supported this recommendation, as did the Committee of Six. Provost Epstein, who said that she would like to work toward this goal, commented that it should be recognized that the number of advisees assigned to faculty within particular majors is driven to some degree by students' choices of majors. Some members of the CEP had also agreed with the curriculum committee's view that faculty with fewer than eighteen advisees who will not be on leave during either semester of the upcoming academic year should be required to participate in the college advising program, including orientation advising. (Some members of the CEP had expressed some concern about requiring all faculty to be on campus during the last week of August.) The Committee of Six also discussed whether there should be an expectation that faculty be on campus during the last week of August in order to carry out this work, and the related issue of the detrimental effects on students when there is a lack of continuity in the advising process. In particular, the members agreed that it is problematic when new students have an advisor up until the end of the add/drop period, and then are reassigned to another advisor after that point.

Professor Horton, who served on the curriculum committee, said he believes that college/orientation advising is a responsibility that should be shared by the faculty. He favors requiring faculty members who will not be on leave and who have fewer than eighteen advisees to participate in orientation advising and to be on campus during the last week of August—or to make alternative arrangements to begin advising students. From his own perspective, he sees the last week of August as a work week, during which he prepares for his courses and devotes time to the work of his department. He wonders if other faculty take this approach and said that he has been encouraged to see how faculty and instructional staff have embraced the provost's annual retreat on teaching and learning. During the retreat, which takes place on campus at the end of August, attendees at all career stages engage in informative discussions about teaching. Professor Horton commented that he is pleased that the number of students reassigned right after

add-drop appears to have declined in recent years, thanks to the college's efforts to address this problem. President Martin said that Amherst should aspire to have as much continuity as possible, including working toward the goal of having all first-year students keep the same advisor during their first two years at Amherst.

Professor Sims said that she would applaud efforts to redistribute advising loads, noting that it is challenging to provide a high-quality advising experience when faculty have a large number of advisees. She commented that the week before Labor Day presents challenges for many faculty who have young children, as many daycare centers close, school often hasn't started yet, and camps are no longer under way. Provost Epstein agreed and noted that many faculty members take vacations at this time for this reason. Professor Sims suggested that there be flexibility built into any system that would require faculty to serve as orientation advisors, and that an advantage to the current system is that it provides this flexibility as well as compensation to those who do give extra time.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Brooks expressed a preference for requiring faculty to participate in orientation advising, which would bring needed clarity about the role of the faculty in orientation advising. At the same time, she expressed concern that there seems to be a slow creep toward allowing less time in the summer for research and writing, because of expanding expectations placed on colleagues by the college. President Martin agreed that preserving the summer for scholarship is critical and suggested rearranging the orientation schedule to allow advising to take place later, for example on the Friday before Labor Day. Provost Epstein expressed concern that taking this approach would not leave sufficient time for staff in the registrar's office to resolve complicated registration issues before the start of classes. The members discussed alternative ways of engaging with college advisees over the summer that would not require faculty to be on campus at the end of August, including speaking with students over the phone or via various electronic means, as suggested by the curriculum committee. Professor Brooks said that she envisions that having such conversations over the summer in this manner would not replace having a conversation with advisees during the last week of August. Students often change their minds about their registration choices after they arrive on campus and speak with other students, for example. Professor Schmalzbauer, commenting on the tension between individual autonomy and the collective good, suggested that advisors be required to be on campus, but that they be permitted to request waivers from orientation advising when circumstances make it very difficult for them to participate. The committee agreed that there is a desire for everyone to do orientation advising if colleagues do not have more than eighteen advisees.

After considering the challenges of the current system, particularly the need for greater continuity within the advising process, Professor Goutte suggested having faculty tie their leave schedules to the number of college advisees they take and to their participation in orientation advising. If a faculty member were to take eight college advisees during orientation after returning from leave, that colleague would presumably carry those advisees for at least two years and would not need to take additional advisees during the individual's second year after returning from leave, or to participate in orientation advising that year. Under the proposed system, faculty would automatically receive college advisees when they returned from leave. This system would not rely on volunteerism, which would eliminate some of the uncertainty and other challenges that the dean of new students faces under the system. The members felt that this approach might be a good solution. Professor Basu wondered if changes in leave plans would prevent the system from being workable. Provost Epstein responded that the number of faculty

who change their leave plans is relatively small. She noted that the system that Professor Goutte envisions could result in an insufficient number of advisors and would require more analysis.

Provost Epstein agreed that orientation advising should be seen as a responsibility and noted that paying faculty to be orientation advisors is a \$40,000 annual expense (each advisor receives \$400.00). Several members raised questions about equity in this regard, commenting that faculty members who have very large advising loads throughout the year do not receive additional compensation and that the compensation does signal the value that is placed on one's advising responsibility. In the end, most members felt that the honorarium should continue to be provided to orientation advisors for the distinct task that they do, which requires them to be on campus in August. The committee agreed to continue its discussion of advising at the members' next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 5:15 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The seventh meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2019–2020 was called to order by President Martin in the president’s office at 2:30 P.M. on Wednesday, October 30, 2019. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors Basu, Brooks, Goutte, Horton, Schmalzbauer, and Sims; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The meeting began with Provost Epstein reporting that Jim Brassord, chief of campus operations, responded to the questions that were raised at the committee’s last meeting. He confirmed that there are no current plans to use artificial turf on Hitchcock and Memorial Fields. A new Gooding surface has eliminated that need, he explained. J. Brassord conveyed that, in fact, the athletics department wants to preserve these fields as natural grass because it is the preferred play-surface for soccer. In regard to whether there are plans to construct a building that could house some administrative functions and free up space at the core of the campus, J. Brassord informed the provost that there are no plans to take this approach at this time. He noted that the renovation of Keefe Campus Center will create much-needed office space at the core of the campus once the new student center is completed.

Given challenges surrounding space on campus, Professor Sims and Professor Horton wondered if the college has short- and long-term plans in place to address needs surrounding offices and classrooms. Professor Sims asked if efforts are being made to project the growth of the faculty and staff and to tie such projections to planning efforts. She also inquired as to whether the Committee on Priorities and Resources (CPR) is being consulted about this issue. Provost Epstein said that the CPR discusses such issues as plans move forward, and that J. Brassord could certainly meet with that committee to discuss the issues raised by the Committee of Six. Professor Horton wondered if the current space challenges have arisen as a result of increasing the size of the student body, faculty, and staff, and not making necessary adjustments and accommodations in areas ranging from dining to offices. President Martin said that planning is robust and ongoing for both the near term (the next five years) and beyond. The comprehensive campus framework plan guides short- and long-term planning, she noted. Professors Horton and Goutte reiterated their concerns about what they see as a shortage of offices and classrooms in the science center. Provost Epstein responded that a good number of these spaces are being used by visitors and staff at this time, often at the request of science departments. When the science center was designed, much of this space was set aside for future faculty hires. As such hiring occurs, new faculty will move into these spaces.

Continuing with questions, Professor Schmalzbauer, on behalf of a few colleagues, asked if semesters spent on medical leave are counted toward eligibility for future sabbaticals. Provost Epstein responded that she is aware that this question has been raised recently and noted that some colleagues have found the language in the *Faculty Handbook* ([III., H.](#)) about this topic to be unclear. The practice in regard to college policy has been consistent, however. Semesters spent on medical leave and unpaid leave of absence are not counted as teaching semesters, since no teaching can take place during the leaves, and therefore are not counted toward eligibility for sabbaticals. Faculty are normally eligible for sabbatic leaves after having completed six semesters of teaching, the provost said. She noted that her office is currently developing a revision to the handbook to convey the policy with greater clarity. She will share the new language with the committee when it is completed, which will be soon. Professor Brooks suggested that the provost remind the chairs of academic departments and programs about the particular language of this policy, and Provost Epstein agreed to do so. The members then turned to personnel matters.

Conversation returned to the [recommendations of the Ad Hoc Curriculum Committee](#) regarding advising and to the views of these ideas that the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) had forwarded to the Committee of Six via [a letter on April 24, 2019](#). Beginning the discussion with an overarching comment about the recommendations, Professor Brooks said that, while she finds all of the ideas to be compelling, she worries about the practicality of implementing new approaches and practices that would increase demands on a faculty that is already overextended. She noted that the curriculum committee had made this point in its report, drawing the members' attention to the following passage from that document:

We would like to conclude by observing that the current cap on faculty FTES limits our ability to move toward the realization of our educational ideals. As our graduating students testify year after year, we go to extraordinary lengths, despite enormous pressures on our time, to uncover and expand their intellectual and creative potential. Past a certain point, however, there is simply no more time to give. In our meetings with faculty members, we heard again and again that one of the factors inhibiting participation in the first-year seminar program is that many departments are so understaffed that they cannot do anything more than offer courses that count toward majors. We urge the administration to support the transformative work that we are attempting to do at the college by significantly increasing the size of the faculty.

In fact, Professor Brooks doesn't see how it would be possible to move forward with most of the suggestions, given the size of the faculty and the commitment to research, teaching, and service that Amherst requires. There simply is not enough time, in her view. Provost Epstein commented that, while faculty workloads may be greater than they were in the past, the FTE cap has been reached, and the size of the faculty is larger than it has ever been. She wonders if colleagues are feeling the impact of this growth. At the same time, she recognizes that, with the spate of hiring, demands surrounding searches, mentoring, and personnel processes have grown. Professor Brooks said that, from her experience in her two departments, as well as from conversations across the college, she can say that this is a serious issue. From what she has observed, colleagues are working very, very hard.

Professor Sims concurred that the demands on the faculty's time necessitate finding solutions that make it practical for faculty to improve advising. She worries about mandating the same approaches for all students, when advisees clearly need different levels of support. Some members noted that the CEP seemed to be making the same suggestions in its responses to the curriculum committee's recommendations. While recognizing these concerns, Professor Horton expressed the view that a college that prides itself on an open curriculum—and on the kind of robust advising that is needed when most students have very little structure in their first two years—should not be satisfied when many students' experience of college advising is two fifteen-minute advising sessions a year, plus a first meeting during orientation. As an aspiration, thirty minutes a year feels like an inadequate level of expectation, he said. The focus of the curriculum committee's recommendations is on college advising, as major advising is not the problem, Professor Horton commented. Providing additional advising sessions for a small number of college advisees would not represent a marked increase in time for each faculty member, by his calculation.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Sims suggested that, perhaps, at the beginning of each semester, each advisor could offer a “check-in week,” making some hours available and issuing an open call to advisees to meet, if the students wish to do so. Professor Schmalzbauer commented that the points being raised are excellent and suggest that the redistribution of advisees is a pivotal recommendation. Having fewer advisees makes it possible for an advisor to devote more time to learning about students and their needs and to advising, and thus to be more effective. She has found her experience with intensive advising to be among her most meaningful as an advisor, though she recognizes that the demands on faculty members’ time make an expansion of this model impossible. The aspirational quality of the curriculum committee’s recommendations is admirable, in her view, but at the same time she also finds the CEP’s pragmatic response to these ideas to be compelling. Professor Horton commented that his experience with intensive advising had been transformative, and he offered high praise for the model. Professor Goutte concurred, adding that guidelines, suggested topics of conversations, and check-ins for advisors are useful aspects of the program. Provost Epstein commented that intensive advising seems to transform the way in which participating faculty advise all of their advisees.

Following up on the other members’ comments about advising experiences that they had found to be among the most valuable, Professor Brooks commented that she often plays an advising role with students who are not her advisees in the formal sense, but whom she has gotten to know well in her classroom, through the Five College program, and through other campus programming, and with whom she has built a relationship of trust. She commented that providing informal advising for students with whom faculty interact and have connections has a significant impact on faculty time, but is also an important commitment. She noted, and others agreed, that this experience and commitment is not uncommon among the Amherst faculty. Professor Basu said that she finds that advising works best with students she has taught. To be a good advisor to other students necessitates meeting with them more often than during pre-registration. Building on this idea, Professor Brooks suggested that first-year seminar instructors could devote part of a mid-semester class to a check-in session for students. Professor Schmalzbauer said that she actually checks in with her first-year seminar students every few weeks and finds it to be very helpful to students, as well as having the effect of helping to build community within the seminar. Provost Epstein commented that it is clear that strengthening a sense of community among students who are sharing an intellectual experience contributes to their sense of belonging and academic success. This has been true for students in the college’s summer bridge program, she noted. Advising has also been playing a key role for the summer bridge students, each of whom is now required to participate in the intensive advising program. The results have been striking, the provost said. The retention rate for students who participated in the summer bridge program in 2018 is 100 percent, she noted. Professor Brooks commented that informal advising is also playing a role in the retention of those students. There is currently a focus on trying to learn more about students who decline the invitation to participate in a summer bridge program. This year their outcomes are being tracked to see if they might be at risk, and perhaps might benefit from intensive advising, the provost noted.

The members agreed that many faculty provide advising in the ways that Professor Brooks described, assuming an additional service responsibility that is most often unrecognized. Professor Horton said that there is very little research about the impact of advising from other influential faculty to whom students turn, and he noted that it would be helpful to add a question about this topic to the COFHE (Consortium on Financing Higher Education) surveys in which

the college participates. The committee commented that it has been suggested that faculty of color, women faculty, and gay faculty often spend the most time on this “invisible” form of advising. Provost Epstein informed the members that Professor Basu, who is interested in whether the distribution of service activities is equitable across such factors as faculty rank, departments/fields, gender, and race, will lead a conversation about this topic at the next meeting of chairs of academic departments and programs. Professor Basu added she would like to discuss how much time faculty are spending outside teaching and research, exploring the quantity of time and work, as well as its distribution. The members noted that there does not seem to be an interest in shifting the responsibility of advising from faculty to professional advisors. Provost Epstein commented that a recent conversation among the deans of colleges in the Northeast revealed that none of Amherst’s peers use professional advisors.

Conversation returned to the topic of the additional time that may be required of faculty if the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Curriculum Committee are implemented. Professor Basu, who said that she believes that advising is crucial for students, noted that, while improving advising may require more faculty time, advising is limited to relatively short periods within the academic year that are known well in advance. These times are part of the academic calendar, and faculty can plan ahead. Professor Brooks, while reiterating that the recommendations of the curriculum committee, taken as a whole, would require a great deal of additional faculty time, suggested that encouraging college advisees to make greater use of office hours for advising would provide another way of offering students more time with advisors. Professor Schmalzbauer said that the check-in period during her first-year seminar usually takes no more than ten minutes. The period also has the effect of making students feel more comfortable in class and facilitates intellectual exchanges, in her experience. Professor Horton said that the curriculum committee also discussed ideas such as these, which he favors, as well as other ideas, including modifying the calendar to create an advising day.

Continuing the discussion, Professor Horton noted that the curriculum committee also suggested that more attention be given to the transition to the declaration of the major and to addressing what has been described as the “sophomore blues.” While there are many factors contributing to the “blues” phenomenon, experiencing a transition to a new advisor—particularly in the absence of a great deal of communication—can contribute to students’ feelings of being adrift. Professor Schmalzbauer suggested that, when an advisor is going to go on leave the next semester, it would be helpful if advisors communicated that they will be away. If the new advisor is known at the time, the advisor could offer an introduction to the new advisor via email. Provost Epstein commented that the Bridging Divides Administrative Group, which she chairs, is considering this issue. The group is particularly concerned with developing new ways of building class cohesion among sophomores and improving the overall experience during students’ second year. Professor Sims said that she has observed the sophomore blues and is pleased that the college is taking steps to address it through a “sophomore reboot.”

In regard to advising students who are struggling, more broadly, the members agreed that it is important to provide faculty with training and to give them the tools that can make them better advisors. Knowing what resources are available and referring students to them, as needed, is essential. Professor Brooks commented that, since she arrived at Amherst, she has seen a positive shift in students’ interactions with the counseling center. In her experience, more students now place greater trust in the counseling center, as significant changes have been made, and some students seem to use this resource more readily and find the support they need there. The committee agreed that other staff also are providing essential help for students who are

struggling personally and/or academically; faculty should not feel that they must shoulder all of students' problems, given the effectiveness of the writing center, the Moss Quantitative Center, the Loeb Center for Career Exploration and Planning, the counseling center, and the Office of Student Affairs.

The meeting concluded with some final thoughts about advising. Professor Schmalzbauer commented that it may be a challenge to enforce requirements, but, perhaps, advisors could be strongly encouraged to meet with their advisees for at least twenty minutes each time. Professor Horton expressed support for this idea, noting that, after three years of trying to develop solutions to issues surrounding advising, he feels that that change will happen only if faculty share greater aspirations and higher expectations for advising. Professor Schmalzbauer expressed the view that the recommendations of the curriculum committee inform one another, and that taken as whole, may help to solve problems surrounding advising. The members expressed support for enhancing group advising as a means of building a greater sense of community among students. In this vein, Professor Basu suggested that it could be helpful to expand the [TYPO/TYSO](#) (take your professor or staff out) programs to include advisors and advisees, so that advisors and advisees will potentially share meals as individuals or a group of students and their advisor. The members also agreed that additional training would be helpful for advisors, so that faculty are aware of the tools that will help make them effective in this role. In this regard, Professor Horton noted that making advisors more aware of the [Advising Hub](#) would be helpful, as this is an excellent tool for communicating different pathways through the curriculum. (The creation of the advising hub was a recommendation and accomplishment of the curriculum committee.) While agreeing that the advising hub is excellent, Provost Epstein commented that it is underutilized. She noted that the Ad Hoc Committee on Student Learning will soon form a working group that will examine and implement ways of making pathways through the curriculum, including majors, more transparent, by developing ways to make the information on departmental web sites clearer. In addition, the Orientation Committee believes that the current approach to introducing first-year students to the curricula and pathways through majors in academic departments and programs during orientation, which involves a wide range of presentations, has not been successful. Members of that committee will be meeting with the chairs of departments and programs at the chairs in November to discuss this topic.

The meeting adjourned at 5:15 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The eighth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2019–2020 was called to order by President Martin in the president’s office at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, November 4, 2019. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors Basu, Brooks, Goutte, Horton, Schmalzbauer, and Sims; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

Responding to a question that was asked at the committee’s last meeting, Provost Epstein informed the members that sixty-five faculty members have participated in the intensive advising program thus far. Continuing with her remarks, she noted that four members of the Committee of Six have indicated that they will be available to meet with three members of the Consultative Group for Untenured Faculty on November 14. The purpose of the meeting is to seek the consultative group’s feedback on the committee’s draft guidelines for administering the common teaching evaluation form. Following that meeting, the committee agreed to finalize the guidelines, informed by the views of the chairs of academic departments and programs, which had been invited earlier, and of the consultative group. Since academic department coordinators will be focusing on the implementation of the new evaluation form for pre-tenure faculty for the first time this semester, the expectation is that departments will begin following the guidelines for evaluations conducted this spring.

Under “Questions from Committee Members,” Professor Sims returned to the topic of planning efforts surrounding space on campus, seeking to learn more about short- and long-term plans to address the shortage of offices for faculty and staff and classrooms. Having reviewed [the campus framework plan](#), she said that she finds the document to be somewhat outdated. Some projects discussed in the framework plan have been completed, or progress is being made on completing them, she has observed. Other projects will clearly not come to fruition. For example, she noted, the concept of making use of the McGuire building for office space is an idea that is no longer viable, as plans call for McGuire (and Merrill) to be demolished to make the site available for the new student center. President Martin explained that the framework plan, which was completed in 2017, defines possibilities for the evolution of the campus, in response to programmatic needs that may emerge over the years. Taking McGuire as an example, she noted that the plan identifies the Merrill/ McGuire buildings (or their location) as an important core site for the campus that could accommodate a number of functions. The plan also notes that a renovation or a replacement of the buildings would be required to serve these functions. Extensive study of McGuire has shown that the cost to convert it to a standalone building would be prohibitive, as it is a fully interconnected wing of Merrill that relies on Merrill’s mechanical and electrical systems, the provost said. President Martin commented that the framework plan, unlike a traditional master plan, is not meant to plan for particular capital projects. As is noted in the framework plan itself, such a plan is “deliberately an adaptable tool that is grounded in clear principles and a broad vision of the future.” That said, President Martin said that she would ask Jim Brassord, chief of campus operations, to consider how the framework plan might be updated.

Continuing, President Martin noted that it is not possible to put formal plans in place beyond a certain horizon, since the landscape, vision, and available resources can change when it comes to building projects. She commented that new opportunities—for example a donor providing the funding for the renovation of 197 South Pleasant Street—can arise suddenly and have an impact on planning. President Martin said that, at present, she foresees that the projects that will be prioritized over the next five years are the construction of the student center, the renovation of Keefe Campus Center for faculty offices, and the renovation of 197 South Pleasant Street, which will house some academic departments and have some space for

seminars and other uses. Professor Sims commented that, while she understands that planning should be responsive and can be fluid, she feels that it would ideally be possible to provide a sense of short- and long-term plans for meeting the needs of the campus, in particular for faculty and staff offices and classrooms. The options offered in the framework plan piggyback on one another, so updating the plan seems necessary. Professor Horton agreed, commenting that it would be helpful to have a conversation about the shortage of classrooms and offices, including the ways in which the use of teaching slots is affecting the availability of classrooms. President Martin said that she would be happy to have J. Brassord create a list of space needs and priorities and to have a discussion with the committee.

Professors Horton and Goutte reiterated their concerns about what they see as a shortage of office and classroom space in the science center. Provost Epstein said that she has asked Associate Provost and Associate Dean of the Faculty Cheney to provide detailed information about the intended use of classroom, lab, and office spaces in the science center. He has already informed her that many spaces that are currently being used by visitors and staff, often at the request of science departments, are intended for future faculty hires. As such hiring occurs, new faculty will move into these spaces, and science departments will need to reassign current occupants to other spaces. Private offices and/or labs for visitors and staff were not included in the plans for the science center, and some of these individuals will need to share space in the end. Professor Goutte said that she is unaware that plans called for instructional staff not to have private offices, as it is necessary for instructional staff to meet privately with students. Provost Epstein said that it is her understanding that shared spaces for conducting such meetings may be the most efficient means of meeting space needs. Some members said that it would be challenging to schedule office hours and drop-in times for students in a shared space, given the constraints of the academic schedule and students' co-curricular activities and multiple faculty or staff members' schedules. Professor Horton and Goutte commented that, in recent years, there have been a significant number of visitors teaching in their departments, and that finding appropriate office space has been a challenge. Professor Goutte suggested that, for visitors who cannot be housed in their departments, finding a space for them to be housed together could be beneficial, rather than having them dispersed across campus in addition to not being near department colleagues. Provost Epstein commented that, due to space constraints and other factors, it is not even possible to house all tenure-line faculty in their departments. President Martin said that she can envision some spaces opening up when several departments move to 197 South Pleasant Street and Keefe is renovated. Professor Schmalzbauer said that she is pleased that more academic functions and activities at the renovated house will create new reasons for students to cross Route 116, effectively extending the campus. Professor Brooks commented that the issue of space is prominent and complex, noting that there are always multiple and often conflicting ideas that come into play when considering competing needs.

The committee urged the president and provost to seek the input of the faculty when considering space needs during the period before Keefe and 197 South Pleasant Street are completed. Professor Sims commented that developing systematic ways of keeping the community informed about space plans is important, and President Martin agreed. Professor Sims reiterated her concern about moving the staff in the newly created shared services department off campus, and she expressed hope that this approach would not become a trend, and that future plans would allow these staff to return to locations within walking distance of

campus facilities. President Martin said that there are no plans to move large numbers of staff members off campus. The members then turned to personnel matters.

The committee next discussed concerns that were conveyed by a faculty member, in anticipation of the committee-of-the-whole conversation about the committee's draft policy on *Consensual Sexual or Romantic Relations between Faculty and Students*, which would take place the next day. Some of the concerns that the faculty member raised focused on the following: the way in which the Committee of Six had framed the committee-of-the-whole discussion (the idea that the committee did not provide the faculty with sufficient background surrounding the proposed policy and the range of arguments, both pros and cons, of prohibiting consensual sexual relations between faculty and students); the amount of time that had been provided for reflection by the faculty was insufficient, with the result that the faculty would not be ready to debate the issue in a deliberative manner at the meeting; the approach taken, which was thought to be unduly punitive and could create a culture of surveillance and have a chilling effect on faculty-student relations (making them more formal and constrained); the danger that the policy would result in administrative oversight of people's personal lives; a lack of discussion about the proposed policy in the context of the American Association of University Professors' 1995 statement "Consensual Relations Between Faculty and Students," with which existing policy is consistent; and a lack of clarity about procedures that would be used to address violations of the policy.

The committee noted that, in addition, the faculty member who had shared these views, as well as another faculty member, pointed out that the document that had been linked to the faculty meeting agenda that had categorized the sexual relations policies of peer schools, and included links to those policies, had contained some errors. The committee apologized for the errors, which largely were the result of not reading policies closely enough and not assigning some policies to the proper category. Professors Horton and Brooks agreed to re-read the policies closely on the committee's behalf; a revised version of the document would then be posted before the faculty meeting, the committee decided. ([This document](#) was later posted.)

The committee found many of the ideas and responses that had been put forward to be valuable, while also questioning the logic behind some of the arguments. The members said that they looked forward to learning more about the faculty's views during the conversation at the faculty meeting the next day. It was agreed that a broad discussion of the draft policy is the intended purpose of the committee-of-the-whole conversation. The members noted that all views would be welcome and said that they would consider the feedback that emerges from the discussion and revise the draft policy, accordingly. It was agreed that what is learned from the discussion would help the committee to write a better policy. The committee began this process by discussing a concern that had also been shared by the faculty member who had raised most of the other issues, about including the word "romantic," when describing the relations covered under the draft policy. Returning to an earlier discussion about whether the policy should address romantic relations, as well as sexual relations between faculty and students, the committee agreed that judging what is or is not meant by "romantic" presents a challenge. The committee then decided to strike "romantic" from the proposed policy.

The members agreed that, moving forward, it will be important to resolve questions of process surrounding what the mechanisms should be for reporting relationships that violate the policy, what protections would be in place for faculty and students, and what the range of penalties should be for violating the policy. The question was also raised as to whether the penalty should be greater if faculty members don't report prohibited relationships in which they

have engaged. In response to a question about whether faculty would become mandated reporters of prohibited relationships, the provost confirmed that this would not be the case, and that there is a separate process that is already in place to address sexual misconduct. In response to some questions about the process that would be used to address violations of the proposed policy, the members confirmed that the intention would be to follow the process that is in place for addressing other faculty disciplinary matters (See [Faculty Handbook III.I., 1. and 2.](#)).

The meeting concluded with a discussion about whether moving to a policy of prohibition could change the culture at Amherst in significant ways. The members wondered whether the cultures of other colleges that have adopted a policy of prohibition have experienced the type of significant negative effects that are feared. President Martin commented that a policy of prohibition could improve a culture, as setting limits and having greater accountability can free members of a community to engage in close relationships, without worrying about what the appropriate boundaries are. She wonders whether there is evidence that setting clear boundaries inevitably leads to punitive shaming. The members said that they continue to believe that Amherst's current policy is wanting, because it does not state clearly enough what the members agree is the crux of the matter, that sexual relations between faculty members and students compromise the integrity of the educational process and violate the trust that students have in faculty members. The committee ended the meeting by concurring that the upcoming discussion at the faculty meeting would inform the draft policy in important ways.

The meeting adjourned at 5:15 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The ninth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2019–2020 was called to order by President Martin in the president’s office at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, November 11, 2019. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors Basu, Brooks, Goutte, Horton, Schmalzbauer, and Sims; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

Under “Questions from Committee Members,” Professor Brooks, on behalf of a number of colleagues, asked about the plans for and status of intensive-writing courses at the college, now that Ben Lieber (who is currently on leave and who will retire in 2020–2021) and Michèle Barale (who is now retired) are no longer teaching these courses. Provost Epstein informed the members that she has written a memo to the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) about her concerns surrounding staffing this program, and that plans call for the CEP to discuss the issue at its next meeting. In response to the committee’s question about the process that is used to identify students who should take intensive-writing courses, the provost said that the practice is that all faculty teaching first-year seminars are asked to identify students who would benefit from intensive-writing courses and to provide the names to Austin Sarat, associate provost and associate dean of the faculty. He then writes to the students and their advisors about the recommendation, but it is up to the students and their advisors to follow up, and there is no requirement that the students take an intensive-writing course. The members noted the Committee of Six’s plans to discuss [a letter from Professor Douglas](#), which was sent to the committee last spring, with some recommendations surrounding writing-intensive courses. Professor Horton suggested that the letter be forwarded to the CEP ahead of that committee’s discussion, and Provost Epstein said that she would be happy to provide the CEP with the document. The remainder of the meeting was devoted to personnel matters.

#### Guidelines of intensive writing course

The meeting adjourned at 5:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The tenth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2019–2020 was called to order by President Martin in the president’s office at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, November 18, 2019. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors Brooks, Goutte, Horton, Schmalzbauer, and Sims; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder. Professor Basu was absent.

The meeting began with a brief update about the November 14 meeting that the committee had organized with the Consultative Group for Untenured Faculty to learn about the group’s views of [the committee’s draft of guidelines for administering the common teaching evaluation form for tenure-track faculty](#). Three of the four members of the consultative group (Professors Edwards, Gardner, and Hicks) and three members of the Committee of Six (Professors Brooks, Schmalzbauer, and Sims) participated. The committee members who had attended reported that the discussion had been informative and productive. They suggested that it would be useful to discuss the conversation in more detail at a later meeting, in the interest of time, as there were many important insights and questions to convey. It is the committee’s understanding that the consultative group will seek feedback from tenure-track faculty members about the draft guidelines and the evaluation process and will share the feedback with the Committee of Six. The committee will then consider the response from tenure-track faculty, as well as the views expressed by the chairs of academic departments and programs at an earlier meeting, and finalize the guidelines.

Under “Questions from Committee Members,” Professor Sims requested that [a letter that she had written to the Committee of Six in August](#) be forwarded to Committee on Priorities and Resources (CPR). In the letter, she proposed that a comprehensive plan be developed for the future of the college’s housing program. Professor Sims commented that it is clear to her that the Committee of Six’s full agenda will not permit a discussion of this issue this semester, and she feels that the matter is pressing. This is because, in her opinion, it would be desirable to fix or redevelop the multiple vacant or underutilized residential properties currently owned by the college in a timely fashion. In addition, there are members of the college community currently making decisions about housing who need clarity about possible changes in the program or opportunities for additional housing, she noted. The capital needs for revitalization of housing assets could productively be discussed in tandem with other planning concerns currently being considered by the CPR, in her view. Provost Epstein suggested that the letter instead be sent to the College Housing Committee, commenting that it is the appropriate body to consider the issue. Professor Sims noted that she agreed that the housing committee is an important body to consider these issues and that this committee is already considering ways to make the best use of college-owned properties (and had received a copy of the letter in August). She feels that the CPR should also be considering the proposal, as there are substantial resource issues to evaluate. The provost said that she would forward Professor Sims’s letter to the CPR. Professor Sims thanked Provost Epstein for her work to move this issue forward.

Continuing with questions, Professor Sims reiterated her interest in learning whether the number of offices and classrooms that will be gained as a result of the renovation of the house located at 197 South Pleasant Street, as well as the Keefe Campus Center, will meet the anticipated need for additional offices. She does not know what the actual need is, but put forth a guess that at least forty offices might be required to house staff currently in Keefe and staff and faculty currently in the basement of Chapin Hall, and to accommodate staff who are now being moved off campus, as well as the planned growth in the faculty FTE cap. Provost Epstein responded that Jack Cheney, associate provost and associate dean of the faculty, is still preparing information for the committee regarding this question. President Martin explained that it is not yet known how many offices the renovation of the house at 197 South Pleasant Street will yield, as the architects are just beginning to consider the project. She said that, presently, there are only rough estimates of the number of offices that will be generated through the Keefe Campus project. Referring to the two projects, President Martin said that the details of the project on

South Pleasant Street will be known first. She anticipates that the two projects will result in at least forty new offices, while stressing that Amherst's space needs, like those of virtually all colleges and universities, are always changing. Professor Goutte suggested that, with planning beginning for a new student center, there might be an opportunity to make efficient use of some spaces in the student center by using some spaces to hold class meetings during early morning hours, when they are not needed for student extracurricular activities.

President Martin responded to Professor Goutte's proposal by noting that planning for the student center is in the very early stages; the possibility of incorporating academic spaces into the building will be considered, along with a number of other competing priorities. Students have made it clear, however, that what they need is a place that belongs to them, that is removed from spaces associated with academic pressure, and that supports separate forms of engagement surrounding recreation and relaxation. The president commented that it will be important for students to feel a sense of ownership of the student center. Creating a student center in which academic functions take place may make it challenging for students to see the space as their own, in her view. Professor Brooks recounted her recent experience holding an event in a residence hall. She believes that a different kind of atmosphere was created because the event took place in student-centered space, and that this sense of community contributed to the event's success. Professor Brooks supports the idea of creating more student-facing spaces on campus that can be used in myriad ways, including contributing to intellectual life at the college. Professor Sims agreed with the need for more student-centered space, and she wondered if academic experiences could take place in a wing of the student center that might also include offices for staff. The wing could have doors that could be closed in order to separate the space from the rest of the building, as needed, and could be left open otherwise. She also noted that she had taken seminars as an undergraduate that were held in "student-owned" buildings close to campus, and that having classes in these spaces did not detract from students' sense of ownership or ability to relax in those locations after hours. President Martin said that all possibilities will be explored, while commenting that offices of student affairs staff who focus on student-conduct issues would definitely not be included in the new student center. Provost Epstein commented that other approaches to solving needs surrounding classrooms should also be considered—for example, re-examining the class schedule, including exploring the possibility of having evening classes and opening up time slots in the afternoon that are currently not used because of athletics practices and contests. The provost noted that having more classes take place on Friday afternoons, so that classes are more spread out, would also expand the availability of classrooms.

Conversation turned to [a letter from Karu Kozuma, chief student affairs officer](#), asking that the committee review a policy that is being proposed to ensure that student organizations at Amherst do not serve as "fronts" for outside organizations. According to K. Kozuma, at present, outside organizations may try to gain access to the Amherst College community by using student organizations as entry points. Through the policy, the college is seeking to outline how a student organization can work with outside organizations, while remaining the primary group organizing an event or program. Some members asked for further clarification. President Martin explained that outside organizations should not provide 100 percent of the funding needed to hold an event on campus. There must be student interest, not just interest by the outside group, and the student organization must provide at least half of the necessary funding. Professor Horton asked what would happen if a student organization agrees to hold an event on campus and to pay for half the costs, when, in fact, the organization does not have the funds to do so. President Martin said that this situation is not likely to happen because the college would not sign a contract unless the student organization can prove it has the necessary funds. Professor Brooks commented that, prior to the meeting, she had done some quick research and had found that many schools have a policy of this kind. The committee agreed that the policy should be framed to emphasize that its purpose is to support the leadership role and agency of student organizations when it comes to

organizing events that they wish to sponsor, rather than simply serving as a list of prohibitions. The members then proposed revisions (shown in red below) to the draft policy that K. Kozuma had sent with his letter. Provost Epstein agreed to share the committee's suggestions with K. Kozuma.

#### ~~Fronting Policy~~

#### Off-Campus Funding Policy for Student Organizations

Student organizations are welcome and encouraged to host events under the name of their registered student organization (RSO) that they directly plan, fund, supervise, and attend. However, event organizers and organizations must adhere to the following policy:

- Student organizations and individuals are prohibited from serving as "fronts" for off-campus organizations. This means that student organizations cannot sponsor, schedule, or plan events ~~in order to~~ for the purpose of give-giving off-campus organizations unaffiliated with Amherst College access to College space, marketing resources, the College name or likeness, or other College resources.
- ~~Student organizations are welcome to host events under the name of their organization (RSO) which they directly plan, fund, supervise, and attend.~~
  - The student organization must be involved in all areas of event planning, event promotion, and day-of execution.
  - The student organization is required to coordinate with the Office of Student Activities in order to develop contracts, venue setup, security, and other logistical matters pertaining to the event.
  - The student organization accepts all responsibility for event finances, including but not limited to those of the non-Amherst co-sponsoring organization should it fail to meet its commitment.
  - The student organization remains accountable to Amherst College for the actions of any non-Amherst organization with which it is hosting the event.
  - A student organization may receive partial funding for its event from an off-campus organization as long as the student organization complies with policies herein and receive written approval through the Office of Student Activities at least twenty-one days in advance of the event date.
  - No funding will be accepted from an outside organization that is more than 50 percent of the cost of the event.
  - All outside funding sources, amounts, and methods for transfer must be disclosed prior to approval.

- All finances and contractual processes must be run through the Office of Student Activities for appropriate processing and accounting.

Following up on the committee's earlier conversations of the semester about the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Curriculum Committee surrounding advising, Provost Epstein asked the members what they recommend regarding next steps. For example, she asked, should proposals for change be brought to the faculty? Professor Horton commented that it seems premature to consider next steps before gathering more data to inform decision-making. He noted that the information about advising that is available is not robust and that much of the information is dated at this point, having been drawn from the responses over the years to the senior survey and to the COFHE (Consortium on Financing Higher Education) survey in which the college participates, and from the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on Advising, which issued its findings in 2012. For example, it would be interesting to learn if efforts to improve advising have had an impact, he said, and the other members agreed. Continuing, Professor Horton said that he wonders, for example, if students' impressions of college advising is more positive, now that progress has been made on reducing significantly the number of first-year students who are reassigned to a new advisor after the add-drop period concludes. Professor Horton reiterated his view that new questions about advising, constructed and framed to elicit the most helpful information, should be added to the senior survey and the COFHE survey. Simply asking students if they are satisfied with advising is not useful, in his view. In addition, he suggested that qualitative research, for example constituting student focus groups, should be conducted. Professor Goutte concurred. In particular, she noted, it would be helpful to learn, from the student perspective, about the specific sources of dissatisfaction with college advising. Professor Sims agreed and commented that it would be helpful to examine survey results by year and to try to determine whether factors such as students' majors and whether students are assigned a college advisor in their field, or not, have had an impact on the ways in which students see college advising. She wonders whether such a study might reveal whether the rate of dissatisfaction has decreased over time, because of the changes that have been made surrounding advising, and because many of those advising are relatively new to the faculty at this time.

Provost Epstein agreed that it would be helpful to update older data and also to try to gather new information about advising. Professor Brooks concurred, expressing the view that much of the information that the college has about what is working about college advising, and what is not, appears to be largely anecdotal. Given that the Office of Institutional Research is stretched at this time, she suggested that it might be helpful for departments to dedicate a department meeting to asking clear questions about college advising and to sharing what they learn at a chairs' meeting. She commented that, while some advisors have built up a great deal of knowledge about departments across the college, other advisors, including those who are relatively new to the college such as herself, may struggle with advising students about courses in curricular areas and fields that are outside the faculty member's own, despite the useful orientation training for faculty, which provides guidance and information on multiple departments. Professor Horton pointed out that advisors do not need to be experts on all departments' courses and majors, but rather need to know where they should advise students to find the information they need. Provost Epstein agreed and noted that the Ad Hoc Committee on Student Learning's website-navigation working group is considering ways to highlight pathways through the curriculum and different majors, which should be helpful for both students and advisors. Professor Horton applauded this effort, noting that, regrettably, some students, particularly in STEM, often declare their major as early as their first year now, in order to have an advisor in the field that they want to study.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Horton wondered whether some changes that might be needed could be accomplished administratively—for example finding ways of having a more

equal distribution of college advisees among advisors, as well as shifting the culture so that college/ orientation advising is seen as a responsibility that should be shared by the faculty. Professor Schmalzbauer said that redistributing advising loads would represent a foundational change that would have a great impact, noting that it is challenging to provide a high-quality advising experiences when faculty have a large number of advisees. Provost Epstein expressed the view that the culture around advising at the college has already changed in some ways, noting that many faculty who participate in the intensive-advising program have reported that the experience has changed the way in which they advise all students. Professor Horton commented that the curriculum committee also discussed the need to change the culture of advising. For example, while some faculty currently conduct advising via email and do not meet with their advisees in person, it would be beneficial if this approach were to be viewed as unacceptable. Professor Sims commented that advising might be improved if untenured faculty were to receive some sort of “credit” for advising. Currently, advising does not factor into the faculty personnel process, she noted. President Martin suggested that some research be done on Brown University’s approach to pre-major advising, as Brown also has an open curriculum. She said that she has seen a promotional campaign on social media describing Brown’s open curriculum and wonders whether faculty there have come up with effective pre-major advising programs. Professor Goutte suggested that perhaps a distinct name is needed to draw attention to the importance and difference of pre-major advising versus major advising. She suggested calling a college advisor an “open-curriculum advisor” to help change perceptions about the role. After a student declares a major, the student would switch to a “major advisor.” She suggested that this approach might reduce some dissatisfaction with advising because students would not expect their “open curriculum advisor” to know how to advise them about the major they want, and would make them more likely to seek input from chairs or other faculty in the majors in which they are interested. The committee expressed support for this new nomenclature. They agreed that this shift in language could potentially solve the problem of students seeking advice on particular majors or precise career paths from their college advisors. It could also help students to focus on the advantages of the open curriculum, as opposed to focusing on the quest for a major or post-college career. The provost said that she would be in touch with colleagues at Brown. She does not think that the school uses professional advisors, but she will find out as part of her broader inquiry.

In regard to other useful data, Professor Brooks recommended that the Office of Institutional Research be asked to assess the viability—from a numbers perspective—of another idea that Professor Goutte had suggested earlier—i.e., having faculty tie their leave schedules to the number of college advisees they take and to their participation in orientation advising. Professor Goutte had proposed that, if a faculty member were to take eight college advisees during orientation after returning from leave, that colleague would presumably carry those advisees for at least two years and would not need to take additional advisees during the individual’s second year after returning from leave, or to participate in orientation advising that year. Under the proposed system, faculty would automatically receive college advisees when they returned from leave. This system would not rely on volunteerism, which would eliminate some of the uncertainty and other challenges that the dean of new students faces under the system, in her view. Professor Horton said that it will be important to try to figure out whether there could be unintended consequences of taking this approach. Provost Epstein agreed to ask Jesse Barba, director of institutional research and registrar services, to research this idea. Professor Horton asked about curriculum committee’s proposal that an associate dean be added to the provost’s office to support advising efforts. Provost Epstein said that she is considering this idea.

The committee next discussed orientation advising and the responsibilities of faculty during the last week of August. The members, with the exception of Professor Sims, said that they generally favor requiring faculty members who will not be on leave and who have fewer than eighteen advisees to participate in orientation advising on campus. Taking this step would bring

needed clarity about the role of the faculty in orientation advising, the majority of the members agreed. Professor Sims prefers the current system and the flexibility that it offers, she noted. Professor Schmalzbauer reiterated her view that faculty should be permitted to request waivers from orientation advising when circumstances make it very difficult for them to participate. As a general matter, the majority of the committee also felt that the last week of August should be considered a work week for faculty. However, they also reiterated the importance of preserving the summer schedule for research and writing. The provost noted that faculty members have nine-month appointments and are paid over twelve months. Since many faculty begin the summer break in May, immediately after commencement, returning to campus during the week before Labor Day is still within the nine-month window of work under such a schedule. In addition, Professor Schmalzbauer pointed out that the college offers a very generous leave policy to support faculty research. In her view, the difficult question about whether to require faculty participation in orientation advising is rooted in Amherst's ambiguous identity as both a serious research and teaching college. In this case, something has to give, either research time or attention to students. The majority of the committee advised that, for these reasons, faculty no longer receive additional compensation for returning to work at this time and for participating in orientation advising. To ensure that as much time is preserved during the summer for scholarship and writing, the president suggested once again the possibility of rearranging the orientation schedule to allow advising to take place later, for example on the Friday before Labor Day. Provost Epstein reiterated her concern that taking this approach would not leave sufficient time for staff in the registrar's office to resolve complicated registration issues before the start of classes.

The meeting adjourned at 5:26 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The eleventh meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2019–2020 was called to order by President Martin in the president’s office at 10:00 A.M. on Monday, December 11, 2019. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors Basu, Brooks, Goutte, Horton, Schmalzbauer, and Sims; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder. The meeting was devoted to personnel matters.

The meeting adjourned at 5:26 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The twelfth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2019–2020 was called to order by President Martin in the president’s office at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, December 16, 2019. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors Basu, Brooks, Goutte, Horton, Schmalzbauer, and Sims; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

Under “Questions from Committee Members,” Professor Sims followed-up briefly on her question from November 18 about space concerns, as she had been advised during that meeting to ask again about specific numbers in a future meeting at least two weeks later. Her question was how the number of offices and classrooms that will be gained as a result of the renovation of the house located at 197 South Pleasant Street, as well as the Keefe Campus Center, compares to the number that may be needed based on anticipated hiring of new faculty and staff that is already planned. Provost Epstein responded that Jack Cheney, associate provost and associate dean of the faculty, is still preparing information for the committee regarding this question. She said that the expectation is that there will be sufficient offices for all tenure-line faculty, including new hires, in the years to come. The provost noted once again that visiting faculty who are occupying offices that have been designated for tenure-line faculty will be moved to other spaces, as needs arise. Several members asked if there is an ongoing study of classroom and office space at the college, as there appears to be concern among many faculty members that there is a space shortage. In fact, administrators often tell faculty that classroom and office space is very tight at the college, Professor Brooks noted. She commented that there seems to be some tension between the president and provost’s understanding, and the impressions that many faculty members seem to share. The shortage does seem real and goes beyond numbers and facts, she said, as issues related to offices are having a negative impact on departmental culture, in her experience. For example, space limitations necessitate that some faculty be assigned to offices outside their departments, which has an impact on the ability to build community, including having full opportunities for informal conversation within departmental spaces. President Martin said that a study of classroom and office space is under way and noted that she would consult with Jim Brassord, chief of campus operations, to inquire when the results of the study will be available.

In addition to requesting that the space issue be discussed this spring, the members asked the provost if she would share a list of other possible spring agenda items, so that the members could prioritize their work. The provost noted that, typically, a list of agenda items is provided to the committee at its first meeting in the spring, but said that she would ask Associate Provost Tobin to generate a draft list of topics for the members’ next meeting. The members said that, early in the spring term, they would like to return to the topic of a policy to prohibit consensual sexual relations between faculty and students, with the goal of bringing a proposal to the faculty. They agreed to review the committee-of-the-whole notes of the faculty’s discussion of the proposed policy and other background materials to inform their revisions to the draft. The members noted that the faculty had raised many good points during the initial discussion of the committee’s proposed policy. While most members of the committee felt that the college’s termination and grievance procedures should be reviewed, it was decided that the sexual relations policy itself should be considered first, as the procedures that are in place could be used if a policy is approved and violations take place. Still, the committee felt that it would be helpful to have information about the penalties for violating such policies at peer institutions. Provost Epstein agreed to provide the members with this information.

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

The thirteenth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2019–2020 was called to order by President Martin in the president’s office at 1:00 P.M. on Wednesday, December 18, 2019. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors Basu, Brooks, Goutte, Horton, Schmalzbauer, and Sims; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder. The majority of the meeting was devoted to personnel matters.

The meeting began with Provost Epstein proposing nominees to serve on the memorial minute committee for Professor Goheen. The members then turned to personnel matters.

The meeting adjourned at 2:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The thirteenth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2019–2020 was called to order by President Martin in the president’s office at 1:00 P.M. on Wednesday, December 18, 2019. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors Basu, Brooks, Goutte, Horton, Schmalzbauer, and Sims; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The meeting began with Provost Epstein proposing nominees to serve on the memorial minute committee for Professor Goheen and the memorial minute committee for Professor Campbell; the committee agreed that the provost should ask these colleagues to serve. The members next reviewed drafts of the letters that the provost sends annually to candidates and chairs regarding tenure procedures and suggested some revisions to these documents. The remainder of the meeting was devoted to personnel matters.

The meeting adjourned at 2:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The fourteenth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2019–2020 was called to order by Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein in the president’s office at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, January 27, 2020. Present, in addition to the provost, were Professors Basu, Brooks, Goutte, Horton, Schmalzbauer, and Sims and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder. President Martin participated, via speaker phone, in the first half of the meeting only.

The meeting began with Provost Epstein proposing nominees to serve on the memorial minute committee for Professor of History and Asian Languages and Civilizations, Emeritus, Ray Moore, who died on January 7, 2020. The members agreed that the provost should ask the nominees to serve on the memorial minute committee. Turning to the calendar for faculty meetings in the spring semester, the members decided that the following dates should be held for possible meetings: February 18, March 3, April 21, May 5, and May 21 (commencement meeting). The committee discussed possible topics for spring faculty meetings and agreed that it would be useful to have a conversation about intellectual responsibility and to have a member of the Office of Student Affairs give a presentation as part of the discussion. The committee recalled that Professor Wagaman had raised a number of important issues in [a letter that she had sent to the committee in 2018](#), including the question of whether a teaching evaluation should be solicited from a student against whom a faculty member has made allegations of misconduct. Provost Epstein, noting that, under such a circumstance, a tenure-track professor should make the department chair aware of the matter, agreed that intellectual dishonesty is an important issue. She expressed concern that some faculty members choose not to report incidents of plagiarism to the Office of Student Affairs because they feel they should protect or help a student by addressing the matter informally. Although faculty members can exercise discretion in reporting plagiarism, reporting as a standard practice may reveal a student’s pattern of cheating. She wonders whether it might be useful to have a standard light penalty for a first offense of intellectual dishonesty, such as a warning. This practice might encourage more uniform reporting because the punishment would not be severe unless it was a repeated offense.

Under “Topics of the Day,” Provost Epstein informed the members of her plans to invite nominations, including self-nominations, for three half-time administrative positions at the college that will be held by tenured members of the Amherst faculty. One position (associate provost and associate dean of the faculty) represents an expansion of the leadership team within her office. The new associate provost and associate dean of the faculty will be tasked with thinking broadly and deeply about advising and teaching and learning at the college. (Provost Epstein noted that Professor Gentzler will conclude her term as faculty director of the Writing Center and the Center for Teaching and Learning at the end of this academic year and will not be replaced. As a result, the addition of a third associate provost and associate dean will be cost-neutral.) The provost noted that the other two positions (faculty diversity and inclusion officer and class dean) are existing positions that will become available when colleagues complete their terms at the end of this academic year. All of the appointments will begin on July 1, 2020, and have three-year terms, with the possibility of renewal, she said. Provost Epstein noted that compensation will include course reduction and additional salary. She explained that she would provide the faculty and staff with a short description of each of the positions in upcoming announcements and said that she looks forward to learning of colleagues’ interest in the positions.

Professor Goutte asked the provost why she had decided to create a third associate provost and associate dean of the faculty position. Provost Epstein responded that the Ad Hoc Curriculum Committee had recommended doing so, and that she had decided that it would be helpful to have a colleague in her office have a dedicated focus on issues surrounding teaching and learning and on initiatives to support and enhance advising at the college. In addition, she noted, the new colleague will carry out the other responsibilities of this position, including participating in the president’s academic cabinet and serving as a senior advisor to the provost, interviewing candidates for some visiting faculty positions and some administrative positions within the provost’s division, and collaborating closely with colleagues in her office on new and continuing initiatives. The members expressed support for the creation of this position. Professor Goutte commented that the focus of the appointment is representative of a hallmark of Provost Epstein’s tenure as provost and dean—a continuing commitment to supporting and strengthening teaching and learning—which was evident from the outset with the creation of the provost’s annual retreat on teaching and learning, a program that continues to have a positive impact.

Provost Epstein thanked the committee for its support and noted that, in the coming weeks, she will also invite nominations and self-nominations for the position of faculty athletic representative (FAR), which will be held by a tenured member of the Amherst faculty. She explained that, in this role, a colleague will work to promote greater understanding among student-athletes, faculty, and coaches about the role of athletics in students' education. Continuing, Provost Epstein said that the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) mandates that member institutions designate a FAR, though the position at Amherst and at most peer institutions has traditionally been underutilized. Following the recommendation of Amherst's Ad Hoc Faculty Committee on Athletics, she has decided to expand the position's responsibilities, and to offer compensation for serving in the role. It is her hope that, with these broader responsibilities the FAR will have greater impact on Amherst's campus and across Division III. The FAR will be a resource for the director of athletics, coaches, and student-athletes and will attend meetings of college, departmental, and student-athlete committees, among other duties. Compensation will include a course reduction or a stipend annually. The members expressed support for strengthening the role of the FAR position. Professor Schmalzbauer asked what the term of the FAR position would be. Provost Epstein responded that the learning curve for the position will be steep, and that she has learned that some FARs at other schools occupy the position for years. On the other hand, she feels that the position should rotate with some regularity among members of Amherst's faculty, in this way enhancing the faculty's understanding of athletics through service in this role. She imagines a three-year term, with an anticipated renewal of at least three additional years.

Provost Epstein next informed the members that the election for the Committee of Six will be launched this week. As a result of the current members' leave schedules, there will be six vacancies on the committee, she noted. If a colleague who is elected to the committee later is appointed to one of the administrative positions that she had just described, the individual will not serve on the committee, and another faculty member will be elected to fill the vacancy on the Committee of Six. Given the full turnover in the committee (which is the result of three members completing their two-year terms and three members leaving the committee because they are going on leave during the next academic year), Professor Sims wondered if a list should be made available of faculty who have served in the past on the Committee of Six in case colleagues wish to elect those with prior experience. Provost Epstein commented that past service is not a criterion for future service on the committee, expressing some concern that including this information could introduce some bias into the election process. Professor Sims pointed out that there is nothing to prevent a faculty member from looking through the online archive of Committee of Six minutes and ascertaining past membership. The members also discussed briefly the continuing practice of including tenure-track assistant professors on the Committee of Six ballot in the spring of these colleagues' first year at Amherst, and the implications if an assistant professor were to be elected.

Under "Questions from Committee Members," Professor Horton asked President Martin about the meetings of the board of trustees that had taken place in San Francisco on January 24 and 25. The president responded that the meetings had been productive, with follow-up from the summer trustee retreat about admission policy and process being one of the topics of discussion. Some trustees had also joined the president and the senior staff at Alumni Association events in California, President Martin said, noting the board's travel to California had been planned to coincide with these gatherings.

The committee next conducted its annual review of senior sabbatical fellowship proposals and voted to forward them to the board of trustees for approval. The members then discussed the theses and transcripts of students in the class of 2020E who had been recommended by their departments for a summa cum laude degree and have an overall grade-point average in the top 25 percent of the graduating class. The committee voted unanimously to forward these recommendations to the faculty and offered high praise for the quality of the work done by this accomplished group of students. The members then discussed several committee nominations.

Conversation turned to the topic of the teaching prize that the college established last year in honor of Jeff Ferguson, the inaugural Karen and Brian Conway '80, P'18 Presidential Teaching Professor at the Amherst, who died in 2018. Provost Epstein noted that the Committee of Six will select two recipients of the award this spring. Current tenured faculty members, senior lecturers, and senior resident artists who have been at the college for at least ten years are eligible for the prize, and the recipients will be announced at the

commencement faculty meeting. They will give public talks focusing on teaching at or around homecoming and receive an honorarium of \$5,000. With the goal of garnering rich and robust commentary to inform selection deliberations, the members suggested some refinements to the letter in which students, faculty, and alumni are invited to make nominations for the prize, as well as to the nomination form. It was agreed that nominations, which should include examples to support arguments for selecting an individual nominee, should be at least 250 words in length and should not exceed 500 words. Provost Epstein reminded the members that last year's committee had agreed that nominations submitted in previous years should be considered when making decisions in the current year. Her office is maintaining an archive of nominations for each faculty member, and the Committee of Six will be provided with this information on an annual basis as part of the decision-making process. Professor Horton suggested that there should be a time limit on how long nominations are kept and considered, proposing that the period be five years.

Continuing with questions, Professor Schmalzbauer asked about the status of developing a proposal for an alternative time for faculty meetings that would allow for a community hour, and Professor Horton, who supports the idea of identifying an alternative time, raised related issues of the class schedule, teaching slots, and enrollment patterns. Provost Epstein explained that, in 2016–2017, the Ad Hoc Committee on Alternative Faculty Meeting Hours had examined the class schedule, with the goal of finding a way to set aside time that could be used for a community hour, possibly daytime faculty meetings, and department meetings. Following a conversation with the Committee of Six, the ad hoc committee had brought forward a proposal in spring of 2017 that faculty meetings and community hours take place on Thursdays from 1:00 P.M. to 2:50 P.M. and that a new block of course times be created on Tuesday/Friday afternoon (an underutilized portion of Amherst's academic schedule). It had been stressed that, for the proposal to be implemented, a number of faculty/departments would need to be willing to teach in the newly created Tuesday/Friday afternoon time slot. The ad hoc committee had also shared information about the underutilization of current time slots, which are not limited to Fridays. Provost Epstein commented that, at the time, it had been noted that it would be problematic if many faculty/departments switched to a Monday/Wednesday schedule, because of bunching that would occur. More faculty would need to teach on a Tuesday/Friday afternoon schedule for the proposal to be implemented successfully. This is still the case. The provost noted the commonly held view that many faculty members may not want to teach on Friday afternoons, as some colleagues leave the area to travel to conferences, and/or commute to and from Amherst and make use of Friday afternoons for these purposes. Alternatively, if faculty meetings actually shifted to Fridays, it is thought that related problems with attendance for the same reasons would occur. It has been agreed that, if a proposal for a Thursday-afternoon time slot were to move forward, it would be critical to gain a sense, in advance, of how many faculty members would be willing to teach on Friday, otherwise there could be serious repercussions. The schedule for co-curricular activities, including athletics and the arts present other challenges. The provost noted that, most recently, the Committee of Six suggested that Jesse Barba, director of Institutional Research and Registrar Services, take a fresh look at the class schedule, with everything on the table, including assumptions about the viability of early-morning classes and extending the academic schedule into the evening. Provost Epstein said that J. Barba has informed her in the past that he thinks that it may be possible to reserve the noon hour, most likely on Tuesdays and Thursdays, for faculty meetings, a community hour, and department meetings. In order to do this, it would be necessary to extend the academic day until 5:00 P.M. or 5:30 P.M. The provost noted that some labs and seminars already extend into these timeslots, and there could be issues surrounding co-curricular activities if this occurs. She said that she would check in with J. Barba about his current thinking, while noting that the complexities of creating a daytime meeting times may be too challenging to overcome. She also noted that faculty meetings typically only take place two or three times a semester in addition to the Labor Day and commencement meetings.

Potential agenda items for the Committee of Six for the spring term was the next topic of discussion. Provost Epstein reviewed a list with the committee and invited the members to propose additional items. It was agreed that major issues for discussion by the committee will include consideration of the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Curriculum Committee surrounding advising and college-wide learning goals (the proposal for which had been revised by the Committee on Educational Policy and the Committee of Six and then returned to the Committee of Six after discussion at a faculty meeting); a continuation of the

committee's work to clarify the criteria for tenure, aligning language with practice; finalization of guidelines for the implementation of the common teaching evaluation form for tenure-track faculty; revision of the policy regarding consensual sexual relationships between faculty and students; and consideration of plans surrounding the future of the college's housing program.

In regard to the learning goals, Professor Brooks expressed strong support for the language and tone of the learning goals proposed by the Ad Hoc Curriculum Committee as part of its report, which she favors over the revised versions. It was agreed that revising the college-wide learning goals is important and will aid the advising process, and that the committee would return to this issue this semester.

The provost reminded the members that, when the compensation program for chairs was launched as a pilot, it had been agreed that an evaluation would be done at the end of the 2019–2020 academic year. The members decided that the provost should ask J. Barba to develop a survey that could be sent to past and present chairs to assess the program. The committee would review the questions and results, the members agreed.

In regard to finalizing the committee's [draft of guidelines for administering the common teaching evaluation form for tenure-track faculty](#), the members noted that this would be a topic of discussion at their upcoming meeting with the Consultative Group for Untenured Faculty on February 10. The consultative group has consulted with tenure-track faculty about the guidelines, it was noted, and plans to share the feedback that was received and the group's views about the proposal. (Earlier, the committee had consulted with the chairs of academic departments and programs about the guidelines.) Following the meeting with the consultative group, the committee agreed to finalize the guidelines and to discuss matters raised when some Committee of Six members (Professors Brooks, Schmalzbauer, and Sims) and three members (Professors Edwards, Gardner, and Hicks) of the consultative group had met in November, as well as any topics that come forward in February. The members also decided to have a conversation about the short video that has been created to introduce the purpose and importance of teaching evaluations.

The members turned to the topic of the policy on consensual sexual relationships between faculty members and students (*Faculty Handbook*, [IV., A., 3.](#)). The faculty had discussed the committee's proposed revision (below) in a committee-of-the-whole conversation at the November 5, 2019 faculty meeting, and the committee discussed next steps in the context of issues raised during that conversation.

#### *Consensual Sexual or Romantic Relations between Faculty and Students*

The integrity of the faculty-student relationship is at the core of Amherst College's educational mission. This relationship vests considerable trust in the teacher, who in turn bears authority and accountability as a mentor, educator, and evaluator. There is scholarly evidence that demonstrates that even when sexual or romantic relationships between faculty and students do not entail harassment, they compromise the integrity of the educational process. They place the student and sometimes the faculty member in a vulnerable position, reduce the instructor's impartiality, and create a disruptive learning environment for all students. Simply having faculty members recuse themselves from supervising, evaluating, advising, or teaching students with whom they had or have a sexual relationship is not sufficient; it deprives those students of educational, advising, and career opportunities.

Because of the unequal institutional power inherent in this relationship and the potential ramifications for the integrity of the educational process, the college prohibits sexual or romantic relations between faculty and students who are enrolled at Amherst College and/or in an Amherst College course, even if the relationship is considered to be consensual by one or both parties. For purposes of this policy, [the definition of faculty in the Faculty Handbook \(II., C.\)](#) applies.

Alleged violations of this policy will be assessed on an individual basis. Violations may constitute grounds for disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Responsibility

for violations of this policy falls on faculty members, who are in positions of greater authority than students. Information regarding an alleged violation of this policy may be submitted to the Office of the Provost and Dean of the Faculty by any individual. The provost and dean of the faculty may initiate an investigation to gather additional information regarding any alleged violations. If the provost and dean of the faculty has reason to believe that the alleged violation may warrant dismissal, suspension, demotion in rank, or deprivation of pay of the faculty member, the process will follow existing college procedures, as outlined in the [Faculty Handbook \(III.I\)](#).

Professor Basu commented that, given that concerns had been raised by faculty about disciplinary procedures, she thinks that the committee should review existing ([Faculty Handbook iii., i., 2.](#)) and other possible procedures to address violations of the proposed policy. Faculty members had also asked for more clarity about the range of penalties that might be imposed, and whether any circumstances might be seen as mitigating—for example, whether a faculty member self-reported a relationship with a student. Continuing, Professor Basu also noted that the research that had been done about the policies at peer institutions had been helpful to the committee, but expressed the view that expanding that research, with a focus on other institutions' adjudication processes and the penalties that they impose for violating their policies, would be helpful to the committee's future deliberations. The other members concurred, and Provost Epstein agreed to have this research done. In addition, the committee decided that it would review carefully the confidential letters that it had received from faculty members about the proposed policy, as well as the committee-of-the-whole notes from the November 5 faculty meeting and previous Committee of Six minutes about the policy. In regard to another issue raised at the faculty meeting—whether exceptions to violating the policy should be articulated—the members felt that this matter could be addressed fairly easily. Professor Brooks, noted, for example, that the scenario of a new faculty member being married to a student before the time of that individual's appointment had been brought forward.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Brooks also commented that any revisions to the proposed policy should continue to stress that, when faculty have sexual relationships with students, those relationships affect the community as a whole, not just the faculty member and the student. As a general matter, the members agreed that the language of the policy should make expectations as clear as possible, and that the goal of the policy is to protect students and the learning environment as a whole. Professor Schmalzbauer expressed the view that it would be beneficial to include a process of restorative justice as part of the process when violations of the policy took place. Professor Horton said that it will be important to stress that any investigations of potential violations of the policy would be conducted by independent investigators who would not be members of the college community, if this is the case. Provost Epstein said that this would be the process that would be followed, and is, in fact, the process used for many serious complaints that arise now.

Professor Sims suggested an alternative approach to the development of the policy, recommending that the current language in the *Faculty Handbook* be revised to convey that consensual sexual relations between faculty members and students be prohibited, rather than discouraged. Other members did not agree with this approach, and it was decided to continue revising the draft proposal above. The members then discussed some possible specific changes to the language of the proposal and agreed to continue their discussion at their next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 5:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The fifteenth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2019–2020 was called to order by President Martin in the president’s office at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, February 3, 2020. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors Basu, Brooks, Goutte, Horton, Schmalzbauer, and Sims; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The meeting began with Provost Epstein asking for the members’ thoughts about the possibility of moving to a model of hiring one or two lecturers with expertise in teaching intensive-writing courses to teach such courses at Amherst. The idea, which has the support of the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP), the provost said, would be that such lecturers would be housed in departments, but would teach courses that would not necessarily be “counted” toward the major. A hiring committee could recommend to the provost that a successful candidate for the position be housed in a particular department, based on the disciplinary background of the individual. The provost could then ask the members of the department if they would be interested in hosting the lecturer. Continuing, she noted that her expectation is that the lecturers, whom she feels should hold a Ph.D. and have a disciplinary background, would not have a three-three teaching load, as most lecturers do, because of the demands of the courses that they would teach; they also would not be expected to produce scholarly work. If there is interest in this model, perhaps it could be undertaken as a three-year pilot, Provost Epstein suggested. Professor Horton asked if such lecturers might teach a two-two load and also have other responsibilities, for example within the Writing Center and/or the Center for Teaching and Learning. Provost Epstein said that this would be a possible model for the position.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Sims asked why a new FTE, based in the English department, was not being considered. She understands that some of the faculty members who had previously taught these classes were part of that department. Provost Epstein responded that it is her understanding that the English department does not feel that it should have a special level of responsibility in regard to teaching writing. She also noted that the approach of awarding FTEs to departments, with the explicit agreement that the department would offer an intensive-writing course in exchange (an allocation process that the Committee on Academic Priorities recommended years ago), has not been effective. Departments that made that commitment do not always continue to teach these courses, Provost Epstein explained. Professor Brooks said that it is her understanding that the English department, of which she is a member, has a strong interest in the continuance of intensive-writing courses at the college. The intensive-writing courses taught by Professor Barale and Senior Lecturer Lieber, both of whom are now retired, were listed in the English department, she noted. This had some advantages, in that it made sense to students to be taking these writing-intensive courses in English, and disadvantages, in that some college advisors and students would mistakenly regard the classes as gateway English department courses, rather than courses explicitly designed for students who require additional training in intensive writing. Professor Brooks offered to ask her departmental colleagues for their thoughts about possible models for teaching intensive writing, including the possibility of having a lecturer in the English department, or other departments, who would do so. Professor Basu said that, although she understands the rationale for the provost’s proposal, she is concerned that, under the model, a lecturer might feel marginalized by not teaching courses that count toward the major, when other faculty members in the same department would do so. Other members posed the question of who would mentor the lecturers and be responsible for assembling their reappointment and promotion cases. Professor Brooks wondered if listing intensive-writing courses in different departments might be confusing to students. Professor Goutte said that she agreed. She expressed the view that an intensive-writing course within a department other than English might attract only the subset of students interested in that field of study, whereas an intensive-writing course formally labeled as an English course would attract any student seeking to become a better writer. It was agreed that Professor Brooks should consult with her colleagues in the English department about the idea of hosting a possible lecturer who would focus on teaching intensive-writing courses.

Conversation returned to the topic of the teaching prize that the college has established in honor of Jeff Ferguson, the inaugural Karen and Brian Conway ’80, P’18 Presidential Teaching Professor at Amherst, who died in 2018. The members discussed the letters that would be sent to faculty, students, and alumni requesting nominations for the award. The committee agreed that alumni who have graduated in the past twenty years and current faculty members and students should be invited to make nominations. The members then turned to several personnel matters.

Provost Epstein next shared with the members a draft of a new policy that she feels would provide clarification that is needed regarding teaching loads for tenure-line faculty, now that opportunities for course reduction have become more available (e.g., for chairing departments, service on the Committee of Six, and service in some administrative roles at the college). The provost noted that all faculty members who are not on sabbatical, unpaid leave of absence, or phased retirement are normally expected to teach the equivalent of at least one course per semester. As noted in the draft policy, in most cases, course reductions may not be combined to effect a semester without teaching. The provost anticipates placing language to this effect in the Teaching and Advising section of the *Faculty Handbook* (IV., B.) as a new number 2, with the rest of the sections following consecutively. The provost stressed the importance of Amherst faculty members being present in the classroom and the detrimental impact on students of faculty removing themselves from teaching when not on leave, while noting that the language of the policy allows for flexibility in very exceptional circumstances. The committee expressed support for making this expectation clear and agreed that allowing for the possibility of exceptions makes sense. Professor Basu stressed the importance of flexibility in the case of faculty members who have provided exceptional service and have unusual opportunities to undertake important research and creative work at critical junctures in their professional lives. Professor Goutte commented that the college has been generous in granting course reductions in recent years, and said that she thinks it is reasonable to stipulate limits on combining such reductions. Professor Goutte commented that she can understand the provost's rationale for wanting faculty to teach at least one course a semester when not on leave. The members suggested a few revisions to the draft language, and Provost Epstein agreed to share a revised draft of the policy at the members' next meeting.

Provost Epstein next discussed some revisions (in red caps below) to the college's "topping-up" policy that she has developed to clarify requirements that are already in place (see [Faculty Handbook III., H., 1.](#)) surrounding eligibility for sabbatic leaves in relation to grants and topping up.

### **Topping-Up Policy**

Amherst encourages faculty members, when eligible for **SABBATIC** leave, to apply for outside fellowships and grants that will support and recognize their scholarly and creative work. To offset some of the financial burden that may result from accepting a fellowship **FOR AN EXTENDED SABBATIC LEAVE** at a level below a faculty member's regular salary, the college provides supplemental salary support, **MOST OFTEN TO HELP FUND AN UNPAID LEAVE OF ABSENCE THAT WILL EXTEND A SABBATICAL FROM ONE SEMESTER TO TWO SEMESTERS**. Tenure-line faculty members who take a leave of absence to extend a sabbatical in order to conduct scholarly or creative work under the auspices of an external grant or fellowship are eligible to receive up to one-half of their salary for the period of their leave, up to one year, to bring the fellowship or grant stipend to the faculty member's full salary for that time frame. The amount that the college will "top up" will not exceed the amount of the fellowship or grant award or half of a faculty member's salary. The college will cover any uncovered benefits costs, beyond the funds provided by the fellowship or grant, provided that the faculty member contributes the share of benefit costs normally met by a faculty member. The provost and dean of the faculty will review all topping-up requests. **IF A FACULTY MEMBER IS ELIGIBLE FOR A TWO-SEMESTER SABBATICAL (WITHOUT AN UNPAID LEAVE OF ABSENCE) AND RECEIVES A FELLOWSHIP OR GRANT, THE COLLEGE MAY PROVIDE UP TO TWO-NINTHS OF THE FACULTY MEMBER'S SALARY DURING THE SUMMER BEFORE THE SABBATICAL, THE SUMMER AFTER THE SABBATICAL, OR DURING BOTH SUMMERS, DEPENDING ON THE AMOUNT OF THE FELLOWSHIP OR GRANT AND DURATION OF THE AWARD.**

The provost noted that, under the current leave policy, which is articulated in the *Faculty Handbook*, "Faculty with regular appointments will normally be eligible for sabbatic leaves or unpaid leaves of absence after having completed three continuous years (i.e., six continuous semesters) of teaching. After six semesters, a tenured faculty member is eligible for one of the following during the same academic or calendar year: (1) one semester of

unpaid leave of absence; or (2) two semesters of unpaid leave; or (3) one semester of leave at 80 percent of a semester's salary in combination or not, as wished, with one semester's unpaid leave of absence. Alternatively, regular faculty are eligible for one year of sabbatic leave at 80 percent of salary or one semester of sabbatic leave at full salary after six years of teaching uninterrupted by a sabbatic leave. They are also eligible if the six years of teaching are interrupted by a leave of absence without pay providing the last three years have been continuous." Provost Epstein explained that, while this is the policy, a practice has emerged in recent years that is becoming problematic. Faculty members, in increasing numbers, are applying for and receiving grants and fellowships that will provide some or all of the funding for the professor to go on leave for a period when the individual would normally not be eligible to take a leave or to extend a leave (i.e., when they do not have the necessary number of teaching semesters). These colleagues request to have their salaries topped up, in order to fund a leave that is off cycle.

The provost commented that, while she is pleased that Amherst faculty members are enjoying successful outcomes when applying for grants and fellowships, having faculty members take leaves more frequently than their eligibility normally allows is creating challenges within departments that need to mount their curricula. In addition, she noted, when faculty members are away, for example for two consecutive years, students and departments often suffer, in her view. In addition, there are often financial implications, as the college may need to devote additional resources to replacing faculty members who are going on leave off-cycle. Provost Epstein feels strongly that leaves should normally be taken in accordance with the rules outlined in the *Faculty Handbook*, and developed the changes to the topping-up policy to reflect this view. She said that faculty members should normally apply for grants and fellowships that will offer support for periods in which they are eligible to be on leave or to extend a leave. Provost Epstein commented that she can imagine a time in a faculty member's career, however, when an exception might be made to this policy, and that the revisions to the policy allow for this possibility.

Responding to the challenges that the provost had described, Professor Horton commented that Amherst has a generous sabbatical policy, and he expressed support for reinforcing the *Faculty Handbook* language through the suggested revisions to the topping-up policy. By doing so, practice will more closely align with policy, he noted. Professor Brooks concurred, while expressing the view that allowing for exceptions is important. She wonders if there might be implications for faculty recruitment and retention, perhaps making the college less competitive in these areas, if the topping-up policy became more limited. Provost Epstein said that she has not received questions about the policy from prospective faculty. She believes that among liberal arts colleges, Amherst's topping-up policy is generous. Professor Brooks noted that Amherst is often competing with R1 universities in attracting and retaining faculty and so should be considering R1 leave policies as well. She gave examples of some universities that offer leaves every two years and ensure faculty benefits when outside grants are awarded. She also emphasized the importance of supporting faculty research, as well as the necessity of ensuring that Amherst has enough faculty members to cover courses, chair departments, and make research leaves possible. Professor Schmalzbauer, while agreeing that Amherst should continue to offer strong support for faculty research, said that, in her estimation, Amherst does have leave policies on par if not better than many R1s. In her view, if the college starts trying to match the leave policies of the most generous and prestigious R1s, Amherst should also be looking at where its research expectations stand in comparison to theirs. Professor Sims also expressed support for following the *Faculty Handbook* language and also allowing for flexibility. She noted that, although the college does not engage in a process of "buying out" teaching time in a formal way, the current topping-up policy seems to be similar to this approach. She feels that not all faculty members are aware of their options regarding external grants and leave, so she supports the greater clarity this proposal would bring. Professor Basu asked how often pre-tenure colleagues win grants or fellowships and wish to take leaves off-cycle prior to tenure. She expressed a concern that extended leaves at this stage could limit the information departments have when making decisions about reappointment and tenure. Provost Epstein agreed, also commenting that it is her hope that the Grants Office will dedicate more of its efforts to supporting faculty at all stages of their careers. It was agreed that it would be helpful if there was greater clarity on what is normally permissible under the topping-up policy, and that the provost's proposed revisions to the policy would help accomplish this goal.

Returning to the point raised earlier by Professor Sims, Professor Goutte suggested that the topping-up policy seems to facilitate buying out an extra semester of leave, which she thought was not allowed for faculty in the sciences who receive external grants. She is concerned that the topping-up policy might allow faculty in the humanities and social sciences to extend a leave when they receive grants and fellowships, but not science faculty.

Provost Epstein said that she would do some research on this question and report back at a future Committee of Six meeting.

The members returned to the topic of the policy on consensual sexual relationships between faculty members and students (*Faculty Handbook*, [IV., A., 3.](#)) and discussed ideas for possible revisions to the policy that they had shared with the faculty at the November 5, 2019, faculty meeting (see below).

*Consensual Sexual or Romantic Relations between Faculty and Students*

The integrity of the faculty-student relationship is at the core of Amherst College's educational mission. This relationship vests considerable trust in the teacher, who in turn bears authority and accountability as a mentor, educator, and evaluator. There is scholarly evidence that demonstrates that even when sexual or romantic relationships between faculty and students do not entail harassment, they compromise the integrity of the educational process. They place the student and sometimes the faculty member in a vulnerable position, reduce the instructor's impartiality, and create a disruptive learning environment for all students. Simply having faculty members recuse themselves from supervising, evaluating, advising, or teaching students with whom they had or have a sexual relationship is not sufficient; it deprives those students of educational, advising, and career opportunities.

Because of the unequal institutional power inherent in this relationship and the potential ramifications for the integrity of the educational process, the college prohibits sexual or romantic relations between faculty and students who are enrolled at Amherst College and/or in an Amherst College course, even if the relationship is considered to be consensual by one or both parties. For purposes of this policy, [the definition of faculty in the Faculty Handbook \(II., C.\)](#) applies.

Alleged violations of this policy will be assessed on an individual basis. Violations may constitute grounds for disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Responsibility for violations of this policy falls on faculty members, who are in positions of greater authority than students. Information regarding an alleged violation of this policy may be submitted to the Office of the Provost and Dean of the Faculty by any individual. The provost and dean of the faculty may initiate an investigation to gather additional information regarding any alleged violations. If the provost and dean of the faculty has reason to believe that the alleged violation may warrant dismissal, suspension, demotion in rank, or deprivation of pay of the faculty member, the process will follow existing college procedures, as outlined in the [Faculty Handbook \(III.I\)](#).

Among the issues the committee considered was the possibility of removing the word *romantic*, as the members had suggested previously, and replacing it with another word that could convey with clarity the idea of lavishing inappropriate and undue attention. After thinking about some options, for example, the word *intimate*, the committee decided to strike *romantic* and to bring forward a proposal to prohibit *consensual sexual relations* between faculty and students only. It was noted that faculty members should be aware that behavior that involves lavishing undue attention on students, which might be considered romantic or date-like and consensual initially, could ultimately be seen by a student as harassment. Faculty members should be aware that such behavior can often be inappropriate, and that accusations of sexual harassment are addressed through the Title IX process, the members noted. The members also reiterated the importance of stressing as part of the policy that its goal is to protect students and the learning environment as a whole. It was agreed that the policy, if approved by the faculty, would also protect faculty members by providing clarity that consensual sexual relations between faculty members and students are prohibited, allowing boundaries to be set with less ambiguity.

In regard to reporting or self-reporting relationships between faculty members and students that might be consensual sexual relationships, the members discussed who might report such relationships and to whom, and the possibility of having particular college administrators serve as sounding boards for those who wish to

discuss possible relationships prior to deciding whether to report them. It was agreed that addressing the consequences of violating the policy is also important, noting in this regard that it would be helpful for the committee to review once again the disciplinary procedures that are in place (see [Faculty Handbook, III.I.,1.,2.](#)). Prior to the faculty meeting in which the proposed policy will be brought forward for a vote, the committee decided that it would be helpful to share with the faculty a brief summary of these procedures, given the many steps that they involve. The members then reviewed the adjudication processes used for violations of similar consensual sexual relationship policies governing faculty members in regard to students at some other institutions, noting that most follow either the standard disciplinary procedures (as is the case with the proposed policy) or Title IX procedures for sexual misconduct. The committee decided to provide the faculty with a small number of the policies and processes that they found relevant and compelling, while noting that Amherst should develop a policy that works best for the college. The members also agreed that the confidential letters that it has received from faculty members about the proposed policy, as well as the committee-of-the-whole notes from the November 5 faculty meeting were very helpful and would inform their efforts to finalize the proposed policy.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Basu noted that some colleagues asked why the committee has decided to bring forward the proposed policy at this time. A primary reason, in her view, is the increasing awareness of the harm that consensual sexual relationships between faculty members and students can cause to the educational environment. In addition, she continued, some faculty members are aware of such relationships at Amherst and letters that the committee has received attest to this fact. The members decided to consider whether excerpts of the confidential letters should be shared with the faculty, while noting the importance of maintaining the confidentiality of the letter-writers.

The members decided to continue to consider possible revisions to the policy and to finalize their proposal over the next several weeks. It was agreed that a faculty meeting should be held on March 3, and that the committee would bring the policy forward for a vote then. While the committee recognized that March 3 is “Super Tuesday,” it was noted that Massachusetts has early voting ([see information online](#)), which offers a great deal of flexibility for voting between February 24 and February 28. Given the other business of the committee and the time needed to prepare for the discussion, as well as the possible dates that are available for faculty meetings, a meeting on March 3 was considered to be the best option. The provost agreed to inform the faculty about the meeting and to provide information about early voting as soon as possible.

In the brief time remaining, the members began a consideration of the faculty housing program, responding to a [letter sent by Professor Sims to the Committee of Six in August](#). Professor Sims noted that the central proposal of the letter was that the college develop a comprehensive plan for the future of the college housing program. Specifically, the letter suggested that the Committee of Six charge the College Housing Committee and the Committee on Priorities and Resources (CPR) with developing a financially specific, long-term production and maintenance plan. Provost Epstein informed the members that it is her understanding that, in accordance with regular governance procedures, the housing committee is currently considering the issues that Professor Sims had raised in her letter, and that the housing committee plans to forward its views to the Committee of Six and the CPR. In her view, it is not appropriate to charge the housing committee when that body is already in the process of responding to the letter. Professor Sims expressed the view that this was also a question of broad college priorities and resources and asked to make the case for why this issue is important, why it should be addressed now, and why she feels that the housing committee and CPR should be formally charged to do so.

In discussing the importance of this issue, Professor Sims noted the role that the housing program plays in helping to build community at Amherst. She commented that the housing program creates opportunities for students to be welcomed into the homes of faculty members and coaches—to share meals and conversation, for example. She is aware that many current and former students feel that these moments and relationships play an important role in the development of their sense of community and well-being while at Amherst and beyond. Faculty members have been encouraged to invite students into their homes, Professor Sims continued, and these opportunities are most accessible to students when faculty members live nearby. She also noted that, when faculty, senior staff, and coaches live close to campus, they find it easier to support the “off-hour activities” (e.g., performances and athletic competitions) of students. In regard to sustainability, another point that Professor Sims said she would like to make is that the college housing program places a

substantial number of people within walking and biking distance of work. In her view, this is the kind of thing that is crucial to the college's climate action plan, which students, staff, and faculty strongly support.

Maintaining these lands and houses is also part of Amherst's broader commitment to sustainability in the community, Professor Sims noted. Specifically, many of the houses have substantial lead paint and asbestos hazards. In her view, there is an institutional responsibility to the community to remediate rather than sell properties with these known hazards. Professor Sims noted that Amherst College also has the responsibility and opportunity to contribute to helping to maintain and increase the housing stock in Amherst generally. The town has a crisis of affordability, she argued, particularly for low- and moderate-income families. High demand for student rentals in the town center has driven up the prices of small houses, putting homes that previous generations of faculty and staff could afford now out of reach for many. Given these constraints, she feels it is particularly important for the college to ensure that its houses are occupied and maintained.

In regard to the question of *why now*, Professor Sims expressed concern that the faculty home-purchase program is facing a potential financial crisis. She said that she hopes that the college can use that crisis as an opportunity to re-invest in and strengthen the housing program, rather than reduce or end it. In her view, the crisis is twofold. She said that the college has several houses that have been sold back or will soon be sold back, but that are difficult to sell because of maintenance needs. At the same time, tenure-track faculty members are receiving tenure and then have no houses to purchase. Right now, she commented, there are six-to-eight properties that are vacant, but that could be used for housing faculty and staff—whether as part of the home-purchase program or as rentals. In Professor Sims's view, this has been a crisis that has been building slowly, but that is now here. She believes that, if the college plans now, Amherst has a good opportunity to keep the program viable for the future. She suggested that the college could take advantage of the fact that the current Town Council is supportive of development and change. This may facilitate possibilities such as using the Dakin Estate-land to build new housing, or renovating existing houses in order to increase density of units and improve affordability. Most ambitiously, she expressed a hope that future housing opportunities created by the college could be more affordable and could be open to staff members. Professor Sims believes that, if Amherst can invest in both the rental and the home-purchase houses, these buildings will be an asset that is really useful and valuable to the college in the long run. Other colleges and universities are making a commitment to housing, she noted, commenting that her letter draws on examples from Princeton. That institution has made substantial investments in this direction because that institution is also located in a community with high housing prices, Professor Sims noted.

In answer to the question of why to charge the CPR and housing Committee, Professor Sims said that a concrete plan would need to have budget numbers attached to it. Continuing, Professor Sims said that she also hopes that a strategy will be developed with a range of voices and faculty input. She argued that a formal charge would empower the CPR and housing committee to work together, because a solution requires decisions about resources. Concluding, Professor Sims said that she feels that addressing this issue is part of Amherst's broader mission to care for its lands, the landscape, and the community. She praised the college's efforts to create positive community and be engaged in civil society. Professor Sims expressed hope that Amherst will continue to think strategically about the future of the lands owned by the college, and the positive leadership role Amherst can play in building sustainable communities

The meeting adjourned at 5:15 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The sixteenth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2019–2020 was called to order by President Martin in the president’s office at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, February 17, 2020. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors Basu, Brooks, Goutte, Horton, Schmalzbauer, and Sims; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The meeting began with President Martin commenting on the success of the previous weekend’s Winter Festival, which was enjoyed by many members of the Amherst community.

With sadness, the committee noted the passing of Ralph Beals, Clarence Francis Professor of Economics, Emeritus, on February 12, 2020, and the members discussed constituting a memorial minute committee. The committee next discussed constituting a memorial minute committee for Professor Lyle McGeoch, who died on October 5, 2019.

Following up on a conversation that she had facilitated at the February 7 meeting of the chairs of academic departments and programs, Professor Basu suggested that the committee discuss the distribution of service work across the faculty—with a particular focus on how best to determine the distribution of responsibility, including informal and invisible service; how to gain a better sense of possible inequities that might correlate with race and gender, as well as field and department size; and how to address inequities that come to light. The other members expressed support for continuing the conversation; it was noted that five Committee of Six members are currently serving as department chairs and had been present at the chairs’ meeting. The members briefly reviewed other possible agenda items for the coming weeks and agreed that bringing forward a proposal to the faculty to clarify the criteria for tenure should be a priority.

Continuing with “Questions from Committee Members,” Professor Horton inquired about the role and responsibilities of lecturers at the college. He wondered why lecturers do not serve on faculty committees, since their contributions are equivalent to those of tenure-line faculty in many other ways, and they share many of the same privileges and responsibilities, such as attendance and vote at faculty meetings. Provost Epstein responded that lecturers are currently categorized as trustee-appointed staff, and also as faculty, and they have departmental responsibilities, but not college-wide duties. As non-tenure-line faculty who are appointed with renewable contracts, they typically have a three-three teaching load, or a three-two load if they carry out significant administrative work for their departments (for example, overseeing comprehensive exams). Continuing, Provost Epstein explained that most lecturers are not expected to produce scholarship or creative work as part of their appointments, though some colleagues in these positions do so; other lecturers focus solely on pedagogy. It is her hope to bring forward a proposal to place lecturers in a new category of non-tenure-line faculty, the provost said. Professor Horton asked about the number of lecturers at the college. Provost Epstein responded that, currently, there are twenty-four lecturers, and she commented that, under certain circumstances, the appointment of lecturers can help meet needs generated by high course enrollments within departments.

In regard to college-wide service, the provost said that she feels that it is important that permanent members of the Amherst faculty bear the responsibility of making long-term decisions at the institutional level. Professor Sims noted the awkwardness that is created by having faculty members who teach regularly, are hopefully at Amherst for the long term, and make highly important contributions to their departments, but do not have all the privileges of tenure-line faculty. Professor Brooks commented that, for faculty partners, appointment as a lecturer can be beneficial, as the availability of a second tenure-line position for a faculty couple is rare. She also commented that, in her experience at a prior institution, the model of appointing some lecturers to positions in which they carry out some administrative work on a continuous basis offered valuable continuity and expertise, and lightened the burden of departmental responsibilities among the faculty. She wonders whether Amherst ought to consider such a model. The members next turned briefly to a personnel matter.

The members next continued their discussion of the faculty housing program. Professor Sims commented that she had been happy to learn from the provost and dean of the faculty that the College Housing Committee is currently considering these issues and developing a plan. She said that she understands and appreciates the administration’s viewpoint that the Committee of Six should wait until the housing committee has made progress before discussing the issue in detail. Plans call for the Committee on Priorities and Resources (CPR) to review the proposals as well. Professor Horton commented that

Professor Sims has raised important issues. Professor Brooks expressed support for developing a long-term plan for the housing program to address the issues that Professor Sims had raised, including consideration for long-term sustainability in regard to the climate action plan and college-wide space needs. Professor Goutte concurred, noting that, when the committee had met with pre-tenure faculty, colleagues had described the lack of clarity about the college's housing program as one of their primary concerns. Professor Basu thanked Professor Sims for her hard work on this issue. Provost Epstein informed the members that the housing committee is preparing a memo with recommendations about the housing program, and that the document should be ready soon. That memo will be shared with the CPR. Professor Brooks asked if the document would then come to this year's Committee of Six. Provost Epstein responded that she anticipates that the Committee of Six will discuss the memo, depending on when the other two committees complete their deliberations. The members asked that the provost inform the two committees that this year's Committee of Six considers this issue to be a priority and would like to consider the matter if at all possible. The provost said that she would convey this view to the housing committee and the CPR and would find out the anticipated timeline for completing the memo and passing it on to the CPR.

The members returned to the topic of the policy on consensual sexual relationships between faculty members and students (*Faculty Handbook*, [IV., A., 3.](#)) and continued the process of refining the policy that the members plan to propose to the faculty on March 3. As part of their deliberations, the members reviewed changes that Lisa Rutherford, chief policy officer and general counsel, had suggested and their implications. Issues discussed included providing avenues for faculty to engage in discussion and to ask questions without entering a formal disciplinary or grievance process; reviewing the procedures that would be used to resolve alleged violations and clarifying that these processes include the opportunity to seek an informal resolution whenever appropriate; and providing a separate avenue for students to engage in discussion and to ask questions about possible violations through conversations with the dean of students. The members reviewed [a brief summary of the discipline procedures](#) that are in place (outlined in *Faculty Handbook*, [III.I.1.,2.](#)) and agreed that it would be helpful to share the document with the faculty. In addition, the president should explain several important aspects of the process at the faculty meeting, the committee decided. The committee discussed whether having students present during the meeting might constrain conversation and decided to think about whether students should be asked to leave the meeting.

Continuing the conversation about matters relating to the policy, some members noted that some policies at other institutions include the provision of having another staff member who could be consulted about questions about the policy or potential violations. The members asked the provost if there would be members of the Amherst community to whom faculty could turn for advice if they had questions, for example, if they wanted clarity on whether a relationship in which they or another colleague were engaged might violate the policy. Some members asked whether the Title IX officer should be the one to judge whether an investigation is warranted and should be responsible for conducting such an investigation. Provost Epstein explained that the Title IX officer's role focuses on Title IX policy, and that this officer would not investigate cases in which Title IX does not apply. In the context of the policy under discussion, Provost Epstein noted that, in cases in which an investigation is necessary, that is, in cases in which the facts are disputed, the provost would engage an independent investigator. The committee agreed that it makes sense to separate processes involving the policy on consensual sexual relations between faculty members and students and Title IX policy, which governs sexual misconduct, for example harassment. Provost Epstein said that, faculty would, of course, be free to seek out other faculty or administrators, but that the provost is the "official" channel of communication with the formal procedures. The committee asked if the ombudsperson could be consulted. Provost Epstein responded that, while it is not appropriate for the ombudsperson to serve as a primary resource for a particular policy or to advise anyone about whether they have violated a policy, as part of his role he is available to discuss any matter that members of the community may wish to bring to him. It was noted that the ombudsperson submits an annual report to the president about issues that are brought to him. No personal information is revealed, and information is discussed in the aggregate. Professor Brooks asked if faculty members with questions could seek the advice of a faculty diversity and inclusion officer (FDIO), if, for example, they

experienced false accusations or rumors on the bases of their identity or affiliations. Provost Epstein said that a faculty member would be welcome to do so, but that the FDIO again could not play an official role. Professor Horton asked if plans call for considering whether consensual sexual relations between students and staff should be prohibited. The provost said that it is her understanding that the Office of Human Resources will review this question and make a recommendation.

In the brief time remaining, Professor Horton asked the provost how the search for the director of the library is progressing. Provost Epstein said that the pool of candidates is outstanding, and that the search committee would begin interviews at the end of the week. President Martin then informed the committee that the response to the staff survey that is under way is also going well, with staff completing the instrument in high numbers. She looks forward to discussing the results with the community once the consultants evaluated the data. The members then reviewed a draft faculty meeting agenda for the March 3 meeting and agreed to approve it at their next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 5:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The seventeenth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2019–2020 was called to order by President Martin in the president’s office at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, February 24, 2020. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors Basu, Brooks, Goutte, Horton, Schmalzbauer, and Sims; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The meeting began with Provost Epstein informing the committee that the Faculty Lecture Committee has selected Carrie Palmquist, assistant professor of psychology, as the 2019–2020 Lazerowitz Lecturer. A member of the Amherst faculty below the rank of full professor is selected annually for this appointment, the provost noted.

Under “Questions from Committee Members,” Professor Brooks, on behalf of a colleague, noted the importance of creating an atmosphere at faculty meetings that is open and collegial, a tone that is welcoming, and an expectation that there will be respect for the expression of all viewpoints. She commented that some untenured faculty members have reported feeling inhibited about speaking at faculty meetings, concerned that there could be repercussions if they express ideas that some tenured faculty members may not support. She urged the members to consider how they can play a leadership role in creating an open and collegial space for exchange of diverse viewpoints. The committee agreed that it is helpful to raise awareness about these issues and to consider further strategies to address them. The members then turned to personnel matters.

In anticipation of the faculty meeting on March 3, the members, after reflecting on the conversation at their last meeting (see [the committee’s minutes of February 17](#)), proposed some final revisions to their proposal to prohibit consensual sexual relationships between faculty members and students. If approved, the policy will replace the current policy (*Faculty Handbook, IV., A., 3.*). The members discussed the possibility of incorporating a restorative-justice model to resolve violations of the policy, and in preparation for their meeting, had shared with one another a number of readings about this approach. Professor Basu said that, in principle, she is drawn to restorative justice and its community-based approach and emphasis on problem-solving instead of a punitive orientation. In the context of violations of the proposed policy, however, she does not feel that this model should be used, at least at this time. Professor Basu commented that a restorative-justice approach is not used to resolve violations of other college policies, and that she is uncomfortable with the idea of only using the model in the context of violations of a policy that would prohibit consensual sexual relations between faculty members and students. She expressed concern that a restorative-justice model that calls for community deliberation would violate the privacy of faculty members who had allegedly engaged in sexual relations with students. In addition, Professor Basu said that the restorative-justice model should only be adopted after engaging in extensive consultation with the entire college community.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Goutte commented that she sees great potential in the restorative-justice model as a tool for resolving peer-to-peer conflicts, including those among students. Professor Horton said that he is also enthusiastic about the idea of using this approach to resolve some issues. All members agreed with Professor Basu, however, that restorative-justice practices should not be used to resolve violations of the proposed policy, noting the unequal power dynamic between faculty members and students. The committee expressed interest in the potential benefits of the restorative-justice model in other contexts, and the members recommended that the college continue to explore the use of this approach in the future, alongside others. Professor Schmalzbauer commented that she had recently participated in training on restorative justice that the college had offered, and she said that it is her hope that there will be more opportunities for members of the college community to learn about restorative-justice practices. She is attracted to the spirit of the approach, and she thinks that restorative practices would be appropriate to use to facilitate conversations between faculty members whose views on the matter of consensual relations between faculty and students are in conflict. Yet, she wonders whether Amherst is prepared to implement restorative justice at this time as a feature of its discipline policy. Professor Schmalzbauer also noted that, while there may be several colleges and universities in the United States that are using a restorative-justice approach to manage some student conflicts, it is her understanding that there is not as of yet a school using it to deal with conflicts between faculty, or

between faculty members and students. As such, there isn't a blueprint to guide Amherst, and developing a model at the college will require time.

Professor Brooks expressed agreement with Professor Basu and Professor Schmalzbauer and added that she has had conversations about restorative-justice approaches at other academic institutions, particularly focused on Title IX cases in which survivors have requested restorative justice as an option, and in tribal communities. She would be in favor of the college looking more closely at restorative-justice practices as a possibility on campus. She believes, however, that it does not make sense to attempt to create a restorative-justice option only for this particular policy regarding sexual relations between faculty and students, when Amherst does not yet have a restorative-justice system in place at the college or when Amherst does not yet offer that alternative to survivors of sexual violence.

Associate Provost Tobin agreed to incorporate the members' changes to the proposed policy immediately after the committee's meeting. The members decided to vote on the final policy the next day. [The final language was later incorporated into the Faculty Handbook.](#) Concluding the conversation, the members agreed that, at the faculty meeting, it would be helpful for President Martin to review several aspects of the discipline procedures that are in place (outlined in [Faculty Handbook, III.I, 1..2.](#)), which would be used to resolve alleged violations of the policy. Specifically, the members asked the president to explain that the process of seeking an informal resolution is part of these discipline procedures. In addition, she was asked to inform the faculty that, when the facts in a case are disputed, and it is decided that there should be an investigation to gather more facts, that process will be conducted by an independent investigator from outside the college. President Martin said that she would be happy to summarize these aspects of the procedures and to answer questions. The members also agreed that [a brief summary of the discipline procedures](#) should be linked from the faculty meeting agenda, as should [related policies from Stanford and Swarthmore](#). Professor Sims suggested that some printed copies of the summary also be made available to the faculty. In addition, the president should explain several important aspects of the process at the faculty meeting, the committee decided. The committee discussed whether having students present during the meeting might constrain conversation and decided to think about whether students should be asked to leave the meeting.

In the short time remaining, the members began a discussion about issues raised by the Consultative Group for Tenure-Track Faculty at a meeting that some members of the Committee of Six (Professors Brooks, Horton, Schmalzbauer, Sims, and Goutte) had had with members of the group (Professors Gardner, Mattiacci, and Edwards) on February 10, 2020. [\(The consultative group also submitted a report last May.\)](#) The committee meets with the group each spring. In addition, the members discussed briefly a conversation that had taken place between three members of the consultative group (Professors Edwards, Gardner, and Hicks) and three members of the committee (Professors Brooks, Schmalzbauer, and Sims) on November 14, 2019. The committee had organized that meeting to learn about tenure-track colleagues' views of the committee's draft of guidelines for administering the common teaching evaluation form for tenure-track faculty. The members reported that the group had discussed the following four issues with committee members at the February meeting: expectations regarding summer research opportunities for students and associated teaching efforts, the guidelines regarding teaching evaluations, orientation for new faculty, and the college housing program.

In regard to summer research in the sciences, Professor Sims said that the consultative group had shared the desire for recognition that this activity is a form of teaching, and that it should be evaluated as such. The group had conveyed concerns about the level of compensation that is provided, and about the clarity of expectations by departments and the college in regard to whether faculty members should provide these experiences, and how many students an individual faculty member should accept. Some untenured faculty members have expressed that they would like their work with research students to be part of their records at the time of reappointment and tenure, for example by providing research students with the opportunity to write retrospective letters. At present, research students only provide evaluations and retrospective letters if they have taken a class with a faculty member, the provost noted. A vote of the faculty would be required to make this change. Some members expressed support for this type of change, noting the important commitment to teaching and mentoring students through these summer opportunities.

Continuing, the members reported that the consultative group had said that faculty members have also made clear that working with students over the summer sometimes does not contribute directly to scientists' own research efforts and can consume a great deal of their time. Faculty members have noted that the majority of the summer experience can be spent in learning and training, not in substantive research pursuits. The consultative group had expressed that some untenured faculty members feel that there is a lack of clarity about whether this intensive form of teaching is factored into reappointment and tenure evaluations. While some faculty members have said that they feel pressure to create research experiences for students, they do not have a sense of clarity about how it will be perceived if they choose not to do so, or to work with a very small number of students, in order to make progress on their own research, for example. Some faculty members feel that they must have research students, and they have commented that working in an Amherst faculty member's lab is almost the only way that many undocumented and international students can gain research experience.

Provost Epstein responded that the college does not have an institutional stance on this issue. She recommended that science departments make clear to their untenured faculty members departmental expectations regarding working with students over the summer. At present, the work that faculty members do over the summer with students is not evaluated, except insofar as it is part of an honors thesis. The provost said that she recognizes the importance of providing an initial laboratory experience during summer, and she supports doing so. She also informed the members that the college is currently reevaluating the compensation that is provided to science faculty who provide research training to students in the summer and is hoping to provide additional compensation.

Regarding the topic of faculty development, the members noted that the consultative group had said that untenured faculty members have expressed a great deal of enthusiasm for the expanded orientation program for first-year faculty members. As part of the program for second- and third-year faculty, colleagues would like to learn more about expectations about college and department service, as well as personnel processes, and had suggested orientation lunches on those topics or others most aligned with the interests of those at this career stage.

Continuing the conversation, the members reported that, the members of the consultative group had said that they value the opportunity to rent housing units close to the college and have generally had a good experience in rental housing. They reported that some faculty members have been surprised by the high costs of heating rental units, however, saying that this information was not provided to them ahead of time. They have also proposed that the college take advantage of programs run by the state that could help reduce the costs of making units more energy efficient, which would lower costs and contribute to sustainability efforts. In addition, the members of the consultative group had noted that, if colleagues receive tenure, they would find it attractive to be able to purchase homes close to the college, but that they do not have a clear sense of what these options may be. (Provost Epstein later informed the members via written communication that information about [estimated utility costs for college rental units are available online](#), and that those who are eligible for this housing are directed to this site before they select a unit. The site is updated whenever a property becomes available or has been taken off the market. Utility costs are estimated because they are dependent on multiple factors, such as family size, preferred temperatures, etc., Provost Epstein explained. In regard to houses that are available to purchase, all eligible faculty receive an email with the property information and application link to apply, if interested. More [information is available online](#). She informed the members that the college participates in the Mass Save Energy Efficiency Program, whenever circumstances allow.)

Turning very briefly to the November meeting with the consultative group, Professor Brooks commented that, beyond the common evaluation form and guidance about the administration of the form, the group had raised concerns about the process of evaluating untenured faculty members' teaching as an overall matter. A member of the group had suggested that a different system for evaluating teaching might be developed, noting that the drawbacks of the current system include issues surrounding bias, and what appears to be a singular reliance on student evaluations. Members of the group had also expressed concerns that class observations of untenured faculty members' courses are not done in a consistent way across departments. Professor Basu suggested that ways be found to reaffirm for departments the

importance of gathering tenured faculty members' independent views of tenure-track faculty members' teaching—and of providing these views both to untenured faculty members as a form of feedback, and to the Committee of Six, as part of tenured members' evaluation of the teaching effectiveness of untenured faculty members. As noted in the letters that are sent to department chairs about reappointment and tenure, the Committee of Six finds that, when evaluating teaching effectiveness, it is helpful to read student evaluations in a broader context. Professor Brooks noted that, based on her experience as a faculty member and on the committee this year, it seems to her that departments generally give more space, in their letters, to quoting student evaluations than to providing faculty members' own observations about their colleagues' teaching. Toward that goal, the committee has recommended that departmental letters of recommendation also include substantive evaluation based on collegial observation of teaching, formal and informal pedagogical collaboration, and annual conversations. Professor Basu suggested that more systematic practices be developed about visiting untenured faculty members' classes. Provost Epstein noted that this point could be emphasized at the March meeting of the chairs of academic departments and programs, during which the topic of departmental mentoring practices and plans will be discussed.

Concluding the conversation, Professor Brooks noted that the consultative group had also raised some concerns about the implementation of the common evaluation form when courses are co-taught, recommending that a streamlined version of the form be generated for co-taught courses. The group had also expressed concern that the guidelines legislate that students should not be provided with snacks during class meetings when teaching evaluations will be solicited. Untenured faculty members also would prefer that the guidelines include more general language that conveys that the use of incentives should not be part of the evaluation process; they expressed the need for some explicit flexibility in the administration of evaluations so as to adapt to different class structures.

The members then reviewed a draft faculty meeting agenda and voted six in favor and zero opposed to forward it to the faculty, pending an electronic vote the next day on the motion regarding the consensual sexual relations policy (that vote later took place, with the members voting six in favor and zero opposed on content and six in favor and zero opposed to forward the motion to the faculty).

The meeting adjourned at 5:49 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The eighteenth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2019–2020 was called to order by President Martin in the president’s office at 2:30 P.M. on Monday March 2, 2020. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors Basu, Brooks, Goutte, Horton, Schmalzbauer, and Sims; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

Under “Topics of the Day,” President Martin and Provost Epstein shared with the committee recent developments in the college’s response to the coronavirus situation. Given the desire to have a discussion with the full faculty about this topic and to provide a venue for colleagues to ask questions, the members decided to revise the agenda for the faculty meeting that would take place the next day. Provost Epstein said that, as the college continues its planning, it will be very helpful to hear colleagues’ questions, which might result in learning about issues that haven’t yet been considered. It was agreed that, if possible, there should be a brief presentation by a local public-health official, and that John Carter, chief of police and director of public safety, who is playing an important role in emergency-response planning, and Dr. Emily Jones, director of student health services, who can advise on medical issues and be available for questions, should be invited to the meeting as well. The committee then voted unanimously to add a discussion about the college’s response to the virus to the faculty meeting agenda, to postpone the presentation by Chief Financial and Administrative Officer Kevin Weinman (he ended up giving a very brief presentation), and to forward the revised agenda to the faculty.

President Martin and Provost Epstein responded to the members’ questions about emergency-response planning, while noting that, by the time these minutes appear, different and/or additional plans could be in place, since the situation is changing rapidly. President Martin commented that the college is being as proactive as possible and is taking the approach of planning for worst-case scenarios—and everything in between—while hoping that it will not become necessary to implement many of these plans. For example, the college is ordering additional food and water to have on hand in the event that some or all members of the community will not be able to gather in the dining hall. The provost noted that planning is also under way to provide faculty members with the tools that they would need to teach courses virtually, from off campus, should doing so become necessary. Colleagues in information technology (IT) will be providing training on how to use these tools and working with faculty members to make sure that they have the necessary equipment to teach online. Professor Horton expressed support for preparing to use this approach under these unusual circumstances.

Continuing the discussion about planning surrounding the virus, the president noted that some faculty members and staff may need to work from home for extended periods, depending on how things unfold, and that some students may need to stay on campus or may end up staying at home or at other locations off campus, again depending on circumstances. It is possible that some students may need to be quarantined or isolated in their dorm rooms, for example. This is another reason that the college is making sure that non-perishable food is on hand. Professor Goutte said that she recalls students being quarantined in their residence halls a number of years ago, perhaps when the H1N1 was spreading, with food delivered to their dorm rooms. Professor Sims asked why the college might send students home, given that taking transportation could become one of the biggest problems in terms of exposure to the disease. Again, the president and provost said that it is challenging to know what might happen, and that contingency plans must be put in place. Professor Brooks said that she can imagine that some members of the college community may decide that, for safety reasons, they would want to work from home. She also believes that some families may decide that they want their student to be at home during this time, depending on the situation with the virus.

Turning to the medical side of the response, Professor Sims commented that considering the needs of students with underlying health problems should be a central focus. In general, she wonders whether most students will take the threat of the virus seriously and/or minimize any symptoms that they may be experiencing. In her view, it will be important to encourage them to seek medical advice if they are not feeling well. Professor Basu asked if the college has access to doctors who can make diagnoses and treat the sick, if many students became ill. President Martin responded that, at present, it seems best if those who believe they are ill go to the hospital, as the college does not have the resources to diagnose or treat the virus at this time, at least. She noted that, as of now, the government is not making the diagnostic test for

the virus available to colleges. Professor Brooks asked what the protocol is at the health center. President Martin said that the center can do testing for the flu, and that the results could be available in an hour. It would then be possible to rule the flu out as the cause of an individual's illness. Again, those who feel that they may have the virus will be encouraged to go to the hospital.

Continuing the discussion, several members asked if Amherst is recommending that faculty, students, and staff refrain from non-essential travel. The provost said that, while the college cannot require members of the community to refrain from personal travel, she would recommend that they do so as much as possible. It is believed that minimizing travel and taking other steps may slow down the spread of the virus, which could relieve pressure on the medical infrastructure. Provost Epstein informed the committee that students, faculty, and staff who have travelled to or through any of the Level-3 countries for college-sponsored or personal reasons as of Sunday, February 23, will be told that they should remain at home and monitor their health for fourteen days following their return. She noted that, out of caution, this practice covers more countries than the current guidance from the CDC (which only covers travel to or through China). Anyone who currently has college-sponsored travel plans of any kind to countries that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have assigned a [Level-3 Travel Health Notice](#) must cancel those trips. (This designation means that the CDC recommends that travelers avoid all nonessential travel to those destinations.)

In addition, the provost explained that students, faculty, and staff will be required to register all Amherst-sponsored travel with the college via an [online registry](#) on the website. Members of the community will also be strongly encouraged to submit basic information about their personal travel plans on the same site. This registry will allow the college to gather information so Amherst can be as responsive as possible to anyone who might need assistance as the situation evolves, or in the event that the college or local health officials need to investigate a local outbreak. Professors Horton and Basu asked whether there will be a central point of information regarding the virus. The provost responded that plans call for the college to launch a single webpage for information on COVID-19 very soon ([this site was later created](#)). In addition, updates will continue to be sent via email and the Daily Mammoth.

Turning to another matter and continuing with "Topics of the Day," Provost Epstein noted that the agenda for Friday's meeting of the chairs of academic departments and programs will include a discussion of departments' mentoring practices and plans. It is her hope that all departments will articulate mentoring plans in writing. At present, she believes that a very small number of departments have such plans in place, and/or have them in a written form. (As a result of the need to update chairs about planning surrounding the virus, this discussion was later postponed. The topic will be on the agenda of the next chairs' meeting.)

Under "Questions from Committee Members," Professor Sims commented that a faculty member had contacted her after reading in the Committee of Six minutes about the possibility of hiring lecturers to teach intensive-writing classes at the college. The colleague had expressed concerns about the idea that such lecturers, who would have courses capped at twelve students, possibly could have a two/two teaching load. These concerns focused on equity, Professor Sims said. The colleague had pointed out that some lecturers in STEM currently teach intensively for a large number of students (e.g., total enrollments of as many as one hundred) and have other demanding and time-consuming responsibilities (e.g., more than twenty hours of office hours a week). These lecturers, however, do not have the possibility of teaching a two/two load, even if they have substantial administrative duties. Provost Epstein responded by commenting that the proposal to hire lecturers to teach intensive-writing courses, and the model for this appointment, is at the nascent stage. Given the issues that the lecturer had raised about equity in teaching loads across the lecturer ranks, the provost said that she would think further about the shape of a potential appointment of a lecturer to teach intensive-writing courses. She thanked Professor Sims for sharing these concerns. Professor Brooks reported that, as the committee had suggested, the English department would discuss the idea of hosting a lecturer in the department at a department meeting next week.

Continuing with questions, Professor Basu suggested that, given the number of issues that the committee has identified for discussion, and the time left for meetings this semester, the members should review the list of remaining agenda items and set priorities. Associate Provost Tobin said that she would provide the committee with a list of remaining topics. The members agreed to prioritize these items.

Professor Brooks, referencing the editorials that have appeared recently in the *Amherst Student* (“[It’s Time to Recommit to Asian American Studies](#)” and “[The Status Quo is Not Enough](#)”) that have focused on the need and demand for Asian American studies at the college, including more courses, faculty hires, and a major, asked about the status of Asian American studies at Amherst. She noted that many of the students in the Asian American studies working group had met with departments to advocate for more faculty and for a major and had made compelling arguments. She emphasized that, although her departments certainly had a stake in these discussions, she believes that this is an important faculty-wide concern. President Martin said that students who are advocating for expanding the number of courses in this area have been meeting with her for three years and are frustrated with the lack of progress. Provost Epstein, who noted that a major and program would need to be an outgrowth of discussions by a group of interested faculty members who wish to move forward on this front, reported that an FTE proposal in Asian American studies was forwarded to the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP). The CEP has now weighed in on the proposal and will soon forward it to President Martin and herself, the provost said. In the provost’s view, it is very important to have such an FTE in place, in order to shape the future of Asian American studies at the college. President Martin and Provost Epstein noted that some seem to perceive this field as parochial, narrow, and identity-based. They disagree, and in their view, many students would benefit from taking a course in Asian American studies to expand their knowledge about the world. Professor Horton agreed and wonders there are other steps, in addition to the appointment of an FTE, that might help address the concerns expressed by students. Professor Brooks agreed, adding that faculty, departments, and the provost and president should prioritize these discussions, including supporting and attending events and other forms of public education, which could deepen understanding of the field.

The meeting concluded with a brief discussion about clarifying the criteria for promotion to full professor. Professor Goutte stressed the need to define how achievement in scholarship and creative work should be evaluated, given that this evaluation takes place within the department and by the Committee of Six, without insight from outside experts in the faculty member’s area of scholarship, which is a critical component of the tenure review process. Provost Epstein said that she seeks to advise colleagues about the criteria for promotion to full professor and meets with associate professors in their third or fourth year in that rank to discuss their trajectory. Professors Brooks and Schmalzbauer agreed that it would be helpful to clarify the criteria, and that the Committee of Six should do so. Professor Basu concurred and also suggested that it would be beneficial to clarify and streamline some of the procedures related to promotion. Following its annual review of the provost’s letters to candidates and chairs about promotion to the rank of full professor, the committee devoted the remainder of the meeting to personnel matters.

The meeting adjourned at 5:49 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

An emergency meeting of the Committee of Six was called to order by Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein in her office at 12 P.M. on Monday March 9, 2020. This was the nineteenth meeting for the academic year 2019–2020. Present, in addition to the provost, were Professors Basu, Brooks, Goutte, Horton, Schmalzbauer, and Sims. President Martin joined the meeting at 12:45 P.M. Professor Horton served as the substitute recorder.

The meeting focused on the college’s approach to help address the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Given the announcement by the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases that it is no longer possible to contain this disease, the provost noted the pressing need to take steps to mitigate the possible effects of COVID-19 on students, staff, and faculty of the college, as well as on members of the local community. The provost conveyed important factors in the decision, including the need to “flatten the curve” in regard to the pandemic’s spread; residential institutions, where people live in close quarters, are especially vulnerable to the rapid spread of the virus. In addition, concerns about the medical infrastructure in western Massachusetts; the college’s very limited ability to isolate students should they be exposed to COVID-19; and the health of Amherst’s more vulnerable community members, especially those with compromised immune systems and the elderly, led to the decision. The provost noted that, while there continue to be no reported cases of the virus at the college, Amherst needs to focus on ways to avoid the risk of exposure to COVID-19 that is posed by hundreds of people returning to campus at the end of the spring break. She described the decision to cancel classes on Thursday, March 12, and Friday, March 13, to move to remote learning as of Monday, March 23, and to have most students leave campus for spring break and not return to Amherst until later in the semester, or not at all this term.

The committee acknowledged the need for this emergency decision, while also raising a number of questions regarding the plan, including what will happen to international students and students without a fixed abode or stable housing situation, how students will be supported to pack up their belongings, how faculty members will be apprised and updated about the plan, how other colleges and universities in the area are handling the crisis, and what other preparation steps are being taken. The committee suggested that the provost convene a faculty meeting to discuss the college’s plans. After continued discussion, President Martin shared her plans to announce the decision later that evening, after consultation with the trustees.

The meeting adjourned at 1:05 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The twentieth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2019–2020 was called to order by President Martin in the president's office at 2:30 P.M. on Thursday, March 13, 2020. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors Basu, Brooks, Goutte, Horton, Schmalzbauer, and Sims; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Professor Griffiths, substitute recorder.

The meeting began with the members thanking President Martin and Provost Epstein for their leadership and foresight in a period of profound disruption for the society and the institution that has resulted from the threat and spread of the COVID-19 virus. The members praised the depth of research the president and provost had used in making a series of difficult and necessary decisions and for communicating clearly and compassionately with the student body.

Provost Epstein next presented for the committee's consideration a set of frequently asked questions (FAQ) about academic matters that she and her colleagues had drafted for distribution to faculty members, staff, and students in the next days. Being broadly in agreement with the answers given, the members asked for adjustments and clarifications on selected items:

On the academic calendar for the rest of the semester, the members decided that it was prudent to strike a balance between preserving the reading period and, alternatively, reassigning those days to make up for the two lost class days (March 12 and 13) and March 23–25, if faculty choose to delay the start of their classes until March 26, as they transition to remote learning. Class meetings will extend for two of the three original make-up days (May 4–5), and reading period will last three days (May 6–8).

On whether students with permission to stay on campus may be allowed in campus buildings, the provost clarified that such permission does not extend to students living off-campus or otherwise nearby. That policy is subject to change in light of local outbreaks of the disease. For now, it is anticipated that face-to-face meeting will be allowed with students who have permission to stay on campus (such meetings were prohibited shortly after the committee's meeting).

On the question of academic interns working remotely, Professor Goutte pointed out that this is not an option with lab assistants and some others. The provost commented that the president and others had stated repeatedly that students would be able to continue their jobs and, if their jobs were not possible to do remotely, that they would be able to do other work remotely and not lose any of their wages. Professor Schmalzbauer noted the impact of lost income for students in low-income families, including undocumented students. Provost Epstein pointed out that Kevin Weinman, chief financial and administrative officer, is working on financial supplements for students facing such hardship. The question of summer employment for students is under review and will be addressed at a later point, the provost said.

On the level of access to technology that faculty members can assume for students, Professor Horton pointed out that he is participating in an ad hoc working group to review students' responses to a survey about their IT equipment and access. Professor Horton provided a helpful overview of the working group and the survey and provided contact information for any faculty who have students with concerns.

On the question of how faculty members can help their advisees, the members agreed on the need for guidance beyond what can be provided via an FAQ. Professor Goutte suggested that the weekly emails from Rick López, dean of new students, to first-year students are a good model, and that similar regular messages to advisors could help prompt faculty to contact their advisees with suggestions of topics/questions. The members agreed that it would be helpful for advisors to start at once with a simple inquiry on their advisees' well-being and whether they are settled. Future emails could be more specific, e.g., on constructing a Google calendar of assignments and on creating a work schedule.

On the requirement for end-of-semester teaching evaluations, the members felt that tenure-track faculty should be allowed to opt out of having the evaluations for the current semester considered in the review for reappointment and tenure. While automatic exclusion of such feedback would ease the decision, untenured colleagues may well want student feedback for remote teaching, which requires extraordinary effort and ingenuity at the cost of research and other professional activity, it was noted. It was later decided that tenure-track faculty members could also opt out of the solicitation of retrospective letters from students whom they taught this semester. The members emphasized that, in evaluating tenure cases in future years, the tenured members of the department, the Committee of Six, the president, and the provost and dean of the faculty should not give any attention or weight to whether or not untenured faculty members choose to include their evaluations for this exceptional semester.

On the question of delaying the tenure clock for those who so choose, the members agreed that the option should be extended to all tenure-track faculty and not just those closest to tenure review. Tenured departmental colleagues and the provost should maintain a neutral position on the decision, while being available to talk through the advantages and disadvantages of each option, it was agreed. Provost Epstein pointed out that, should there be a delay of the tenure decision and, therefore, of the post-tenure sabbatical year, the extra year of teaching could be banked for calculating the second leave after the award of tenure.

Professor Goutte asked if external reviewers who are evaluating scholarly and creative work as part of tenure cases may be informed about the suspension of work in labs. Provost Epstein said that that would be appropriate.

The members raised a number of issues not addressed in the draft of the FAQ:

On the question of unspent research funds from this fiscal year, Provost Epstein clarified that it would not be feasible to roll them over to next year. Annual research and travel funds do not roll over, and in a situation of financial exigency, the college needs to be especially careful with its resources, she said.

On in-class observation for untenured colleagues, Provost Epstein indicated that the expectation is suspended during the period of remote teaching.

On whether future faculty meetings could be held remotely, including meetings that could provide a forum for discussing teaching, learning and decision-making during the COVID-19 epidemic, Provost Epstein said that the option is being explored, including the difficulty of giving voice to online participants. The members suggested the need for the president and provost to contact the faculty again to increase direct communication and maintain morale. They agreed to do so.

On the question of adjusting the grading system for students, the members agreed that the decision to make all courses this semester pass/fail could be a disservice to the dedication of students and their desire for meaningful feedback, but that other options should be considered. Provost Epstein pointed out that the Committee on Educational Policy has been discussing the widening of the flexible grading option (FGO). Many students would not wish to go to a pass/fail option, she said.

The committee then turned to [an email just received from Professor Moss](#) addressing the impact of the school closures on faculty members with children in those schools, including those chairing departments. The members found this to be an urgent concern that should supersede other agenda items that the committee had discussed prioritizing earlier, among them clarifying tenure criteria and guidelines for administering teaching evaluations for tenure-track faculty. In a wide-ranging discussion, the committee emphasized the need to set priorities clearly and realistically both in the institution and in

individual cases. Since providing childcare is not an option for the institution, the college community must adjust expectations of faculty who have such responsibilities, it was agreed.

The members affirmed that keeping students engaged in learning should be the priority, but that flexibility will be needed. Professors Brooks and Sims emphasized the need to make clear the one or two key learning goals of a course and to adjust expectations for what can or should be accomplished within a semester. Professor Goutte noted that a colleague's approach of including students in the reformatting of the course expectations and practices is one way of enhancing student engagement. Members who had recently met with Riley Caldwell-O'Keefe, director of the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), emphasized the usefulness of the guidance and resources made available by the CTL and Academic Technology Services. (e.g., [Teaching and Learning during COVID 19](#) and [Teaching and Learning with Technology](#)). Professor Schmalzbauer shared that the Department of American Studies has implemented a buddy system such that colleagues can cover for each other in emergencies.

On the question of institutional expectations, the members agreed that colleagues can reasonably defer or be selective about other obligations, including certain non-essential tasks involved with chairing departments. Professor Brooks suggested that the college and departments should defer non-essential service obligations and committee meetings. Provost Epstein pointed out that many meetings have been cancelled and that college service must be a secondary consideration at this time. Professor Horton pointed out that the option to delay the tenure clock could provide some help to tenure-track colleagues, though he regretted that historical trends had brought so many colleagues with young families to the double obligation of chairing departments and serving on time-consuming committees. Professor Goutte raised the extra challenge of faculty members serving simultaneously as chairs and on the Committee of Six during a crisis, noting that spreading out leadership roles would be advantageous. Provost Epstein said that some departments have a policy to exempt members from chairing while serving on the committee, but recognized that this is not always possible. She noted that the rising generation of more recently tenured faculty members would provide some demographic relief for the problem.

President Martin noted that, in giving the college community an immediate and direct response, her email of March 12, 2020, may have given the false impression that the remedy is being left to the discretion of the team coach. Clarity about the seriousness and breadth of the college's response is still needed. As ever, the confidentiality of disciplinary procedures prevents institutions from demonstrating how rigorously they enforce student codes of conduct. Beyond this incident, the need for institutional change is evident, the president said. Provost Epstein and she continue to gather information from students about the incident and the culture behind it. Professor Schmalzbauer said that she sees this as an appropriate occasion to implement restorative-justice practices, with the goal of facilitating a meeting between the lacrosse team and those in the greater Amherst community who have been harmed by some team members' racism. Professors Basu and Brooks pointed out the comparative lack of diversity in some sports, in the college, the failure of the current system of trainings to foster inclusive environments, and the pressure that some minority students often feel to either repeatedly confront or not to speak out about the culture of their teams. President Martin emphasized the multiple dimensions of the problem, including the problems that can arise in overly insular single-sex groups. President Martin said that, given how ineffectual bias training has often proved to be, her hope is that a program could be devised for faculty members to engage student-athletes in a more substantial intellectual analysis of the workings of bias and privilege. Professor Brooks suggested that the college could look to leadership models like the Haudenosaunee Confederacy's lacrosse team, which emphasizes the values of conflict resolution and inclusivity on which lacrosse was originally based. The committee then turned briefly to a personnel matter.

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The twenty-first meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2019–2020 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 3:00 P.M. on Monday, March 23, 2020. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors Basu, Brooks, Goutte, Horton, Schmalzbauer, and Sims and Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein. Professor Horton served as substitute recorder.

The meeting began with an acknowledgement of the challenges that many Amherst students and faculty are facing at this time, as a result of the impact of the COVID-19 virus. Provost Epstein outlined two proposals for changes in grading policy that have come to her primarily from students, but also from some faculty. The goal of both options would be to support students during these uncertain and challenging times. The first proposed policy would have all spring 2020 courses move to a flexible grading option (FGO) in which students have the option of receiving a grade or a pass/fail, which they would decide after classes are completed and grades are submitted by faculty. The second proposed policy would move all courses to a mandatory pass/fail grading scheme. Many colleges and universities have adopted or are considering these options. The provost also described possible approaches that might allow the faculty to vote electronically on changes to grading policy for spring 2020.

The committee had a wide-ranging discussion about the potential process to make a decision, and about the pros and cons of the two proposals. All members agreed that a change is warranted and necessary, given the circumstances that the Amherst community is experiencing, and that a decision must be made quickly. As Provost Epstein explained, moving to mandatory pass-fail for all courses would likely provide some potential equity advantages; students who find themselves in more difficult circumstances would not be disadvantaged in comparison to those finding themselves in less difficult circumstances. In addition, faculty members who fall ill would not have to worry about grading students who are learning in very unusual circumstances. This option has been adopted by some institutions, including MIT and Smith. Some members recognized the benefits of a mandatory pass-fail system. Other members worried that there were potential unintended consequences of moving all grades to pass-fail that the faculty might not be able to fully determine in advance. These might include substantial work already done by students, including honors students, that would not receive graded credit, and a lack of grades that are needed to demonstrate preparation and mastery for other courses or for graduate programs. Some members were concerned about how to sustain student and faculty engagement under a mandatory pass-fail option in which only a minimum level of work would be sufficient to pass. Others noted that the FGO proposal appears to offer the most flexibility, as it would allow students a pass-fail option for all courses if needed, but would retain the option for student achievements to be recognized as much as possible. Members commented that adopting the flexible grading option for all courses would not preclude a later decision to move all courses to pass-fail, if doing so proved to be warranted at a later date. There was general agreement that, no matter which option was adopted, it will be important that the criteria for what constituted a *pass* not be made more restrictive at this time. Some members hoped faculty could discuss the merits of the FGO option with their colleagues before voting. However, they agreed with President Martin that the college has an obligation to let students and faculty know if a change to grading policy will be made, and her view that time is of the essence.

The committee concluded that the arguments for the flexible grading option were compelling and provided a useful way to support student learning. Professor Brooks, who had also presented compelling reasons for pass-fail, drawn from her conversations with other faculty, said that she did not yet have enough information to conclude whether FGO or mandatory pass-fail would be the best option. She said that she would not vote against the FGO motion in the Committee of Six, but that she wants more time to consider the options. After discussion of alternative ways to proceed with making a decision, the members agreed to bring a motion to the faculty to adopt the proposed flexible grading option, once the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) had endorsed a motion to do so. The faculty vote would be taken electronically. If the motion failed, then the Committee of Six and the CEP would consider other options. Provost Epstein agreed to circulate the proposed motion on Tuesday to the full faculty with an announcement that an electronic vote would be conducted on Thursday. (The Committee of Six later voted electronically on the motion. On March 24, 2020, the members voted six in favor and zero opposed on the substance of the motion and six in favor and zero opposed to forward the motion to the faculty.)

President Martin next updated the committee on the sanctions imposed on the lacrosse team and her offer to meet with other groups, including the Black Student Union, to discuss ways that the college takes these allegations very seriously. The committee expressed concern about the impact of these incidents, particularly during a period of upheaval, and noted its support for community-wide conversations about how to address racism on campus at an appropriate time. Several members of the committee noted that this incident presents opportunities for faculty engagement, including revisions of the honor code and the use of restorative justice approaches to engage the Amherst community in education focused on race and racism.

The president also updated the committee on financial planning that is under way. Chief Financial and Administrative Officer Kevin Weinman has been engaged in preparing for a recession for several years and is updating those plans for the current environment. The president noted that Amherst's financial liquidity is good, and that she is committed to a financial-planning process that includes all constituencies of the college. The members noted that they had received emails from faculty and staff regarding a desire for communication around the challenging financial issues and thanked the president for her attention to these concerns. Some members noted that the reports of the special committee (the Advisory Budget Committee, or "ABC" committee) formed during the 2008 crisis may be helpful documents in this process. The members then turned briefly to a personnel matter.

The meeting adjourned at 4:05 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The twenty-second meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2019–2020 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 2:30 P.M. on Thursday, March 26, 2020. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors Basu, Brooks, Goutte, Horton, Schmalzbauer, and Sims; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The meeting began with the members describing their experiences teaching remotely; each felt that, given the circumstances, all of their classes had gone well. Provost Epstein said that she had heard of only one technical glitch with Zoom connectivity, while many faculty members had reported that they had had largely positive experiences with teaching remotely. Professor Horton commented that the upcoming two-week period of advising promises to be an enormously useful time, during which faculty can get a sense of what individual students are experiencing.

Under “Topics of the Day,” Provost Epstein informed the members of plans to hold a virtual faculty town-hall meeting that will be hosted by President Martin, Chief Financial and Administrative Officer Kevin Weinman, and herself. The event will take place via Zoom on Tuesday, March 31, 2020, at 7:30 P.M. A town hall for staff has also been planned, the provost said. The event on March 31 will provide an opportunity for faculty members to ask questions in two formats. The provost explained that colleagues will be invited to send questions via email to Associate Provost Janet Tobin in advance of the meeting. Another option will be to submit questions via Zoom-chat the evening of the event. It was agreed after the committee’s meeting that Professor Horton should serve as the moderator of the event. Given the nature of virtual meetings, it will not be practical for viewers to have their video and microphone options on, Provost Epstein said. President Martin, K. Weinman, Professor Horton, and she will be on camera, however, the provost noted. Professor Goutte asked if virtual attendance at the event is optional for faculty. The provost said the town hall is not a regular faculty meeting, and faculty are not required to participate.

The members discussed the timing of the committee’s annual meeting with all tenure-track faculty members. The committee agreed to meet with untenured colleagues soon after the faculty town hall, as there might be follow-up questions after the event. The members decided to hold the meeting via Zoom on April 6, from 4 P.M. to 5 P.M. This meeting will provide an opportunity for tenure-track faculty to share their views and questions. The members acknowledged that, during this very challenging and highly unusual time, colleagues will likely have much to discuss that is unique to this situation. The members said that they hope that this occasion will offer a forum that will be helpful, though much remains unknown.

Under “Questions from Committee Members,” Professor Sims asked, on behalf of some members of her department, why a decision was made to retain the timeline leading to the original schedule for commencement, when commencement will not be taking place. Provost Epstein responded that, given the uncertainty about the duration of the COVID-19 crisis, it is prudent not to extend the semester any longer than it needs to be. Though graduation was originally set for May 24, it is now hoped that the vote on degrees will take place on May 28. Extending the original date became necessary because of the extension of other deadlines, in order to provide more flexibility for students. Provost Epstein noted that students may have summer plans or may be starting jobs, another reason for not making the semester longer. Professor Sims thanked the provost for this explanation and noted that she agrees that Amherst should not have a longer semester.

Continuing with questions, Professor Basu commented that some students have informed her that their study-away programs have moved to a mandatory pass/fail grading system because of the virus. Ordinarily, her department would not accept such courses toward the major, and she wonders if all departments and programs are now being asked to do so at this time. Provost Epstein said that it is her hope that all departments will be flexible in this regard this semester, particularly if the faculty votes to extend the flexible grading option (FGO) to all courses this semester. (As the committee’s meeting was under way, the faculty was voting electronically on the motion below, which the committee had approved the day after its most recent meeting. [On March 24, 2020, the Committee of Six voted six in favor and zero opposed on the substance of the motion, and six in favor and zero opposed to forward the motion to the faculty.] Later that evening, Provost Epstein announced via email that the motion had passed by an overwhelming majority.

Given the grave emergency posed by COVID-19 and the virus’s impact around the globe, the college is doing whatever it can to provide additional support to faculty, students, and staff. In this spirit, the Committee on Educational Policy and the Committee of Six propose that the faculty vote to provide additional flexibility to students and faculty by revising

specific grading policies for the spring 2020 semester only, as described in the motion below.

### **Motion**

That the Flexible Grading Option (FGO) policy be revised immediately so that, as the default, all classes during the spring 2020 semester be treated as though the FGO had been elected, and that the following also be approved for courses during this semester only: that any FGOs used in spring 2020 not “count” as one of the four FGOs that students are permitted to use during their time at the college; that students who are not in their final semester at the college have until June 15, 2020, to decide whether or not to accept their assigned grade, or in the case of any passing grade, elect to receive a pass (“P”); that second-semester seniors have until May 22 at 5 p.m. to decide whether or not to accept their assigned grade, or in the case of any passing grade, elect to receive a pass (“P”); and that, in cases in which students are granted extensions this semester, they have five days after the grade is posted to select a pass/fail option. There are no extensions for graduating seniors.)

Professor Goutte next inquired about the timing of the decision regarding whether summer research programs will take place this summer. It is her understanding that many students are counting on having housing, as well as research experiences, during this time. Provost Epstein responded that the decision will not be made by April 10, as had been announced earlier, because of continuing uncertainty about the timeline for the virus to be under control. The new deadline for making the decision is May 1, she noted. Turning to another topic, Professor Goutte asked if it is expected that the pandemic will have an impact on the college’s admission cycle. She wonders whether the deadline by which admitted students must make a commitment to Amherst has been extended, for example. President Martin confirmed that the deadline has not been changed. It is difficult to know the ways in which the virus situation might affect the admission process at this point, the president said.

Professor Horton commented that projections suggest that more might be known about the trajectory of the virus in about three weeks. He emphasized the importance of supporting students on all fronts at this time, noting the anxiety that many feel, not only about present circumstances, but about the impact that the virus may have on their pathways to their future careers. Many will enter the job market during what may be the worst economic downturn in decades, and most will find it challenging to find an internship this summer. Provost Epstein commented that Emily Griffin, director of the Loeb Center for Career Exploration and Planning, is focusing her efforts on networking with Amherst alumni to develop virtual internships and to help students with strategies for finding jobs during this difficult time. President Martin emphasized that it is important to remember that all students are facing the same circumstances all over the world. Whenever it becomes possible to compete for jobs and internships, Amherst students will be on a level playing field—and she is confident that they will do well.

Professor Basu asked whether plans call for moving forward with searches for faculty FTEs for the next academic year, given the stresses on the college’s budget. Provost Epstein said that it is possible that searches will be delayed, but the decision about whether to take the step will not be made for several weeks. Searches for visiting positions may be cancelled, she said, but she is discussing individual searches with departments to learn more about their needs. (After consulting with the departments involved and the president, the provost later decided to cancel the searches for visitors, due to the impact that the pandemic is having on the college’s finances.)

Continuing with questions, Professor Schmalzbauer said that she has learned that some faculty members, particularly in STEM fields, are struggling with the transition to remote teaching and with finding ways to support students. Some untenured faculty members are particularly worried about the impact that the virus situation is having on their research programs, which in most cases have been shut down. President Martin commented that the COVID-19 situation is uncharted territory, and that it is very difficult to predict what will happen and how long the college will need to operate remotely. Everyone should do the best that they can right now, Provost Epstein said, and noted that the college will continue to be as flexible and understanding as possible. Professor Horton suggested that faculty members focus on one or two learning outcomes in their courses for the remaining weeks of the semester and take as much pressure off students, and themselves, as possible. Professor Brooks commented that everything is in a state of transformation right now, and she expressed the view that things will not return to the way they were before. She predicts that some faculty members’ research agendas will shift permanently in new directions, for example. Some colleagues will receive recognition for being able to do so, Professor Brooks feels.

Professor Sims noted that, in her view, staff members have been feeling anxious about the impact that the virus may have on the college's budget, and the possibility that previously anticipated pay increases will not happen, and/or that there may be layoffs. President Martin said that the world is living through a catastrophic occurrence. It is impossible to offer any sense of certainty about most things at this time, however, the college will do all that it can to continue to support the community.

Concluding the part of the meeting that was devoted to questions, Professor Basu asked if there will be flexibility about the timing of sabbaticals, given that the future is so uncertain. Faculty who were/are planning to be away might not be able to travel, potentially for all or part of next year. Can colleagues decide to delay their leaves and teach next year instead? Knowing that the college will be flexible on this front will help faculty organize their lives, she noted. Provost Epstein later noted that she intends to be flexible with leave schedules, while reminding colleagues that, if they delay, they should consult with their departments about another time to take a leave that will not result in additional costs to the college, such as the hiring of visitors. The remainder of the meeting was devoted to personnel matters.

The meeting adjourned at 4:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The twenty-third meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2019–2020 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, April 6, 2020. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors Basu, Brooks, Goutte, Horton, Schmalzbauer, and Sims; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

Having heard from some faculty members and students who feel there are strong arguments for shifting to a mandatory pass/fail system for this semester, the members discussed the possibility of doing so. Some have commented that some other institutions have already moved to this system. The committee noted that many of those schools have included in their policies a mechanism for “uncovering” grades, if needed. As part of their deliberations, the members considered a letter from a student, which had been forwarded to the committee at the student’s request, and [a letter from Professor Jaswal](#). The members also drew on their own conversations with students and faculty about this topic.

The members commented that, in her letter, Professor Jaswal had noted that many pre-med and first-generation students are upset that Amherst has not moved to a mandatory pass/fail system. She expressed the view that the extended flexible grading option (FGO) system will not alleviate stress for pre-med students, as “they have been advised to try to get the best grade they can since it’s not clear whether medical schools will accept self-elected *Pass* grades.” (Provost Epstein said that there is no indication, thus far, that medical schools will penalize students for electing a *Pass*.) Professor Jaswal had also expressed the view that a mandatory pass/fail system is the most equitable way to demonstrate that Amherst recognizes that students have been put in very different and unequal situations this semester, some of which can make learning challenging. She had noted that faculty are also experiencing many different and unequal situations, conveying that moving to a mandatory pass-fail system would help faculty “focus our very stretched capacities on helping students learn, rather than assessing them, and supporting students who are struggling the most.” The committee commented that the student letter-writer had expressed support for the extended FGO system, commenting that students have worked extremely hard, and continue to work hard while at home. In the student’s view, a switch to a pass/fail would not incentivize or reflect the time and effort students have put in to learning and in to completing good work so far and in the future. Many students are counting on this semester’s courses to improve their GPAs and to demonstrate their skills and hard work to employers, law schools, medical schools, and Master’s/Ph.D. programs, the student had noted.

The committee agreed that, since there seems to be some ambiguity among students and faculty about whether a mandatory pass/fail proposal is currently being debated, it would be helpful for the Committee of Six to provide greater clarity about its view on this matter—considering the feedback that has come forward and the members’ own thoughts. The members agreed that they had believed that the faculty vote on the FGO would be binding, but had recognized that changing circumstances could necessitate continued discussion and possible adjustments, if deemed necessary. The committee acknowledged and discussed compelling arguments on all sides. Some members expressed the view that, at the end of March, the committee had considered the full spectrum of arguments for and against adopting a mandatory pass/fail system, before deciding instead to forward a motion to the faculty to extend the FGO to cover all classes for this semester. Most members said that they continue to feel that the flexibility inherent in the extended FGO approach allows for greater equity, given that students have widely different circumstances and goals during this challenging time. Members noted that some faculty members continue to make strong arguments for a mandatory pass-fail system as the most equitable solution, given the very different scenarios that students are currently facing. Some members shared that they too have observed the vast disparity among student circumstances, which they find very concerning. Yet, the committee also continues to believe that the extended FGO is an important way to recognize student engagement during this extremely unusual and challenging semester. The committee also agreed that the faculty vote that took place should be considered binding, since there had not been an unforeseen change in the general context of the pandemic since the FGO vote, and that this matter should not be legislated again at this time. In the members’ view, making another change to the grading policy could also be disruptive and could add to the current confusion. For all of these reasons, the committee decided to recommend that no further changes in grading policy be made at this time, and the members decided not to bring another proposal forward to the faculty. The committee asked the provost to communicate the members’ view to faculty and students.

Turning to another topic, Provost Epstein commented that, at a recent meeting that she and the president had with the Consultative Group for Tenure-Track Faculty, the group had conveyed that some tenure-track faculty members would prefer that the default be that teaching evaluations not be solicited this semester. Earlier, the committee had decided that the default would be that the evaluations would be solicited from all students in all classes this semester, and that tenure-track faculty members could then decide whether they want end-of-semester evaluations from this semester included in their tenure dossiers, and whether they want students in classes taught this semester to be solicited for retrospective letters at the time of reappointment or tenure. The members of the

Consultative Group had said that they would prefer an “opt-in” system for teaching evaluations this semester, rather than an “opt out,” as is currently the case. They feel that the common teaching evaluation will not be useful this semester. Provost Epstein suggested that the committee might want to re-think its previous decision, based on this feedback. The members decided to discuss this matter further after the meeting that the committee would have with all tenure-track faculty immediately after the committee’s meeting. It was agreed that it might be useful to revisit this topic, as well as the grading policy, at the virtual meeting of chairs of academic departments and programs, which would take place on April 10.

Under “Questions from Committee Members,” Professor Basu noted that it would be helpful for the committee to discuss the issues on which it should focus for the remaining weeks of the semester. It was agreed that the members would take up this topic at a future meeting. Professor Goutte next inquired once again about the timing of the decision regarding whether summer research programs will take place this summer. Provost Epstein responded that she does not anticipate such programs taking place on campus; remote programs may be possible, perhaps for six weeks. She anticipates having a better sense by the end of April.

Concluding questions, Professor Brooks asked President Martin if she plans to make a statement on behalf of the college about incidents of COVID-19-related anti-Asian racism that are increasing across the United States during the pandemic. Referencing the fact that two Amherst students who live on campus have been the targets of verbal assaults in the town of Amherst, and that there have been reports of racist language in the college’s dorms and on social media platforms, Professor Brooks also wondered what steps have been taken to protect Amherst students from such acts of violence. President Martin said that she had plans to address both of these important issues ([she issued a statement](#) the next day).

In light of recent very troubling incidents (including the one just described), and noting the college’s commitment to diversity and inclusion and the many steps that Amherst has taken to foster diversity and inclusion on campus, the members had a wide-ranging conversation about how the college can best continue to address issues of racism on campus. The members began the discussion by applauding the extraordinary leadership that President Martin has demonstrated in this realm throughout her presidency. It was agreed that this is an issue that should be addressed by the entire college community, and that the faculty should play an important role in deliberations about changes in college policy and discussions with students. The remainder of the meeting was devoted to personnel matters.

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The twenty-fourth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2019–2020 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, April 13, 2020. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors Basu, Brooks, Goutte, Horton, Schmalzbauer, and Sims; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

Under “Topics of the Day,” Provost Epstein noted that, at a meeting that the president and she had had with the members of the Consultative Group for Tenure-Track Faculty, the group had shared that, in its view, tenure-track faculty members would prefer that the default be that teaching evaluations not be solicited for courses taught by tenure-track faculty this semester. Under such a system, the provost explained, untenured faculty who wish to have their academic department coordinator (ADC) solicit evaluations in the usual fashion, would need to “opt in,” i.e., faculty would need to request that this process be undertaken. To do so, faculty members would contact their chair and ADC by whatever deadline is set (later agreed to be April 21). If the chair and ADC don’t hear from an untenured faculty member by the deadline, the formal solicitation of teaching evaluations for the individual’s courses would not take place this semester, the provost explained. She commented that taking this approach would also spare students from doing evaluations that faculty members might not feel are useful because remote teaching and learning are so anomalous and this semester is so challenging. In addition, the burden on ADCs would be lightened, as they would not need to solicit evaluations from all students in all classes this semester.

Continuing, Provost Epstein noted that, if tenure-track faculty members decide that they want teaching evaluations solicited for their spring 2020 courses, the following will occur, as was agreed earlier. Faculty members will decide if they want to have these evaluations included in their dossiers for reappointment and tenure. This semester, ADCs will then solicit evaluations in the usual fashion (if faculty request that evaluations be done) and will then provide anonymized evaluations only to the faculty member teaching the course. The ADC will then be asked to retain these evaluations with the student names, but not to review or share them with tenured members of the department until individual faculty members declare their intentions. The evaluations will be kept in an electronic file that is not accessible to any members of the department until the tenure-track faculty member decides how they will be used.

Provost Epstein noted that, by the semester before they will be evaluated for reappointment and tenure, tenure-track faculty will then decide if they want to share these evaluations with their tenured colleagues, and if they want them to be part of their reappointment and tenure dossiers that will be considered by the Committee of Six. If they are to be considered by the Committee of Six, they must be shared with both the department and the committee, the provost noted. The provost said that her office will write to tenure-track faculty during the semester before they are considered for reappointment and tenure to ask what their preference is, and to communicate their decision to her and to the department. In addition, tenure-track colleagues will also decide whether they want students whom they taught this spring to be asked to write a retrospective letter about their experience at the time of reappointment or tenure, Provost Epstein explained. If the student took a course with the faculty member during another semester, that student will be asked to write a retrospective letter about that course. The provost said that her office will also write to tenure-track faculty the semester before they are considered for reappointment and tenure to ask what their preference is about retrospective letters, and to communicate their decision to her and the department.

Professor Sims expressed concern that many students might want to have their voices heard through the evaluation process and might not be given the opportunity under the proposed opt-in system. She commented that she has heard from tenure-track faculty, both individually and during the Committee of Six’s meeting with untenured faculty, who want to go forward with teaching evaluations this semester. She also feels that continuing the process of teaching evaluations, even during this difficult semester, would be most consistent with Amherst’s culture of mutual feedback and mutual accountability. Faculty would still be able to decide whether to use these evaluations in the tenure and promotion process, she noted. Provost Epstein, while commenting that student feedback is important, noted that the opt-in approach would be responsive to concerns articulated by pre-tenure faculty. Professor Horton stressed the importance of being as compassionate and flexible as possible with faculty and students. Professor Brooks commented that she wants to respect the views of untenured faculty, who have expressed that they want more autonomy in determining the process that will work best this semester. Giving untenured colleagues the ability to decide whether they wish to deal with evaluations at all at this time makes sense, in her view, and she feels that the opt-in system is a good solution. Professor Brooks stressed the importance of reassuring tenure-track faculty members that the decision about whether to include end-of-semester evaluations and retrospective letters from this semester in their reappointment and/or tenure dossiers will have no bearing on decision-making about their cases. To ensure that this understanding is documented going forward, Professor Brooks suggested that a reminder be included each year in the letters that are sent to candidates and chairs about the procedures that are used for reappointment and tenure. The other members agreed that taking this step would be important, and the provost agreed to implement this suggestion.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Basu also expressed support for the opt-in system, as did Professor Schmalzbauer. Professor Horton commented that student feedback on teaching, even during this time, would be

meaningful for tenure-track colleagues, but said that he favors the opt-in system because it places decision-making in the hands of tenure-track faculty members. Concluding the conversation, the members decided that an opt-in system should be adopted for this semester. At the same time, the committee felt that tenure-track faculty should be encouraged to solicit evaluations from students—either through the formal process—or through a less formal method of their choice, as a way of gaining valuable feedback from students and to give them voice during this time. (After further consultation after the meeting, the opt-in system was extended by the provost to include lecturers, resident artists, and visiting faculty.)

The members next returned to the topic of the college's grading policy for this semester. Since the committee had last discussed the issue, there had been more conversation about this matter at the most recent meetings of chairs of academic departments and programs. In addition, the members had received [a note from Professor Gardner](#) requesting that the college shift to a mandatory pass/fail system for this semester. Some students had also voiced this view via a recent survey that the college had administered to students to learn more about their experiences with remote learning, Provost Epstein said. Other students who took the survey did not express a view, she noted, informing the members that a specific question about grading had not been included on the survey. Some students and faculty had also communicated with committee members informally about grading, some favoring the current extended flexible grading option (FGO), and others arguing for a shift to a mandatory pass-fail system. The Committee on Educational Policy still favors the extended FGO option, the provost informed the committee.

(Much of the following conversation was shared with faculty, students, and staff via an email from the provost that she sent on April 15, announcing the committee's recommendation that no further changes be made to the grading policy this semester.) In a wide-ranging discussion, the members reviewed again the compelling arguments both for and against moving to a mandatory pass/fail system, many of which center around justice and equity, the committee agreed. A member commented that many of the calls for a mandatory pass/fail system are motivated by faculty concerns for students who are currently facing additional barriers to learning in the remote environment. Another member noted that, while the mandatory pass/fail system would ensure equality of outcomes where achievement meets a basic level, the formal and informal communications that committee members have received from students suggest that the equity issue is more complex. The member shared a letter that she had received from a low income transfer student, in which the student passionately argued that, without the FGO option, there would only be three semesters of grades on the individual's transcript, which would make it difficult to apply for national fellowships and graduate programs. The student had argued that many transfer students were in the same situation. Ultimately, the committee concluded that social class and circumstances were not necessarily proxies for whether a student supported mandatory pass/fail or wanted to retain the FGO. The committee also concluded that the flexibility inherent in the extended FGO approach responds to the needs and desires of the most students, while acknowledging that this was a difficult decision and that no system of assessment can address all concerns. Many students had already invested considerable effort in their courses prior to the transition to remote learning, it was noted. Others need a record of grades to apply for future jobs or programs. At the same time, the FGO allows the option for students experiencing unexpected challenges in each course to convert grades to a "pass" as needed, the members agreed. The committee further concurred that the extended FGO is also an important way to recognize continued student engagement during this difficult semester. A member commented that, as the college enters the final three weeks of the semester, changing the grading policy again at this time would be unfair, as many students and faculty have made decisions under the assumption that the extended FGO policy would be in place. Making another change could have unintended consequences as a result. The other members agreed.

Concluding the conversation, the members commented that no grading policy can fix the wide disparities in student circumstances during this extraordinarily difficult time. Above all, the members agreed that the best approach to evaluating student learning this semester is one that cannot be legislated, but which they urge the faculty to adopt. That is, when grading, professors exercise the utmost compassion and flexibility—in light of the challenges that everyone is facing, and in keeping with Amherst's mission and values. One committee member emphasized ways to share grading information with students that might help relieve some of their anxiety during this time. For example, explaining that the work accomplished previously would already ensure that the student would earn a minimum final grade of B-minus, even if no further work was turned in, thus eliminating worries about failing the course due to current hardships. This member expressed the view that most faculty want to help and support students during this difficult time, rather than penalizing them with low grades. Provost Epstein noted that some students feel that some faculty have been assigning more work during this period of remote learning than is typical. While faculty have autonomy when it comes to the workload in their courses, the members agreed that, given the current situation, focusing on a smaller set of learning goals, and lightening the load on students would be most helpful.

Under "Questions from Committee Members," Professor Horton asked about the status of the appointment of a

faculty athletics representative (FAR). While continuing to feel that expanding the duties of this position is important, the provost informed the members that she has decided to delay the appointment of a FAR, as well as a third associate provost and associate dean of the faculty in her office, due to the budgetary pressures that the college is facing at this time. The provost said that it is her hope to appoint an additional associate provost and associate dean of the faculty as early as January of 2021, if the college's financial situation allows. Professor Horton, while understanding the rationale for the delay, noted the importance of the envisioned role of the FAR in work surrounding diversity and inclusion, in relation to athletics. Provost Epstein responded that Professor Hart, who serves as faculty diversity and inclusion officer (FDIO) has been deeply involved in such efforts in this role. For example, he has been very involved in the work that is under way to develop a program of education focusing on racism for members of the lacrosse team.

Moving on to the related topic of finding ways, more broadly, for the college to address issues of racism on campus, the members informed the provost that the Black Student Union (BSU) has invited the committee to meet virtually with its officers. President Martin, who has met with the BSU leadership a number of times in recent months, expressed support for involving more faculty members in the work of considering the BSU's concerns and recommendations. The BSU has indicated that it would like the college to address the harm that hate speech does and to adopt the view that racial epithets are not covered by academic freedom and freedom of expression. The president has informed the BSU that the faculty developed and approved the college's Statement on of Academic Freedom and Expressive Freedom. President Martin commented that issues surrounding speech are enormously complicated, and that it would be very helpful for faculty to engage the community in discussions about this important issue at Amherst, and within higher education more broadly. Professor Basu expressed support for involving the faculty in these discussions, perhaps initially informally and later at a faculty meeting. She expressed support for a meeting between the committee and the BSU. She also stressed the need to increase communication to the community about what steps have and will be taken to address racism on campus. Professor Basu suggested that the committee meet with members of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion to learn more about their work. Professor Brooks asked for the Committee of Six to request a meeting with the members of the Presidential Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion to hear more about the recommendations this body had made. Provost Epstein said that she would help facilitate these meetings. Professor Brooks suggested that the meetings with the BSU take the form of a listening session, after which the committee would deliberate on how best to respond.

Continuing with questions, Professor Sims, noting the financial pressures that the college is facing because of the pandemic, expressed concern for members of the staff whose jobs rely on students being on campus in the summer. She suggested that, if the college is considering furloughing these staff, could they instead have an opportunity for retraining so that they could be productively employed at Amherst over the summer in ways that meet college needs, and also allow for social distancing. Perhaps, for example, more staff could work on maintenance or improvement of buildings and grounds this summer, including projects in preparation for the bicentennial, Professor Sims commented. President Martin said that she would discuss this suggestion with the senior staff and other groups.

Concluding the portion of the meeting devoted to questions, Professor Schmalzbauer noted that a colleague had asked her to mention that faculty members who will stand for tenure in the fall, and who have books being released now, will likely be unable to give talks about their works because of social distancing. Professor Schmalzbauer also expressed concern about the pandemic's impact on undocumented and DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) students, noting that the Supreme Court will soon be deciding on whether to rescind DACA protections, which is adding stress to the lives of some of Amherst's most vulnerable students. She asked whether the college is continuing to work with other institutions to lobby in support of DACA students. President Martin noted that she is a member of the Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration, which is "dedicated to increasing public understanding of how immigration policies and practices impact our students, campuses, and communities." Membership enables the college to be a signatory on petitions that are relevant to issues that have an impact on DACA students. President Martin said that she had signed the most recent petition as soon as she had received it. Professor Schmalzbauer then thanked the provost for providing a wealth of important information at the recent meeting of chairs of academic departments and programs.

The committee then considered whether to hold a faculty meeting on April 21. The members agreed not to do so, cognizant of the pressures that faculty members are experiencing at this time, and noting that there is no business that necessitates having a meeting. (A few days later, the president and provost decided to hold an informational meeting with faculty and other colleagues who attend faculty meetings via Zoom on April 21, during the regularly scheduled meeting time for faculty meetings.) Following up on that point, Professor Sims suggested that, during these extraordinary times, it might be helpful to look beyond the regular schedule of having faculty meetings on the first and third Tuesday of the month during the semester. Given the possibility that there might be more information unfolding about the pandemic, it might be useful to have a meeting, perhaps on May 5, but also later in May, ahead

of the commencement faculty meeting on May 28, or even after that, if developments continue to unfold, in order to ensure the role of faculty governance in the process. The other members agreed. On a related note, Provost Epstein commented that some tenure-track faculty members have expressed a preference for having departmental and other meetings involving faculty in the evening during this time. Since attendance and participation occurs from home via Zoom, they are able to put their young children to bed before the meeting.

Conversation turned to the Jeffrey B. Ferguson Memorial Teaching Prize, which was awarded for the first time last spring. Current Amherst faculty and students, and alumni who graduated from the college within the last twenty years were invited to make nominations for the award. The inaugural Karen and Brian Conway '80, P'18 Presidential Teaching Professor at the college, Jeff Ferguson taught in the Department of Black Studies and in the Department of American Studies for more than two decades. The Ferguson Prize is awarded annually to two Amherst faculty members who see teaching as an art and vocation, engage in pedagogical innovation in their courses, have a significant impact in their department or program and on the broader curriculum, help students develop foundational skills in the finest liberal arts tradition, inspire students and colleagues alike to cultivate the life of the mind, and have a lasting impact on students' intellectual and personal development. Current tenured faculty members, senior lecturers, and senior resident artists who have been at the college for at least ten years are eligible for the prize. Recipients give public talks focusing on teaching at or around homecoming and receive an honorarium of \$5,000. Nominations submitted in previous years are considered when making decisions in the current year.

Given the current state of social distancing that will preclude awarding the prize in person this year at the commencement faculty meeting, and the opportunity to reflect on the nomination process now that it has taken place twice, the members decided to discuss some matters relating to the prize. The committee agreed that refinements to the process should be considered, with the goal of garnering rich and robust commentary about the ways in which candidates exemplify Professor Ferguson's pedagogical values and practices, and transformative teaching.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Basu wondered whether the Committee of Six should select the recipient of the prize, noting that it was awkward to evaluate colleagues' teaching. Provost Epstein expressed the view that the committee, as the faculty's elected representatives, seems the most appropriate body to do so. She noted that the committee functions in a similar role when it selects colleagues for various fellowships. Professor Horton agreed and suggested that members of the Committee of Six, who function as the selection committee, should not be eligible for the prize while they are serving on the committee. This was the approach taken last year, but he feels that it is important to codify this practice. The other members agreed. Professor Basu suggested that the committee discuss the criteria it would use to decide on recipients for the prize. Since the committee would award two prizes, she suggested that recipients should reflect the diversity of faculty identities and interests. She also suggested that the committee consider giving the award to faculty at a particularly meaningful stage in their professional lives. Professor Brooks suggested that considering teaching that is transformative, not only in the classroom, but at the college, might be an additional guideline. In considering other steps in the nomination process, the committee considered whether departments should play a role. Professor Schmalzbauer commented that, at her previous institution, finalists for teaching awards were invited to present materials to the selection committee, including a statement about their teaching philosophy and letters of recommendation from students. Professor Sims expressed the view that it would be desirable to consider carefully colleagues late in their careers so as not to miss the opportunity to honor them for the impact that they have had as teachers. The committee agreed to continue its discussion of the prize, informed by information about the ways in which other colleges and universities select recipients of teaching awards. The provost agreed that her office would gather this information.

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

The twenty-fifth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2019–2020 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, April 20, 2020. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors Basu, Brooks, Goutte, Horton, Schmalzbauer, and Sims; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

Under “Topics of the Day,” the committee expressed support for having a virtual town-hall meeting the next evening for faculty and others who attend faculty meetings. Since the time of the members’ last meeting, President Martin and Provost Epstein had proposed holding the meeting, and the committee had supported the plan. All agreed that, during this time of social distancing, regular communication is particularly important. Provost Epstein commented that the unpredictable nature of the pandemic makes it challenging to plan for the future. Though this is an uncertain time, planning for a range of scenarios is exactly what the college must continue to do, she noted, and engaging the community in this effort will be critical. At the town-hall meeting, the president and provost said they would convey their view that it seems less and less likely that the fall semester will take shape as it ordinarily does. Provost Epstein said that she and President Martin want faculty to know that it will be necessary to begin to prepare, now and over the summer, to teach in a number of modalities in the fall—in-person, remotely, and in a hybrid format (a combination of remote and in-person learning). The provost commented that, at the town hall, she, President Martin, and Kevin Weinman, chief financial and administrative officer, would discuss the senior staff’s current thinking about various possibilities, in the hope of stimulating attendees’ creative thinking. In addition, she said, K. Weinman would briefly explain the seriousness of the financial challenges that Amherst is facing now and those that the college may face in the future. President Martin and Provost Epstein informed the members that it has been decided that the college will be open in some format in the fall, but that a number of possible scenarios are being examined. They stressed that, at this juncture, it is too early to make other decisions.

President Martin shared with the committee some details about what would need to be in place before students can return to campus (e.g., the ability to conduct widespread, accurate testing and contact tracing; having sufficient supplies of personal protective equipment; extending social-distancing protocols, perhaps including having students who may be on campus living in single rooms; and having the flexibility to adopt different strategies quickly, if needed). Professor Sims asked if science faculty might be able to begin conducting research in their labs, perhaps before it is possible to resume teaching on campus. President Martin said that she has been learning more about protocols that private labs would need to adopt if Governor Baker softens some social-distancing restrictions after May 4. For example, labs would need to have scientists work in shifts, to reduce the number of individuals in labs at one time, President Martin has learned. Everyone would need to wear gloves, masks, and gowns and have their temperature taken on a regular basis and testing, if possible, and rigorous social-distancing procedures would need to be in place. In addition, the labs would need to be able to change course quickly if problems arose. The president said that she is thinking about how these protocols could possibly be put in place in Amherst’s labs in the near term, in order to begin to bring Amherst scientists back into their labs. Nothing could be done, however, without the current restrictions being lifted, and the college having necessary protocols and supplies in place. Conditions would not be easy, if all this does come to pass, President Martin said, but she knows that faculty are eager to return to their research. The president informed the members that she has been consulting with government officials about possibilities and plans, including Congresswoman Katherine Clark, who represents the Fifth District of Massachusetts. On behalf of all Amherst science faculty, Professor Goutte expressed tremendous appreciation to the president for focusing on the issue of how research programs might resume in the sciences, even with necessary restrictions. She asked the president to share this information at the faculty town hall, given the many concerns about this issue.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Sims asked how the college’s planning is being guided by science and public health information or expertise. President Martin responded that consultation with experts in the field of medicine and public health is essential, in her view. The college is fortunate that a number of Amherst alumni and members of the college’s board of trustees are leaders in these fields, and that they are generously providing advice to her. They include Ezekiel Emanuel ’79, vice provost for global initiatives, chair of the Department of Medical Ethics and Health Policy, and Diane v.S. Levy and Robert M. Levy University Professor at the Perelman School of Medicine and the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania; David Kessler ’79, professor of pediatrics and epidemiology and biostatistics at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), former dean of the medical schools at Yale and the UCSF, and former commissioner of the Federal Drug Administration; and Harold Varmus ’61, Nobel Prize-winning scientist, Lewis Thomas University

Professor of Medicine at Weill Cornell Medicine and a senior associate at the New York Genome Center, and former director of the National Institutes of Health and National Cancer Institute; and Amherst trustee Shirley Tilghman, president emerita of Princeton and professor of molecular biology and public affairs there. President Martin noted that she has also been consulting with leaders within higher education. Provost Epstein is in regular contact with her counterparts within the Northeast deans' group, the NESCAC (New England Small College Athletic Conference), and the Five Colleges. President Martin noted that she is also drawing on Amherst's accomplished alumni and trustees to engage the college community in thinking further about the current and future impact of the pandemic. As was recently announced, she is convening a series of interviews and panels that will be live-streamed next week. The first of these events will take place on April 28 and will feature Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz '64 H'74 and private equity manager and Amherst trustee David Novak '91, who will discuss the economic ramifications of the pandemic. Two days later, there will be a panel discussion that includes Professor Tilghman, Dr. Varmus, and Dr. Kessler. The committee expressed enthusiasm for these upcoming conversations and thanked President Martin for arranging them.

Professor Horton, praising the ongoing communication that has been taking place via emails from the administration and in the form of virtual town halls and meetings with department chairs, wondered if a (virtual) faculty meeting should also be held in the near term—even if there no formal business to conduct. He commented on the importance of maintaining the structures of faculty governance even during this unusual time. There are decisions surrounding the pandemic that should be made by the faculty, or on which the faculty should be consulted, as well as decisions that are clearly within the purview of the administration, Professor Horton noted. Professor Brooks commented that, when decisions are made, it would be helpful if the administration would be clear about who is making them. Professor Basu said that she has recognized the need for the administration to make recent decisions quickly, and to take decisive action as events have warranted. At times, however, doing so has meant more limited consultation with the Committee of Six, she has observed. Professor Basu commented that, as a result, some may worry that there will a reduced role for faculty governance at the college during the time of the pandemic; with this thought in mind, she wonders what questions that the faculty raise should be decided on by the Committee of Six. Provost Epstein commented that there are some matters on which departments may need to weigh in, and some that will involve the faculty as a whole. One of the issues that will come before the faculty first, she imagines, are any changes to the academic schedule that may be proposed. Decisions involving the curriculum will also be brought to the faculty, the provost noted. All agreed that creative thinking and a willingness to be flexible will be central to decision-making in the months to come.

Provost Epstein noted that plans also call for the Committee of Six to continue to meet weekly through May, and during June as well—perhaps biweekly or as needed. This schedule will enable the president and provost to continue to consult with the members on a regular basis. In addition, Provost Epstein said that she anticipates that broad faculty engagement in considering different scenarios will likely occur after classes end, when more information will have been gathered about possible options, and so as not to place additional pressure on colleagues at this point in the semester. In regard to developing and making recommendations about possible options that the college may wish to pursue, Provost Epstein informed the members that President Martin has constituted three working groups; faculty members, including the chairs of the Committee on Priorities and Resources (CPR) and the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP), will play a central role in the groups' deliberations. She noted that President Martin has asked K. Weinman to chair the Finance Working Group (the other members are Professor Jack Cheney, associate provost and associate dean of the faculty; Professor Javier Corrales, chair of the CPR; Tom Dwyer, director of financial planning and assistant treasurer; Kelley Mannix, assistant director of athletics for business operations; and Lisa Rutherford, chief policy officer and general counsel). Provost Epstein informed the members that the president has asked her to chair the other two groups. They are the Remote/Hybrid Learning Working Group (the other members are Riley Caldwell O'Keefe, director of the Center for Teaching and Learning; Professor Chris Durr; Jaya Kannan, director of technology for curriculum and research; Professor Ted Melillo, chair of the CEP; and Professor Austin Sarat, associate provost and associate dean of the faculty) and the Logistics Working Group, which will consider preparations that would be needed to bring students back to campus (the other members are Jesse Barba, director of institutional research and registrar services; Jim Brassord, chief of campus operations; Karu Kozuma, chief student affairs officer; and Matt McGann, dean of admission and financial aid). President Martin noted that the working groups will provide valuable information that will inform the efforts of the campus-wide committee that she will constitute in the next several weeks. This committee will resemble the

2008 Ad Hoc Advisory Budget Committee (ABC) in its make-up, with representation from all constituencies. The president and provost emphasized the importance of engaging the entire Amherst community in thinking about the challenges ahead, and in developing solutions. The members expressed appreciation and support for these plans and recommended that, at the upcoming town-hall meeting, as many specifics as possible be communicated. If different scenarios could be presented, then colleagues could start thinking about how they need to prepare, even if it is not known which scenario will ultimately take place. The committee asked when details about scenario-planning might be made available and the timetable for making decisions. The president and provost said that the hope is that more should be known in several weeks.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Sims inquired how students are being kept informed about the information under discussion. President Martin, who noted that the dean of students communicates with students via email frequently, informed the members that a virtual town-hall meeting for students would take place later in the week. Professor Sims, who said that she was pleased to learn of this meeting, next asked the provost for more information about how hybrid teaching is being envisioned. Provost Epstein explained that this form of teaching would make use of both remote and in-person instruction. It might be possible, for example, to offer two sections of the same course, one for students on campus and another for those who would need to access the course remotely. If extensive online teaching must take place in the fall, the provost said, the college will need to provide tools beyond Zoom. In the coming days, the working group devoted to hybrid and remote learning will be speaking with a number of vendors to learn more about the technology and support that could be provided to the faculty, with the goal of enhancing the ways in which content-rich and engaging courses could be developed and taught. In regard to the schedule in the fall, there are many possibilities. Things could start out being virtual, with students being brought back to campus later in the fall, or it could be the other way around. Another idea is to adopt a model that has been developed by Beloit College, which is currently garnering a lot of attention. Under this plan, the fall 2020 semester would be divided into two modules. Instead of a typical course load of four simultaneous courses over fifteen weeks, students would take two courses for seven weeks, have a break for a week, and then take two other courses for seven weeks. Courses would meet for six hours a week during these compressed modules. Faculty would each teach one course a module under the plan. Among the advantages would be that students and faculty would be juggling fewer courses and could concentrate on the material being taught and learned. There would also be additional flexibility if transitions needed to be made from on-campus instruction to remote instruction, the provost noted.

Turning to the next topic of conversation, Professor Horton asked about plans for the committee to meet with the Presidential Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion. Provost Epstein said that she would make the necessary arrangements (a meeting was subsequently scheduled for May 8). Thanking the provost, Professor Horton inquired as to whether the task force has issued any reports. President Martin said that she would confirm with Norm Jones, chief diversity and inclusion officer, what reports have been completed. The members also expressed the need to learn more about the work of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI), noting the important role that the ODI and the task force can play in working closely with faculty, students, and staff. The committee asked if it would be possible to meet with the members of the ODI as well. The members then returned to their conversation about finding ways for the college to address issues of racism on campus, a discussion that was now informed by their recent meeting with two leaders of the Black Student Union (BSU). President Martin, who has met with the BSU leadership in recent months, informed the committee that she would be meeting with the students again the next day. She said that she would be interested to learn more about the committee's meeting with the BSU.

The committee felt that its meeting, which was conducted as a listening session, had been informative and productive. The students had discussed matters relating to the recent racist incident involving members of the lacrosse team, the BSU's proposals for changes that Amherst should make to prevent and address hate speech and other racist acts on campus, and the BSU's call for greater clarity and transparency about college rules and procedures surrounding racist incidents. The members noted that they had largely listened during the meeting, asking clarifying questions, as needed. It was noted that the BSU is asking the college to follow up on the work of the External Advisory Committee on Diversity, Inclusion, and Excellence, which made recommendations in June of 2016, and on the ongoing work of the Presidential Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion, which has been developing a bias-response protocol and restorative practices. The committee noted that the BSU discussed the task force's proposal that the college institute bias-response protocols and restorative-justice practices to respond to incidents of hate speech and other racist acts on campus, a proposal recently renewed by the BSU. Right now, the students had informed the committee, practices surrounding reporting racist incidents

are informal, and many students do not know when or how to go through more formal channels that may be in place or how they will know if any action has been taken. President Martin said that she supports developing processes for handling alleged bias incidents and in documenting such incidents. The president commented that, in the past, in informal discussions, some have resisted the idea of bias-reporting systems at Amherst because of the potential threat that academic freedom and freedom of expression could be abridged. Perhaps the simultaneous implementation of restorative-justice practices could be helpful if a bias-reporting system is put in place at Amherst, however. The president and provost commented on the difficulty of extending bias-reporting protocols to a classroom setting. It was agreed that the issue of academic freedom and freedom of expression in the classroom need to be considered very carefully.

The members agreed that it is essential that the faculty address bias reporting in a way that protects academic freedom. President Martin commented that, while she has agreed with many of the students' proposals, reconsidering the language of the college's policy on academic freedom and freedom of expression is a faculty governance issue. She has stressed to the students that the Committee of Six developed, and the faculty approved, the college's Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom, and that any change to the statement would require a vote of the faculty.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Brooks noted that the faculty has not discussed the relationship between academic freedom, freedom of expression, and hate speech during her time at the college, and she stressed the importance of doing so. While the committee emphasized that hate speech, including racist language, is not acceptable, the BSU does not accept that the college has responded in ways that indicate that this is true at Amherst, the members noted, and has not created effective structures for preventing and addressing such incidents. President Martin expressed the hope that addressing this issue would not become mired in the college's sometimes time-intensive processes. In some matters, such as this one, that have become urgent, the entire community should become involved in bringing about change, in her view. All agreed that, in fact, racism on campus is an urgent matter. Professor Basu expressed the view that ways should be found to deliberate around these issues now, rather than deferring consideration until the next academic year. The other members agreed and discussed the possibility of holding a faculty meeting in the near term that would include a committee-of-the-whole conversation about the matters that the committee had been discussing. After a wide-ranging conversation, it was agreed that the limitations of social distancing and the Zoom environment would make a committee-of-the-whole very challenging. The committee ultimately decided to defer holding a faculty meeting until it had been able to gather more information and engage in additional consultation on how best to address racism on campus.

Beyond a formal faculty meeting, the members discussed approaches that could take place at this time to focus the faculty's attention and concern on these important matters. Professor Schmalzbauer said that she would like to learn more about the issues that have been discussed surrounding academic freedom and freedom of expression, specifically in relation to racist or hate speech. She proposed organizing some virtual panel discussions led by Amherst faculty and other scholars who are knowledgeable about this topic, including current debates, in order to learn how to frame the faculty's future conversations. The other members agreed that engaging the faculty in discussion about academic freedom and freedom of expression in relation to hate speech, as soon as possible, is important, and that providing a range of perspectives is essential—both through events and, possibly by sharing relevant materials.

President Martin noted that, when she had re-read the report of the external committee recently, she had been struck once again by its emphasis on the need for the college to take an educational approach to addressing issues surrounding diversity and inclusion at Amherst. Most prominently, the external committee had recommended that Amherst find more ways to build intellectual community. President Martin said that she has long held the view that creating more shared intellectual experiences for students across difference is key to such efforts, an approach recommended by the external committee—and an approach that the curriculum committee also recommended. The members noted that at their meeting with the BSU, the students questioned why the college is not doing more to ensure that all Amherst students are educated about the history of racism in this country. President Martin said that she supports the curriculum committee's proposal for a sophomore seminar, for example, which Professor Basu noted could include a focus on this history, and which could help students develop a better understanding of current Amherst students' experiences as members of underrepresented groups on campus, and the racism that persists in this country at a structural level.

Continuing her remarks, President Martin noted that, while the curriculum committee had recommended a new required sophomore seminar, which could both help students build foundational skills and gain a better

understanding of issues surrounding racism, she is disappointed that the proposal has not garnered the support of the faculty. Professor Basu, a member of the curriculum committee, agreed wholeheartedly with the president, and she recommended that the Committee of Six include on its agenda soon the sophomore seminar and the curriculum committee's proposal regarding advising. The latter is also extremely important in this context, in light of the concerns raised by the BSU, Professor Basu said. Professor Goutte, who indicated her support for doing so, noted that the Committee of Six is an important conduit of information, and she suggested that ways be found for the committee to consider issues of diversity comprehensively as part of its regular work, rather than doing so only in response to incidents of racism.

Professor Schmalzbauer said that she also feels that it is important that all Amherst students take some courses that have a focus on issues of race, class, gender, and inequality. She noted the challenge of ensuring that students do so, when the first-year seminar remains the only college-wide requirement. Professor Schmalzbauer expressed concern about the narrowness of the student demographics in the courses that she teaches that touch on the areas under discussion. It could be useful, Professor Schmalzbauer suggested, to gather data on the demographic make-up of the students taking these courses across the college. Provost Epstein said that she would ask J. Barba to gather this information for the committee's review. President Martin concurred that this would be helpful information to inform future discussions, and Provost Epstein concurred that the data could be telling. President Martin commented that she is aware that the college has good data on issues surrounding race, class, and gender and the ways in which students access the curriculum.

Continuing the discussion of steps that can be taken now, Professors Basu and Brooks proposed that departments be asked to think about their curricula and to ensure that majors take some courses that address racism and exclusion. Professor Brooks suggested that departments could require majors to take a course in another department that enables their majors to develop their capacity for thinking critically about race, including histories and structures of racism. The members agreed that ways should be found to engage departments in this work and to foster collaborations across departments. Professor Basu asked whether certain athletic teams bear particular responsibility for acts of racism. She wonders whether this could be explored through the kind of investigations that had been conducted by the Ad Hoc Committee on Sexual Misconduct (SMOC). President Martin commented that the college does not have the data that suggest that athletic teams engage in racist behavior more than other groups do. Students have described a culture of racism at the college that is pervasive, the president commented, including in the classroom among some faculty and among some of their classmates.

The members agreed on the importance of taking tangible steps to move these issues forward. In addition to the ideas described above, it was agreed that the honor code should be revisited and possibly revised. To ensure that next year's Committee of Six takes up this issue, and that there is continuity in the approaches that will be taken, the members agree to meet with the new members on May 18 to discuss this topic. In addition to agreeing to meet with the presidential task force and ODI staff, members noted plans to meet with the BSU leadership again soon. In addition, the committee recommended that the administration develop a proposal for a bias-reporting protocol that would include restorative practices. President Martin commented that this work has already begun.

Provost Epstein next informed the members that she would soon announce the appointment of Pawan Dhingra, professor of American studies, to the position of faculty diversity and inclusion officer and David Schneider, Andrew W. Mellon Professor of Music, to the position of class dean. She noted that these colleagues would assume their administrative roles on a half-time basis for a term of three years, with the possibility of renewal, beginning July 1, 2020. She also informed the members that Professor Rick López will continue to serve as dean of new students, and that, under a new structure that has been developed to enhance our focus on the sophomore year, Senior Associate Dean of Students Jess Caldwell-O'Keefe will now serve as the dean of sophomores on a continuing basis. In the next academic year, Senior Associate Dean of Students Charri Boykin-East will be the class dean for the class of '22, and Professor Schneider will assume the role of class dean for the class of '21, for which Dean Caldwell-O'Keefe has been the class dean. In the future, Deans López and Caldwell-O'Keefe will continue in their respective deanly roles for first-years and sophomores, respectively, the other faculty class dean and Dean Boykin-East will each become the class dean for a junior class, continuing with that class through graduation. Professor Schneider will serve as the class dean for the class of '21 this fall and then become the class dean for the class of '23 the following year. Professor Dhingra will join Allen Hart, James E. Ostendarp Professor of Psychology, as one of the college's two faculty diversity and inclusion officers, who are situated within the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. The position supports and

advances the college's efforts to recruit and retain highly talented, promising, and accomplished scholar-teachers. Responsibilities include serving as a resource/mentor for faculty to support their career advancement, developing and implementing strategies that contribute to successful searches for faculty positions, conducting exit interviews with candidates for faculty positions, and developing and presenting workshops on topics in the area of diversity and inclusion that are of particular interest to faculty members.

Under "Questions from Committee Members," Professor Schmalzbauer noted that she was delighted to learn that Carlos Adolfo Gonzalez Sierra '14 has received the Paul and Daisy Soros Fellowship for New Americans. She noted that it is her understanding that Carlos is the first DACA student to win the award. She views the award as a wonderful honor and celebration of Amherst and its students, she commented. The other members agreed.

The committee then discussed an email from Professor Rangan in which she and Professor Frank asked about Amherst's current plans regarding contingent faculty. Provost Epstein said that the college is honoring all written commitments to new visitors, as well as the multi-year commitments that have been made to visitors previously. To her knowledge, there are very few visitors who will be leaving Amherst who will do so without moving on to positions elsewhere. The provost said that she envisions that very few new visitors will be hired during the foreseeable future. In regard to the question of lab instructors the provost said that those who occupy these positions are permanent staff who are essential to the academic mission. Lecturers are considered permanent faculty on renewable contracts who are essential to the academic mission. Provost Epstein commented that she cannot make more definitive statements at this time about extending the contracts of visitors who will conclude their contracts this year, but noted that she anticipates that, given financial pressures and uncertainty about student enrollments, hard decisions may need to be made. A member asked if visitors will have access to support that is envisioned for permanent faculty who will be teaching online. The provost said that all faculty will have access to these opportunities for faculty development. She also informed the members that she has written to all new faculty, both tenure-line and visitors, who will begin their positions at Amherst on July 1, 2020. She assured these colleagues that their appointments are secure. Professor Sims asked if faculty who have half-time appointments might be asked to teach additional courses if this is needed to ensure smaller classes sizes in the fall. Provost Epstein said that this is a possibility, but that she would need to know more about how the fall will take shape before knowing that is an option.

The members then discussed some of the topics that the committee hopes to address in its remaining meetings, which include finding ways to measure the distribution of service activities across such factors as faculty rank, departments/fields, gender, and race to try to determine if service obligations are equitable; guidelines for the administration of the common teaching evaluation form; several recommendations of the Ad Hoc Curriculum Committee (as noted above); and clarification of the criteria for tenure.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The twenty-sixth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2019–2020 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, April 27, 2020. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors Basu, Brooks, Goutte, Horton, Schmalzbauer, and Sims; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The members began the meeting by turning briefly to personnel matters. Under “Questions from committee members, Professor Horton suggested that a faculty member be added to the Logistics Working Group that will consider preparations that would be needed to bring students back to campus. The current members of the group are Jesse Barba, director of institutional research and registrar services; Jim Brassord, chief of campus operations; Provost Epstein (chair); Karu Kozuma, chief student affairs officer; and Matt McGann, dean of admission and financial aid. The provost responded that the logistics group is focusing on matters that are not academic in nature, for example, ensuring that there would be sufficient personal-protection supplies on campus. For this reason, in her view, it does not seem necessary to have another faculty member serve.

Following up on Provost Horton’s question, Provost Epstein noted that she and the president have begun conversations about the need to engage more faculty members in the process of thinking about possible temporary adjustments to academic structures for the next academic year, in order to support remote learning and teaching. Such adjustments may be needed, they feel, given the likelihood that this mode will be necessary for some part of the year and/or for some students and faculty. The provost said that, after classes end, the plan would be to charge an ad hoc faculty committee with thinking about such adjustments, which may include, but are not limited to, different teaching time blocks and modular approaches to structuring the semester; different ways of mounting curricula and distributing teaching responsibilities among faculty within departments and across the college; and different ways of organizing and balancing the service and administrative work of the faculty, in recognition of the additional support needed by students during the pandemic, and the extraordinary burdens that COVID-19 is placing on the faculty. Provost Epstein noted that, in developing its recommendations, the ad hoc faculty committee would be asked to consult widely with all constituencies and relevant college offices; consider information that has been gathered about the experiences of students, faculty, and staff during spring 2020; collect new information, as needed; and draw on the relevant findings of the three working groups recently charged by the president. The ad hoc committee would also review and consider ideas developed by peer institutions in the face of the pandemic, Provost Epstein explained. In appointing faculty to the committee, the provost and the president said that they favor drawing on faculty from a range of faculty governance committees, disciplines, and career stages. In addition, the president commented, she plans to constitute a student advisory group to gain a better sense of students’ thinking about these and other issues.

Professor Brooks asked the president and provost for clarification of the role of members of governance bodies who might serve on the envisioned ad hoc committee. She feels that it is important to gain clarity about whether such faculty would represent their committees, and in so doing would bring information back to the other members of those bodies and consult with their colleagues, or would be serving as individual faculty who would bring their own perspectives and judgement to the work of the ad hoc committee. Provost Epstein responded that members of the governance bodies would be serving as individuals who are representing their own views and considering what is best for the institution. (Over the weekend following the meeting, the provost, in the interest of time, shared the president’s formal charge to the ad hoc committee and proposed faculty members to serve. The provost also informed the members that she would chair the ad hoc committee. The committees offered advice on the make-up of the ad hoc committee, and the president and provost said that they would take the committee’s comments into consideration when appointing faculty members to serve.)

Continuing with questions, Professor Basu asked about plans for commencement for this year’s graduating seniors, including whether degrees would be conferred remotely. She noted that some departments are considering ways to honor their majors who are members of the class of ’20. President Martin said that graduating seniors have been asked about their preferences regarding commencement, and that she has not yet seen the results of this informal survey. There will be a virtual ceremony to confer degrees and to celebrate seniors, though the shape of this event is not yet known. Students have also

expressed interest in having a commencement on campus a year from this summer—perhaps sometime between June and September. In addition, the provost noted, an event celebrating academic achievements will take place on the same weekend as an in-person graduation. In the meantime, those who win prizes will receive their prizes, and a list of the winners of undergraduate awards will also be made public, though there will not be a ceremony in any form this year, she explained.

Professor Basu next asked about the Committee of Six's role in addressing questions and suggestions relating to the college's response to the pandemic that it receives from faculty and students, and also how the committee should convey its own thoughts. She noted that the faculty had been encouraged to contact the Committee of Six at the last faculty town-hall meeting. Professor Basu asked to what degree the Committee of Six should be actively involved in considering questions related to COVID-19 and what type of questions the committee is best-positioned to explore and answer. President Martin said that she sees the logic of the Committee of Six, as the elected representatives of the faculty, participating in this process on the faculty's behalf. The president reminded the members of her plans to constitute a campus-wide committee in the next several weeks. That committee will resemble the 2008 Ad Hoc Advisory Budget Committee (ABC) in its make-up, with representation from all constituencies. The president and provost emphasized the importance of engaging the entire Amherst community in thinking about the challenges ahead, and in developing solutions. She said that she and the provost would think further about the Committee of Six's role and bring her thoughts back to the committee.

Continuing with questions, Professor Basu asked about plans for the international students who are now on campus, once the academic year ends. Some of these students might not be able to return to the U.S. to pursue graduate studies and employment here, and others would lose their visa status if they were to return to their homes, she said. President Martin responded that the international students who are on campus at this time will be permitted to stay on campus this summer, if this is the best solution for them. The exception is graduating seniors. She noted that Liz Agosto, dean of students, is working with each graduating senior who is currently on campus, trying to develop plans on a case-by-case basis. Professor Horton expressed concern for the students who are now on campus, particularly after the academic year ends. At that time, he commented, they will no longer have remote classes to provide some structure to their daily lives, as they endure isolation, uncertainty about the future, and other challenges. The members wondered whether it would be possible to inform departments about whether any of their majors will be on campus this summer. Provost Epstein said that she can ensure that this information is made available. President Martin said that she is also concerned about students who will need to be on campus over the summer. She informed the committee that the college will provide remote opportunities and/or jobs for these students. One possibility that she is exploring is whether the students can be trained to conduct contract tracing. Professor Sims noted that students have been working on the campus farm this spring and seem to have enjoyed doing so. Perhaps they could continue to work on the farm over the summer, she suggested. President Martin said that this could be a possibility. On a related note, the president discussed procedures that she has put in place for those who are on campus. President Martin informed the members that everyone should be wearing masks and practicing social distancing, even if they are taking walks on campus. She has asked that signs be posted to this effect to make sure that those who are visiting, working, or living on campus follow these practices.

Professor Schmalzbauer next asked whether the college is accepting aid through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act that is being allocated as part of an emergency relief package for institutions of higher education, in order to provide emergency funds to students in need whose lives have been disrupted by the pandemic. It was noted that wealthy institutions such as Harvard, Yale, and Princeton have received criticism for accepting these funds. Harvard recently returned CARE funds to the Department of Education, though it had planned on using the aid to help its students with the greatest financial needs. President Martin said Amherst will not accept CARES funding to support the temporary transition to online learning, but will accept funding to provide grants to students who are experiencing hardship. In addition, Amherst, drawing on college funds, will provide grants in an equivalent amount to Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), undocumented, and international students who are in need. The CARES Act, President Martin commented, does not allow for funding to be given to students who fall into these

categories. Professor Schmalzbauer thanked President Martin and expressed gratitude that the college is supporting students in this way.

Continuing with questions, Professor Brooks said that she is troubled that some faculty members are assigning a great deal of work during this very difficult time, according to concerns shared by some students. She worries about the impact that significant academic pressures may place on students who may be experiencing a range of challenges. It is her understanding that, while continuing to respect faculty autonomy, some faculty members are trying to communicate with colleagues about the need for flexibility, compassion, and workload accommodations for students, due to the impact of COVID-19. She noted that, from the beginning of the pandemic, Jackie Alvarez, director of the counseling center, has shared information with the faculty about the additional cognitive load that students are carrying during this crisis and how that load is not distributed evenly. Nevertheless, students have been communicating with faculty whom they trust, particularly during advising week, that some faculty seem to be going forward with “business as usual,” or even requiring more work at the end of the semester than is typical. Continuing, Professor Brooks noted that some faculty are incorporating student check-ins during their classes, and that she is aware that students are sharing these concerns in this format as well. From all that the faculty has been told, students’ learning can be aided by empowering them to learn in different ways, not simply by forcing them to adhere to deadlines and typical requirements, under penalty of failure. Professor Brooks said that she has adjusted assignments in her own class, and has found that doing so is fostering student engagement and success. She expressed concern about the workload issue, as classes end and exam period begins.

Professor Basu commented that these issues are complex, and that finding a balance between supporting students and continuing to challenge them intellectually during this time can be difficult. While she feels that overloading students with work at this time is a problem, she finds that holding students accountable and maintaining structures that reward them for their hard work can be beneficial to them. The committee agreed that finding the right balance is important, particularly because of the likelihood that the pandemic will continue to have an impact in the fall, and that remote learning may once again be in place. Professor Brooks said that she continues to believe that identifying the core learning outcomes of courses and providing multiple pathways to achieve goals is essential during this time. There are ways of reducing quantity, while still providing meaningful learning experiences that are sustainable, she noted. Professor Horton concurred, and commented that he had observed, while serving on an ad hoc committee that worked on identifying the technology needs of faculty at this time, that meaningful learning takes place when professors take the approach of focusing on a pared-down set of learning goals during this time of remote teaching and learning.

At the conclusion of the conversation, the members agreed that it would be helpful to send an email to faculty, students, and staff reminding everyone of the resources and policies that are available to the faculty to provide flexibility and support for students. In the email, faculty could also be reminded that, if they have concerns about any of their students, including individuals’ ability to complete academic work successfully at this very difficult time, they should reach out to the class deans as early as possible to discuss the possibility of granting extensions. The members concurred that it would also be helpful to include information about the flexible grading option (FGO), which has been extended to all courses being taught this semester, and about extensions, including for seniors. The provost said that she would coordinate the communication. (Two days after the meeting, the chief student affairs officer and the interim registrar sent an email with this information.)

The members turned to a “brainstorming document” that Professor Trapani sent to the committee on behalf of a small group of faculty and staff who had recently generated a set of ideas about ways to support colleagues who have become “primary, full-time caregivers” as a result of the closing of schools and daycare centers during the pandemic. Provost Epstein said that this is a significant issue and that she appreciates receiving these ideas, some of which have already been under discussion. The provost noted that, having a better sense of what the enrollment will be in the fall will aid planning efforts. If there are fewer students on campus than is typical, it is possible that fewer faculty will need to teach full loads. It may be possible to institute some form of parenting leave. Adjusting sabbaticals might also be possible, as long as the college

does not incur additional costs as a result, and if departmental needs can still be met, the provost said. Those who wish to request or adjust leaves should contact her, Provost Epstein said.

It was noted that, beyond faculty who are facing challenges because they have small children, there are colleagues with underlying health conditions or who are caring for elderly relatives, and/or who have other concerns about teaching on campus, if it becomes possible to do so in the fall. Flexibility on everyone's part will be key, Provost Epstein said, adding that departmental and individuals' needs will have to be considered and balanced. The members discussed that, in considering ways of providing support to those who are serving as caregivers, it will be important to be cognizant that those who do not have these responsibilities should not assume too many burdens. Professor Goutte commented that, within a department, pre-tenure colleagues may disproportionately face the challenge of caring for young children during the pandemic, but may worry about asking for help or flexibility from their department. Supporting these colleagues should be a priority, she said. It was agreed that departments will need to think creatively about what courses need to be offered during this time and about possibly redistributing teaching responsibilities. The college could also decide that all faculty should teach one course instead of two in the fall, President Martin noted, if there are good educational reasons for doing so. Professor Basu commented that service demands are likely to grow if the pandemic continues to have an impact in the fall, as more students struggle and need mentoring and advice. She suggested that faculty who assume additional service responsibilities might be given a reduced teaching load.

The committee noted that other approaches might involve faculty members collaborating on the design of a course and then team-teaching two sections. Professor Brooks commented that she has found such collaboration to be intellectually and pedagogically enriching. Professor Horton applauded the spirit of moving in directions of this kind, noting that the faculty will need to come together to meet learning objectives. He expressed the view that "all-or-nothing" teaching will not be viable for students in hybrid environments. Professor Sims commented that preparing to teach in multiple formats will create burdens for faculty. Knowing what approach will be needed as soon as it is practicable will be most helpful. She noted that it would also be helpful to avoid changing more about teaching structures than is necessary, because of the high time burden of preparation. The provost said that all faculty members should be thinking about how they would teach their courses remotely, and departments should be planning on how to mount their curricula remotely, including thinking flexibly about major requirements.

Turning to another topic, Professor Sims noted that a colleague has asked her to convey to the president a recommendation of another Amherst alumnus who could offer valuable advice about the pandemic. The president agreed to contact the individual, a physician who has expertise in public health.

Professor Sims next asked if there is a sense of what the enrollment will look like in the fall, for example how many students will choose to take a gap year or voluntary leave. President Martin said that the deadline for students to inform the college about whether they intend to take a gap year or a leave has been extended from May 1 to June 1. President Martin commented that, under current college policies, there is no deadline in place by which families must pay tuition. The president said that plans are in place to reexamine and revise this and other related policies. As a result of the flexibility that currently exists, it will be difficult for the college to have certainty about the enrollment for the next academic year. Professor Sims asked when a decision will be made about the format of teaching for the fall—for example, whether courses will all be taught remotely, or whether some students will be able to attend some classes on campus. President Martin said that she anticipates that some of the information that is needed to make a decision may be available by July 1, but she is not certain. Provost Epstein stressed the need for faculty to prepare to teach under all possible eventualities.

The members next discussed whether to have a faculty meeting on May 5 for the purpose of engaging the faculty in a discussion about race and racism on campus. After considering the time needed to prepare for the meeting, the committee decided that it would be most helpful to have a faculty meeting on May 21 instead. By that time, the members would have met with the members of the Presidential Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion and, possibly, staff in the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, and would have the benefit of their perspectives on the issues that have been raised. It might also be possible, under this timetable, to share some relevant readings with the faculty in advance of the meeting, the members noted.

The committee also agreed that the faculty would benefit from having Norm Jones, chief diversity and inclusion officer, as well as representatives from the Black Student Union speak at the meeting, and the president agreed to invite N. Jones and the students. The members felt that hearing about students' experiences with racism on campus would be compelling, and that N. Jones would be helpful in discussing issues surrounding race and racism more broadly. President Martin noted that it is her understanding that the BSU student-leaders may wish to discuss the possibility of adding specific language about hate speech to the Amherst College Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom, drawing on language in other institutions' statements. The president said that she would ask the students whether they would share this language with the Committee of Six. It was noted that N. Jones could, perhaps, discuss the development of a proposal for a bias-reporting system, work that is currently under way. Provost Epstein noted that having the faculty meeting on May 21 would also make it possible to update the faculty on the COVID-19 situation, since more may be known about the pandemic and the college's responses in several weeks.

Conversation returned briefly to the topic of the distribution of students taking courses that are attentive to issues of race, class, and gender and sexuality. Prior to the meeting, the members had reviewed data provided by J. Barba, director institutional research and registrar services. The information that he had assembled showed that the demographics of students who take these courses is more diverse than the committee had anticipated. Professor Basu said that she would like to see data on how the intersection of identities influences course selection, for example, by comparing athletes by race and gender. She also wants to learn how course selection differs across athletic teams. The provost said that she would ask J. Barba to provide this information, while commenting that it would be important not to use these data to target particular teams.

The meeting ended with a discussion of the nominees for the Jeffrey B. Ferguson Memorial Teaching Prize. The members first discussed whether a separate committee should be established to select the winners of the prize, and most members felt that the Committee of Six should continue in this role; some members said that they did not hold a strong view. In regard to making the selection process more robust, Professor Basu commented that, after reviewing information about other institutions' models for awarding their teaching prizes, she did not find approaches that would be compelling to adopt at Amherst. It was agreed that, as one of its first tasks, the new Committee of Six should develop ways of strengthening the nomination process for the prize, as well as criteria for selecting the winners. For this round of consideration, the members decided that, in evaluating the nominees, a significant criterion for selecting the winners of the prize should be the curricular impact that faculty members have had across the faculty and the college, in addition to exceling in the classroom and in serving as mentors. This approach would honor Professor Ferguson's own contribution to the curriculum and his work helping other faculty members think about how to design courses that would build intellectual skills through the study of content that spanned the disciplines. The members then selected the winners of the prize for this round. It was agreed that President Martin would inform these colleagues, but that the award would be announced publicly at the first in-person faculty meeting. The winners would be asked to give public talks when it becomes possible to do so.

The meeting adjourned at 4:15 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The twenty-seventh meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2019–2020 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 2:30 P.M. on Thursday, May 7, 2020. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors Basu, Brooks, Goutte, Horton, Schmalzbauer, and Sims; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

Under “Topics of the Day,” Provost Epstein asked the members advice about the practice, which was adopted in 2012, of celebrating retiring faculty members at their final faculty meeting by having a citation read. The provost explained that, for a number of years prior to that time, citations about retiring faculty members had been read at commencement. She understands that some retiring colleagues had objected to the practice, which had then been discontinued. Provost Epstein commented that, over the years, more and more retiring colleagues have expressed the desire not to have citations written or read at faculty meetings. She suggested that an alternative might be having the president read the names of all faculty who are retiring in a given year at the last faculty meeting. A profile of the retiree could then be published in the *Amherst Magazine*. In her view, alumni of the college would be very interested in such pieces, which are often done now. The provost commented on the importance of memorial minutes, a tradition of longstanding that she feels should continue. She then asked for the members’ thoughts about discontinuing the practice of reading citations for retiring faculty members. The committee expressed support for honoring faculty members upon their retirement, and Professors Basu and Goutte expressed support for continuing with the citations at the final faculty meeting of the year. Professor Sims also expressed support for continuing with the citations for those who wish to have them, and suggested that part of the problem might be that criteria about the length of the citations have not been established, and departments may feel that they should be writing very lengthy citations. Associate Provost Tobin, who coordinates the citation process, said that departments are informed that the citations should be around 250 words. The citations are often longer, she noted. The members agreed that next year’s Committee of Six should consider ways to honor retiring faculty members. The provost said that, in her view, it might be best to postpone until the faculty can gather in person the reading of the citation for the one retiring colleague who has agreed to have this done this year. The other faculty members who are retiring this year have declined the invitation to have a citation read. Provost Epstein suggested that the members consider this proposal at the committee’s next meeting.

Under “Questions from Committee Members,” Professor Basu thanked President Martin and the members of the senior staff for the leadership that they have demonstrated in agreeing to take salary reductions (for the president, 20 percent and for the senior staff, up to 15 percent), in response to the impact that the pandemic is having on the college’s budget. The other members added their appreciation for this gesture.

Professor Basu next asked if the membership and charge of the Ad Hoc Faculty Committee on Academic Structures during COVID-19 (ASC) will be announced to the community. The provost noted plans to inform the community via the provost’s newsletter about the ASC, which the president has charged with thinking broadly, imaginatively, and practically about temporary changes to address the challenges that COVID-19 is posing to the fulfillment of the college’s academic mission. The provost commented that the members of the ASC will recommend for the 2020–2021 academic year adjustments to structures to support remote learning and teaching, recognizing the likelihood that this mode will be necessary for some part of the year and/or for some students and faculty. [The charge to the ASC is available online](#), Provost Epstein commented. She then confirmed that, in addition to herself, the following faculty members have agreed to serve on the ASC: Scott Alfeld, Amrita Basu, Tekla Harms, Darryl Harper, Michael Kunichika, Jen Manion, and Pat O’Hara. The provost said that she would chair the ASC.

Continuing with questions, Professor Basu asked President Martin about the implications of the new Title IX regulations that the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights had released on May 6. The president responded that she has not yet had time to review the two thousand pages of new federal regulations. She said that, in the coming weeks, Title IX Coordinator Laurie Frankl will do so, and will determine what required revisions will need to be made to Amherst’s current policies and procedures to achieve compliance with the new rules. Her evaluation of the new regulations will be shared with the Amherst community, including changes to the college’s processes that will be

mandated, as well as where there will be opportunities for community input. President Martin noted that, unlike some institutions, Amherst already has a live hearing process, while commenting that there will need to be changes to that process, such as requiring advisors (who could include attorneys) to cross-examine the parties involved. It is also her understanding that, under the new regulations, colleges and universities will still have a choice about the standard of evidence that they use. Professor Brooks commented on the helpfulness of meetings that had been held when new Title IX guidelines had been proposed, and recalled that faculty participants and President Martin had affirmed the need for continued and strengthened education around sexual respect at the college. She suggested that these new changes may prompt Amherst to take a closer look at how restorative justice can be used in some Title IX cases. President Martin agreed that a restorative-justice model could be helpful for resolving some cases.

Professor Basu next suggested that the committee take time at future meetings to discuss the unequal service burdens across the faculty, which she feels are increasing in the midst of the pandemic. Determining what types of service are most important during this time, and recognizing those who are doing such service, is important, in her view. Concluding her inquiry, Professor Basu asked whether the Committee of Six has or should have a formal role in addressing race relations on campus, noting that the members have been taking on responsibilities in this area recently, meeting with the leadership of the Black Student Union (BSU) and, soon, the Presidential Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion. Provost Epstein noted that the BSU leadership, as other college constituencies do, had reached out to the Committee of Six, and that the committee, as is appropriate, had responded. In her view, issues such as bias reporting and implementing restorative practices may be considered by the committee, when they are brought forward through regular governance processes and/or requests. She doesn't necessarily feel that responsibility for race relations is part of the committee's charge, per se. In the case of the student leaders, the Committee of Six was a natural body to which they would reach out, because the committee members likely see the committee members as faculty leaders.

Professor Brooks expressed the view that the Committee of Six has a formal role in addressing issues surrounding diversity and inclusion. In reviewing the charge to the Presidential Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion, she was surprised to learn that a member of the Committee of Six should be serving on the task force (no current member was asked to serve, she noted). The committee is thus accountable when it comes to issues surrounding diversity and inclusion, and she feels, through no fault of the committee itself, that the members have neglected their responsibility. Professor Brooks commented that the faculty made commitments following the Amherst Uprising and that it is very important to fulfill them. Having conduits to faculty committees serve on the task force seems important, in her view. Provost Epstein noted that Committee of Six members have served on the task force in the past. The task force is not a standing committee of the faculty, so members are not appointed using the process that is in place for those committees, the provost noted. President Martin commented that the task force had been in place before Norm Jones, the college's first chief diversity and inclusion officer, had arrived at the college. She asked him to take over the leadership of the body, including proposing faculty members to serve and co-chair the task force. President Martin commented that Professor Brooks had raised important issues and said that she would consult with N. Jones about whether he finds the current structure of this advisory body to be the most helpful. She noted that, in the past, the task force had prepared information for the review conducted by the External Advisory Committee on Diversity, Inclusion and Excellence and had met with the external committee twice. President Martin commented that L. Frankl and Dean Gendron, senior associate dean of students, are currently working on developing a proposal for a bias-reporting system and restorative protocols, informed by work that the task force has done on these projects. President Martin said that she would think further about the issues raised in this conversation.

Professor Goutte, turning to another topic, asked if staff performance evaluations will be done this semester, given the impact of the pandemic, which includes having most staff work remotely. Provost Epstein said that she understands that plans call for making use of a streamlined version of the evaluation system, which will resemble the mid-year check-in. In this way the extraordinary

performance of the staff during COVID-19 can be documented. Any issues that have come up during this time should also be documented, the provost noted. It is her understanding that the Office of Human Resources will be sending out information soon about the form that will be used. The provost commented that, since there is a salary freeze in place, performance evaluations will not have an impact on the level of salary increases, as can be the case under the typical system.

Continuing with questions, Professor Horton asked about the recent announcement that a student on campus has tested positive for COVID-19, which had followed the news that a custodian who has been working on campus also has the virus. He asked about the results of contact tracing and other steps that have been taken to protect the health of others within the Amherst community. Provost Epstein explained that all of the students who were in Morris Pratt, where the custodian had been working, were dispersed across campus, and have been living with many fewer students per floor/building. These students have not come to Valentine to pick up food; meals have been delivered to their buildings out of caution. The student who tested positive was one of the students who had been dispersed, and that student is now quarantined in the dorm where the individual had moved. She believes that all students who were moved to that dorm have since moved again. President Martin noted that the student who has tested positive has had very few contacts with other students, as it turns out. The student seems to have a relatively mild case of the virus and is able to continue with academic work, and colleagues from health services and student affairs have been checking in often.

All agreed that this case of the virus spreading points to the difficulty of keeping students apart in a residential setting. Professor Schmalzbauer commented that she has heard that some students who are now on campus have not been diligent about always practicing social distancing, which leads her to be concerned about what might happen if many students return to campus in the fall, if the pandemic is continuing. President Martin said that one condition of bringing students back to Amherst will be having much stricter rules in place to reduce the risk of spreading the virus—which would include continual testing and strict social-distancing protocols. In addition, she noted, there would need to be serious consequences (most notably being sent home) for violating the social contract to which all would need to agree. Professor Basu concurred that it seems clear that not all students who are on campus now seem to be following the rules about social distancing. She expressed concern, noting that some students are also worried about catching the virus from other students who are not taking precautions surrounding COVID-19 seriously. She agrees that a strong social contract, with attending consequences, should be put in place. Professor Basu suggested that these steps be implemented with the small number of students who are remaining on campus this summer. It would be informative to see if students would take the rules seriously. President Martin agreed that implementing this approach would be helpful.

Professor Sims asked if staff who may have been exposed to the coronavirus are currently able to obtain testing. The president said that staff need to rely on their own physicians for referrals for testing, while noting that it is her understanding that, at present, testing is not readily available in the area. Professor Sims asked whether the student who has the virus can go outside in the open air to promote well-being, or if this student must stay in the dorm room during the entire period of quarantine. Upon learning that the student must stay inside, she asked whether there is a window in the room to provide ventilation, which is particularly important when it comes to lessening the spread of the virus if others come into the student's space. President Martin reassured her that the student is being very well cared for, and that robust precautions are in place.

Professor Schmalzbauer noted the recent announcement that Hampshire plans to resume in-person classes in the fall, and that the school will be conducting regular testing for COVID-19 antibodies and for the virus. She expressed her surprise by the announcement, which was on the front page of the *Daily Hampshire Gazette*, and asked if President Martin could provide any insight. President Martin said that the other Five-College presidents were not informed in advance about this announcement. She noted that she would be speaking with several of the presidents the next day, and said that she anticipates that Hampshire students will not be permitted to take courses on the other campuses, if there is a return to in-person classes in the fall. The president also informed the members that she has spoken

with Kumble Subbaswamy, chancellor of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, to see if it might be possible for the university to run tests for the virus for Amherst in university labs, and to analyze results. Professor Goutte commented that she had been thinking about possibilities to run tests in the college's labs. Unfortunately, while Amherst has the equipment to do necessary polymerase chain reaction (PCR)s, there are no staff on hand to do the necessary work, and no one is properly trained in obtaining and handling the potentially infectious samples. President Martin expressed appreciation for all of the ideas that members of the community are suggesting. On a related note, she said that she had recently asked Avery Farmer '20, president of the Association of Amherst Students, if he would help constitute a student advisory group to consider ideas related to remote learning and other adjustments during the pandemic. President Martin noted that he has already sent her the names of six to eight students who are willing to serve. Professor Goutte said it would be interesting to have these students, as part of their deliberations, interview the students who have been on campus this spring to learn more about their experience as a way to inform what works and what doesn't work well.

The members turned next to assignments for faculty committees, reviewing a list of suggestions brought forward by the provost's office and making alternative recommendations, in some cases. Professor Sims expressed the view that it might be best to delay appointing colleagues to serve on committees until more is known about the format for teaching and learning in the fall. She noted that some faculty members will not be able to serve if schools and daycare centers remain closed. The provost responded that many of the colleagues whom she has suggested join various committee are either tenured, or untenured individuals who are returning from post-reappointment leaves. The practice, for the most part, is not to appoint untenured colleagues to serve on major committees, for example the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) and the Faculty Committee on Admission and Financial Aid, though there are exceptions. The provost feels that it is important to staff committees and to continue with shared governance, knowing that regular business may need to be abbreviated in the fall. If a governance body is needed to consider an issue related to COVID-19, however, having the membership in place will be important, in her view. Professor Basu asked if the three working groups (Logistics, Hybrid Learning, and Finance) and the ASC will continue their work in the fall. Provost Epstein said that these bodies are expected to complete their work before the end of the fiscal year. Professor Goutte said that, on an annual basis when making committee assignments, it would be helpful for the Committee of Six to be provided with a list of the chairs of academic departments and programs for the next academic year, so that this responsibility can be factored into decisions about whom to invite to serve on committees.

Continuing the discussion about committees, Professor Horton noted, more generally, that some committees require a much greater time commitment than others. In regard to Professor Basu's concern about the unevenness of service burdens, he feels that it will be important to have a conversation in the future about committee service. He has observed that there are some faculty members who do not serve on committees, while others are regularly engaged in service that is very time-consuming. Professor Sims said that she has noticed this pattern as well. Professor Sims also commented that, if colleagues need to teach one course at a reduced salary in the fall because it is not possible to care for children at home and continue the current teaching load, she does not feel that they should then have to take on heavy service burdens. Provost Epstein noted that colleagues who teach one course while they are on parenting leave are currently compensated with 72 percent of their salaries and are expected to do some service. President Martin commented on the need to provide the faculty with the flexibility that is needed to make remote learning work. She is convinced that, if the college must move to remote learning in the fall, there must be adjustments. In her view, students will need to be taught in small groups and will require more of the faculty's time. Provost Epstein agreed, while noting that the ability to have faculty teach fewer courses and to have small enrollments is somewhat dependent on the number of students who are enrolled at the college.

The members next reviewed proposals for a Whiting Foundation Public Engagement Seed Grant that had been submitted by members of the faculty and selected one individual to be Amherst's nominee for

the grant. The members also concurred with the provost and president's recommendation that a colleague receive a named professorship.

A brief conversation followed about additional data that Jesse Barba, director of institutional research and registrar services, had provided to the committee about the distribution of students taking courses that are attentive to issues of race, class, and gender and sexuality. Professor Basu had requested this information to learn more about how the intersection of identities may be influencing students' course selections in these areas, for example, by comparing athletes by race and gender. She had also requested information to learn how course selection might differ across athletic teams. The new data show that there is no appreciable difference among male and female athletes in their course selections in these areas (there were more male athletes than female athletes included in the data, it was noted). Professor Basu suggested that, in the future, it would be interesting to examine students' course selections in these fields by major. Professor Horton feels that the real question to address might be whether some groups of students, for example, athletes from a particular team, are clustering in certain courses. Professor Sims said that, while she can usually break up clusters in her courses, by having students do work in groups to which she assigns them, for example, she feels that the real challenge is to break up the clustering that takes place among students at the time of enrollment in courses. Professor Brooks agreed and said that it is important to learn whether some clusters of students are not taking any courses on race and class and/or not learning about the history of colonialism. This information would be helpful to know when advising, she commented. Professor Schmalzbauer noted the need to ensure that students of all identities are encouraged to take, and are welcomed in, courses that include challenging and sensitive conversations surrounding issues of race, class, sexuality, and gender. Professor Basu expressed the view that it is important to have students with a mix of backgrounds learn together in these courses. She asked if the tagging of these courses has provided adequate information about patterns of students' course selection. Professor Horton said that he believes that the CEP has made efforts to focus on identifying and tagging courses by category and improved the ability for students and faculty to search based on these tags.

The meeting ended with a decision to have a faculty meeting on May 21 to discuss efforts to address racism on campus and to include student-leaders of the BSU, who have been asked to share their own experiences with racism at Amherst. An update on college planning surrounding COVID-19 would also be on the agenda, it was decided. The members agreed to discuss the format for the faculty meeting at their next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 4:15 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The twenty-eighth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2019–2020 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, May 11, 2020. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors Basu, Brooks, Goutte, Horton, Schmalzbauer, and Sims; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The members began the meeting with a discussion of whether it would be preferable to have the citation for a retiring faculty member read at the May 28 faculty meeting, which would take place via Zoom, or to wait to have the citation read at the next in-person faculty meeting. It was agreed that the retiring faculty member should be given the choice. Associate Provost Tobin said that, on the committee's behalf, she would contact the chair of the department and ask that he reach out to the retiring colleague about this matter.

Under "Questions from Committee Members," Professor Basu noted that the Committee of Six had had an informative and productive meeting with the Presidential Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion. She commented that the committee is impressed with the steps that the college has taken to address issues of diversity and inclusion, and the work that is under way by the task force to develop proposals for bias-reporting and restorative practices. She also recognized that much work remains to be done. Professor Basu stressed the importance of ensuring that a member of the Committee of Six serves on the task force and noted that Norm Jones, chief diversity and inclusion officer, has expressed support for having a member do so. Options might include having a current member of the Committee of Six serve until the time of transition to the new committee, when a member of the incoming committee would then join the task force; asking one of the new members to begin serving on the task force now, along with a current member of the Committee of Six; and/or having a new member of the committee begin serving now. Professor Horton said that he had found the meeting with the task force to be very helpful, and was pleased to learn more about the work of the body. Maintaining a connection with the Committee of Six would be beneficial to the work of the task force and of the committee, in Professor Horton's view. Professor Basu commented that the committee had discussed with N. Jones whether it might be more helpful to him to have an advisory body with a different structure. The president and provost agreed to discuss this matter with N. Jones to learn more about his ideas about the most effective structure going forward.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Brooks expressed support for the work that the task force is doing surrounding restorative practices. While the college has made progress on addressing issues surrounding diversity and inclusion, Professor Brooks feels that more education is needed for faculty, students, and staff, particularly since the capacity for exchange and constructive conversation on difficult topics such as racism, erasure, and inequality is uneven across the campus. Over the course of her time at Amherst, students have shared experiences with her that demonstrate the need for the combined bias response protocol and restorative practices that the task force has been working to develop. The provost commented that any bias reporting system that includes classroom activity will need to be very carefully considered. Unless there is a widely shared conception of what is and isn't covered by such a system, such a mechanism could have a chilling effect on intellectual discourse. Some members expressed concern about putting a system in place that would include pathways for students to report faculty members or other students who make comments in class that are seen as insensitive or racist. Professor Brooks commented that such chilling effects already exist in many Amherst classrooms and that restorative practices show real promise, even for addressing incidents that occur in the classroom. Noting the complexities of this issue, Professor Schmalzbauer said that she would find any reporting system that only "calls out" individual students or faculty members to be problematic. She worries that students could become inhibited about speaking about complicated issues related to race, class, or gender, or might not even take particular courses, out of the fear of saying something that might be perceived as being racist, for example. She favors a formalized bias-response protocol with an educational orientation, which would frame any feedback that is provided to individuals within a restorative framework, and is inspired by the groundwork the task force has laid to make this possible. The members agreed that it will be helpful for the leadership of the Black Student Union to discuss at the May 21 faculty meeting their experiences with racism and its impact. Some faculty members may not be aware that incidents of racism are taking place on campus, the members agreed.

Professor Sims next asked the president and provost if they would update the committee on planning efforts for the fall semester. Provost Epstein noted that the recently constituted Ad Hoc Faculty Committee on Academic Structures during COVID-19 (ASC) began meeting the previous week. Plans call for the ASC to begin meeting with members of the community beginning this week, for example faculty members, class deans, and Jackie Alvarez, director of the counseling center. The ad hoc committee will continue such meetings in the weeks to come, including with the group of faculty and staff that had recently developed [some ideas regarding faculty and staff with significant caretaking roles that Professor Trapani had forwarded to the committee](#). The provost noted that Jesse Barba, director of institutional research and registrar services, had consulted with the Consultative Group for Tenure-Track faculty recently to inform a survey of the faculty that will be sent out later in the week. The purpose is to gain more information about the faculty's experience with remote teaching this spring. The results will be shared with the ASC, Provost Epstein said. Professor Sims expressed support for the efforts to consult with groups such as these that will convey the concerns of faculty who have had to assume new full- and part-time caregiving roles (mainly of young children) due to the COVID-19 crisis.

Continuing, Provost Epstein said that it is her hope that the ASC will complete its work by the end of this month. While it will not be possible to make firm decisions about students returning to campus until later in the summer, most likely in July, the provost expects that, by end of May, the committee will develop recommendations for how best to structure the academic year. It is the provost's hope that these recommendations might be discussed as part of the agenda for the May 28 faculty meeting. At that point, senior staff will also have made significant progress on exploring a number of different scenarios that the college may consider—and the financial impact of each—depending on how the pandemic unfolds. Provost Epstein said that she realizes that faculty and students want the college to make firm plans now, while noting that doing so won't be possible for some time, in order to have the information that is needed to make final decisions. What seems clear is that the need for social distancing will require that some classes, in particular large classes, be taught remotely in the fall, even if students can return to campus. There could be smaller sections of such classes taught in person, Provost Epstein noted, but it is not yet known whether this will be possible, and enrollments will have an impact on whether this approach is viable. Having faculty teach under a reduced course load, giving colleagues more time to prepare their courses and more time to engage with students in the fall, is another option that is being considered. Ultimately, departments will need to decide how to mount their curricula most effectively under the circumstances—which are themselves uncertain.

The provost next discussed with the members the upcoming schedule for reviewing the theses and transcripts of students recommended by their departments for a summa cum laude degree and having an overall grade point average in the top 25 percent of the graduating class. She explained that the committee would also review the theses of students who had received summa cum laude recommendations from their departments and whose overall grade point average was likely to land below the top 25 percent but within the top 40 percent of the class, since these students would qualify for a magna cum laude degree. Professor Goutte asked if the committee would also review information about the distribution of grades and summa honors across departments. The provost said that this information has been examined in the past and could be studied again in the future, but that such a review is not part of the committee's regular process. Professor Horton agreed that this seems like a longer-term issue that could be a topic of future conversation.

The members devoted most of the remainder of the meeting to a consideration of the agenda, individuals who would be giving presentations, and format of the May 21 faculty meeting. Conversation then turned to some questions of particular relevance to tenure-track faculty. With the recent message to the community that discretionary spending should be curtailed, Professor Sims noted that some faculty members are unsure whether they should curtail spending from their start-up funding or grants. The provost replied that colleagues should continue to spend their start-up and grant monies for research purposes, as necessary. A member asked how new faculty would be welcomed this fall, given the need for social distancing. Provost Epstein responded that Austin Sarat, associate provost and associate dean of the faculty, is developing a remote orientation program for new faculty, as it is likely that such a format will be needed, depending on how the pandemic unfolds. Professor Goutte, raising a question on behalf of tenure-track colleagues, asked

whether they might speak with the Committee of Six after the plan for the fall is known. Colleagues are always welcome to engage with the Committee of Six, the provost said.

The members then discussed concerns that some tenure-track faculty members had voiced during a meeting with the Committee of Six that took place via Zoom on April 6. Professor Brooks noted that some colleagues had expressed concern about the evaluation of their teaching this spring, in light of the COVID-19 situation. Provost Epstein commented that the “opt-in” system for having end-of semester evaluations and retrospective letters solicited for this spring’s classes, which was put in place after the meeting, likely alleviated this worry. In addition, faculty members who agree to have evaluations solicited also have the choice of whether they will be included in their reappointment and/or tenure dossiers. Professor Brooks also shared a concern from an untenured faculty member, who suggested it might be challenging to find scholars who are willing to serve as outside reviewers, due to the impact of the pandemic. Provost Epstein commented that no department has brought a concern of this kind to her attention, and she is aware that some departments of candidates standing for tenure have already completed this process, without experiencing difficulties. Professor Sims noted that some colleagues have asked whether it might be possible or advisable to extend reappointment clocks, in case caring for young children or closure of laboratory work, etc. during the pandemic has had an impact on their scholarly trajectories. Provost Epstein said that she would be open to discussion about changing pre-tenure colleagues’ leaves, but that she does not think that extending reappointment clocks would be necessarily helpful. While some faculty members, depending on their fields, may not have produced a great deal of scholarship at the time of reappointment, they most often complete projects and increase their scholarly productivity and accomplishment by the time of tenure.

Continuing the conversation, the members noted that many pre-tenure colleagues expressed ongoing anxiety about how their research productivity might be judged at the time of tenure, given the amount of research time that they have now lost due to the COVID-19 situation. As some faculty members had noted, the shelf-life of experiments means that some of their research—often started well before March 2020—would now have lost its relevance or need to be completely restarted. Professor Brooks reiterated her view that the pandemic, while closing some avenues of research (e.g., by constraining necessary travel), may also afford opportunities to move in new and important scholarly directions. She noted that one of Amherst’s strengths has been its strong support for faculty who change their scholarly course, and expressed the view that this support should extend to untenured faculty, particularly during this time, when diverse kinds of innovative research may be needed. Professor Goutte relayed concerns about the long-term impact on laboratory research teams, as the lab shut-down has meant a loss of training of future research students, especially as advanced students, whom they had trained, will not be available to help with the training of new students once the labs open up again. The committee agreed that, for these and other reasons, COVID-19 is likely to have consequences that will continue to be felt many years from now. The Committee of Six noted the importance of conveying these kinds of concerns to tenured members of departments, who might not otherwise be aware of the anxieties felt by pre-tenure colleagues. One member of the committee emphasized that when colleagues stand for tenure, it will be important that they document in their letter to the Committee of Six the impact that COVID-19 had on the candidate's teaching and research. Finally, some members of the Committee of Six commented that some lecturers feel high levels of anxiety, believing that if the college were to cut faculty positions, lecturer positions would be among the first eliminated. The provost reassured committee members that there are no plans to eliminate any faculty positions.

The meeting adjourned at 4:15 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The twenty-ninth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2019–2020 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, May 18, 2020. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors Basu, Brooks, Goutte, Horton, Schmalzbauer, and Sims; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The meeting began with a brief discussion of plans and protocols for returning Amherst's science faculty to their labs, as allowed under Governor Baker's reopening plan during the COVID-19 pandemic, which had just been announced. Provost Epstein said that she and Associate Provost and Associate Dean of the Faculty Cheney would soon be meeting with members of the Science Faculty Steering Committee to develop college protocols and a timeline for returning to labs. She noted that only a limited number of individuals will be allowed in the science center at one time, and that many procedures will be put in place to mitigate risk to the degree possible. Professor Goutte, who noted that the scientists are excited and eager to return to their labs, asked how science faculty will interface with colleagues in facilities as part of planning efforts. The provost said that she would invite Jim Brassord, chief of campus operations; John Carter, chief of police and director of public safety; and Jess Martin, administrative director of the science center, to be part of the upcoming meeting that she had just mentioned and to address this question and other matters. The president and provost emphasized that, while the governor's announcement of a phased reopening is hopeful and will allow plans to move forward to begin to bring some members of the college community back to campus, Amherst will be taking a careful and gradual approach to doing so. President Martin said that she had recently had a productive conversation with the newly established student advisory committee about the conditions that would be necessary to bring some students back to campus, both in summer and fall. The students had brought forward some interesting and creative ideas, she noted.

Conversation returned to the question of ensuring Committee of Six representation on the Presidential Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion. Several members said that they understand from their conversations with Norm Jones, chief diversity and inclusion officer, that he would prefer to have a member of the current Committee of Six, as well as an incoming member, join the task force as soon as is practicable. The current member could step down from the task force upon completing service on the Committee of Six, and the incoming member could then remain. The committee suggested that the president and provost consult with N. Jones about his preferences in regard to this matter, and they agreed to do so.

Under "Questions from Committee Members," Professor Sims, who had written to the members ahead of the meeting about this subject, noted that a number of faculty members had asked her to share their concern that the membership of the Ad Hoc Faculty Committee on Academic Structures during COVID-19 (ASC) does not include a colleague who has young children. These colleagues feel that those who have not been in a primary caretaking role for the past two months will find it very difficult to understand fully the pressures that faculty with young children are experiencing. Primary among these pressures is the need to parent and homeschool their children during working hours, at the same time they need to meet the college's standards and expectations for the faculty's work.

In responding, Provost Epstein and Professor Basu reviewed briefly the ongoing work of the (ASC), including plans to meet with the group of faculty and staff who had brought forward ideas for supporting colleagues who have assumed significant caretaking roles due to the pandemic. It is clear that this will be a significant issue going forward, for which solutions must be found, the ASC recognizes, the provost noted. Professor Sims responded that these colleagues are aware that the ASC has scheduled a meeting with the group mentioned above. They feel, however, that a one-time listening session is not a substitute for having a faculty member who is experiencing these challenges serve on the ASC and bring that perspective to the ad hoc committee's work.

Continuing, Professor Sims recalled that the Committee of Six had discussed the idea of appointing a colleague with young children to the ASC, but had decided that doing so did not seem feasible because of the additional time pressures that would be imposed on members of the ASC during the busy weeks at the end of the semester. In light of caregivers' questions, and with grading almost done, Professor Sims asked whether consideration should be given to adding a faculty member with young children to the ASC at this point. She wonders whether the needs of caregivers are being considered as the ASC develops proposals for different scenarios. For instance, she had understood that, if daycare facilities and schools do not open in the fall, it may

be necessary for some colleagues to take a voluntary furlough (reducing their course load and being compensated at a reduced level), in order to fulfill their responsibilities as primary caregivers. Professor Sims said that she cannot envision how this arrangement would be possible under the seven-week “Beloit model,” given that individuals’ teaching loads during those seven weeks could not be reduced. She asked how parents could handle this situation, given that many faculty members will not be able to work full-time hours, if schools and daycare facilities remain closed. Professor Sims said that she fears that the result would be reduced office hours, less meaningful feedback, and/or less synchronous class time—all of the opportunities that students need most.

Provost Epstein informed the committee that the ASC will be considering the issues that Professor Sims had described as part of its evaluation of potential models for the next academic year. The meeting with the group described above represents the beginning of the ASC’s effort to gather information and consider ideas to support caregivers of young children and others, for example elderly family members. She expressed the view that it would be challenging to add a new member to the ASC at this stage, since work has been under way and various meetings have already occurred. Professor Basu, a member of the ASC, agreed, while noting that she would be happy to share information about the upcoming discussion, as well as the ASC’s ongoing deliberations about this issue, with Professor Sims, who could then convey what she learns to others. The ASC would then consider caregivers’ feedback. The provost and Professor Basu said that, even though they themselves are not in the role of primary caregiver, they and the other members of the ASC recognize the importance of this issue. Professor Sims said she is primarily concerned that this issue is addressed and thanked Provost Epstein and Professor Basu, as well as the other members of the ASC, for their work on colleagues’ behalf.

Continuing with questions, Professor Basu asked if there is a venue for staff members to bring forward ideas about academic matters. She is aware that some academic department coordinator (ADC)s have developed some proposals. Provost Epstein said that the ASC will meet with the academic resource team, which comprises staff that support teaching and learning, through the library and information technology, for example. The provost commented that ADCs are welcome to be in touch with their department chairs or with the ASC directly with any ideas that they would like to share.

The committee next reviewed the nomination from the Department of Physical Education and Athletics for the Edward Hitchcock Fellowship and voted unanimously to support awarding of the fellowship to the nominee and to forward the nomination to the faculty. Professor Horton suggested that the college adopt a practice of vetting candidates for “Green Dean” positions, with the goal of learning whether students who are applying have engaged in conduct unbecoming an Amherst student and/or have disciplinary infractions listed on their records. Provost Epstein agreed to speak with Maria-Judith Rodriguez, chief human resources officer, about this idea, while noting that any disciplinary infractions would be reviewed, but would not necessarily disqualify candidates, depending on the nature of the infraction and students’ overall record at the college.

At 3:00 P.M., the incoming members of the Committee of Six (Professors del Moral, Kingston, Leise, Manion, Trapani, and Umphrey) joined the meeting via Zoom. The members of both committees had agreed that it would be useful to have a discussion about agenda items that will carry over to this summer or next year, or which time and present circumstances have not permitted the current committee to address. A good deal of the conversation focused on the committee’s meetings with the student leadership of the Black Student Union (BSU), the Presidential Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion, and members of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI), which the current members felt had been productive and informative. As the current Committee of Six members explained, these conversations had prompted them to organize a listening session as part of the agenda for the May 21 faculty meeting.

Professor Basu reiterated her view that some of the topics that the committee had hoped to address seem even more crucial in light of the pandemic. These include the unequal service burdens across the faculty, with respect to different fields and identity groups, and academic advising and mentoring, which increasingly includes students’ well-being, as well as academic concerns, during this time. Professor Basu said that it is her hope that the committee will consider the Ad Hoc Curriculum Committee’s proposals surrounding advising and for a required sophomore seminar. The members

noted that other topics include the following: clarifying the criteria for tenure, and related consideration of adjustments that might be made due to the impact of the pandemic on the trajectory of untenured faculty members' scholarship and teaching; evaluating recommendations that are set to come forward about the college's housing program; thinking about issues surrounding campus planning; considering last year's proposal from the Faculty Committee on Admission and Financial Aid (FCAFA) that the faculty elect the membership of the FCAFA (mimicking the process used for the Committee on Educational Policy and a small number of other faculty committees), rather than having the Committee of Six appoint the members; clarifying the criteria for promotion to full professor; and considering the provost's proposal to expand the responsibilities of the faculty athletics representative (FAR). Provost Epstein commented that the ASC will make recommendations about possible ways to address the impact of the pandemic on untenured faculty.

In regard to the FAR, Professor Horton suggested that it would be beneficial for the FAR, in carrying out the responsibilities of the position, to be connected with college diversity and inclusion efforts. In regard to the topic of intensive-writing courses at the college, Professor Brooks commented that the English department plans to consider the idea of having a lecturer housed in the department teaching such courses. Professor Horton suggested that it would be useful for the new Committee of Six to discuss with the president and provost the ways in which the committee conducts its work, for example how questions raised by the faculty are brought forward and considered, and the members' dual role as a sounding board for ideas that are being developed by the college and as the faculty's elected representatives. In regard to the FCAFA, Professor Sims noted that a goal of the proposal to elect the membership, as she understands it, is to ensure that senior, experienced faculty members are appointed to that committee. Professor Basu noted the importance of having the outgoing Committee of Six share its observations about these and other topics with the incoming members. In this way, there will be continuity, rather than idiosyncrasy, surrounding the Committee of Six's work. This is particularly true regarding the perceptions and concerns of tenure-track faculty, which have been shared with the committee on a number of occasions this year, both through conversations with the Consultative Group for Tenure-Track Faculty and at a meeting that was open to all tenure-track colleagues. Professor Brooks commented that, at the committee's most recent meeting with tenure-track faculty, colleagues asked that ways be found to ensure that the Committee of Six will factor in the impact of the pandemic when evaluating tenure cases in the years to come, particularly after the pandemic is over.

The members also stressed the importance of continuing the committee's efforts to support diversity and inclusion on campus, including supporting steps that are aimed at addressing racism on campus. The members' efforts have also been focused on educating themselves and raising awareness about issues of racism and bias at the college. They have learned of the work of the Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion to develop bias protocols and restorative practices. They have heard from both members of the ODI and leaders of the BSU about the progress that has been made, and steps that still need to be taken, to address racism on campus and build a more inclusive and equitable community. It is expected that bias reporting in a classroom setting and implementing restorative practices will come forward in the next academic year, it was noted, though restorative practices will begin this summer for the lacrosse team, as well as for coaches and administrators within athletics. The members noted that N. Jones has asked that both a current member and incoming member of the Committee of Six serve on the Presidential Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion, in this way building continuity and a strong connection to the committee. Professor Brooks commented that she has learned a great deal from the committee's meetings with the task force, members of the ODI, and the leadership of the BSU, and from reviewing related materials. The members urged the incoming members 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](#). This spring, the current committee has been laying the groundwork for such a conversation, the members noted. Professor Goutte commented on the importance of communication in the committee's work, stressing the value of the committee's meetings with the BSU leadership, members of the ODI, and members of the Presidential Task Force for Diversity and Inclusion; she hopes that such opportunities for communication will continue to be sought.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Umphrey asked if the incoming committee can be provided with the materials from internal and external bodies that the current committee has reviewed, as well as minutes of the conversation that the committee had with the presidential task force. President Martin said that N. Jones will provide the various reports and that she would share her notes of the meetings that she has had with the student leaders of the BSU. Provost Epstein said that she would forward the informal minutes that had been taken of the meeting with the task force, which were taken by Heather Ruggeri, assistant to the chief diversity and inclusion officer. Members of the Committee of Six also offered to share their informal notes on these meetings with incoming members.

President Martin informed the incoming members that the issues that the administration can address are in process, and that timelines have been communicated to the students; issues of speech and expression must be addressed by the faculty, the president said. As has been noted previously, according to the student leaders of the BSU, practices surrounding reporting racist incidents are informal, and many students do not know when or how to go through more formal channels that may be in place or how they will know if any action has been taken. In response to the students' request to revise the [Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom](#), the president said that she has informed them that the faculty developed this statement and must approve any changes to it. In addition, any bias-reporting system or educational effort that extends to the classroom setting is also within the purview of the faculty, she noted, and will be considered separately from the student-to-student reporting system. The current Committee of Six encouraged the new members to hold a meeting with the student-leaders of the BSU, as they have found it to be compelling and informative to hear from the students directly about their experiences with racism on campus. It was noted that, in addition to involving the Committee of Six, the College Council will review the proposed bias-reporting system.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Kingston commented that he is not familiar with restorative practices. Professor Brooks acknowledged that much about restorative practices was new to many faculty, including members of the committee, and that the members have been learning about this approach. This was one of the motivations for asking Professor Hart to share information about restorative practices, including resources, at the upcoming faculty meeting. It was agreed that it would be helpful for the ODI to provide resources to the faculty about restorative practice. Professor Schmalzbauer commented that Professor Hart, who has been spearheading efforts to pilot this approach at the college, is in the process of creating a brochure on this topic.

Professor Umphrey next asked to whom the ASC will be making its recommendations. Provost Epstein explained that recommendations that are within the purview of the faculty will be brought to the faculty, while other recommendations will focus on matters that are within the purview of the administration. In the case of the latter, the president and provost will consult with the Committee of Six, whenever possible. Due to the complexities of the issues involved and the time pressures that the college will face, it will be essential for this consultation to begin to occur over the summer, Provost Epstein noted.

Professor Trapani next asked if there are issues surrounding athletics that will come before the Committee of Six. Provost Epstein said that she does not anticipate immediate issues that will demand the committee's attention at this time, noting that she has been working closely with Don Faulstick, director of athletics; N. Jones; and Professor Hart on issues surrounding athletics that intersect with matters of diversity and inclusion. Professor Trapani asked if issues related to student mental health will be on the committee's agenda. Provost Epstein responded that she does not believe so.

Professor Hart, faculty diversity and inclusion officer, and N. Jones joined the conversation at 4:00 P.M. They reviewed briefly their ongoing work, and their roles in framing the issues that would be the subject of the listening session. N. Jones said that he appreciated the opportunity to have a conversation with the Committee of Six about the work of the ODI and to have this additional discussion. Professor Hart noted that work will continue virtually this summer with restorative practices. He will continue to engage with faculty, as well as holding restorative circles with coaches and administrators. Consultants who have been supporting these efforts will continue to do so through the fall, Professor Hart explained. It is his hope that some faculty will become facilitators after receiving training, and also will form a restorative

practices advisory group. Professor Hart said that he is working on a handbook and resource guide about restorative practices. He noted that the information will be printable and be posted on the web. Learning of Professor Umphrey's request for written materials that had been provided to this year's Committee of Six, N. Jones agreed to send to the incoming members information provided to those who had attended the workshop on restorative practices, as well as the self-study prepared for the External Advisory Committee on Diversity, Inclusion, and Excellence, and the external committee's report. The provost then thanked all of the guests, and they left the meeting at 4:31 P.M.

The meeting concluded with a brief discussion surrounding ways that tenure-track faculty members should begin to document the impact that COVID-19 has had on their scholarship and teaching. The provost noted the example of including on CVs invitations to conferences that ended up being canceled this spring because of the pandemic and articles that journals had accepted for publication, but had later decided not to publish because of COVID-19. Faculty should continue to add to this narrative until the time of tenure, at which time departments, the Committee of Six, and outside reviewers will consider this information. Some members noted that department chairs may struggle with offering feedback about teaching to tenure-track faculty during their annual conversations, given the switch to remote learning and, in some cases, the poor response rate of students, when they were asked to complete evaluations. In addition, it may be difficult to offer guidance about scholarship. Provost Epstein agreed, but noted that the annual conversation is a time when tenured colleagues can develop a better understanding of the particular challenges that the tenure-track colleague is facing because of the pandemic. In addition, the annual conversation should cover the fall semester, she said. In regard to scholarship, the provost noted that the impact of the pandemic varies significantly by field. The college will be taking all this into account going forward, Provost Epstein reiterated. For now, everyone will have to do the best they can.

The meeting adjourned at 4:45 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The thirtieth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2019–2020 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 3:30 P.M. on Tuesday, May 26, 2020. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors Basu, Brooks, Goutte, Horton, Schmalzbauer, and Sims; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The meeting began with Provost Epstein informing the committee that Professor Brooks has been invited to serve on the Presidential Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion for the remainder of her term on the Committee of Six, and that she has accepted. The committee thanked Professor Brooks for taking on this additional service.

Under “Questions from Committee Members,” Professor Horton asked if dates have been set for faculty meetings that will take place in the summer. Provost Epstein responded that she envisions that, in addition to holding a faculty meeting at which the faculty will be asked to vote on some of the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Faculty Committee on Academic Structures during COVID-19 (ASC), potentially as early as June 9, a meeting of departments chairs will also be needed early in June to discuss the guidelines that the ASC will recommend for departments, and college planning for the next academic year. The provost noted that there will also be some meetings to present information about the pedagogical support that will be available to faculty during the summer. She noted that the ASC will not be making a recommendation about any possible adjustments to the grading policy for the next academic year, explaining that that matter will be considered at a later time. The members recommended that the faculty be asked to hold several dates in June for a faculty meeting, so as to aid colleagues’ ability to set aside time in their schedules. Provost Epstein agreed to share some potential dates with the committee following the May 28 faculty meeting.

Continuing with Questions, Professor Goutte asked about the status of the college’s incoming class. Provost Epstein conveyed that, at this time, 489 students have accepted Amherst’s offer of admission. Often there is “melt” over the summer, she explained, with some students changing their college choices. This may be more pronounced this year, due to the pandemic. The college is maintaining a waiting list over the summer, and may admit students from the list, if needed. The target size of the entering class is 473, Provost Epstein said, while noting that there may end up being a smaller number of first-year students, if a significant number of gap years are requested and granted. Continuing, the provost noted that students have until June 1 to submit requests to take a gap year; some first-year students have already done so. In addition, current students may end up making requests to take voluntary leaves, depending on decisions about the format of the fall semester (whether teaching will take place on campus, remotely, or making use of a combination of the two), and the ways in which the pandemic unfolds. President Martin commented on the strength of the incoming class. Professor Horton asked if fewer students are planning to study away in the fall. Provost Epstein said that around sixty students have indicated that they would like to study away in the fall, though it appears unlikely that this will be possible because of the pandemic. While the college has not prohibited study away in the fall, students have been instructed to register for Amherst courses in case study away cannot take place. The committee then turned briefly to a personnel matter.

In anticipation of the faculty meeting on May 28, the members discussed a request to have Zoom Chat enabled during the faculty meeting and decided that, as this function does not replicate a feature of a live faculty meeting, doing so does not seem necessary. All agreed that it would be best to continue to call on faculty members to speak during the meeting via the virtual “raise-hand” function. Colleagues who wish to communicate with one another during the faculty meeting could certainly text or email, it was noted.

The remainder of the meeting was devoted to a discussion of draft recommendations that the ASC will bring forward. Provost Epstein explained that some proposals will require votes of the faculty; others are earmarked for consideration by the Committee of Six. ([The first draft of the ASC’s report](#) was distributed to the faculty the next day.) Professor Basu, a member of the ASC, and Provost Epstein, who is chairing it, shared both the recommendations and the rationales that underlie them. They explained that motions for recommendations that require a faculty vote, including the structure for the academic calendar for the next academic year, will be brought to the faculty in early to mid-June, since planning will need to begin as soon as possible.

Professor Basu began the discussion by turning to the issue of the academic calendar, noting that the ASC had spent a lot of time considering the “Beloit model,” in which faculty teach two seven-and-a-half-week modules over the course of the semester, and in which faculty and students distribute the courses they teach

and take over that time. The ASC had found the model appealing, she said, because it reduces pressures on students and would offer flexibility, should in-person teaching and learning need to be discontinued on campus mid-semester. In the end though, Professor Basu explained, the ASC had rejected the modular system. Many colleagues had told the ASC that the model would not permit the kind of steady increase in competency required, for example, by language learning, or the kind of scaffolding or opportunities for writing and rewriting that are necessary for many courses and for the first-year seminar program, Professor Basu informed the members.

Continuing, Professor Basu said that the ASC had ultimately concluded that it would be impossible to create an academic calendar that included both modules and courses taught over thirteen weeks, a hybrid model that some colleagues had requested. A summer semester had been considered and rejected, she noted, because many colleagues want to reserve their summers for research, and because students are eager to pursue internships. In the end, given the time faculty will need to devote to course preparation, the ASC decided to recommend that the college leave in place the semester system of thirteen weeks of instruction, with a fall and spring semester. Under the ASC's proposal, the start of the academic year would take place late in August, so that course work (exclusive of reading period and examinations) for the fall semester could conclude before Thanksgiving, with the spring semester beginning in February.

In regard to preparing courses over the summer, Provost Epstein noted that the college will provide pedagogical support to help faculty better prepare to teach in the remote and online environment. (Faculty must prepare courses in such a way that could be taught in person, remotely, or as a combination of both formats, she noted.) Colleagues will be encouraged to take advantage of these learning opportunities during the summer hiatus. The provost noted that staff from the Center for Teaching and Learning, as well as other members of the Academic Resource Team, are available to help faculty learn about resources, collaborations, and projects that might enhance or transform existing courses or lead to entirely new partnerships.

Returning to the subject of the academic calendar, Professor Basu said that the ASC will also recommend the adoption of a January term of four weeks, in which students would be able complete a single full course for credit. Teaching during this January term would be optional and would need to be coordinated within each department's staffing plan for the year, Professor Basu noted. Faculty who opt to teach over the January term would receive credit for teaching one of their four courses during the academic year, and would have the option to do so again in January 2022. Faculty who do not teach the first year will also have the option of teaching in the January term in 2022. Professor Basu said that it is anticipated that these courses would be taught remotely. Provost Epstein said that she was excited to learn of the interest that faculty have in teaching during January. In response to the recent faculty survey, more than sixty faculty members responded that they would be interested in teaching in January, and about fifty indicated that they would consider doing so. The idea of teaching interdisciplinary courses on contemporary topics—for example, the impact of the pandemic, was also high. Professor Basu noted that the ASC feels that the January term is a structure that will encourage pedagogical and curricular innovation, flexibility, and creativity. Professor Schmalzbauer expressed enthusiasm for having increased opportunities for faculty to come together to teach interdisciplinary courses. Professor Horton asked if the earlier start date for classes in the fall would align with the academic calendars of other Five-College institutions. Provost Epstein said that she thinks that the earlier schedule should not present problems for students who wish to take classes at the university, Hampshire, or Smith. All such courses would be taken remotely, she noted. The provost said that taking courses at Mount Holyoke would present a challenge, as Mount Holyoke has adopted the Beloit model for the next academic year.

Provost Epstein noted that, under the ASC's proposals, all students would go through a new fall 2020 course-registration process during the summer. Prior to that registration, departments would be asked to take the opportunity to envision their curricula for the full 2020–2021 academic year (fall and spring semesters as well as the January term). Departments will need to have staffing plans in place and send new course proposals to the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) by June 19, 2020. Professor Horton asked about the timeline for registration. Provost Epstein said that all departments should know which courses they will offer by the end of June, and that pre-registration will take place in July for all students other than first-years. New students will register in August, with faculty advising students over the summer.

Turning to the next topic, Professor Basu explained that, after hearing from the director of the counseling center and others about the stress that students are experiencing, the ASC decided to recommend that students be permitted and encouraged to take three courses per semester as a regular course load. Those who would do so could graduate with a minimum of thirty courses regardless of what year they graduate (120 federal course credits). Under the proposal, students who want to take four courses per semester would need to receive approval from their advisor and a class dean, following the same procedure currently used to petition for a five-course load. Students who fail courses could take another course during the January term.

President Martin expressed some concern that students would take only three courses per semester, even if teaching and learning takes place on campus next year. If teaching is remote, with all the challenges that accompany this mode—for some students even more than others—she can understand why a reduced course load makes sense. If students are on campus, however, she wonders whether it would be better for them to be engaged fully in their academic work. On a related note, President Martin commented that she has been meeting virtually with the student advisory committee that was constituted recently and has been very impressed with the students' ideas and with the seriousness that they have demonstrated about the need to reduce the risks surrounding the spread of the virus. She has asked the students to help develop a social contract that could be put in place if students return to campus during the pandemic. The students feel that the best approach would be for students to be allowed to have contact with the ten or so students with whom they live, while practicing social distancing from everyone else. They feel that there should be consequences for students who do not comply with the social contract.

Continuing the conversation, President Martin noted that she is more hopeful than she has been in recent months about the possibility of having some or all students come back to campus for the next academic year, and the college's ability to take the steps necessary to reduce the associated risks, to the degree possible. She has more hope than was warranted earlier that testing with rapid turnaround times will be available. In her view, Amherst has a responsibility to provide students with the education that they expected when they chose the college, if at all possible, and she is particularly concerned about the impact of learning remotely on students who have been experiencing serious hardships while away. Professor Basu and Provost Epstein, said that the ASC will consider the president's feedback, while noting that the ASC had developed its recommendations under the assumption that, whether students return to campus next year or not, some courses will need to be taught remotely. Provost Epstein said that classes with enrollments of more than thirty-five students would need to be taught remotely. Professor Basu commented on the challenges of planning for the next academic year in the face of the uncertainty surrounding the pandemic. President Martin agreed that the process is extremely difficult. Professor Basu asked the president if she feels that the ASC should review its recommendations in light of the optimism that some or all students will return to campus for the next academic year. President Martin responded that doing so would be helpful, she thinks.

Continuing with her summary of the ASC's recommendations, Professor Basu turned to the issue of advising. She said that the ASC recognizes that a strong advising system plays a foundational role in student success, particularly during this challenging time, while also being aware that advising during the pandemic poses challenges and burdens for the faculty. She informed the members that the ASC will make a number of recommendations to support students, while also suggesting ways to support faculty, who are facing greater demands on their time as they develop new courses and pedagogies. While doing so, colleagues must also find ways to balance their teaching with research and family responsibilities. Protecting untenured faculty members' time for research is another goal of the ASC's recommendations. With these ideas in mind, Professor Basu said that the ASC will recommend that tenured faculty with fewer than twenty major and college advisees be assigned additional college or major advisees to reduce the demands on colleagues with larger advising loads. The ASC will propose that tenure-track faculty not be assigned additional college advisees, unless they elect to have them, she noted.

Professor Basu said that the ASC will also suggest a few strategies to reduce the burden of advising, including that the department chair or another faculty member serve as point person for the department on advising. This person could hold advising sessions once a month or three times over the course of a semester, for example. Faculty with large advising loads could develop strategies for a combination of group and individual advising sessions. Professor Sims said that she supports the approach of having tenured faculty

assume the burden of advising over the summer so that the research time of untenured faculty can be protected. She asked how much time summer advising is anticipated to take. Provost Epstein said that she anticipates that two of three meetings with advisees could be in a group format, while one could be an individual meeting. So, it would be about twenty hours over the course of the summer. She imagines that advisors would meet with their current advisees once during the first two weeks of July to discuss how the changes for the next academic year would affect students' academic program. Under the ASC's proposal, professors who have a very high number of major advisees, for example, economics, would not receive new college advisees.

Continuing the discussion about advising, Professor Basu noted that the ASC is supportive of the efforts of the Dean of New Students Rick López to plan a robust virtual program for orientation advising in July and August. Doing so is necessary, given the importance of beginning and maintaining contact with new students. Professor Horton suggested that the work of advising could be reduced by making videos in which the answers to commonly asked questions are provided, and that departments might want to make use of this approach for their advisees. Given the number of double and triple majors, and the fact that advisors will pick up sophomores who have declared their majors, Professor Horton asked if the ASC feels that the numbers will allow faculty teaching in the fall to have fewer than twenty college and major advisees. The provost said that she anticipates this to be the case, commenting that departments not only gained sophomore advisees, but no longer have advisees who just graduated.

Turning to the topic of faculty who have become caregivers due to the impact of the pandemic, Professor Basu said that the ASC will recommend that, with the approval of their department and the provost and dean of the faculty, faculty members with caregiving needs could elect to reduce their teaching load by one course if they take a reduction in pay, or if they take on a combination of increased college or department advising responsibilities, student research supervision, special topics teaching, or other curricular initiatives around senior theses or intensive research opportunities. Provost Epstein said that, under the proposal, she would consult with departments about their curricula and staffing in relation to faculty members' requests to take course reductions. To reduce the burden on faculty members' time, the provost noted that, to the extent possible, most routine college committee work should be reduced, and that committees should prioritize pressing college matters, according to the ASC's recommendation. Attempts should be made to protect tenure-track colleagues from demanding college-wide service.

Provost Epstein next discussed the ways in which the ASC envisions departments considering the courses that they choose to mount at this time. She noted that the ASC will propose that decisions about course offerings be made at the departmental level and not the individual level, emphasizing the importance of department-wide consultation. Provost Epstein said that the ASC will encourage departments to prioritize offering a range of courses that will serve both introductory functions, including those needed for major requirements and those required for college-wide curricular service (e.g. introductory-level courses), noting that departments will need to assess how best to distribute the work of mounting those courses. In a remote learning environment, departments might wish to adjust their requirements for the major, with the constraint that majors must comprise at least eight required courses, the provost noted. Departments should consider eliminating or combining one or more low-enrollment (fewer than nine students) elective courses to reduce their instructional burden during the next academic year, the ASC will recommend. Departments may offset offering courses with small enrollments by offering large lectures courses and will need to create a staffing plan, Provost Epstein said. It would be useful to share these plans at a chairs' meeting to exchange ideas, the committee agreed. In addition, the ASC will note, enrollment caps on some courses can be adjusted. The provost noted that departments must keep in mind, however, that, when 1,800 students are enrolled and taking four courses per semester, class-size averages need to be around eighteen students per course. If fewer students are enrolled, those averages will go down; if fewer courses are taught, those averages go up. The provost commented that student response to their experience this spring suggests that both large enrollment and small enrollment courses can go well in the online environment, but that discussion-based courses of twenty-five to thirty students were the most problematic. The ASC also will suggest that team teaching of larger courses be encouraged. Professor Brooks asked if new faculty and visiting faculty and fellows, who typically have small enrollments in their classes in the first year, should be encouraged to co-teach. Provost Epstein said that this would be possible, and also that new faculty could serve as advisors for theses and

research projects, both in their own departments and, possibly in other departments. It will also be possible for faculty to teach multiple sections of the same course in one semester, thus reducing the time they need to devote to preparation.

Continuing the discussion, Professor Goutte asked if students would be permitted to take two lab courses, which would be 1.5 credits each, as a full course load. Provost Epstein said that this would be permissible during this unusual time, under the ASC's recommendations. Advisors could suggest alternatives, it was noted. Professor Goutte commented that it will be important for students who are pursuing the pre-med curriculum to be advised over the summer, in light of these course-load options, to make sure they will be able to meet all requirements by the time they graduate, and without putting extra burden on later semesters. Provost Epstein said that plans are in place to provide such advising to students under a cohort model, as is already done during orientation for new students. Professor Goutte asked if it would be helpful for science departments to chart some sample curricula for the next year that would provide templates for pre-med students. Provost Epstein responded that doing so would be very helpful. Turning to another topic, Professor Goutte asked if it might be possible for faculty to elect to teach a reduced course load for one or both semesters next year and to teach three courses during future semesters. Provost Epstein said that, while the ASC might consider this option, she worries that, under such a system, it might take faculty a long time to "repay" the courses that were not taught. This might not be the best option for faculty, in her view. Professor Goutte expressed some concern about all faculty having the option of overseeing research projects instead of teaching courses. Provost Epstein said that departments would hopefully prioritize that pre-tenure colleagues receive the option of reducing their teaching loads in this way. She noted that it would also be important for departments to ensure that, while there is a focus on teaching, faculty who are in the early stages of their careers, as well as other faculty, have the opportunity to pursue their research.

Professor Horton asked about the process to address decisions to teach in person. Provost Epstein and President Martin noted that the expectation will be that faculty who are not bound by concerns about their age, do not have underlying health conditions, or do not live with someone with an underlying health condition will teach in person, when students return to campus. Of course, no faculty member will be forced to do so, they said. Professor Horton offered the suggestion that, for the next year, departments, such as mathematics and statistics, that typically have courses with a high number of weekly meetings (e.g., a fourth hour in mathematics and statistics courses) have faculty teach in person for a longer session one day a week, and virtually during the other class sessions. This approach could facilitate learning and optimize the time available for classrooms to be cleaned. In regard to classrooms, the provost said that Jim Brassord, chief of campus operations, and Jesse Barba, director of institutional research and registrar services, are working on ensuring that there would be a sufficient number of classrooms for classes with different enrollments, given the need for social distancing. Larger spaces on campus that currently have other uses may be converted into classrooms, she noted. President Martin said that she would support having as many class meetings as possible outdoors, while the weather permits, as doing so would reduce the risk of spreading the virus. She also sees the value of making use of tents (with open sides to permit air flow) for classes and of having as much dining as possible take place outdoors. Provost Epstein said she supports this approach as well, while noting that classes with significant technology needs would not be able to take place in tents. Allowing teaching in the evening would also help with classroom availability, it was noted. To this end, the ASC will recommend that the registrar be asked to develop an expanded course schedule that stretches into the evening, Provost Epstein said. It is hoped that this will permit teaching times that work better for students in different time zones and that provide additional teaching flexibility for faculty. Professor Basu commented that the ASC will also recommend that the registrar be asked to establish a sixty-to-ninety-minute weekly community hour. Such a time could be used for lectures, panels, dialogues, and listening sessions for and by faculty, staff, and students and will help strengthen connections during a time of social distancing.

Professor Basu next informed the members about the ASC's deliberations around guidelines regarding tenure. She noted that the ASC will encourage the Committee of Six to adopt the following recommendations: that candidates, in their letters on their own behalf to the Committee of Six at the time of reappointment and tenure, document the impact of COVID-19 on their teaching and research trajectories; that departmental letters to outside reviewers at the time of tenure explicitly solicit information on the impact of COVID-19 on research

and publishing in the candidate's field, and thus on the expected research progress of candidates for tenure; and that departmental recommendations at the time of tenure address the effect of COVID-19 on candidates' research, describing the impact of the pandemic on doing research, acquiring grants, and publishing scholarly work; and that the absence of college-wide service during the COVID-19 period have no bearing on a tenure decision.

Professor Goutte commented that it is unclear when the faculty laboratories will be able to function. She noted the challenges faced by scientists at small colleges are more acute than those faced by scientists at research universities. The latter rely on graduate students and postdocs, who will repopulate the labs as they reopen, and some have reopened already, she noted. Scientists at colleges such as Amherst, on the other hand, rely on providing hands-on training to undergraduates so that they can gradually lead research efforts in the lab. The lack of students in the labs has not only halted research, but has also halted the training pipeline, which will have an impact on several years of research ahead. Professor Goutte stressed the importance of including and perhaps increasing the representation of outside reviewers from predominantly undergraduate colleges for this reason. Professor Sims also suggested that the outside reviewers be informed that faculty were asked to prioritize teaching over research during the pandemic, which might explain a reduction in research productivity. Professor Basu said that it is her understanding that the college's expectation will not be to prioritize teaching over research, and the provost concurred. The ASC decided against prioritizing teaching over research. Instead, the hope is to make the teaching burden less onerous in a variety of ways. President Martin commented that she is aware that the pandemic has also had an impact on the ability of some scientists at research universities to move forward with their research.

The committee expressed its gratitude to the ASC for all of its hard work on the faculty and college's behalf, and the members said that they look forward to learning more about the draft recommendations at the faculty meeting the next day.

The meeting adjourned at 5:15 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The thirtieth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2019–2020 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 3:30 P.M. on Monday, June 1, 2020. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors Basu, Brooks, Goutte, Horton, Schmalzbauer, and Sims; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

Under “Topics of the Day,” the committee noted the moving and elegant virtual celebration of graduating seniors that had taken place on May 31. President Martin praised Amherst’s special events team, which had created the event, and expressed the college’s gratitude to all who had participated in making the event so special. The committee expressed its admiration and appreciation for the President’s remarks at the celebration and for the letter, titled “[Racism, Truth, and Responsibility](#),” that she had sent to the college community following the festivities.

Turning to another topic, President Martin informed the members that she had recently received a letter from one of the leaders of the Black Student Union (BSU) asking if the college would be interested in partnering with the BSU to provide support to a non-profit organization dedicated to combatting racism through education and other efforts. President Martin noted that, while she personally would make a donation to such a project, the college, as a non-profit entity, may face barriers to providing funds to another non-profit organization. She said that she would consult with the Office of the General Counsel and the chief financial and administrative officer and then would explore the possibilities for engaging in a project with the BSU. Some members, who said that they would also make a personal donation if asked, suggested that there could be an invitation to the college community to make a donation if other ways could not be found to support this effort. The committee expressed support for this idea. Professor Sims, noting the success of the recent virtual programs that had featured accomplished Amherst alumni discussing matters of contemporary interest, suggested that this venue might provide opportunities for the college to collaborate with the BSU to offer an educational experience focused on race and racism. President Martin said that planning is under way for additional virtual talks and expressed enthusiasm for convening a conversation about race and racism. The committee also expressed support for doing so. Professor Basu wondered if donations that have been given in honor of Professor Ferguson, or that might be sought in his name, might be directed to support the BSU’s idea. The president said that she would explore this possibility.

Under “Questions from Committee Members,” Professor Schmalzbauer noted the recent hiring of what appear to be very strong coaches. The president and provost agreed that the new coaches are impressive. Professor Schmalzbauer praised the work that Professor Hart, faculty diversity and inclusion officer (FDIO), and Don Faulstick, director of athletics, have been doing with the athletics department in the area of diversity of inclusion. The committee thanked Professor Hart and D. Faulstick for these efforts. Professors Goutte and Schmalzbauer, noting that June 1 was the deadline for students to inform the college whether they would be requesting a gap year, asked the provost how many students have done so. Provost Epstein responded that close to forty students had made a request as of earlier in the day. She noted that not very many current students have requested voluntary leaves, while noting that many students are likely waiting to learn more about the college’s plans for the format of teaching and learning next year, before making such requests.

Provost Epstein next discussed with the members a summary of students’ responses to a survey about their experiences with remote learning during the spring 2020 semester. The survey instrument, which was administered between May 13 and May 20, was developed in consultation with the senior staff and members of the Ad Hoc Faculty Committee on Academic Structures. The members agreed that many students’ impressions of their educational experience this spring provided critical views about their learning during this time, views that were often different from the faculty’s assessment, which was fairly positive. Provost Epstein said that it appears that, due to time constraints and for other reasons, some colleagues may not be able to engage in learning opportunities during the summer that will be available to support them as they prepare to teach courses in the remote and online environment. The provost explained that

the college has engaged 2U to provide support for mounting large virtual classes, and that Riley Caldwell O’Keefe director of the Center for Teaching and Learning, and Jaya Kannan, director of technology for curriculum and research, will be facilitating a curriculum designed by the Association of College and University Educators (ACUE) over the summer to cohorts of faculty members in groups of thirty or so.

Continuing the conversation, Provost Epstein commented that, while some Amherst faculty members have developed pedagogies that can be readily transferred to virtual teaching, many colleagues would benefit from these programs. The goal is to provide students with the best possible educational experiences, given that some courses (all courses with enrollments of thirty-five and over) will be taught virtually next year, even if students are on campus, she said. If students are not on campus, then all courses will be taught remotely. Professor Sims asked if the expectation is that faculty should be preparing to teach in multiple modes. The provost responded that faculty members who will be teaching large courses will need to prepare to teach them remotely, and other faculty will need to prepare courses in such a way that they could be taught in person, remotely, or as a combination of both formats. The provost noted that faculty will be asked to make decisions about participation in summer programs in two weeks, and that plans call for having short presentations on the programs at the next faculty meeting (which, later in the meeting, the members agreed should take place on June 9, beginning at 7:30 P.M.).

Provost Epstein noted that the focus of the programs will be to work with faculty on how content can be delivered most effectively in a remote environment, including how best to use the “live” portion of the class, and to develop activities of various kinds. The overall goal is to find ways to help students feel more connected to their professors and also to spend less time on Zoom. Professor Sims noted that she agrees that the student surveys clearly indicate the value of live teaching (whether in person or on Zoom). She stated that she hopes that 2U can facilitate opportunities for students to ask questions and interact in real time with their peers and professors. Professor Goutte, who had attended a focus-group session with 2U the previous week, expressed the view that the company may help some colleagues grapple with how to personalize large classes, an issue that is already under consideration in her department, and perhaps may provide some helpful on-site technical support, for example with lighting and microphones. While 2U may help improve some courses, Professor Goutte said, she does not believe that the company will help solve the biggest problems facing the college in regard to remote learning. These issues stem from students missing their community and the opportunities for shared study habits and motivation that it provides. In her view, the most beneficial step, as proposed by the Ad Hoc Faculty Committee on Academic Structures during COVID-19 (ASC), will be to reallocate faculty resources, in order to have smaller classes/sections and to allow students to interface with faculty to a greater degree. She is in favor of President Martin’s plans to install additional Adirondack chairs and wondered if they could be grouped together so that classes could come together outdoors and spend time together. Mending the fabric of the community will be very important in her view. The members agreed that the summary of the survey results indicates that students’ greatest criticism of the spring was the loss of a connection with their professors and the greatest desire was to be back on campus. The members also concurred that they had not been surprised by the results of the survey, as the views that are expressed replicate what they have heard from their students directly.

In regard to the apparent disparity between students and faculty members’ perceptions, Professor Brooks commented that faculty and students perhaps had very different expectations of what success in a remote environment would mean. Going forward, she feels that devising assignments that reduce the time that students stay on screens will be important, and she expressed enthusiasm for taking advantage of the outdoors, an approach that she has taken in the past. She suggested that the college consult with experts in outdoor education for ideas of how to integrate the study of the natural world—for example, studying Amherst’s sanctuary from different disciplinary perspectives—into courses. The sanctuary, which is a wonderful resource, is underutilized as an educational resource, in her view.

Turning to a related issue, Professor Basu said that many of the ASC’s recommendations stem from concern about the academic and emotional challenges that students experienced during the part of the

spring semester that they had spent away from campus. Professor Brooks concurred, commenting that college is so much more for students than just attending classes. It is clear, she noted, that students have felt the loss of the other aspects of the college experience—from their friends to co-curricular activities, which cannot be replicated in a remote environment. Professor Basu expressed hope that Amherst will move forward with the creation of a community hour, as the ASC has recommended, as a way of strengthening community and helping to restore students' sense of connection to the college. She expressed the view that Amherst should be thinking of ways to engage students in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities such as book clubs and games, some of which could have an intellectual component. It is her hope that faculty who are teaching remotely can find ways of interacting with students, either individually or in cohorts, outside of class. Provost Epstein said that R. Caldwell O'Keefe and J. Kannan, as part of their work, will offer strategies to faculty for how to engage further with students in a remote environment as part of courses. Departments may need to consider ways of connecting with students more broadly, she noted.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Horton commented that he finds the results of the survey, including the gap between students' and faculty members' perceptions of their experiences this spring, and students' views overall, to be sobering. The importance of live connections is clear, based on student responses. Professor Horton stressed the importance of providing as much information as possible about what the company can do for the faculty. The provost's description of the pedagogical support that would be offered to faculty by 2U is encouraging. Turning to another topic, he asked when the work of the ASC will be completed, as he worries about the timetable for getting plans in place for the next academic year and for informing the faculty. Provost Epstein said that the ASC will complete its work this week and will bring its final recommendations to the Committee of Six on Thursday or Friday. The members would be asked to vote on motions remotely or could have an additional meeting, if needed, she said. The motions will come before the faculty next Tuesday, June 9. Professor Horton asked if there are plans to meet with chairs to discuss the guidelines for departments that are presented in the ASC's report. Provost Epstein said that she has scheduled a chairs' meeting for this Friday, June 5, for this purpose.

Professor Horton next inquired if progress has been made on settling on a date for the start of the fall semester. Provost Epstein responded that the start of classes, regardless of whether they begin in person or remotely, is tentatively set for August 24. This is the date that should be used for planning purposes, though there is always the possibility that it may need to change. Plans call for this timeline, and some other updates regarding plans for the fall, to be announced tomorrow, she said ([an announcement was sent to the community on June 2](#)). This earlier start date will allow the college to hold as many classes and other activities as possible outdoors, which experts agree is safer than indoors, President Martin noted. Doing so will also provide unique learning experience at the same time, as Professor Brooks has noted, she said. Provost Epstein commented that, in an effort to schedule and encourage as many activities as possible—both academic and extracurricular—to take place outdoors, with proper distancing and safety protocols, the college has ordered twenty tents that will be equipped with power and whiteboards. The tents will be linked to classrooms so that faculty can use them when the weather allows and use assigned indoor spaces as well, as the weather permits, she noted. If students are able to return to campus as is hoped, the August 24 start date will permit thirteen weeks of instruction before students leave for the Thanksgiving break, Provost Epstein explained. Reading period and finals would take place remotely under this model.

On a related note in regard to teaching technologies, Professor Schmalzbauer commented that, when she had worn a mask recently at the outdoor protest that had taken place on the town common, her experience with speaking and listening had been challenging. Her own voice had been muffled, as had those with whom she was trying to speak. This experience has led her to wonder about how classroom discussions would be able to flow organically during in-person instruction, when everyone would be wearing masks. Provost Epstein said that she believes that colleagues in IT are investigating technology that might help, for example by amplifying voices, in both classrooms and tents. Her office will check with David

Hamilton, chief information officer, to learn more about IT's plans. (The provost later learned that the college is exploring other forms of masking, such as face shields and transparent masks, which may not help with sound issues, but would make it possible for faculty and students to see more of one another's faces.)

Continuing the discussion, Professor Basu asked whether policies will be developed in regard to teaching in person. Provost Epstein and President Martin reiterated that the expectation will be that faculty who are not bound by concerns about their age, do not have underlying health conditions, or do not live with someone with an underlying health condition will teach in person, when students return to campus. Provost Epstein said that she is aware that some faculty who are not in the categories mentioned above are uncomfortable with the idea of returning to campus to teach. The president and provost expressed hope that colleagues will feel more comfortable once they see the many steps that the college will take to keep the community as safe as possible. President Martin noted that the Office of the General Counsel and the Office of Human Resources may advise the college that faculty and staff be asked to provide a doctor's note if they will not return to in-person teaching. Such a note would need to convey that there is a medical reason that the individual should not work on campus, without providing any details about the reason why this is the case. There may be reasons surrounding equity that would offer an argument for taking this approach, the president said. Provost Epstein commented that the class schedule will be extended into the evening, providing greater flexibility for faculty members with caregiving responsibilities.

Professor Sims asked what information is available about how many faculty members are likely to be in each category. It was agreed that getting a sense of how many faculty would not be able to teach in person would be helpful for planning purposes, and the provost said that the college may survey the faculty to learn more. It would also be helpful for departments to gain a sense of how many colleagues would definitely be able to teach on campus or who definitely would not. Professor Goutte commented that she has observed that some staff members who were initially anxious about returning to campus are now more comfortable doing so, seeing the social distancing, masks, and cleaning policies that are now in place. President Martin said that essential staff members who also were anxious initially are also now more comfortable working on campus, she has been told. All acknowledged that the transition from sheltering in place to returning to campus may feel strange after being away for so long. Professor Brooks asked if departments should begin to have discussions about who will be teaching and how curricula might be mounted under various scenarios that might be in place next year, as well as the detailed departmental guidelines proposed by the ASC. Provost Epstein said that many departments have already begun such conversations, and she encourages all departments to do so.

Professor Basu next reviewed some recommendations that were outlined in the second iteration of the ASC's report, which the committee had received during its meeting. Professor Basu noted that the ASC had revisited a number of issues and had considered some new ideas, taking into account feedback received at the May 28 faculty meeting.

A good deal of conversation focused on the committee's second recommendation, which appears below:

Given the challenges the pandemic poses to student learning and success, all students are permitted and encouraged to enroll in three courses per semester during the 2020–2021 academic year. Students are encouraged to explore the curriculum further by enrolling in a course during the January term. Students who want to enroll in more than three courses during the fall or spring semester must receive approval from their advisors and class dean, following current procedures for enrolling in five courses. Students cannot enroll in fewer than three courses in a semester.

Professor Horton said that, while he is supportive of the flexibility that is provided by allowing students to carry three courses instead of four, he would prefer that the default be that students take four courses, and be permitted to take three if they choose to do so. The members also discussed whether it would be too

burdensome for students to get approval from both their class dean and their advisor, in order to get permission to take four courses (a point raised in [an email sent to the committee by Professor Bishop](#)). President Martin said that she continues to have concerns about making the default three courses, expressing the view that students might infer that the faculty does not feel that they would be capable of taking four courses, which she does not believe would be the case for many students. Professor Basu said that the ASC based its recommendations on reports that many students experienced stress this spring and found it hard to concentrate on their work. The idea is to reduce stress and to provide students with more time to work on each of the courses that they take, with the goal of helping them to be successful and to get the greatest educational benefit. Professor Basu said that the ASC is aware that many students would choose to take four courses anyway, because of the requirements of their majors or because they feel capable of doing so. "Normalizing" a three-course load would be best for struggling students, who might not take advantage of the option to take three courses otherwise, because of the pressure they place on themselves or anxiety that their professors and others might think less of them if they took a reduced course load, she noted.

Continuing the conversation, Provost Epstein commented that, under the proposal, any student who wishes to take four courses would certainly be able to do so. She believes that the process to get permission to do so would not be onerous in practice. The provost commented that the current proposal provides much-needed flexibility during what promises to be an uncertain time. Professor Horton suggested that a later drop deadline be established for the next academic year, in this way providing the flexibility for students to drop one of their four courses if they feel they become overburdened. Professor Sims agreed with President Martin that it is not a good idea to create barriers to taking four courses, and added that she is concerned that a petition system may impose additional work on the class deans and could pose a barrier, particularly for students who are less comfortable navigating the system, even though they may do very well in four classes. Professor Brooks suggested that, perhaps the recommendation should be that students consult with their advisors to arrive at the decision to take four courses.

Professor Schmalzbauer said that she views the proposal to shift to three courses as the default course load for next year to be compelling, while also supporting the proposal that students make the decision to take four courses in conversation with their advisors. Professor Basu said that she also favors having three courses be the normal load. In addition to the already articulated arguments for doing so, she feels it would be helpful to have this form of support in place, if the college brings students to campus and then needs to send them home suddenly because of the pandemic, as occurred this spring. Under such a scenario, she worries about the impact on students' learning, particularly for students with difficult living situations in their homes. Professor Goutte said she thinks that reducing the minimum number of courses per semester to three is a good way to provide flexibility, but she feels that many students would elect to take more than three, especially in the sciences where some lab courses are now 1.5 courses. Professor Basu and Provost Epstein said that they would share the committee's views with the ASC.

It was noted that President Martin would be meeting with the ASC the next day and could share her perspective about the proposal to make three courses the regular load at that time as well. (Following her meeting with the ASC, President Martin informed the members that she had been persuaded by the ASC's thinking. Establishing three courses as a norm seems important as a matter of equity, given the disparities in student experiences that have been exposed, not only at Amherst, but across the country, she noted. The president said that members of the ASC had also explained that the support of advisers and deans is not meant as a barrier, but, instead, as yet another opportunity for students, who could be studying remotely, to have contact with faculty. It would also give faculty advisers and class deans the chance to check in, solidify the relationship, and help become part of building an early warning system, the president noted. Given language that establishes a norm, but also makes clear that a four-course load will be acceptable, she had changed her views on this issue, she said.)

Turning to the subject of caretakers, Professor Basu noted that the ASC has revised its proposals to support caretakers, in light of concerns that were expressed at the May 28 faculty meeting. Under the new proposal, with the approval of their department and the provost and dean of the faculty, faculty members could elect to reduce their teaching load by one course in academic year 2020–2021 if they take a reduction in pay (72 percent of their semester salary), or if they agree to teach an overload at a later time that is mutually convenient to the department and the faculty member. In addition, under the proposal, any faculty member could elect to teach one additional class as an overload course in academic year 2020–2021, so as to have a reduced teaching load at a later time that is mutually convenient to the department and the faculty member. (It was noted that Professor Fong had sent [a letter to the committee](#) outlining a similar approach. Both her letter and Professor Bishop’s had been shared with the ASC.) Professor Basu noted that some senior colleagues might elect to teach more courses now in order to provide curricular coverage that could enable untenured colleagues to teach fewer courses next year, if they wish to do so.

Professor Basu explained that, under the current proposal, faculty would indicate interest in either option (to teach more or teach less) via a uniform college-wide communication system, with the goal of ensuring equity and accessibility for all faculty, but especially for tenure-track faculty. She noted that some faculty members have requested that they not be put in the position of having to ask their department chairs for a course release. Professor Basu explained that, under the ASC’s proposal, faculty members would not be asked to defend or explain their need for either course release or course overload. This information would then be distributed to department chairs, the provost and dean of the faculty’s office, and the faculty diversity and inclusion officers. Departments would be asked to honor all requests by default, rejecting them only if it is untenable to mount their curriculum without the applicant teaching a full load.

Professor Goutte, while supporting the flexibility provided by the proposal, expressed concern about how requests for overloads would be handled. She feels that this strategy might be a desirable tool to garner additional time for research in a given semester, which could create challenges for departments in regard to mounting their curricula. She noted that, while the request to teach an additional course as an overload doesn’t require the approval of the provost and chair under the ASC’s proposal, it might be helpful to require that this be the case so that departments can plan accordingly, and minimize the number of overloads in any given semester. Overloads, should only be taken as needed, in her view. The other members agreed that this would be a good idea. The committee also suggested that those who wish to teach an overload have an initial conversation with an FDIO, so that the college could gain a sense of the reasons that faculty want to take this option. Provost Epstein also expressed support for this proposal, which she said she would share with the ASC. She also noted that faculty would not be allowed to combine two course releases during a given semester so as not to teach at all.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Basu noted that, under the proposal, all such arrangements would ultimately need to be approved by the department chair and the provost, after considering departmental curricular and staffing needs. She noted that departments, chairs, and/or individual faculty members would be encouraged to utilize and/or consult with the FDIOs, when needed, to arrive at arrangements that work for both departments and individual faculty members. Additionally, faculty who are uncertain about what teaching load is appropriate for them in the coming year would be encouraged to consult their faculty mentors and/or the FDIOs for guidance. Provost Epstein commented that, while FDIOs may seem principally to be designated advocates for faculty of color, their charge is to support all faculty members. She noted that, with the proposed centralized portal, information can be collected and distributed with greater efficiency, and that faculty who feel that they are experiencing challenges that necessitate a course release will be given a voice, and will have recourse, beyond their departments. Professor Brooks emphasized the importance of supporting colleagues who have caretaking responsibilities, and she asked if there will be a sufficient number of faculty available to mount the curriculum if a significant number of colleagues choose to have a reduced teaching load under the proposed options. Provost Epstein said that she does not think that a large number of faculty members will choose to reduce their teaching

loads via these options, which do come at some cost, unless they really need to do so. She noted that the ASC's departmental guidelines include the recommendation that departments consider lightening untenured faculty members' teaching loads through mechanisms such as co-teaching, and having tenured faculty take on most of the responsibilities of the course.

Professor Sims, who said that she feels that the proposed options offer important flexibility for caregivers, thanked the ASC for revisiting so thoughtfully the challenges being faced by caregivers. She noted that, if schools reopen in the fall, they may operate under a staggered schedule—for example, having children attend only two days a week. Such a schedule represents an immense change in what is normally provided by the public school system and would present challenges for many faculty parents. She asked whether the ASC could reconsider a course release for parents with children under the age at which they can be at home without adult supervision. She worries, in particular, about the difficulties that single parents of young children would face, as they would not have the support of a partner. Provost Epstein said that faculty who face very challenging situations would be asked to consult with an FDIO, and that the college would do the best that it could to be supportive. Professor Sims thanked the provost for being sensitive to the needs of parents.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Basu expressed the view that the ASC's current proposal to support caregivers is more generous and flexible than the previous one and reduces the need to make distinctions among caregiving roles. Professor Schmalzbauer also expressed support for the new proposal, while at the same time expressing some concern, based on her experience at her previous institution, about having faculty who take a course reduction "repay" the course later. She noted that, because the previous institution did not provide paid parental leave, many female faculty members took a course reduction when they had children, which, under the rules, had to be "paid back." Such courses became known colloquially as "punishment courses," and some stigma was attached to them. She is a little leery of this approach when she thinks about a likely gendered pattern in faculty teaching overloads in the future, and how these faculty would balance overloads with other service responsibilities. She also suggested that, if this policy is adopted, clear expectations be set about the time frame in which courses would have to be paid back, so that the payback burden does not weigh for too long.

Turning to the subject of the calendar for the next year, Professor Horton asked if there would be a break between the end of the four-week January term and the beginning of the spring semester. Professor Sims expressed the view that the faculty should be provided with more specifics about the calendar, in advance of voting on the adoption of a January term and an earlier start and end dates for the semester as a principle. Provost Epstein said that she anticipates that there would be at least a four-day break period between the end of the January term and the beginning of the spring semester. It will be important to have as much time as possible for this gap, as students will need to return to campus for the second semester under a staggered schedule, it was noted. Provost Epstein said that the faculty will not be asked to vote on a detailed calendar on June 9. Such a vote would take place during a future meeting in the summer or, more likely, via a vote as was used to determine the grading system for this past semester.

Professor Basu, noting that the ASC would not be weighing in on the grading system for the next year, asked the provost how she envisions consideration of this issue would occur. The provost expressed the view that next year's Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) and Committee of Six should develop a proposal that the full faculty would need to approve.

Professor Sims asked for clarification about advising loads under the ASC's proposal. The provost said that tenure-track faculty will not be given new college advisees, including first-years, under the plan, unless they have fewer than five major and college advisees. Faculty members who have more than twenty major and/or college advisees will not be asked to take on new college advisees.

The members returned briefly to the ASC's recommendations to the Committee of Six regarding faculty personnel processes, which the committee supported. Professor Sims asked if departments' annual conversations should include discussions with the candidate about the impact that COVID-19 has had on

their teaching and research. Provost Epstein said that it is a good idea for departments to have ongoing conversations with tenure-track colleagues about these issues. Professor Goutte stressed the importance of having departments explain to outside reviewers the impact that the pandemic had had on the research operations of candidates. The provost said that departments could certainly convey this information in their letters soliciting outside reviewers, who would also have some awareness of COVID-19's impact on the field, she imagines. Professor Goutte said that the language in the report might suggest to some that departments should be evaluating the impact of the pandemic on candidates. This was not the intention Provost Epstein said. In its departmental recommendation, the department is encouraged to describe the impact of the pandemic on the candidate, and the candidate is encouraged to do so in the candidate's letter to the Committee of Six, she noted.

Professor Brooks next asked if the committee could have a follow-up discussion at its next meeting about the listening session that had taken place at the May 21 faculty meeting. The members agreed that doing so would be informative.

Concluding the meeting, the members once again expressed its gratitude to the ASC for all of its hard work on the faculty and college's behalf.

The meeting adjourned at 4:50 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The thirty-first meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2019–2020 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, June 8, 2020. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors Basu, Brooks, Goutte, Horton, Schmalzbauer, and Sims; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

Under “Topics of the Day,” President Martin informed the members that, since the committee’s last meeting, the college had agreed, as part of a partnership with the Black Student Union (BSU), to match individual donations of up to \$250 from students, faculty, and staff that are made to the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, the United Negro College Fund, and the Pioneer Valley Workers Center. The BSU has named the project #AmherstActs. The fundraiser began on June 3 and will end on June 10, the president said. The college will donate a maximum of \$20,000 in matching funds, she noted. (Later, it was learned that, all told, including the funds that the BSU raised and the college’s match [which, in the end, was a dollar-for-dollar match, with no cap, and was not tied to individual donations], #AmherstActs raised \$183,000, with approximately \$115,000 going to the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, \$36,000 to the United Negro College Fund, and \$32,000 to the Pioneer Valley Worker’s Center.)

President Martin next updated the members about her continuing efforts to draw on the expertise of scientists to learn more about the processes and supplies that the college would need to have in place in order to bring Amherst students, faculty, and staff back to campus safely. She feels, more and more, that it may be possible to do so. Eric Lander, a geneticist, molecular biologist, and mathematician who is the president and founding director of the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard, has informed her that he believes that, in a matter of two months, the institute will be able to provide sufficient COVID-19 testing for students at Massachusetts colleges and universities. These tests, he has said, would offer very quick results—potentially within twenty-four hours—and are anticipated to cost about \$25.00 per test or less, depending on demand.

Continuing the conversation, the president noted that different experts in public health have different ideas about the frequency of testing for students, and she shared some possible models with the committee, including testing students upon arrival, two days later, and then every three or four days, perhaps. If no asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic carriers of the virus are found after two weeks, then testing could perhaps be conducted less frequently, the president said. Professor Goutte asked if “pooled testing” has been considered, as this method allows more people to be tested with fewer tests. She noted that those within a cohort of students who would be living together, for example, could be pooled and tested with a single test, yielding more information for one test. The president said that pooling has been discussed, and that this is one of the strategies the experts are weighing; she continues to get recommendations from experts.

Professor Basu asked if the college will consider bringing students back to campus a few weeks before classes start so that they can be tested and orient themselves before beginning their academic work. She also wonders whether the ability to have sufficient testing will be a determinative factor when deciding how many students can return to Amherst. President Martin said that it is still not known whether sufficient testing will be available, and that the college will not bring students, faculty, and staff back to campus unless testing of students can take place. Provost Epstein said that she can imagine bringing most students back to campus two or three days before classes start, though some students, for example, those participating in the summer bridge program, might return to campus some weeks before classes start.

Professor Schmalzbauer asked if plans call for faculty and staff to be tested if they will be on campus. President Martin responded that the modeling that has been done for the college has focused only on the impact of students spreading the virus to faculty and staff. For a variety of reasons, the provost and president noted, it is thought that it is less likely that faculty and staff would transmit the virus to students. Faculty and staff should not be in close contact with students on campus, however, if proper social-distancing procedures are followed, the provost said. President Martin commented that, for insurance

reasons, Amherst's health center can only test students. In addition, it is unclear, for legal reasons, that the college can require faculty and staff to be tested.

Professor Sims next returned to the issue of the challenges that faculty-parents will face if schools and daycare facilities operate under a staggered schedule when these entities reopen, which it appears they may by fall. She asked if the college will allow scheduling approaches that will permit flexibility that is based on individual circumstances. For example, some faculty members may need to come to campus to teach and hold office hours only on the days of the week that children will be at school or daycare, and to teach remotely on other days. Provost Epstein responded that flexibility under these conditions will indeed be key. She said that the approaches that Professor Sims had suggested would certainly be viable. President Martin and Provost Epstein emphasized that the college cannot return to "business as usual," and that things will not be perfect in the next academic year, given all the challenges ahead. At the same time, they stressed that, if students are able to return to campus, it will be essential for them to spend some time in person with as many faculty members as possible; students have indicated that they very much missed their in-person interactions with their teachers. Professor Sims thanked President Martin and Provost Epstein for their support of caregivers and the willingness of the college to be so accommodating.

Professor Sims asked whether staff members will have similar flexibility. President Martin said that Lisa Rutherford, chief policy officer and general counsel, and Maria-Judith Rodriguez, chief human resources officer, are developing policies and protocols that should be completed and brought forward to the senior staff for consideration soon. Professor Basu noted the importance of consulting with academic department coordinator (ADC)s as part of planning efforts surrounding departments. She commented that some ADCs work on an academic-year schedule, and their pay or vacation time will need to be adjusted if they must return to the college early to help prepare course materials and perform other work, in anticipation of starting the academic year early, and on campus.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Basu wondered if the college might consider providing an outdoor space and financial support for babysitting on campus for the children of faculty who are teaching on campus, perhaps inviting students who have been tested to provide this service. Provost Epstein suggested that it might be preferable for faculty to hire babysitters instead, as she understands that it may be problematic, for legal reasons, for the college to provide babysitters, including those who are Amherst students. President Martin expressed concern about the idea of Amherst students going off campus to family homes, as the college will likely need to restrict students' off-campus activity, given the risks surrounding the spread of the virus. Professor Goutte wondered if the college might be willing to pay for testing for potential babysitters who are not Amherst students, and in this way support the faculty. Provost Epstein responded that, while reasonable people might disagree, she does not think that this is an appropriate use of the college's resources.

Conversation turned to adjustments to the registration process that may be needed if students return to campus in the fall, and the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Faculty Committee on Academic Structures During COVID-19 (ASC) are approved. Some members wondered whether reimagined course descriptions will include information about the modality in which the course will be taught. Given the uncertainty surrounding how the pandemic may unfold, and because faculty may need (based on enrollments and other factors) or want to shift how they will teach a particular class, Provost Epstein said that she would worry about including such information, as things may change. Certainly, if a course will definitely be taught remotely, and the reason for doing so is clear, it would be fine to include this information, she noted. Professor Horton expressed the view that it will be important to know the format in which courses will be taught by the time revised course proposals must be submitted to the Committee on Educational Policy (June 19).

Professor Sims next asked whether athletic competition will be allowed in the fall. Provost Epstein said that it is unlikely, but not impossible, that there will be NESCAC (New England Small College Athletic Conference) competition in the fall, but she thinks that it should be possible for students to work on

strength and conditioning and other forms of training, depending on the activity. The provost noted that Austin Sarat, associate provost and associate dean of the faculty, is chairing a working group that is thinking about a range of issues related to athletics in the COVID-19 environment. The other members of the group are Liz Agosto, dean of students; Timothy Banks, assistant coach; Gregg DiNardo, associate director of athletics; Isabella Edo '21; Don Faulstick, director of athletics; Maria Rello, director of sports medicine; Professor Catherine Sanderson; Justin Serpone, head coach of men's soccer; and Alexander Versfeld '21.

In discussing how the cohorts of students who would live together would be constituted, President Martin commented that the college will be more open than it might usually be to allowing students to choose the group of up to ten with whom they will live. The members of the student advisory group with whom the president has been meeting expressed trepidation about living with students whom they don't know well, as they worry that some students might not comply with social-distancing rules that are put in place. Professor Schmalzbauer said that she had been thinking that the need to constitute these cohorts might present opportunities to build community across difference. She can understand however, that living with strangers might make students feel less safe, under the circumstances. Still, she would worry about students who are not invited into one of the cohorts for one reason or another. Professor Brooks pointed out that students from underrepresented groups often rely on one another for support, and she feels that it would be important that they be able to choose to live with friends during what promises to be a stressful time. It makes a difference to students to be surrounded by others whom they trust, she noted. Professor Sims agreed that close friends are important for well-being and suggested that students be allowed to choose two or three friends as members of their cohort so that they know some people very well in their groups, while still being placed with other students to promote building community across difference.

Professor Goutte next asked for clarification about a number of matters related to how courses would be structured and how courses would be counted in the next academic year. She inquired whether a class of forty students, which would meet the criterion for having to be taught remotely by virtue of its enrollment—even if students are on campus—could sometimes be divided into four sections of ten students that would meet in person. Provost Epstein said that this structure would be ideal.

Turning to another question, Professor Goutte suggested that it would be useful to think in terms of courses, rather than course credits, when advising students, but she believes she heard Provost Epstein reiterate that the “three” that is referenced in the ASC's report refers to course credits. In that case, two lab courses that are 1.5 courses would be a full load for a student. If this is so, Professor Goutte said that there will be a significant number of STEM students who will not want to heed this recommendation, and instead will want to take four “courses” ( $1.5 + 1.5 + 1$ ). Professor Goutte commented that, for many of these students, four courses will be a reduction in load when compared to normal semesters. She noted, for example, that 45 percent of students (fifty-eight students) enrolled in CHEM-221 in the fall of 2019 were registered for a total of five or more course credits. She stressed the importance of making the ASC's recommendation clear to advisors, and of emphasizing the flexibility and case-by-case assessment that will be permitted under the recommendation. Provost Epstein said that having students take two lab courses ( $1.5 + 1.5$ ) as a regular load in the coming year is a recommendation and not a requirement.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Horton said he agrees that it's important to understand the implications of the lab courses and half courses. One thing that should be kept in mind is that different sophomores might have different default requirements, based on their prior course selection, he noted. Professor Horton then presented the following scenarios to illustrate this point. Consider students who took chemistry and biology (with labs) in their first year, he said. They still have two half-courses that they can count toward graduation and so could take  $1.5 + 1.5 = 3$  as their course load for

the fall. If these students were his advisees, he would encourage them to consider this, though would approve requests to add an additional course outside of STEM, perhaps denoting that third course (but fourth course credit) with the flexible grading option (FGO). He then said to consider students who took chemistry and biology (with labs) in their first year, along with two half-courses in music. They have no further half courses that they can count toward graduation. They would need to take the same two science courses with labs, but they would only count as 1 + 1, so the students would need to elect an additional full course. Professor Horton said that, under such circumstances, he would strongly discourage such a student from enrolling in four courses in the fall, which he described as the “moral equivalent” of a 5.0 course load.

Professors Goutte and Sims said that, as advisors they would be uncomfortable recommending that students take two lab courses as a full load. Provost Epstein said that advisors will have to use their best judgment about what is best for each of their advisees. Professor Goutte stressed the importance of ensuring that premed students be advised with all of these issues in mind, or they could potentially not be able to meet all of their requirements. Provost Epstein noted that students should be encouraged to pick up another course during the January term, which would run for four weeks under the proposal. Professor Horton said he is comfortable suggesting to students that they take three courses and concentrate on completing them successfully and then take a course in January. Provost Epstein said that she anticipates that the offerings during January will be robust, and that students will potentially be able to register for January courses at the same time they register for their fall courses.

Professor Basu next asked if it would be possible and desirable, when teaching a seminar remotely, to shift from teaching one day a week for two hours and forty-five minutes to two days a week for eighty minutes each day. She imagines that having break-out groups and some asynchronous instruction would also be helpful in a remote environment, she said. Provost Epstein expressed support for this approach and noted the desirability, from a student-learning perspective, of reducing the length of time that students spend on Zoom.

Professor Sims asked if thought has been given to how the add/drop period will be structured, with the goal of trying to keep students from “gaming” the system. She suggested that strategically minded students might sign up for four classes and then drop one, which could be disruptive, given all the extra thought that must go into course sizes this semester. Provost Epstein said that the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) will need to have a conversation about how much “shopping” can be tolerated during this challenging time. Provost Epstein said that the registrar will try to keep students in the courses that they pre-registered for previously, to the degree possible, so that when they register in the summer, they will not be starting from scratch (this approach was later changed). Professor Brooks expressed support for advising students to take three courses in the fall, to start, and emphasizing the opportunity to take an additional course during January. Professor Goutte asked if it would be possible to give students who take three courses in the fall priority when deciding which students can enroll in January courses. Provost Epstein noted that doing so will depend on the numbers and said that she would consider the idea. She noted that, by the end of registration in the July, it will be necessary to know which students are in which courses, so that the number of slots available for first-year students is also known.

The remainder of the meeting was devoted to a conversation—following up on the May 21 listening session—about next steps that the committee and the college should undertake to support diversity and inclusion on campus, including combating racism. The members also had a discussion about issues related to the service demands being placed on the faculty, including the extent to which such demands may be unequal and ways of moving forward to explore and address this issue.

Professor Brooks said that she has been pleased with the commitments that the college has made to foster diversity and inclusion and combat racism on campus. She feels that it is important not to lose momentum and to make sure that there is a list of questions and action items, and to be clear which college

bodies are responsible for moving forward on each. She suggested that the first step is for the current Committee of Six to meet again with the leadership of the BSU and suggested that the new Committee of Six do so in the future and that its members continue with the important work that was done this semester. The members asked Professor Brooks to invite the students to meet with the committee at next Monday's meeting, and she agreed to do so. She also suggested that the members of this year's committee share their notes with the incoming members, as well as the BSU's proposed revision to the college's [Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom](#). Incoming members should engage the faculty in a discussion of the intersection of hateful and harassing speech and the college's statement, as the current committee has suggested, Professor Books noted.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Basu, thanked Professor Brooks for facilitating the listening session and said that she is hopeful that the college will develop the scaffolding to direct students to courses on race and racism. By compiling a list and descriptions of these courses and posting them together online, the offerings will become more visible to advisors and students. She expressed hope that faculty will create a new cluster of courses with this focus. Provost Epstein suggested that the first-year seminar model provides an ideal vehicle for offering these courses, as three, four, or five seminars on race and racism will attract a significant number of students. Professor Basu agreed. She suggested that the college collaborate more closely not just with the BSU, but with other student groups, and that anti-Asian racism is also an issue that the college should seek to address.

In addition to enhancing the curriculum in these ways, Professor Basu stressed that Amherst needs to learn more about the quotidian forms of racism that students experience both in the classroom and in their social lives at the college. She and several other members commented that, while it is compelling and informative to hear from students directly, it is unfair and exploitative to put them in the position of having to educate faculty and others in a public venue about their experiences; some students have said that it should not be their responsibility to do so. Some members suggested that an anonymous survey of students might be a good tool to gather information. Provost Epstein said that it would be helpful to find a way to make a list of actions that make students uncomfortable in the classroom. Professor Schmalzbauer suggested making use of restorative practices to create a space for faculty and students to come together to discuss these issues. She feels that this approach would be preferable to conducting a survey. She noted that some students wrote about their experiences with racism following the Amherst Uprising, and that these comments may have been preserved. Professor Schmalzbauer and President Martin expressed the view that providing the Amherst community with a list of relevant readings would be a good way of educating everyone about issues surrounding race and racism, and specifically about what students of color may be experiencing on campus and in the classroom. Professor Schmalzbauer noted that Professor Hart has been creating [a list of readings](#) as part of his work for Restorative Practices Amherst College (RPAC) and that she would consult with him. It would be ideal if the community could come together to read and discuss select readings. Professor Sims agreed and also noted that there were more anti-racism training sessions offered for faculty following Amherst Uprising, and that possibly providing them again would be helpful.

The meeting ended with a discussion about issues related to the service demands being placed on the faculty, including the extent to which such demands may be unequal, and ways of moving forward to explore and address this issue. The members suggested that more information be gathered about the service being performed by faculty. One approach might be to ask department chairs how departmental service is allocated. In addition, the Office of Institutional Research could provide a vehicle for faculty to self-report about their service, it was noted. It might also be helpful, in conducting this research, to draw on the Office of Diversity and Inclusion for support. Provost Epstein said that she would see if Jesse Barba, director of institutional research and registrar services, would have time to work on this project over the summer, while noting that he remains very busy, due to all the changes that are being made as a result of the pandemic.

Professor Brooks expressed support for moving forward with this effort, commenting that many faculty are feeling overwhelmed by the burdens that service places on them, given all of their other responsibilities as scholars and teachers. Provost Epstein commented that there is a tradition of Amherst faculty wanting to play a primary role in the governance of the college and a faculty-centric culture. In many realms where it might be possible to do so, faculty do not want to delegate service to staff members, she noted. Professor Basu concurred that service can be rewarding and can allow faculty to have an impact, while noting that some faculty are called to do a great deal more service than others—from departmental service, such as mentoring untenured faculty, serving on search committees, and leading the external review process—to college service that may include service on demanding ad hoc committees and standing committees. She suggested that some forms of service could be made more interesting if they were tethered to faculty research, teaching, and administrative leadership opportunities. She stressed the importance of acknowledging and rewarding this form of work. Professor Basu said that she is impressed that a number of faculty were interested enough in service to participate in the leadership program that had recently been offered through the provost's office. Professor Goutte expressed gratitude for the course release that is granted to the members of the Committee of Six, as she sees this as a signal that service is valued, as time is provided for faculty to devote to this work. Provost Epstein commented that the down side to course release for service is that faculty are taken out of the classroom, and students suffer, in her view. Professor Schmalzbauer said that she has observed that, for many faculty, research productivity is reduced after tenure. Others struggle with being active researchers, dedicated teachers, and engaged citizens of the college. Something has to “give,” she noted.

Conversation turned to [a note from Professor Trapani to the committee](#) about the idea that faculty should prioritize teaching over research because of the additional preparation for teaching that is now required due to the pandemic, as the provost had suggested at a faculty meeting earlier. Professor Basu expressed the view, which was shared by the ASC, that it would be misleading to suggest that the college's standards in regard to scholarly accomplishment at the time of the review for tenure will change. Instead, the ASC made recommendations (course reduction, allowing faculty to co-teach and have senior faculty carry the bulk of the responsibility for a course, reducing the number of advisees) that aim to lighten tenure-track faculty members' teaching load so as to preserve time for them to do research, she noted. In regard to Professor Trapani's concerns about caregivers, it was noted that the ASC also made recommendations to try to support faculty-parents and other faculty-caregivers during the pandemic, as noted earlier. Provost Epstein said that faculty are welcome to send suggestions to the Committee of Six, which remains open to thinking more about this issue.

Concluding the meeting, Professor Basu, noting that the ASC would not be weighing in on the grading system for the next year, asked the provost how she envisions consideration of this issue would occur. The provost said that next year's CEP and Committee of Six should develop a proposal over the summer that the faculty would need to approve.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The thirty-first meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2019–2020 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, June 15, 2020. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors Basu, Brooks, Goutte, Horton, Schmalzbauer, and Sims; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The meeting began with a discussion of the committee's meeting schedule for the remaining weeks of June. The incoming Committee of Six will begin meeting in early July and will continue to do so over the summer, though not on a weekly basis and with more abbreviated meetings. The committee will resume its regular schedule once classes begin. Provost Epstein said that she does not anticipate that the committee will need to meet on June 22, unless the members wish to discuss the proposed academic calendar for 2020–2021 and/or schedule for fall 2020. Plans call for the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) to consider the calendar and schedule this coming Wednesday, the provost said. The hope is that the CEP will then forward the proposed calendar and schedule to the Committee of Six, and that the committee will review them soon after. If the members have no concerns, the faculty could vote electronically, perhaps as early as this week. If the members wish to have a discussion via Zoom, the committee can do so on June 22, Provost Epstein said.

The provost next asked if the members had any concerns about the calendar, based on the proposal shared at the last faculty meeting. Professor Goutte noted that some colleagues have worried that there is such a long period without a break during the spring semester. As little as one day off could be helpful, she noted. Provost Epstein responded that, depending on how the pandemic unfolds, it might be possible to have a day without classes, or to add in a break, if senior week does not take place. She reiterated that there are no breaks included during the fall and spring because the college does not want students leaving campus and then returning soon after to resume classes, due to the risks associated with COVID-19.

The committee briefly discussed the proposed academic schedule for the fall and data about some classrooms, which the provost had shared with the faculty earlier in the day via email. Provost Epstein noted that Jesse Barba, director of institutional research and registrar services, is still working with other colleagues on plans to reduce the capacity of classrooms to allow for social distancing, and that the list that had been provided is not final. Most members said that they had not had much time to digest the information fully before the meeting, but did not identify any problems based on their initial review. As an aside, the provost informed the members that she would soon be sending a communication to all students about the changes to the academic program for the coming academic year, as recommended by the Ad Hoc Faculty Committee on Academic Structures During COVID-19 (ASC) and approved by the faculty earlier in the month.

Continuing the conversation, some members asked whether courses will need to be reapproved by the CEP. Provost Epstein said that only new courses will require approval by the CEP. All courses that will be taught in the academic year 2020–2021, including the January term, will need to be updated in [the college's catalog editing tool](#), the provost explained. This should be done no later than June 19, she noted. For each course, there is an option to indicate that the course will be offered only online. All other courses will be assumed to be "HyFlex," that is, some or all course meetings will be in person, but also accessible to students joining the class through remote learning. She noted that courses may be divided into two sections if thirty or more students enrolled in the course in its last iteration, or if thirty or more students pre-register for the course. Professor Basu asked what the process should be if a faculty member wishes to teach a seminar remotely in two sections, since enrollments will not be known until after registration. Would the best approach be to propose teaching two sections and then to cancel one if the minimum enrollment is not met? Provost Epstein said that the best approach would be to offer two different classes; if one of them ends up having thirty or more students, the other class could be canceled and the large class could be divided into two. Otherwise, professors will not have students pre-registered for a second course. The provost also noted the following course caps: one

hundred- and two hundred-level courses may be capped at eighteen; three hundred- and four hundred-level courses may be capped at fifteen.

(The committee later reviewed the proposed calendar and schedule and, on June 18, voted unanimously in favor on the substance and to forward the following two motions to the faculty.

**Motion One**

As recommended by the Committee on Educational Policy and the Committee of Six, that the faculty approve [the proposed calendar for the 2020–2021 academic year](#).

**Motion Two**

As recommended by the Committee on Educational Policy and the Committee of Six, that the faculty approve the [proposed meeting times and time slots for classes for the fall 2020 semester.](#))

Professor Horton wondered if there might be business for the faculty to take up at a faculty meeting in the coming weeks. The provost noted that the grading policy for the next academic year will be an issue that the faculty needs to decide, but that the CEP must consider this question first. The CEP will not have time to address the grading policy this week, she noted. Professor Sims expressed the view that there should be clarity about the grading policy before the start of re-registration so that students know their options before choosing classes. She said that some faculty have expressed to her that the college should consider a universal pass/fail model as an option, in addition to thinking about whether to put in place a mandatory flexible grading option (FGO) for all or some courses. Professor Sims expressed the view that it is important to have a faculty conversation about this topic that is as inclusive as possible, noting that some faculty were troubled about the lack of a discussion about grading policy before last spring's vote on the FGO. Another option for the coming year that has been suggested to her is that all first-year students take courses pass/fail in their first semester at the college. Professor Horton suggested that no significant changes to the grading policy should be needed in the coming year, given the accommodations that are going to be made to support students, as recommended by the ASC and voted by the faculty. Provost Epstein concurred and noted that part of the rationale for having three courses as the regular course load is to help students be successful in the courses they take. Professor Sims commented that it is likely that students with underlying health problems, as well as some international students, will definitely be learning remotely, and may struggle in the same ways that students did in the spring. Provost Epstein later conveyed these concerns to the CEP.

Under "Questions from Committee Members," Professor Schmalzbauer asked for confirmation that faculty cannot use two course releases that they may have accrued for various reasons to reduce their teaching load to zero during a given semester. The provost confirmed that this is indeed the case, with some exceptions made for some half-time faculty-administrators. Professor Goutte next asked if faculty who are lecturing to a small number of students in a large room this fall will need to wear a mask or protective shield. The provost said that all faculty and students will need to wear masks if classes are taking place on campus. Professor Goutte next inquired whether, for a large class, it would be permissible to offer live recorded lectures to which half of the students in the class are invited to attend in person on one day, and the other half is invited to the next lecture. This strategy would reduce in-person class size by one-half, while ensuring that each student has access to one or two in-person lectures each week, she noted. This would be fine, Provost Epstein said, as long as students attend on the required day so as to preserve social distancing.

Continuing with questions, Professor Sims asked whether it will be possible for athletes to take a course during January term, since, typically some teams (e.g., swimming, basketball, and hockey) train intensively or have part of their season during this time period. Provost Epstein said that, depending on

how the pandemic unfolds, teams may be able to focus on training and conditioning in January. She does not think it likely that teams will be traveling to train in other locations, however. It might be possible both to train and condition and to take an intensive course during January, the provost said, depending on the requirements of both. On the other hand, given that the January term will most likely be remote, it may not be advisable to bring athletes back to campus at that time.

Noting that the committee would have only one more meeting if the members do not meet on June 22, Professor Basu suggested that that committee discuss how best to move forward with the consideration of service burdens placed on faculty, with a focus on inequities. It might be useful, she noted, to provide the incoming Committee of Six with thoughts about how to determine the extent to which service demands may be unequal and how such inequities might be addressed. The other members agreed that it would be a good idea to think further about this issue and to have a discussion at the members' next meeting.

Professor Brooks next asked President Martin if progress is being made on developing a bias-reporting and response protocol. The president responded that things are moving forward on two interrelated fronts—a change to the honor code that will be policy driven and which will focus on harassment and discrimination, and the development of a bias-reporting and response protocol. Laurie Frankl, Title IX coordinator, and Dean Gendron, senior associate dean of students, are continuing their work on the former, she noted. It is anticipated that both efforts will be ready for review in the fall, President Martin said. She stressed the importance of pairing the launch of the bias-reporting and response protocol with the implementation of RPAC (Restorative Practices at Amherst College).

The members next discussed and approved some revisions to the provost's letters to chairs and candidates about reappointment. The changes are aimed at incorporating guidelines surrounding faculty personnel processes that are included in the report of the ASC, and options regarding teaching evaluations for the spring 2020 semester, which were granted to all tenure-track faculty. The members then reviewed a nomination for a new endowed professorship and offered their support for naming the nominee to the professorship. The next step is for President Martin to bring her recommendation to the board of trustees for approval.

The committee returned to the topic of guidelines for administering teaching evaluations for tenure-track faculty, reviewing a draft that the members had begun earlier, and which was informed by the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee for the Development of a Common Form to Evaluate Classroom Teaching, as well as the Committee of Six's conversations with the Consultative Group for Tenure-Track Faculty and tenure-track faculty, more broadly. The members agreed to finalize the document, if possible, on June 29, which would be the committee's last meeting.

In preparation for meeting with three student-leaders of the Black Student Union (BSU) in the next hour, the members discussed some points that would be helpful to share. The committee stressed the importance of conveying to the students that, before any proposals for change within the academic realm are brought to the faculty, it would be useful and informative to have some preliminary conversations—in particular on bias-reporting and the relationship between harmful and harassing language and academic freedom—with faculty and students in small groups. In this way, intellectual exchange could take place, laying the groundwork for shaping proposals that might later be brought to the faculty. The members agreed that the relationship between harmful and harassing language and the college's [Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom](#) is an important issue for the faculty to take up in the next academic year. Professor Basu and Professor Schmalzbauer suggested convening a discussion group of faculty who have different views surrounding this issue, with the idea that discussions happen in smaller groups before taking the issue to the faculty floor. The other members concurred that doing so would be a good idea. The readings that Professor Hart is assembling about issues surrounding race and racism, and specifically about what students of color experience on campus and in the classroom, could serve as a foundation of some discussions, it was noted.

In their roles as leaders of the Black Student Union (BSU) Joelle Crichlow '22, Maya Foster '23, and Jeremy Thomas '21 joined the meeting at 4:15 P.M. The president, provost, and committee welcomed the students and thanked them for their efforts to raise and address important issues surrounding race and racism on campus. The meeting took place as protests over systemic racism and police brutality were under way throughout the world, sparked by the murder of George Floyd by police.

Professor Brooks assured the students that, while the listening session at the recent faculty meeting had been one way to raise awareness among the faculty, the committee is committed to ensuring that the issues raised by the BSU, including the relationship between academic freedom and harmful and harassing speech, as well as bias-reporting, will be considered further by the faculty in a number of ways. Professor Brooks explained that she is now serving on the Presidential Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion as the Committee of Six representative, and that a member of the incoming Committee of Six will take on this role when she rotates off the committee and the task force at the end of June. In addition, Professor Brooks informed the students that this year's Committee of Six has met with the incoming members of the committee to ensure that they are well informed about the meetings that have taken place with the BSU, and that the new members are provided with the relevant materials (e.g., reports, self-studies, minutes of the meetings with various individuals and governance bodies).

Professor Schmalzbauer thanked the students for their amazing work and inspiring leadership and noted the importance of maintaining the current momentum that has been generated. She shared the members' recommendation that the members of the BSU and other students engage in discussion with faculty and fellow students in small groups before proposals are brought to the faculty. The students said that they would welcome this opportunity. Professor Sims and Professor Goutte also thanked the students for all they are doing and asked them if they wished to describe their impressions of the faculty meeting listening session and thoughts on next steps. J. Crichlow responded that the listening session had presented a good opportunity for the BSU leadership to voice its concerns to the faculty. She noted that she had appreciated that, during and after the faculty meeting, some faculty members had contacted her to thank the students for sharing information. Some professors had said that they had not been aware of some of the issues that the students had described. M. Foster asked what the faculty's objections might be to amending the college's Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom to address issues of harmful and harassing speech, expressing the view that a discussion of the language that the BSU has proposed would be a good starting point. (M. Foster reminded the members that she had done a good deal of research on the academic freedom statements of peer institutions that address the intersections of harmful and harassing speech and academic freedom. This information will be provided to the incoming Committee of Six, it was noted.)

Continuing the conversation, the students agreed that the events of May and June and the ongoing protests have highlighted the need for ongoing campus conversations about racism, both as it is experienced at the college, and as part of the education that Amherst provides to its students. M. Foster said that she found the listening session at the faculty meeting to be a useful forum for receiving feedback from faculty. It was clear to her from the comments that the faculty made how important student voices are to professors, which was gratifying to realize, she noted, and how student voices are framed in a faculty context. M. Foster stressed the need to establish a base level of security for students on campus, so that all students feel safe. The fear and tension that is occurring right now surrounding race in this country makes this need even more pronounced, she commented. The students noted that creating a safe space for Black students who come back to campus should be a priority for Amherst. They asked whether professors and other members of the campus community are prepared to facilitate the inevitable and necessary discussions on systemic racism that will arise in the fall, given the national climate.

Professor Horton commented on the importance of a range of academic disciplines examining in deeper ways the impact that systemic racism has on campus and in the world. He pledged to participate

in such efforts as part of his professional work as a statistician, for example, studying aspects of police policy and reform that rely on quantitative analysis.

Returning to the issue of the intersections of academic freedom and harmful and harassing speech, the members asked M. Foster if there was one policy at another institution that she views as addressing this issue in an exemplary way. She responded that the policies of Skidmore and Harvard seem particularly well done, while noting that the proposal that the BSU has developed for a revision to Amherst's policy (which had been shared with the members) draws on aspects of six different policies. Professor Basu commented that deciding what is an appropriate bias-reporting and response protocol will be difficult because of divergent faculty views on this question. Some faculty would worry about limitations this might place on readings and conversations that address controversial issues. She reiterated the need to have a vigorous exchange of views on these subjects in small groups, before motions come before the faculty. Professor Basu also suggested that another college goal should be facilitating broader discussions on racism at Amherst, and in the U.S. She informed the students that the ASC has recommended the creation of a community hour at the college. Perhaps some number of these forums could be devoted to conversation about race and racism; relevant readings could be shared and discussed. Bringing student-activists who represent other identities, for example Asian American and Latinx students, would broaden such community-wide discussions in informative ways, Professor Basu commented.

Professor Sims noted that she strongly supports such conversations, as well as efforts by individual departments to find ways to bring the study of systemic racism into their curricula. J. Crichlow commented that she appreciates that departments are having conversations of this kind at this time and also stressed the importance of sustaining such discussions and making permanent changes. One way of accomplishing this goal, J. Crichlow suggested, would be to change the first-year curriculum so that every Amherst student is educated about systemic racism. Professor Brooks noted that, as there are no general education or diversity requirements at Amherst, the faculty needs to find approaches that will enable the college to attain this goal within the college's culture. The incoming Committee of Six will be asked to consider this issue. She stressed the importance of having the faculty take responsibility for educating itself so that professors are equipped to engage in conversation about race and inequality in and beyond the classroom.

President Martin asked the members to share with the students arguments that are most likely to emerge that may present barriers to change, as the students have said that they would find such information helpful. Professor Basu responded that some faculty will worry that a proposal surrounding harmful and harassing speech will impinge on academic and expressive freedom. Some will want to define clearly what kind of speech might be curtailed if the statement is revised. Possible inadvertent consequences of bias-reporting will also trouble some faculty, she said. Professor Basu said that she does not share all of these concerns but that it is important to anticipate them. Provost Epstein commented that some faculty will be concerned that, under a bias-reporting and response protocol, students and others will be permitted to report faculty who present controversial material in their classrooms. Others will be concerned, she imagines, that setting any kind of collegewide requirement will be at odds with the open curriculum. This curriculum, which stressed the importance of student choice, has been deeply embedded at Amherst for fifty years, the provost added. Professor Sims noted that some faculty will see a tension between making students feel safe and shying away from difficult and sensitive material and conversations. Professor Schmalzbauer said that she has heard from faculty who fear that students may decide not to take a course that involves engaging in conversation about race, class, or gender inequalities because they fear saying something wrong and getting themselves or the professor reported. She suggested that the implementation of restorative practices at the college could help eliminate faculty and student fear and avoidance.

J. Crichlow commented that she has never questioned the content of a class and explained that the BSU is not suggesting that a bias-reporting and response protocol should impinge on faculty members' right to present material in their classrooms. Some language, however, does do harm. She suggested that, at the beginning of a class, it would be helpful for everyone if professors set some ground rules—for example, the N-word should not be used. Some students might not know if it is permissible to say the word if reading a passage, for example, and may be uncomfortable. If they are uncomfortable, they might not know what to do. If the rules are made clear, it would alleviate a lot of anxiety, J. Crichlow noted. In her view, a bias-reporting and response protocol would provide an outlet for students to express concerns about harmful language, without worrying about repercussions. M. Foster concurred with these views, noting that having safer and more inclusive spaces will benefit everyone, not just Black students. Accountability does not have to be punitive, and she recommends moving away from thinking about these issues in this way.

Concluding the discussion, J. Thomas suggested that creating a document with frequently asked questions would be helpful to move the conversation forward. He offered to create one if the idea is of interest, outlining points one by one. The focus, in his view, should be on the harm that can be caused by words, rather than on proscribing individuals' conduct. The BSU's goal is to further the mission of academic freedom, as, at present, some individuals feel that they are unable to speak. The members thanked the students and expressed their appreciation and commitment once again, and the meeting ended.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The thirty-second meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2019–2020 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, June 29, 2020. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors Basu, Brooks, Goutte, Horton, Schmalzbauer, and Sims; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The meeting began with a discussion of the final decisions needed to complete plans for the fall semester, with President Martin seeking the members' feedback about several different scenarios that are under consideration. She informed the committee that, after extensive consultation with public-health experts and consideration of many factors, a decision has already been made to bring to campus in the fall approximately 1,200 to 1,250 students (just over 60 percent of Amherst's total enrollment and between 70 and 75 percent of those students who indicated interest in returning to campus for their studies). Among the factors that have led to this decision is the necessity of providing each student with a single room, ensuring that the bathroom-to-student ratio is reduced, considering the capacity of hospitals to care for those who may fall ill, and ensuring that social-distancing protocols can be put in place. The decision of the University of Massachusetts to invite all of its students—some thirty thousand—back to campus in the fall, which would have repercussions for the Amherst College community in a number of areas, was a matter of concern, President Martin said. The president noted that she and the senior staff are in the process of considering which students should be invited back in the fall. The hope, she said, is to bring back even more students in the spring—ideally all who wish to be on campus. Should doing so prove to be unwise, however, those students who cannot be here in the fall will have priority in the spring, President Martin noted. In the end, the president cautioned, even after a decision is made, conditions could require that Amherst change its plans before the semester begins, depending on how the pandemic unfolds.

The committee, while recognizing the disappointment that will accompany the decision not to bring all students back, expressed support for a plan to reduce the number of students on campus in the fall—in order to reduce the risk of spreading the virus. The members then discussed the educational benefits of bringing first-years, sophomores, juniors, and seniors, as well as students in a number of other circumstances, to campus in the fall, taking into account a number of factors. It was noted, for example, that there is a need for first-year students to acclimate to the Amherst community and begin to feel that they are a part of the college. The first-year experience of rising sophomores, it was noted, had been truncated as a result of the pandemic, so that they were not able to have a full year on campus. The next academic year would be a critical time for them to consult with their advisors and other faculty about selecting a major. It was also pointed out that many of last year's juniors had had their study-abroad experiences cut short in the spring and had to settle for online learning that, in most cases, was not equivalent to the remote instruction that Amherst faculty offered in the spring. Now rising seniors, some of these students will need to be on campus to make use of facilities in order to work on their theses, the members agreed. In addition, the committee concurred, some students may need to be on campus because the challenges associated with their home situations present barriers to academic success. Professor Brooks asked about Meiklejohn Fellows, for example, and President Martin assured the members that these students are likely among those who would be able to petition to return to campus. Professor Basu asked about international students who are already in this country and may not be able to return to their countries of origin or stay in the United States in the fall. International students who are in the U.S. and have no other place to go would be invited back to campus, the provost said. Most members recommended that first-year students and sophomores be invited back to campus, as well as students in the categories described above.

The president and provost noted that all of these factors, as well as others that have been identified, are being taken into account as part of the decision-making process; there are many compelling arguments for different scenarios, which is what makes it so challenging to arrive at a decision, they said. The members applauded the administration for putting safety first and for the

thought, care, and leadership that is being given to arriving at a plan that works for the Amherst community. ([On July 1, the president announced](#) the following: that for the return to campus in the fall, Amherst will give priority to all first-year students, all transfer students, all sophomores, any seniors who are scheduled to graduate at the end of the fall semester, and to seniors who are returning to campus after spending the fall and/or spring term of the 2019–2020 academic year studying abroad. In addition, it was announced that two categories of students may petition to study on campus: senior thesis writers whose work requires access to campus facilities or materials that would otherwise be unavailable, and students whose home circumstances impede their academic progress. The president wrote that no student will be required to be on campus during the upcoming academic year; all students who wish to study remotely for one or both semesters may do so, even if they have been invited to study on campus. If more students than anticipated choose to study remotely or take an academic leave, the college will extend opportunities to additional students who wish to study on campus, President Martin announced.)

The president asked the members if they thought it would be helpful to call a special faculty meeting the next day, before the public announcement about the fall plans is made. The purpose would be to discuss the final decision about the fall with the faculty and others who attend faculty meetings. The members agreed that doing so would be a very good idea. The members recommended that, at the meeting, the president provide as many details as possible about operations in the fall—from how students will have meals (all meals will be grab-and-go) to how teaching and learning will take place outdoors and in the tents that have been rented. In regard to personal protection equipment, President Martin noted that the college has acquired masks for faculty, students, and staff. Provost Epstein commented that transparent masks, samples of which Amherst acquired recently and which are now being tested by some faculty, seem promising—particularly for language instruction, for which seeing instructors' lips move is very important. At the moment, some things are a work-in-progress, as various processes are being developed and tested, she noted. President Martin explained that everyone will be required to wear masks when in public spaces. In addition, daily symptom self-monitoring and reporting will be required, and that, for students, asymptomatic testing will be conducted on a frequent and regular basis (upon arrival, a few days later, and possibly as much as twice per week throughout the term). Faculty and staff will also need to be tested, but less frequently, President Martin said. ([See the FAQs that have been posted](#) for more details.) President Martin agreed to hold a faculty meeting and noted that plans are under way to hold town-hall virtual meetings for new students and their families, for returning students and their families, and for staff members.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Basu asked whether there is a sense of how many faculty members will teach in person. Provost Epstein said that it appears that, at this time, roughly 35 percent of faculty will teach their courses remotely only, and that the rest of the faculty will teach in a combination of modalities. She noted that it appears that most students on campus should expect to have at least one course that is taught remotely only, though, depending on student's major, they could potentially only have courses that are taught online or have a combination of in-person and remote instruction.

Turning to another topic, Provost Epstein noted the creation of a new Instagram page, [@Blackamherstspeaks](#). She commented that it would be informative for faculty and staff to see the posts that Amherst students and alumni of color are making on the page, which describe their experiences with racism at the college. While many of the posts are moving and difficult to read, they offer a window into the kind of behavior that has caused students pain, and could help to educate the community, the provost noted. Members commented that faculty had asked for particular examples of Black students' experience of racism on campus during the previous listening session, and that this Instagram page might be a good place for faculty to turn. The committee had a wide-ranging discussion of the ongoing work to increase the faculty's awareness of issues of racism on campus and

the steps that are being taken to address them, including restorative justice practices at Amherst and the development of a bias-reporting and response protocol, as well as the pathways to communication that have been established between the Committee of Six and the Presidential Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion. Professor Brooks noted that Professor del Moral has agreed to serve on the task force, beginning July 1. Though she will not be serving on the task force once her term on the Committee of Six ends, Professor Brooks said that she remains committed to working with students on these issues. President Martin said that she is impressed with the efforts that students and alumni are making to raise awareness about issues surrounding racism on campus and to work with the college to address them. The president noted that she had sent a private message of support to the creators of the [@Blackamherstspeaks](#) Instagram account.

While agreeing that the posts can be very valuable in helping the community understand what some students have been experiencing, a member also expressed concern that some posts identify specific members of the community, including staff and untenured faculty members. For example, this member is aware that, based on the posts, some individuals, who have already changed teaching practices to avoid unintentional harm (such as may occur from putting students on the spot or asking them to share personal information), are still identified as doing so. These incidents may have happened many years ago, including before the great increase in awareness generated by the Amherst Uprising. Some posts therefore may give inaccurate information about current teaching practices; faculty members who have been singled out in this way may be reluctant to offer certain courses or present vital course material related to race and racism as a result. Professor Schmalzbauer said that, on a related note, she has been thinking about the need to put some structures in place to help faculty prepare for the difficult and sensitive conversations that can be expected to occur in Amherst classrooms this fall, given the protest movement and the attention it is drawing to racism and police brutality. Professor Brooks agreed and suggested that the faculty diversity and inclusion officers (FDIO)s could play an important role in this effort; she noted that the FDIOs have already begun to develop ways to bring faculty together in conversation about multiple topics. Professor Brooks emphasized that everyone will face challenges in facilitating these conversations in the fall, whether they have long experience or not, and thus it would be helpful to bring multiple faculty together in spaces of exchange. President Martin informed the members that the college will soon launch a web page that will focus on steps that Amherst has and will take to address racism on campus. Professor Sims said that, on that site and in other venues, she thinks it would be helpful to emphasize that processes such as restorative practices and bias reporting are being developed to help educate the community about racism and respond to specific incidents through a constructive process.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Basu agreed with Professors Schmalzbauer and Brooks that it is important that faculty members in all disciplines feel comfortable having open and robust conversations in their classrooms about race and racism, and that colleagues do not shy away from such discussions out of fear that they could be labeled as racist. She suggested that a group of faculty work with the FDIOs to develop and facilitate some workshops and then invite all members of the faculty to participate. Professors Schmalzbauer, Basu, and Sims agreed to participate in this effort. Professor Goutte underlined the importance of the college resource web page as a place where faculty and staff who might not be able to participate in workshops can still find recommended readings and best practices, such that they too can be better informed with ideas on how to improve campus culture; she pointed to the [HSTEM web site](#) as an example of useful resources available to the campus community.

Under "Questions from Committee Members," Professor Schmalzbauer suggested that it would be helpful if the college had a liaison to Amherst Books, in order to keep the store informed about plans for this academic year and to help the bookstore strategize about ways to distribute books safely to

students. Provost Epstein agreed to have someone in her office reach out to the owner of Amherst Books.

Continuing with questions, Professor Sims asked about the college's current thinking about options for staff members with jobs that cannot be performed during this time. President Martin responded that, as noted in a communication sent to all staff and faculty on June 24, beginning July 5, staff who will not be able to perform all or some of their work will need to begin using their accrued leave time for those hours that they are unable to work. Staff who are unable to perform all or some of their work remotely or for whom there is no work available on campus will have the opportunity to explore the possibility of performing other work. Supervisors and department chairs will work with staff to evaluate options for remote work, a modified shift or work schedule, and/or a temporary work reassignment. If a suitable alternative or supplemental work is not identified, the Office of Human Resources will work with the staff member to explore other options, for example, use of leaves (vacation, floating holidays, etc.); accrual of a negative leave balance, capped to the maximum accrual for vacation and sick time based on years of service; or taking an unpaid leave of absence, if eligible and approved. Professor Sims asked for further clarification, inquiring specifically whether furloughing staff will be considered. President Martin said that the college will take every measure possible to avoid furloughs, but cannot rule the use of them out, depending on how the pandemic unfolds. Provost Epstein informed the members that some staff members at the Woodside Children's Center (which is associated with the college, but technically is not part of Amherst) will be furloughed briefly, beginning July 8. Initially, they will receive 50 percent of their salaries and be eligible for unemployment benefits that include the additional \$600 per week provided through the CARES Act, which will mean that they will not experience a loss of income. For a brief period in August, before they return to their jobs on August 13, their incomes will be lower, however.

Professor Basu next asked about the library's capacity to scan books for courses and to put materials on e-reserve for fall courses. Provost Epstein noted that, as the library has communicated to the faculty, for this fall, print course reserves cannot be provided safely. While the library was able to provide emergency access to required books in the spring by scanning them—in some cases, scanning the entire book—this practice is not normally allowed under copyright regulations. The provost said that, as faculty develop courses for the fall, the library can support colleagues in a number of ways, including by purchasing a multi-user e-book version, scanning a limited number of chapters from a book, and assisting in checking e-book availability for possible alternatives for a specific title with no online version. To ensure that the library has enough time to prepare reserves so students will have access on the first day of the fall semester, the library needs to know about the materials that faculty need as soon as possible, and the deadline for doing so is August 1. The library will determine e-book availability for required texts and upload links to the e-reserves section of faculty members' Moodle pages, Provost Epstein explained. The library will also reach out to faculty about alternatives if e-books are not available. The goal is to have readings available at least two weeks ahead of where they fall in a syllabus.

Conversation turned to a [proposal from the Committee on Educational Policy \(CEP\)](#) for a grading policy for the 2020–2021 academic year. The discussion was informed by data about FGO usage from last spring that had been provided by Jesse Barba, director of institutional research and registrar services. Noting that the CEP had rejected the idea of a universal pass/fail policy for first-year students and had wanted to “avoid creating complex policy instruments, which might have unintended consequences,” Professor Schmalzbauer wondered what these consequences might be. Provost Epstein said that, to her knowledge, schools that switched to such a universal pass/fail policy were unhappy with this approach, as were many students. Schools are returning to their regular grading policies, sometimes with a bit more flexibility regarding pass/fail options, including some that are adopting approaches that resemble Amherst's use of the FGO in the spring, the provost noted. She

said that the CEP favors a return to the college's regular grading policy for the 2020–2021 academic year, while also continuing to provide greater flexibility, given the current circumstances.

The provost noted that, under Amherst's regular policy, students are allowed to use up to four FGOs during their time at Amherst; they are allowed to use only one FGO per term, and it must be elected by the end of the add-drop period. Now, due to the pandemic, the CEP has proposed, extending up to two *additional* FGOs, she said. Use of these *additional* FGOs would be limited to one course during the fall semester and spring semester of this academic year (see the Committee of Six minutes of July 2, 2020, to learn about a change to this proposal). These *additional* FGOs would not "count" against the four FGOs that all students are permitted to use during their time at the college, Provost Epstein explained.

Continuing, Provost Epstein said that, under the proposed grading policy, in fall 2020 and spring 2021, students would be permitted to elect one course as a regular FGO during the add-drop period, and to elect one additional course as an FGO after receiving a letter grade for their work in that course. For each of these two courses, students could then choose either to accept the letter grade or to replace the letter grade with a *pass* (if they have received a passing grade), Provost Epstein explained. There is an exception for students who are in their final semester at the college, who cannot use an FGO in that semester. Under the proposal, the provost said, such students would be allowed to select one additional course (beyond the one to which they are already entitled in their final semester) to be taken pass/fail.

The members expressed support for the proposal and the flexibility that it would offer, while also providing a return to a measure of normalcy. It was noted that other measures already approved by the faculty for this academic year, for example the reduced course load, will also provide students with greater flexibility and support. Provost Epstein asked the committee whether it would be necessary to call a faculty meeting in order to vote on the proposal. Concluding the discussion, the members expressed the view that it would be preferable for the incoming Committee of Six, which would meet for the first time on July 2, to discuss the policy and bring a motion forward to the faculty.

The meeting ended with a discussion of how best to move forward with exploring issues related to the service demands being placed on the faculty, including the extent to which such demands may be unequal, a topic of much discussion by the committee this year. The members agreed that more information should be assembled about the service being performed by faculty and made detailed suggestions about what data should be gathered. The provost agreed to convey this information to the incoming Committee of Six. She asked the members whether they felt it might be useful to constitute an ad hoc committee to study this issue and make recommendations, and some members expressed support for doing so. Provost Epstein said that she would convey this view to the incoming committee as well. The members then turned briefly to a personnel matter.

The committee meeting ended with a brief discussion of the current draft of its guidelines for administering teaching evaluations and agreed that the incoming Committee of Six should address one remaining long-term issue—the matter of adapting the form for co-taught classes, a request of tenure-track faculty. The members expressed support for doing so since co-teaching complicates the assessment in a way that is not easily dealt with on the existing form (see a previous discussion of this topic in the committee's minutes of June 8, 2020). Creating such a form will represent a revision to the form that was approved by the faculty, it was noted, and the use of a different/revised form will require the approval of the faculty. The members noted that this structural problem in regard to co-taught courses had not been anticipated or discussed when the faculty approved the form, but had arisen from the Committee of Six's subsequent meeting with untenured faculty. With respect to the short term, the members also noted the importance of developing guidelines for administering teaching evaluations this fall, given that many evaluations will have to be done online and these evaluations will be included formally in reappointment and tenure portfolios. Members highlighted the low response rates for evaluations from this semester and asked the next Committee of Six to

consider how to increase response rates, given that this was a crucial goal of the ad hoc committee that developed the new form.

The president and the provost thanked the members for their service during what has been an exceptionally demanding and uncertain period; they noted that the committee had accomplished a great deal, often under a time frame that has been unusually compressed. The committee expressed its gratitude to President Martin, Provost Epstein, and Associate Provost Tobin for their leadership and work with the committee and on behalf of the college. The members noted that they had learned a great deal and had valued their experience.

The meeting adjourned at 4:45P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty