

The first meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2020–2021 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 10:30 A.M. on Thursday, July 2, 2020. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors del Moral, Kingston, Leise, Manion, Trapani, and Umphrey; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The president and provost welcomed the members to the committee and thanked them for meeting during the summer, a schedule that is atypical for the Committee of Six. In this regard, Provost Epstein commented on the importance of having regular opportunities for consultation with the committee during this time of flux and uncertainty, as the pandemic continues to unfold.

Under “Topics of the day,” President Martin and Provost Epstein noted that they will host a number of virtual meetings—two for students and their families and one for staff—to provide information and answer questions about the college’s plans for fall 2020, which [the president had announced on July 1](#).

Under “Questions from Committee Members,” Professor Manion followed up on a question that she had asked at the special meeting of the faculty held on June 30. A colleague had asked Professor Manion to inquire once again how the college would respond if a member of the Amherst community refuses to wear a mask while on campus. President Martin replied that all faculty, students, and staff are required to wear masks in public spaces on campus and, later this summer, will be asked to sign an agreement to this effect. Anyone violating this policy, which will be posted in all college buildings, will be asked to stay away from campus, she said. Professor Trapani asked what the protocol will be if someone observes that an individual is not wearing a mask. In particular, he is concerned that, if students see a faculty member not wearing a mask, they may not feel comfortable reporting what they have observed, and may be concerned about ensuring their anonymity if they do. President Martin said that she would ensure that all members of the community are provided with guidance about what to do in this situation.

Professor Umphrey, who had observed at the June 30 faculty meeting that some comments about possible responses to student infractions had moved quickly toward the idea of punishment, said she hopes that an educational approach would be Amherst’s first recourse. Such an approach, she imagines, would stress the need to respect the general good, and address feelings of fear and anxiety during this time. President Martin said that, as noted at the faculty meeting, the response to an initial and relatively minor infraction would result in an approach much like what Professor Umphrey had described. The president commented that it is hoped that the college can make use of the more robust restorative practices that are beginning to be adopted on campus, and she noted that students will also educate one another. Repeated infractions, or one that is serious enough to put people at high risk, would have consequences, however. President Martin commented that the members of the student advisory committee with whom she has been consulting—aware of the liberties that students have taken in the past that put others at risk—have requested that Amherst adopt a model of accountability and consequences when students return to campus. The college supports this approach, given the seriousness of the COVID-19 situation, the president said, and those who disregard policies may be asked to leave campus—going either to nearby spaces that the college has secured, or back to their homes, depending on the situation. Students who are asked to leave campus will still be enrolled and may study remotely.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Trapani stressed the importance of ensuring that students are provided with information and training about the virus and how it is spread, as part of Amherst’s educational role. Some students, he noted, may come from areas and/or families in which the risks of the virus are not understood or believed. President Martin said that the college will educate students about the virus, both before they arrive on campus and after they are here.

Professor del Moral inquired about the status of the five additional FTE lines that the board of trustees allocated in 2016, at the request of the president, to enhance the recruitment of Black and Latinx scholars. She also asked about the process that departments must use to apply for these FTEs.

Provost Epstein responded that two of these lines have been allocated so far, and that the college is eager to allocate the other three. Both the president and the provost encouraged departments to apply for these positions. Departments that would like to bring forward a request to hire a specific individual must submit a proposal to the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP). Prior to doing so, the provost recommended that departments speak with her about the individual whom they wish to hire. Included in the proposal is a brief summary of the process that led to the identification and recruitment of the individual and a description of the strengths in scholarship, teaching, and service that the person promises to bring to the department and the college, including contributions to the curriculum. The scholar's CV is also provided. It is imperative that these FTEs be hired through specific, targeted outreach and recruitment, Provost Epstein noted. An FTE that is allocated through this program will be "on loan" to the department, she explained. When a faculty member who is hired into one of these positions retires, the line will return to the college. Lines that are allocated through this program do not require that departments "mortgage" another FTE.

Professor del Moral next asked that the faculty be provided with the number of tenured faculty who are persons of color, and that this number be broken out by identity groups (Black, Latinx, Asian American, and Native American), and their departments. She also requested data about the number of tenure-track faculty who are persons of color and their departments. The members agreed that having baseline information of this kind will be helpful as the college moves forward with recruitment efforts. Provost Epstein agreed, while expressing concern about providing information at the department level. Given the small number of faculty in each department, those colleagues who have not disclosed their racial and/or ethnic identity possibly could be identified if such data were to become public. The provost noted that, at present, statistics indicate that the college has fewer faculty of color than it actually does, given that some faculty from underrepresented groups and some white faculty choose not to self-identify. Professor Kingston commented that some inaccurate or misleading information has been circulating, and that, if the administration does not provide correct information, the vacuum may be filled with misinformation.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Manion concurred that information at the department level is needed. She commented that, while the instinct is often to protect underrepresented groups by not counting individuals—and that instinct is admirable in her view—having accurate information is essential, in order to hold institutions accountable. Data that are collected with the goal of supporting underrepresented groups should be encouraged, Professor Manion pointed out. In relation to the provost's concern about revealing the identities of those who have chosen not to self-disclose, the members asked when faculty are asked to disclose their racial and/or ethnic identity. The provost responded that this step occurs at the time of hiring. Several members noted that, while they may not have provided information at that time, perhaps they would be willing to do so now, given the current moment and their awareness of the importance of this information. Others may feel the same way, they suspect. President Martin suggested that faculty be given the opportunity to self-disclose now if they wish to do so, with the understanding that they would be doing so for a valuable purpose. Provost Epstein expressed enthusiasm for finding a way to obtain this information. The Committee of Six agreed to lead efforts to gather these data, in order to measure the progress Amherst is making in diversifying the faculty.

President Martin suggested that faculty also be asked to self-disclose whether they are LGBTQ if they wish to do so. She believes that many LGBTQ colleagues would be pleased to be asked to do so. Professor Umphrey agreed that this effort is important for "meeting the moment," including engaging with issues about which students are most concerned. She suggested that Professor Hart, faculty diversity and inclusion officer, be consulted about ways to frame this request in ways that resonate with colleagues. The other members expressed support for this idea. The provost agreed to consult with Professor Hart. Professor Manion commented that there is a body of scholarship that focuses on capturing this information (e.g., for the census) and suggested that it would be informative to invite a scholar in this field

to speak at Amherst about this subject. Issues surrounding gathering these data have been a fundamental part of how race and racism function, Professor Manion noted. At the conclusion of the conversation, the members agreed to think further about how to gather information about the number of tenure-line faculty of color at Amherst, and LGBTQ faculty, and to move forward with doing so late this summer or early in the fall. Professor Kingston suggested that it would also be informative and helpful to examine tenure statistics to determine the tenure rate for faculty of color and how it compares to the tenure rate for other faculty. He noted that a lack of clear information on this topic may be producing anxiety for underrepresented tenure-track faculty.

The committee briefly discussed the new Instagram page, [@Blackamherstspeaks](#), which was also the subject of conversation at the June 29 meeting of the outgoing Committee of Six. The new Committee of Six, like the outgoing committee, supported sharing with the Amherst community more broadly the experiences of racism and harassment that Amherst students and alumni of color are recounting in their posts. President Martin expressed the view that many faculty members may not be aware of the Instagram account and suggested that the posts also be made available in another format, so they will be read more widely. The president noted that she has sent an institutional response to the creators of the Instagram account and that it had been posted on Instagram the previous evening. President Martin informed the members that the college has already taken steps to address some issues and incidents described in some of the posts and will work to address others that present enough specifics to allow Amherst to act.

Conversation turned to a [proposal from the Committee on Educational Policy \(CEP\)](#) for a grading policy for the 2020–2021 academic year. (See also the discussion of the proposal by the outgoing Committee of Six in the June 29 Committee of Six minutes.) The provost noted that, as described in the proposal, 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. She informed the members that the outgoing Committee of Six had found the CEP's ideas to be compelling and supported the proposal.

(To avoid confusion, the information below reflects the committee's decision to propose that an *additional* FGO also be provided during the January term, bringing the total number of *additional* FGOs to three. In its original proposal, the CEP had suggested extending two *additional* FGOs, one that could be used in the fall semester, and the other in the spring.)

Provost Epstein noted that, under Amherst's regular policy, students are permitted to use up to four FGOs during their time at the college; students are permitted to use only one FGO per term, and it must be elected by the end of the add-drop period. Now, in light of the pandemic, the CEP has proposed, and the Committee of Six supports, extending up to three *additional* FGOs, she said. Use of these *additional* FGOs would be limited to one course during the fall semester, January term, and spring semester of this academic year. These *additional* FGOs would not "count" against the four FGOs that all students are permitted to use during their time at the college, the provost noted. Both committees agreed 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.

Continuing, Provost Epstein said that 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. In addition, students who take a course in January 2021 would be permitted to elect an FGO option in that course. 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.

Professor Umphrey said that she supports the proposal, as she feels that it is important to return to as regular a set of expectations for students as is possible under the circumstances, while still being supportive. She noted the need to document the academic work of juniors and seniors, as many will wish to go on to graduate school. Professor Kingston concurred, commenting that there is already a good deal of flexibility and that he will be less lenient with grades in the coming semester than he was in the spring. Professor Trapani said that he wanted to confirm that, if students withdraw from a course and drop down to two courses, they would still be eligible for financial aid. Provost Epstein said that, as long as students are registered for three courses through the end of add/drop, they will be considered full-time students and will not jeopardize their qualification for federal financial aid. Professor Manion also expressed support for the proposal, including the idea that use of the *additional* FGOs would occur at the end of the semester (serving as what she described as a “crisis FGO”). Professor Trapani commented that it is theoretically possible that a student could use the current FGO policy (selecting a course during add/drop as an FGO) and then, under the proposal, have an *additional* FGO at the end of the semester, and possibly not have any grades. Professor Umphrey asked if the data about FGO usage from last spring, provided by Jesse Barba, director of institutional research and registrar services, reveal any concerns, as she worries that vulnerable students may make more use of the FGO in higher numbers. Provost Epstein said that she has not heard any concerns of this kind, but that she could ask the class deans about this question and could also ask for their feedback about the proposal. The committee asked the provost to move forward with this plan.

Overall, the committee expressed support for the CEP’s proposed grading policy (with the addition of the January term FGO) and agreed that the faculty should vote on it electronically as soon as is practicable, without calling a faculty meeting. The provost said that, if the class deans do not share any concerns, she would provide a draft motion to the committee early next week.

(The committee later voted six in favor and zero opposed on content and six in favor and zero opposed to forward the following motion to the faculty:

That the Flexible Grading Option [FGO] policy be revised for the 2020–2021 academic year to extend up to three *additional* FGOs to all students, and that these *additional* FGOs, if used, be elected after grades are posted, by a date set by the registrar.

That these *additional* FGOs not count as one of the four FGOs that students are permitted to use during their time at the college, and that use of these *additional* FGOs be limited to one course during the fall semester, January term, and spring semester of this academic year [one regular FGO and one *additional* FGO may be used for fall and spring, and an *additional* FGO may be used for January term]. See the exception below for students in their final semester at the college.

That during the 2020–2021 academic year, students who have not exhausted their FGOs by the time they are in their final semester at the college 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. [Note that students who are in their final semester at the college, in accordance with current policy, are not permitted to use an FGO in that semester].

That students who are not in their final semester at the college have until a date, to be set by the registrar for each semester and the January 2021 term, to decide whether or not to accept their assigned grade, or in the case of any passing grade, to elect to use an additional FGO to receive a *pass* ["P"] in one course).

The meeting adjourned at 11:34 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The second meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2020–2021 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, July 13, 2020. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors del Moral, Kingston, Leise, Manion, Trapani, and Umphrey; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

Under “Topics of the Day,” President Martin noted that, thus far, 1,060 Amherst students who were invited to return to campus in the fall have indicated that they plan to do so—about two hundred students short of the number that the college had expected. Amherst may consider some additional petitions from students who want to come to campus and meet a number of criteria, she noted. President Martin informed the members that the deadline for students to make their intentions known is 5:00 P.M. today. About 8.5 percent of students have now requested to take a gap year or academic leave, confirming what the same proportion had indicated previously, when completing surveys. The president noted that, in the days to come, she and the senior staff will review carefully data about students’ decisions, making plans accordingly.

Conversation turned to the topic of anti-bias training. President Martin and Provost Epstein emphasized that it is a college priority that all staff and students participate in anti-bias training. They asked the members for their thoughts about the form that such training should take for the faculty. The committee agreed that anti-bias training is critical for faculty. Professor Leise suggested that the college offer opportunities for faculty and staff to attend anti-bias workshops and other forms of training together. Professor Kingston concurred, commenting that having different campus constituencies participate in training separately seems antithetical to the goal of fostering an inclusive community at Amherst. The members also expressed a preference for training that is created in-house, rather than making use of online training modules provided by an outside vendor. Provost Epstein commented that, in the past, relatively few faculty members have attended workshops on issues surrounding race and racism that have been offered by the Offices of Diversity and Inclusion (now known as the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) and Human Resources. Some members suggested that anti-bias training be treated in the same way as Title IX training, which is a requirement for all faculty and staff. President Martin and Provost Epstein expressed support for having faculty and staff engage in anti-bias training together, if that approach is preferred.

In regard to the question of whether anti-bias training should be mandatory for faculty, Professor Trapani expressed support for having such a requirement, thus ensuring that everyone makes time for this important work. If the college can require cybersecurity training for faculty, it can require anti-bias training, in his view. The other members concurred. Professor Trapani also suggested that the ways in which training opportunities are communicated should become more varied and prominent, helping to make sure that faculty and staff are aware when workshops are being held. Professor Umphrey asked if there are ways to make use of a community hour to engage in training and other educational opportunities surrounding race and racism. Provost Epstein explained that classroom shortages made it impossible to build a community hour into this year’s academic calendar. Moreover, the hour that has been envisioned for co-curricular activities would only be an hour in duration, which would not provide sufficient time to conduct training, the provost said. It might be possible to create a community hour if the college needs to transition to all-remote teaching in the fall, she noted, and some of this time could then be used for programming surrounding race and racism and other topics.

Professor Manion stressed the necessity of having all faculty participate in the training, and she agreed that this should be a requirement. Faculty, in their role as educators, need to understand students’ experiences of racism and racial violence. She noted that, while resistance to mandatory training is often framed as an issue of academic freedom, we might look at it differently. If students think we don’t care enough about racism even to learn the terminology, arguments, and demands of the movement for Black lives, how will we be able to teach and mentor them effectively? Departments need to discuss the ways in which issues surrounding race and racism resonate within disciplines, she

noted. In her view, if a baseline of 10 to 20 percent of the faculty gains knowledge and compassion about racism, it will be worth any resistance to making training a requirement.

Professor Trapani agreed that it would be helpful to have training surrounding curriculum development, with a focus on issues of race and racism, take place within departments; to have the faculty equity and inclusion officer (FEIO)s offer training across academic departments; and also to have faculty participate in college-wide training with staff and students, which will help to build community. Provost Epstein noted that last year's Committee of Six had emphasized that faculty members in all disciplines need to feel comfortable having open and robust conversations in their classrooms about race and racism. Professors Schmalzbauer, Basu, and Sims had agreed to work with the FEIOs to develop and facilitate some workshops, and then to invite all members of the faculty to participate. Recommending readings and best practices was also seen as important, she noted. President Martin encouraged departments and faculty groups to spend time reading and discussing some of the extraordinary long-form essays on issues of race and racism, in addition to participating in formal anti-bias training that is developed. Professor Trapani expressed support for doing so and noted how much he had learned from the recent [online discussion between Nikole Hannah-Jones and Professor Polk about the legacy of slavery in the United States](#), applauding the college for offering this programming. President Martin informed the members that more discussions of this kind are being planned with guest-speakers.

Continuing the conversation, Professor del Moral suggested that the ways in which the college is supporting the faculty's transition to remote teaching offers an excellent model for the work ahead surrounding anti-racism. She has found the efforts of the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) and Academic Technology Services (ATS) to profile online some Amherst faculty members' pedagogical approaches to be very helpful. This structure has helped faculty members to educate one another about strategies for remote teaching, Professor del Moral commented. In addition, Professor del Moral wonders if the incentives that have been offered to faculty to work on enhancing remote teaching can be replicated for anti-bias training and curricular work surrounding race and racism, which may encourage faculty to take the initiative in these areas. She suggested that, in addition, the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion offer anti-racist training for faculty, drawing on models that have been successful at other institutions of higher learning, and that departments also develop their own educational opportunities. Professor del Moral cautioned against adopting a strategy that would tap faculty from underrepresented groups to testify about the pain that they have experienced personally. In her view, everyone should be educating themselves about issues surrounding bias and racism, and the faculty should be accountable for doing this work. Professor del Moral worries that if training is not required, the work will not be done.

Concluding the discussion, Professor Umphrey commented that almost all faculty have been placed in small groups to participate in the 2U and ACUE-based summer programs. She wonders if this infrastructure could be used to provide some readings and videos to faculty before the semester begins. Colleagues could be informed that the study of race and racism is a compelling field of knowledge about which they may wish to learn more, while also "meeting the moment" and students' calls for change at Amherst and the country more broadly. Perhaps, she suggested, a seventh week with this focus could be added to the summer programs, with discussions enriched by the bonds that faculty have already formed within their groups. The provost said that this approach might be possible, but that the FDEOs would need to lead such an effort, as the CTL and ATS are stretched thin.

Under her remarks, Provost Epstein noted that she had consulted with the class deans, per the committee's request, about whether they are concerned that vulnerable students may make more use of the flexible grading option (FGO) this year, in ways that may be detrimental, based on what they had observed about FGO usage last spring. The class deans said that they appreciate the flexibility shown by the faculty, and that they are hopeful that the FGO policy for this academic year will serve as a useful

resource for many students. They do not have any concerns about the use of FGOs, as they assume that students will be advised well by the faculty, in advance, on how to use FGOs strategically.

The committee noted that, at an orientation held prior to the committee's first meeting, the members had discussed issues of confidentiality in the committee's minutes. The members were informed that public minutes should be used as a guide in regard to questions of whether matters discussed by the committee can be shared with others; it was also noted that very few conversations (with the exception of personnel matters and committee nominations that are under consideration) have not been included in the committee's public minutes. Minutes of discussions of certain sensitive or unresolved matters and plans in their formative stages, about which the president and the provost are seeking the advice of the Committee of Six, have sometimes been kept confidential, the members were told. Generally, conversations about these issues are made public once the matter is in a less tentative state, the committee learned. It was agreed that email will not be used to communicate about personnel or other confidential matters, and that the use of email should be kept to a minimum in general. The longstanding policy of appending letters to the minutes was also discussed. Letter-writers are informed by the provost's office as to when their letters will be appended, it was noted. 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 then decided that, for reasons of transparency, comments by committee members should be attributed by name in the minutes.

The provost next informed the members that she and President Martin have decided to authorize seven searches for tenure-track faculty positions. It was fortuitous, she noted, that the number of requests for positions matched the number of FTEs available this year, a rarity, in her experience. Positions were allocated in the following areas and departments: organic chemistry (chemistry), South Asian history (a joint appointment in history and Asian languages and civilizations), gender and science (sexuality, women's and gender studies), sculpture (art and the history of art), Asian American history (a joint appointment in history and sexuality, women's and gender studies), political theory (political science), and race and politics (political science; the department's search in this area last year failed). President Martin commented that the decision to authorize the searches was made recently, after she, the provost, and the chief financial and administrative officer had spent some time weighing the pressures on the budget. The trustees supported the decision to move forward, she noted. In the president's view, during a crisis, it is important to be both prudent and cautious in regard to expending resources, while also seizing opportunities. She noted that most institutions have put hiring freezes in place at this time, presenting a golden opportunity for Amherst to hire stellar new faculty in a range of disciplines. At the same time, making a commitment to these additional faculty salaries—when every source of the college's revenue is under pressure—was done only after a good deal of assessment, she said.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Kingston asked how many of the allocated FTEs are replacements, and to what degree there is an overarching strategy for allocating new FTEs. Provost Epstein responded that most of the recently allocated FTEs are for replacements. More broadly, she explained that an important goal of the ongoing comprehensive campaign is to expand the faculty—with funds being raised to support twelve additional professorships. As an example of current priorities, she noted that the position in chemistry is new and is part of an effort to expand the faculty in STEM fields. Another priority is to continue to diversify the faculty. In addition to adding positions in STEM, the college also hopes to expand positions in areas that will enable more students to study their own history and cultures, and those of others. Provost Epstein said that many departments want to expand into new curricular areas, but at the same time, do not want to give up areas that they have now. This structural problem can lead to some challenging conversations surrounding FTEs, she noted.

President Martin commented that, due to its other work, it is challenging for the Committee on Educational Policy to find time to consider the future of the curriculum some ten or twenty years out. It is critical that the college do so, however, she said. It is important that the faculty consider questions such as interdisciplinary areas on which there should be a greater focus, and, more generally, whether the college is moving forward in ways that both provide students with the best liberal arts education, and advance knowledge. The president does not envision being able to add many more lines beyond the twelve that are being planned; departmental needs and college-wide needs must be weighed with care, she noted. While enrollments should not be determinative, they need to be taken into account, President Martin commented.

Returning to her remarks, Provost Epstein informed the committee of plans to hold a virtual convocation on August 23—a ceremony that will need to be modified for this format—and a virtual faculty meeting on September 1. The faculty will need to vote on course proposals electronically in mid-August, she explained. The members agreed that a faculty meeting should be held on September 1. The agenda for that meeting will be approved at a future Committee of Six meeting, it was noted.

Under “Questions from committee members,” Professor Kingston asked, on behalf of a colleague, when Woodside Children’s Center will reopen. Provost Epstein commented that there was not sufficient interest to warrant keeping the center open during the entire summer; the plan is to reopen on August 17. Professor Trapani noted that Woodside families, his included, had received an email from the center about a meeting that would take place that evening about the facility’s plans, as well as a fall enrollment form. It is his understanding that the director and assistant director will answer questions at that time.

Professor Umphrey next asked, on behalf of a colleague, about the status of work to develop 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. She has made a commitment to students that both efforts will be ready for review in the fall, President Martin said, and she expects a recommendation from the Presidential Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion by the end of the summer. The president reiterated the importance of pairing the launch of the bias-reporting and response protocol with the implementation of RPAC (Restorative Practices at Amherst College). Professor Umphrey asked if these efforts will focus on student-to-student incidents only. President Martin explained that the Presidential Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion had been in conversation with the previous Committee of Six about a bias-reporting and response protocol that would apply to faculty and staff as well. The goal is to develop a community-wide process, the president said. Provost Epstein noted the intersection of issues surrounding academic freedom that have been raised in regard to bias reporting in a classroom setting. President Martin noted that the University of Chicago, which has a robust statement on academic freedom, also has a bias-reporting and response protocol, on which Amherst’s own can be modeled.

Continuing with questions, Professor Trapani noted that, in response to the Committee of Six minutes of June 8, 2020, a number of tenure-track faculty members have written to him to convey concerns. He explained that, [in a note that he had written to the previous Committee of Six](#), which had been attached to those minutes, he had noted that, while faculty had previously been told to prioritize teaching over research because of the additional preparation for teaching that is now required due to the pandemic, the minutes conveyed a different expectation—that teaching *not* be prioritized over research. A number of tenure-track faculty are now worried that, at the time of tenure, all that they have been asked to do on the teaching front during the pandemic—efforts (including the 2U and ACUE summer programs) that are peripheral to their research and actually take up time that they would otherwise devote to research—will not be considered in the context of their

scholarly productivity at the time of tenure. Professor Trapani noted that the minutes suggested that faculty should be focusing on research and scholarship.

Responding, Provost Epstein commented that, while the college had, early on, asked faculty to prioritize teaching over research, the Ad Hoc Faculty Committee on Academic Structures During COVID-19 (ASC) later recommended a different approach. The ASC had decided, as noted in the June 8 minutes, 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.” Professor Trapani expressed the view that these ideas and accommodations—for example having tenured colleagues teach an overload to enable untenured colleagues to have a reduced teaching load—might seem helpful “on paper,” but would not necessarily be workable in reality. Some untenured faculty share this view, he noted, and worry about how they will be evaluated at the time of tenure. Provost Epstein informed the committee that she had emailed all faculty members who had filled out the form to request a change in their teaching load and had offered to discuss any concerns. If colleagues did not fill out the form or communicate with her in other ways, she had no way of knowing that they needed a reduced teaching burden, she noted. In addition, tenure-track faculty members and their departments will have the opportunity to discuss the impact of the pandemic on candidates’ teaching and research at the time of the reappointment and tenure reviews, the provost said.

Turning to another topic, Provost Epstein noted that the college has decided to capitalize *Black*, [when, as the New York Times recently noted](#), “describing people and cultures of African origin.” The provost explained that the newspaper has also made this change, commenting recently that it “...believe[s] this style best conveys elements of shared history and identity, and reflects our goal to be respectful of all the people and communities we cover.” The Committee of Six expressed support for adopting this change in its minutes.

The members then briefly discussed efforts to identify and recruit faculty of color, with President Martin and Provost Epstein urging departments to apply for one of the five additional FTE lines that the board of trustees had allocated, and for which departments had been invited to apply in 2016, to enhance the recruitment of Black and Latinx scholars. Three of these FTEs are still available. They also noted that a target-of-opportunity process is available under a separate process—as part of the regular search process—for tenure-track faculty. While some additional efforts may be needed to identify talented scholars of color, particularly in certain disciplines, this work is important and needs to be undertaken, the committee agreed. Professor del Moral emphasized that there are scholars of color who meet and exceed Amherst’s criteria for tenure, but departments must be willing to take the additional steps that are necessary to recruit them.

On behalf of several colleagues, Professor Manion next asked about the college’s response to the Trump administration’s newly announced policy directive requiring international students to take at least some in-person courses in order to remain in the United States. President Martin said that Amherst will do everything it can to protect international students and to advocate for them. She noted that Amherst is among the many other colleges and universities that have joined together to file amicus briefs in support of a lawsuit filed by Harvard and MIT. (The government later agreed to rescind the policy guidance.)

Provost Epstein next discussed with the members the college’s new [Statement of Shared Responsibility in Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic](#). She informed the committee that Amherst students, faculty, and staff will be required to abide by the statement, and that it will be added to the *Faculty Handbook*, the *Student Code of Conduct*, and the *Employee Handbook*. Professor Leise said that she is not clear about the difference in meaning between “removed” and “trespassed,” as these terms

are used in the statement. The provost explained that *trespassed* represents an extra-legal step that means that, if the individual comes back on campus, the person can be arrested. *Removed* means that individuals are told to leave campus. The committee expressed support for moving forward with the statement.

Professor Manion next inquired whether an alternative could be provided to the current policy on the COVID-19 website that requires faculty and staff to report a positive COVID-19 test result to John Carter, Amherst's chief of police and director of public safety. Noting nationwide police violence against Black people and ongoing protests, she wonders if the college could put a system in place that centers the needs of Black and brown people in the Amherst community. She asked whether professionals in the field of public health might take on this responsibility, as testing ramps up in the late-summer and fall, and contact tracing is required for those who test positive for COVID-19. President Martin, praising Chief Carter for the work he has done in the area of contact tracing last spring and this summer, said that it is her understanding that Kevin Weinman, chief financial administrative officer, is now assembling a contact-tracing team, and that John Carter will no longer be involved in this work. She said she would provide more information to the committee about the contact-tracing team as she learns more. Amherst's health center cannot do this work for faculty and staff because of insurance issues. The meeting concluded with a discussion about a committee nomination.

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The third meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2020–2021 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 4:00 P.M. on Monday, July 27, 2020. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors del Moral, Kingston, Leise, Manion, Trapani, and Umphrey; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The fourth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2020–2021 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, August 10, 2020. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors del Moral, Kingston, Leise, Manion, Trapani, and Umphrey; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The meeting began with the provost suggesting colleagues who might serve on a memorial minute committee for Prosser Gifford. Dean Gifford, Amherst's first dean of the faculty, died on July 5, 2020. The committee agreed that Provost Epstein should proceed with constituting a committee to honor Dean Gifford.

President Martin next informed the members that she would soon be writing to faculty and staff to ensure that everyone is aware that the college plans to move forward with having roughly half of the student body on campus this fall. (At the time of the committee's meeting, a number of colleges and universities had recently reversed decisions to bring students to campus, instead deciding to go completely remote for the fall semester, or limiting further the number of students they would have on campus.) The president informed the members of her plans to host a webinar for students and their families that evening. The event's purpose is to reiterate Amherst's expectations for the fall and to make sure that students and their families are comfortable with the rules that have been put in place, and will adhere to them.

Continuing her remarks, the president noted that students will begin arriving at Amherst on Saturday, and that classes will begin on August 24, as planned. President Martin stressed, as she later wrote in [her note to faculty and staff](#), that Amherst has "the responsibility to provide students with the best possible education and the greatest possible chance to succeed." She reminded the members that Amherst students and other students across the country found remote learning very challenging last spring. Many struggled to do their academic work because of a lack of privacy, poor internet service, and/or family responsibilities. President Martin emphasized that the college has a responsibility to extend itself so students can be on campus. She also commented that the college has spent months on preparations to bring students back, including putting robust procedures in place to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19, to the degree possible.

Professor Trapani asked why Amherst is encouraging faculty to teach their classes remotely, but has decided to bring many students to campus anyway. Provost Epstein said that approximately two-thirds of Amherst faculty members have indicated that they will teach remotely, but that it is hoped that students will have many opportunities to interact with faculty in person—in some classes, in small groups, and in office hours, for example. She emphasized the importance of having faculty come to campus, encouraging those who can to do so.

Continuing with questions, Professor Umphrey asked if the tents that the college has rented may be used for office hours and advising, or whether they are reserved for teaching only. She also wonders what the system will be to reserve the tents. Provost Epstein responded that Jesse Barba, director of institutional research and registrar services, and Addy Free, registrar, are working on issues surrounding the tents and will send out [a message soon that will address these and other questions](#).

Provost Epstein next turned to the topic of Title IX policy. She reminded the members that, in May, the U.S. Department of Education had released new Title IX regulations, requiring all educational institutions that receive federal funding to make changes to their policies related to sexual harassment by August 14, 2020. The provost then shared updates to Amherst's policies related to sexual assault and other forms of sexual harassment. Over the summer, the Title IX Team, in collaboration with her office and the Offices of Student Affairs and Human Resources, developed [an interim Title IX policy and interim Title IX grievance process](#), both of which are applicable to all students, faculty, and staff, she noted. These measures will take effect on August 14. The president and provost informed the members that, due to the short timeframe within which institutions had to update their policies, and the disruption

caused by COVID-19, the college decided to develop interim policies. Both factors made it impossible to engage the Amherst community in a conversation about this important matter within the time allotted. The interim Title IX policy and grievance process will allow Amherst to engage in those conversations

over the coming year and to make adjustments, where possible, President Martin and Provost Epstein said. Final policies will then be implemented for the next academic year.

Among other rules, the new regulations require that institutions have a consistent standard of evidence by which all Title IX complaints will be reviewed, the provost noted. The interim Title IX grievance process provides for the use of the “preponderance of the evidence” (or, “more likely than not”) standard. For faculty, this represents a shift from the “clear and convincing” standard that is otherwise applicable, as described in the *Faculty Handbook*. The rationale for the decision to adjust the standard of evidence in faculty cases, rather than student cases, relates to students being the primary users of the formal process for Title IX matters. The preponderance of the evidence standard is used in all student conduct matters and has been the standard of evidence in the student sexual misconduct process since at least 2013, Provost Epstein said. (In an email to the community sent on August 14, Laurie Frankl, Title IX coordinator, outlined other [changes that have been made to accommodate the new requirements](#)).

Continuing the conversation, the president and provost noted that the Title IX Review Committee, which comprises students, faculty, and staff, will engage the community in conversation about the interim policy and grievance process and then draft a final Title IX policy and grievance process that continues to meet the college’s legal obligations, and the needs of the Amherst community.

Professor Umphrey, who said she understands the necessity of putting interim changes in place, also expressed deep concern about the consequential change to the standard of evidence. She noted the need for a good deal of conversation about this issue, and she asked if there is a date certain by which the Committee of Six can revisit this policy change. Provost Epstein, who said that she is also concerned about the change to the standard of evidence, noted that this topic will be on the committee’s agenda during the second semester, following the conversations with the Amherst community.

Conversation turned to the question of the time for faculty meetings this year, an issue raised by Professor Fong in [a note that she had sent recently to the committee](#). In that communication, she pointed out that the date and time of the first faculty meeting (September 1, at 7:30 P.M.) of this academic year is a time when classes are in session; this year’s academic schedule includes 8 P.M. sections for classes and sections, Professor Fong noted. She suggested holding faculty meetings sometime during the time reserved for “community hours” (Tuesday or Thursday, from 5:10 P.M. to 7:50 P.M.). The provost noted that this time has been set aside for co-curricular activities for students, including, possibly, performances that would involve arts faculty, and not for community hours. Professor Trapani expressed support for looking beyond the typical evening meeting time and trying to find a block earlier in the day in which courses are not being taught. As a former member of the Ad Hoc Committee on Alternative Meeting Hours, which was charged in the spring of 2016 with examining the feasibility of creating a weekly two-hour block during the day that could be set aside for faculty meetings and community scheduling, he said that he is aware of the challenges that are associated with finding an alternative time. Given that the academic schedule has been modified because of needs surrounding remote learning this fall, he wonders if new possibilities might emerge, however.

Continuing the discussion, Professor Trapani suggested that Friday afternoons, a potential time for faculty meetings that has been dismissed in the past because of the fear that there would be low attendance, might be workable, particularly since colleagues presumably won’t be traveling on Fridays. The provost noted that a number of classes are being held on Fridays up until 5:00 P.M. Professor Manion also expressed support for finding a time for faculty meetings earlier in the day. Provost Epstein said that it is possible that Mondays or Wednesdays earlier in the evening might work, but that she

would need to confirm this idea with Jesse Barba, director of institutional research and registrar services. Professor Umphrey wondered if the time slot reserved for first-year seminars in the fall might be available for faculty meetings and community hours in the spring. Provost Epstein said that this slot is very heavily used and would not be available for faculty meetings. The members agreed to have the first faculty meeting at the regular meeting time and to explore whether alternatives might be found

going forward. The committee next reviewed a draft faculty meeting agenda for September 1 and voted six in favor and zero opposed to forward it to the faculty.

Professor Umphrey next asked a number of questions about the anti-racism plan that the president had outlined in [her email to the community of August 3, 2020](#). She applauded the president's statement of values and energetic program surrounding this important and pressing issue. Professor Umphrey then asked three questions on behalf of colleagues. First, is it expected that the bias-reporting and response protocol will encompass incidents occurring in the classroom? If so, to what extent should faculty weigh in when the proposed process intersects with academic freedom and freedom of expression? Second, she asked about the process for awarding the remaining three FTEs of the five senior faculty FTEs requested by the president and approved by the board of trustees to help diversify the faculty, as well as future FTEs allocated via the usual Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) processes. Professor Umphrey expressed concern that some academic departments, particularly smaller ones with less curricular flexibility, and those that focus on disciplines with competitors whose salary scales significantly outpace those of liberal arts colleges, may find it challenging to identify and recruit Black and Latinx scholars. This could mean that such departments end up with fewer FTEs in the long run, as they may not be among the departments that, as President Martin's letter indicates may be required, have "already made progress toward racial diversity using existing lines or have filled one of the open new lines." Professor Umphrey pointed out that, under the plan, such departments will get preference when the president and provost review recommendations from the CEP for searches. Would departments that had followed the 2018 Curriculum Committee's recommendation to hire faculty with expertise in underrepresented regions of the world now be disadvantaged when requesting new or replacement FTEs, she wondered. Lastly, Professor Umphrey asked how to reconcile the important contributions of the Instagram site *BlackAmherstSpeaks*, calling the community's attention to the many abrasive and wearing incidents of racism faced by Amherst Students, with some posts that highlight individual faculty and staff in ways that make it possible to identify them—and which some faculty and staff believe were referenced in President Martin's letter. Those who may be mentioned in social media posts (by name or otherwise) cannot easily find ways to respond, Professor Umphrey said, placing particularly staff and pre-tenure faculty in a vulnerable position.

Responding to the questions in reverse order, President Martin commented that there are no examples that are used on the Instagram site that she has not heard multiple times before from students during office hours and in other venues. In her view, the community should first concentrate on showing Black students that Amherst cares about what students are telling us. In regard to the FTE allocation process, the president expressed concern that only two of the FTE lines for senior hires of Black and Latinx faculty have been used since an invitation to submit proposals for them was extended to departments in 2016. The faculty needs to do better in the work of diversifying the faculty, and the college needs to take bold steps to provide support for this effort, including by exerting some pressure. She informed the members that Amherst is committed to providing the resources that are needed to recruit and retain outstanding faculty of color. In regard to the three remaining FTE lines, the president said that it is possible that the college will now consider hires of assistant professors at the advanced stage in this rank. President Martin also noted that, when reviewing proposals for these and other FTEs, the provost and she would continue to take many factors into account when reviewing the CEP's recommendations, not only one. Addressing the question about the proposed bias-reporting and response protocol, the president said that the faculty will consider

issues that touch on the academic freedom and freedom of expression in the classroom. She noted that the Presidential Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion believes that the bias-reporting and response protocol should not be limited to student-to-student interactions. If it is, students will continue to suffer indignities in and outside the classroom, it is felt. President Martin informed the members that the anti-bias and response protocol that is being developed is being modeled on the system at the University of Chicago. Professor Umphrey said that she is pleased to learn that the faculty will have the opportunity to weigh in on the anti-bias and response protocol at the proposal stage, in the contexts that have been described, and to have an impact on the outcome. Professor Kingston commented that any part of a bias-reporting and response protocol that seeks to regulate speech in the classroom must first be discussed by the faculty. He also feels that it should be made clear that anonymous posts on social media are explicitly excluded from consideration in the tenure and promotion process.

Returning to the question of diversifying the faculty, President Martin expressed support for making use of cross-departmental cluster hiring, which has been a successful approach used by other institutions, she noted. Moving away from thinking in departmental terms and seeding interdisciplinary domains would be beneficial on multiple fronts, Professor del Moral noted, commenting that she supports a cluster approach that would bring Black and brown faculty to Amherst in cohorts. Under such a model, faculty are hired with peers and can explore topics collaboratively under such a structure. Bringing a senior colleague to the college, who then attracts promising scholars in the field who are at earlier stages of their careers, is an effective and helpful strategy, Professor del Moral noted. President Martin commented that hiring in clusters takes coordination, time, and effort, but that the college is committed to investing in this and other ways of building a faculty that more closely resembles the student body and the country. Additional FTE lines can likely be made available for this purpose, she said.

Conversation turned to the proposal from the leaders of the Black Student Union (BSU) to revise the college's [Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom](#) to address the intersections of harmful and harassing speech. The BSU has provided the committee with examples from some other institutions that bar the use of racial epithets and racially derogatory remarks and set some limits on free speech that is threatening, potentially violent, and/or constitutes harassment. President Martin said that she agrees with the students' view that members of the community should be held accountable when they demean or harass entire groups. The students have asked that these ideas be reflected in the college's Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom. President Martin noted that any revisions of the statement require a vote of the faculty.

Provost Epstein reminded the members of the view of last year's Committee of Six 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. This year's committee agreed that the relationship between harmful and harassing language and the college's Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom is a very important issue for the faculty to address soon. Professor del Moral asked about the best way to move forward. At the committee's request, Professors Umphrey and Manion agreed to review the statements on academic and expressive freedom of other colleges and universities, including examples of other statements beyond those that had been provided by the BSU, and to bring a proposal for a revision of Amherst's statement to the committee for review and discussion. The other members thanked Professors Manion and Umphrey for taking on this work, which all agreed must be thought through very carefully. Professor Manion said that she looks forward to building on the work of the BSU, which she appreciates greatly. Professor Umphrey agreed

and also noted the importance of reviewing other institutions' statements and policies systematically, and by so doing, giving the process broader reach.

Discussion turned to the committee's agenda for the fall. The members reviewed a list of issues provided by Associate Provost Tobin, some of which represented carryover from the committee's work of previous years, and considered the time that will need to be devoted to reviewing personnel cases. Professor Leise suggested that the committee focus on a set of issues that fall under the umbrella of attracting and retaining faculty, including several that touch on the evaluation of teaching. Provost Epstein wondered if appointing an ad hoc committee to consider the evaluation of teaching, would be a good approach to beginning to address this issue. She noted that the ad hoc committee that had developed the common teaching evaluation form, which had been chaired by Professor Kingston, had been very effective. That ad hoc committee had a narrow charge—to develop the form—she noted, and had not been asked to address the evaluation process broadly. Potentially, the service burdens of

faculty, and possible inequities, which is an issue that touches on evaluation, would be another matter that the committee could consider, the members noted. Beyond the regular work of the Committee of Six, and the attention it must devote to matters arising out of the pandemic, the members agreed to make anti-racism work its top priority, including the intersection of academic and expressive freedom and harmful and harassing speech and the bias-reporting and response protocol. Professor Manion expressed hope that the faculty will approach anti-racism work expansively and positively.

In regard to appointing an ad hoc committee to focus on the evaluation of teaching, Professor Umphrey said that she supports doing so. She feels that this is the right moment to think broadly about the evaluation of teaching, particularly as so many tenure-track faculty members are expressing concerns about equity in relation to this and other processes. Professor Umphrey recommended that a tenure-track faculty member be invited to serve, if an ad hoc committee is constituted. Provost Epstein concurred that having an ad hoc committee focus on this work would be desirable, while also noting that there are not many faculty members available to serve on additional committees at this point. Professor Kingston said that he is nervous about the prospect of burdening faculty with additional responsibilities at this challenging time. He wonders whether this is a moment to try to innovate, or to focus on keeping things afloat and doing the best job possible. He also expressed the view that it would be helpful to have the new common teaching evaluation form in use for a longer period before turning to an assessment of the evaluation process.

Referencing the long list of possible agenda items on which the committee would not have time to focus this semester, Professors Trapani and del Moral expressed support for exploring a structure in which one Committee of Six focuses on faculty personnel matters, while another addresses the executive committee work. In this way, more could be accomplished, they feel.

Professor Trapani next asked whether the committee should meet soon with the student leaders of the BSU to continue the conversation/relationship that was begun by the last Committee of Six. The other members expressed the view that it would be best for the committee to begin its work on the relevant issues before having such a meeting. All supported meeting with the students in the future.

The meeting concluded with the members asking the provost to remind the faculty about the college's policy on [Surreptitious or Unauthorized Observable Recording of Others](#), a part of the *Student Code of Conduct*, and to encourage professors to include a link to the policy on their syllabi. The members reiterated that doing so is particularly important, given the risks and challenges associated with teaching politically sensitive content in a remote environment. Provost Epstein agreed to do so at the September 1 faculty meeting. She noted that a recent issue of the provost's newsletter had also provided information about this topic. (In addition, a discussion of this issue appears in the Committee of Six minutes of July 27, 2020, as does a link to the board of directors of the Association for Asian

Studies' [helpful statement on this issue](#).) In addition, as noted earlier, Hanna Bliss, director of institutional student engagement, has been asked to speak with students from China about this issue.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The fifth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2020–2021 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, August 24, 2020. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors del Moral, Kingston, Leise, Trapani, and Umphrey; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder. Professor Manion was absent.

The meeting began with President Martin commenting that the moving-in process for students had gone very well, and that it is wonderful to see them back on campus. She also informed the committee that a member of the college's custodial staff recently tested positive for COVID-19, the first staff case and second overall case this semester on campus. President Martin said that the staff member is at home, isolating, and is currently asymptomatic and feeling well.

Under "Questions from Committee Members, Professor del Moral asked about the status of plans to send a survey to all faculty and staff at the college to seek demographic information that can inform the college's efforts surrounding equity and inclusion. Provost Epstein said that she would check in with Norm Jones, chief equity, and inclusion officer, to learn more about the timetable for the project.

Professor Kingston noted the consternation caused to some faculty by the college's recent determination that, due to laws governing local employment and tax responsibility, any Amherst student who is residing outside the United States, including those who are studying remotely, are unable to work for the college. He asked if Amherst will make efforts to navigate processes that would allow international students to work for the college in the spring. Professor Kingston informed the members that the economics department employs many international students as teaching assistants and graders. He pointed out that enabling international students to continue to work in these and other roles will help keep them involved in the economics department, and the Amherst community more broadly, during the time in which the pandemic is preventing them from being on campus. Provost Epstein said that she recognizes and regrets this situation for international students, and domestic students who are living abroad, but that the college has little leeway where tax laws and other barriers to paying international students at this time are involved. She reminded the members that international students who are studying remotely, but who are still living in the United States, may still work for the college.

Professor Kingston also asked whether international students' financial-aid packages, specifically the amount of their family contribution, are being adjusted if they are unable to come to the United States. Provost Epstein said that she would look into this matter and report back to the committee. (Matt McGann, dean of admission and financial aid, later informed the provost that all students who are learning remotely, whether they are doing so in the United States or outside the country, have had their financial aid adjusted. Students who are studying remotely do not pay for room and board, and they receive an enhanced personal allowance to account for increased expenses that result from not being in residence at Amherst. Also, all students have seen their term-time work expectation replaced with Amherst College scholarship.)

Continuing with questions, Professor Umphrey asked if students will be kept informed when professors decide to shift classes from being in person to remote, noting that some students are upset about such changes. Provost Epstein said that students will be informed. She noted that it is difficult to know the exact number of such shifts before the add/drop period concludes. Another complication has been that some faculty members have decided to change modalities without informing the registrar's office. The provost said that this problem came to light because some faculty who had said initially that they would be teaching in person did not ask to be tested for COVID-19, a requirement for those teaching on campus. As of Friday afternoon, 32 percent of the faculty appeared to be teaching in

person. Also, as of Friday, one-fifth of students who are in residence did not have any in-person classes, Provost Epstein said. At least two professors let her know that they had been exposed to COVID-19 and would be returning to in-person instruction once they had completed the necessary quarantine period. Provost Epstein said that she continues to hope that colleagues, over time, will become more confident that the campus is safe, and will choose to teach in person and/or to meet with students in small groups and in office hours on campus. Provost Epstein informed the members that she will keep them informed about these statistics.

Turning to another topic, as a precursor to the envisioned substantive work on the issue of service burdens being placed on the faculty, Professor Trapani suggested that it would be helpful for the provost's office to find better ways to track each faculty member's record of service. In reviewing his own history of committee service in the documents that have been provided to the Committee of Six to inform the process of making appointments to committees, he noticed that some of his assignments were not represented. Completing this logistical work of having accurate records of service would be a good way to prepare for the consideration of this issue, in his view. Provost Epstein noted that her office currently must rely on antiquated systems to track faculty members' college-wide service. The expectation is that the ability to track service will improve a great deal following the launch of the Workday system in January, she noted. Professor del Moral said that, at the departmental level, she finds it useful, as chair, to document colleagues' department and college service by asking everyone about their assignments and maintaining a simple spreadsheet. In this way, she can get a sense of her colleagues' service burdens during a given semester, and keeps this in mind when assigning additional departmental responsibilities. At the committee's request, Professor del Moral later shared the spreadsheet that she had created with the members, who felt it was a helpful tool. The committee suggested sharing this document with department chairs, as well, and Provost Epstein agreed to do so.

The provost next informed the members that research on alternative times for faculty meetings this fall has revealed that the traditional time for the meetings (the first and third Tuesdays of the month, at 7:30 P.M.) presents the fewest conflicts with the teaching schedule. This semester only two faculty members, both of whom are visitors, are teaching at this time, she noted. The members then approved the following dates (at 7:30 P.M.) for possible faculty meetings: September 1 (already confirmed), September 15, October 6, October 20, November 17, December 1, and December 15. The committee then reviewed proposals for the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Summer Stipend competition.

At 3:00 P.M., Jesse Barba, director of institutional research and registrar services, joined the meeting to review the results of the 2019–2020 Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE) Faculty Job Satisfaction Survey. J. Barba noted that the COACHE program is housed at the Harvard University Graduate School of Education and offers one of the most well-known surveys for exploring the job satisfaction of faculty. He informed the members that Amherst has participated in this survey since 2013, and that the 2020 survey was administered in February and March, and was sent to all faculty, including all tenure-line faculty, visiting faculty, and lecturers. Prior to the meeting, the committee had been given the Chief Academic Officer Preview, a report that provides survey respondents' overall satisfaction with twenty-five areas of faculty work. Provost Epstein said that she plans to hold open meetings for faculty about the survey results and to post the preview report on a password-protected site for faculty. She also plans to hold separate meetings with chairs of academic departments and programs, untenured faculty, and associate professors. In regard to the latter, it was noted that faculty at this rank were the most negative about their experience at Amherst in their

responses to the survey.

Continuing, J. Barba explained that each of the survey's topical benchmarks is a composite of several indicators of job satisfaction, with scores ranging from very dissatisfied (1) to very satisfied (5). For each benchmark, the report shows Amherst's score relative to all COACHE participants and five peers selected by Amherst. The peers chosen for the 2020 survey are Bates, Davidson, Hamilton, Kenyon, and Wellesley, he noted. The benchmark analysis is broken out for all faculty, pre-tenure faculty, associate professors, women, and faculty of color. J. Barba noted that the report identifies several areas of strength and concern in job satisfaction, relative to Amherst's peers and all COACHE participants. According to the survey results, Amherst's areas of strength are collaboration, facilities and resources, governance adaptability, a shared sense of purpose in governance, health and retirement benefits, satisfaction with senior leadership, and satisfaction with research. Areas of concern are departmental collegiality, departmental engagement, department leadership, service work, promotion to full professor, and the clarity of tenure expectations. J. Barba said that it is important to note that these areas do not necessarily represent an absolute high or low score, but rather an evaluation relative to other COACHE schools. As an example, the benchmark for departmental collegiality is a 4 (satisfied), but that still leaves Amherst in the bottom 30 percent of COACHE participants. He then answered the members' questions about a table that presented the trend in each survey benchmark over the three project years.

The committee expressed some concern about the survey's overall response rate of 49 percent, which represents a decline since the last survey, and which is a lower response rate than that of many peer schools. The response rate in 2017 was 56 percent, it was noted. J. Barba explained that the end of the survey project had overlapped with the beginning of the shift to remote education, due to COVID-19. He said that a response of 50 percent is fairly good, and that the results of this survey are largely consistent with survey results in 2013 and 2017. Losing a few critical weeks of survey time could have had an impact on the response rate, he noted. Professor Trapani pointed out that peer schools would have experienced the same truncated survey process, but still had higher response rates than Amherst's. In addition, the committee noted that Amherst's response rate has traditionally been low. Professor Kingston said he was surprised by Amherst's low response rates, and he wonders if a representative sample resulted.

Continuing the conversation, the members were a bit puzzled that the response rate for faculty of color was quite low, but that faculty in this category who did respond were generally positive, particularly in comparison to other participants in the COACHE survey. It was noted that the response rate for non-tenure-track faculty was also low, which was seen as a concern. Professor Kingston wondered if there was an error in an item at the bottom of page eleven of the report. Among line items tabulating the worst aspects of working at Amherst, one line is presented as capturing responses indicating that there are no positive aspects of work at Amherst, rather than no negative aspects, which might have been the intention. J. Barba said he would inquire. Responding to a question from Professor Trapani about some survey items, J. Barba clarified that some questions were provided only to those (e.g., tenure-track faculty) for whom they were relevant, rather than to all respondents. Professor Trapani also expressed the view that some aspects of the data visualization within the report made it challenging to make comparisons among groups across ranks for a given survey item, for example. J. Barba said that COACHE is responsible for the production of the report, which would be time-consuming to modify. Professor Trapani noted that it would be useful to consider how different groups compare to each other in their satisfaction levels for the individual items.

Turning to another issue that arises from the survey responses, Professor Umphrey noted a significant trend downward over the seven-year period between 2013 and 2020 in regard to collaboration among faculty. She wonders whether this trend is reflective of less involvement in interdisciplinary work among colleagues. Professor Umphrey also wonders whether the concerns surrounding departmental engagement and collaboration that are reflected in the survey responses signal a culture shift over the past seven years. She also is curious to learn more about the decline in satisfaction around teaching during that seven-year span, wondering if and how demands on faculty have increased or shifted. The committee wondered whether survey respondents may have different views than non-respondents. The committee thanked J. Barba, who left the meeting at 3:30 P.M.

Going forward, Provost Epstein said that she plans to consult with N. Jones and Pawan Dhingra and Allen Hart, faculty equity and inclusion officers, about how the college can learn more—and seek to address—the issues that some of the survey responses raise. In regard to following up on the survey results in other ways, she recommended that the committee work to develop language for the *Faculty Handbook* to clarify the criteria for tenure and promotion to full professor, a project that has been on the committee's agenda for several years. Any change in the language will require a vote of the faculty, she noted. In regard to promotion to full professor, Professor Kingston commented that negative views on this issue may be a natural result of the college's shift in practice away from the promotion review operating as a rubber stamp. Having a more substantive review at this career stage may account for associate professors' dissatisfaction with the process, but that does not mean that this change is not positive, in his view. Professor Kingston said that, overall, he feels that, while the COACHE survey can be a useful tool for studying trends, it should be subsidiary to more qualitative approaches. In his view, one of the most significant issues that should be addressed is the quality of childcare that is available to the faculty. This has been an area of concern for years, he noted. Provost Epstein said that it is her understanding that it is the quality of the Woodside facility, and not the care, that has been the most pressing issue. She informed the members that plans were under way to consider a new childcare facility at the time that the pandemic struck. Unfortunately, that project will need to be delayed as a result of COVID-19.

Concluding the conversation, Professor del Moral said that she was also surprised by the decline in the survey's response rate over the past seven years. She wonders whether communicating about the concrete changes (e.g., the development of the program to support and compensate department chairs) that have been outgrowths of concerns expressed by the faculty via previous surveys may be helpful. Showing that the college takes the survey results seriously, and acts on them when possible, could inspire more faculty to participate, perhaps. The provost said that she would speak with J. Barba about taking this approach when faculty are next invited to participate in the survey. Professor Trapani then suggested that the committee also consider ways to address respondents' concern about the appreciation and recognition of faculty. In this regard, Professor Leise expressed appreciation for the Center for Teaching and Learning and Academic Technology Services' practice of showcasing and recognizing on their website the pedagogical innovations of individual faculty. Professor Trapani noted the importance of considering meaningful ways to value and recognize faculty service and contributions to the college and their fields.

Conversation turned to expectations for committee service during the pandemic, an issue about which some chairs of faculty committees have sought clarification, the provost said. She noted that the Ad Hoc Committee on Academic Structures during COVID-19 had recommended that committees meet only when they feel it is necessary to do so. The members agreed that, given the extra demands on the

faculty during the pandemic, committees should set several priorities, address pressing matters/projects only, and meet with less frequency and only when necessary. President Martin said that she supports this approach, while expressing the view that the college's work surrounding anti-racism cannot be delayed. The members concurred. After some additional conversation about the need to move forward on this front, it was recommended that the provost reach out the chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Student Learning to suggest that this body continue its efforts to learn more about student success at Amherst. Concluding the conversation about committee service, Provost Epstein noted that, in light of the committee's concerns about the number of faculty that might be asked to serve on the Ad Hoc Faculty Committee on the Implementation of the Workday Student Module, she has revised the charge for that group. The provost proposed that the chair of the Committee on Educational Policy (or the chair's designee), a faculty member who is serving as a class dean, and four other faculty members (with at least one faculty member from the humanities, social sciences, and sciences) serve. Professor Kingston asked if there is already a committee that includes faculty that is serving in an advisory role for the Workday project. Provost Epstein responded that there is such a committee, which is focused on human resources and payroll functions. Professor Kingston suggested that the faculty on that committee be invited to continue their work by serving on the new committee, as these colleagues would already be familiar with the Workday project. Provost Epstein agreed to extend an invitation to these faculty members. Professor Trapani asked if service on the ad hoc committee would "count" as the members' committee service. Provost Epstein said that she believes that it would.

In the brief time remaining, the members discussed [a letter from Professors Hicks and Edwards](#), who wrote in their role as members of the Consultative Group for Tenure-Track Faculty. Professor Kingston, noting the valuable role that the consultative group had played in last year's effort to create a common evaluation form, expressed support for formalizing the structure and role of the consultative group, including its plans to elect its members. Other Committee of Six members said that they share this view. Professor Umphrey asked if the committee can be provided with some background about the consultative group. Associate Provost Tobin said that she would provide the members with relevant Committee of Six minutes, which include information about the consultative group's history. The committee agreed to invite the consultative group (past and current members) to meet with the Committee of Six to discuss the issues raised in the letter, most prominently the request to engage in consultation about the challenges posed by COVID-19, and future accommodations that might be offered to untenured faculty by the college. (Professors Edwards and Hicks later agreed to meet with the Committee of Six on August 31.)

Concluding the meeting, the members discussed [an August 12, 2020, note sent to the committee by Professor Fong](#), which had a number of signatories. The committee reviewed each of the measures proposed by them. In regard to the request for regular information about the number of students studying in different modalities, Professor Trapani commented that the college has been sending weekly communications to the community, and conveying information as it becomes known, including within the minutes of the Committee of Six and at meetings of the chairs of academic departments and programs. It was noted that shifts in the decisions of some faculty and students have made the situation fluid. As to the request that Amherst provide financial support for students who have made a change to remote learning, Provost Epstein said that the college has been generous with the support that it is providing to students affected by the pandemic. In regard to the request to begin planning for the spring semester, President Martin and Provost Epstein responded that it is too early to begin making such plans, as the course that the pandemic takes will be determinative in many ways. The signatories

also asked for clarity about whether faculty are expected to teach on campus, or are free to decide for themselves if they wish to teach in person or remotely, without repercussions. Professor Trapani said, that from his view, Amherst has made it clear that faculty can decide whether they will teach on campus or remotely during the pandemic, with the hope that as many faculty as possible will choose to teach on campus—if they are able. In regard to whether such a decision will have any impact on faculty personnel processes, Professor Trapani noted that the college has reiterated that the decision not to teach in person will not affect the outcome of such processes.

Noting the request to extend policies from spring 2020 surrounding teaching evaluations for tenure-track faculty and the extension of their tenure clocks, the committee stood by its earlier decision to return to the regular processes of having end-of-semester teaching evaluations and future retrospective letters solicited from all students in all classes taught by tenure-track faculty, and to have these evaluations and letters included in reappointment and tenure dossiers. The committee also continues to feel that it is premature to offer any additional extension of tenure clocks at this time. If the course of the pandemic results in dramatic changes, the members would be open to thinking further about these decisions, they said. As to the request to give tenure-track faculty the option of a course release that does not require a reduction in pay, the provost noted that the Ad Hoc Committee on Academic Structures During COVID-19 decided not to take this approach. Rather, the approach has been for the provost and departments to work with individual faculty members to make a number of arrangements to reduce pressures surrounding teaching and to offer greater flexibility, particularly for pre-tenure colleagues, and for all faculty with significant care-giving responsibilities. In terms of the proposal to allow faculty to choose to take an additional course reduction in exchange for teaching an extra course in the future, or for supervising special topics or theses, the provost noted that “mortgaging” courses would be problematic, particularly because the college expects to have a greater number of students on campus next year, as about two hundred students are currently taking academic leaves or gap years.

In regard to [a second note sent by Professor Fong on August 14, 2020, on the topic of admissions during the pandemic](#), Provost Epstein informed the members that President Martin had responded to the suggestions therein, which are not considered viable.

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The sixth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2020–2021 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 3:05 P.M. on Monday, August 31, 2020. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors del Moral, Kingston, Leise, Manion, Trapani, and Umphrey; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The meeting began with President Martin providing an update on COVID-19 testing that has taken place since the beginning of the fall semester. So far, out of about eight thousand tests, two students and one custodian have tested positive for the virus, she said. It is thought that the test result for the custodian, who remains asymptomatic, may have been a false positive. The president informed the members that many parents have written to say how grateful they are that Amherst decided to bring some students back to campus, and how pleased their children are to be here. She thanked the faculty and staff for the work they are doing on students' behalf.

Continuing, Provost Epstein echoed the president's thanks and noted the importance for students of having the opportunity to be on campus. At the same time, enforcement of rules surrounding student behavior has emerged as a significant need, and the senior staff has been considering a number of different approaches, she said. Among them are putting posters up across the campus with reminders of the rules surrounding social distancing and wearing masks, and the importance of not putting the community at risk by violating these measures. Some coaches are assisting student affairs professionals by being on campus on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings to support students and remind them of safety measures. Professor Kingston asked if Amherst students who are living off campus nearby (and studying remotely) will be permitted to have COVID-19 tests. President Martin said that the college is eager for these students, who number about forty, to be tested. They have been invited to have testing that will take place at a time that is separate from that of other members of the college community. President Martin noted that it is difficult for the college to know exactly how many enrolled students are living nearby; approximately thirty have permission from student affairs to live off campus for various reasons, and their addresses are known. Other students in the area have responded to requests for information, but not yet all.

The members turned to several committee assignments. On the subject of committee service more generally, the provost noted that some colleagues seem to be unfamiliar with the process that is used to appoint faculty to committees, including the Committee of Six's central role. She plans to find ways to make the process more transparent, including through a discussion of college governance with faculty who are in the early stages of their careers at Amherst. On a related note, Provost Epstein informed the members that she was pleased to learn from Professor O'Hara, chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Student Learning, that the ad hoc committee will be meeting biweekly this semester.

The committee next considered proposals for the Mellon New Directions grant and selected the college's nominee. Following the conclusion of that process, Professor Trapani thanked Professor Manion for her work as the organizer and facilitator of *The History of Anti-Black Racism in America* lecture series and seminar. He praised the first talk by Professor Mary Frances Berry, which took place on August 26, and said that he is looking forward to future lectures in the series.

In anticipation of the imminent arrival of the members of the Consultative Group for Tenure-Track Faculty, the committee briefly discussed the history and purpose of the group. Professor Umphrey said that past Committee of Six minutes about the consultative group, which had been provided to the members, had been very helpful in learning more about the context for the upcoming conversation. When asked by the committee to offer her thoughts about the group, Provost Epstein expressed support for having such a body, while noting that it is important that it not serve solely as a vehicle for advocacy. As such, it could contribute to an *us versus them* culture at the college that would be divisive. In her view, the group's purpose should be to support tenure-track faculty and serve as a conduit for communication with the administration, but also to support the institution.

Professors Edwards and Hicks, who are currently the only members of the consultative group, joined the meeting at 3:30 P.M. The discussion that ensued focused on ways of formalizing the charge of the

group, including better defining its structure; the process for selecting its members; and the work that it undertakes.

Professors Edwards and Hicks thanked the committee for inviting them to meet. Professor Hicks began the conversation by asking if tenure-track faculty had been consulted before the Committee of Six made the recent decision to return to the regular system of soliciting student end-of-semester evaluations and retrospective letters for all classes taught by tenure-track faculty. (Last year's committee decided that there would be an opt-in system for end-of-semester evaluations and retrospective letters in the spring of 2020, due to the impact of the pandemic.) Professor Kingston responded that, while the Committee of Six is always open to hearing colleagues' views, the committee is elected to make decisions and does not necessarily consult with affected groups before doing so. In this case, if the situation with the pandemic changes dramatically, the committee could always revisit this decision, he noted. Commenting further, Professor Kingston said he expects that evaluations of teaching from this highly unusual time will be read in context. Professor Hicks commented on the broader, ongoing conversation within the academy about the disparate impact of the pandemic and how to remedy it—in regard to, for example, race, gender, and migration status. Professor Umphrey said that it would be helpful if Professor Hicks could be more specific about the ways she envisions that the college can think equitably about processes moving forward. She herself would worry about creating inequity by *not* following the regular processes of the college, which apply to all. Among these processes are the requirements surrounding student evaluation of teaching.

Continuing the conversation, Professors Edwards and Hicks conveyed tenure-track faculty members' concerns and anxiety about the impact that COVID-19 is having on research, teaching, and service—and asked how the college will ensure that the effect of the pandemic will be taken into account at the time of reappointment and tenure. Professor Edwards expressed the view that there are disparities faced by tenure-track faculty that are specific to their disciplines and/or departments. He warned against a one-size-fits-all approach to evaluating and documenting the impact of the pandemic on tenure-track faculty members' research and teaching, particularly for women and other members of underrepresented groups. Having pre-tenure faculty from different disciplines engage in a conversation about the effects of the pandemic would be helpful, Professors Edwards and Hicks concurred. Learning more about what different colleagues are facing would inform the work of the consultative group, and college decision-making. President Martin suggested that departments, including the chair and other tenured faculty, should be made aware of the distinctions under discussion, and she stressed the importance of departments' role in keeping a record of the obstacles being faced by tenure-track faculty—and the resultant impact. Certainly, this topic should be part of the annual conversation process, Provost Epstein noted. The committee agreed that departments and tenure-track faculty will play a key role in regard to documentation, and that the Committee of Six will review candidates' records in context when making recommendations to the president to inform faculty personnel processes.

Discussion turned to creating a charge for the consultative group, which would include the way in which the consultative group's membership is chosen. Professors Edwards and Hicks stressed their desire to learn more about the priorities and needs of tenure-track faculty and said that it would be helpful to be able to send their colleagues surveys, with this goal, among others, in mind. Having this information will contribute to any charge that is drafted for the consultative group, they noted. Provost Epstein said that plans are under way to survey the faculty in October about their early experience in the fall. She suggested that, as was done last May when a survey was sent to the faculty, the consultative group frame some questions for tenure-track faculty. Professor Hicks noted that she and Professor Edwards had not received the results of the May survey. Provost Epstein said that she would check in with Jesse Barba, director of institutional research and registrar services, about this oversight. She feels that the consultative group should not be sending out surveys to the faculty directly, as all surveys need to be coordinated through the Office of Institutional Research, and all results must be available to the institution, rather than to a subgroup only. Professor Hicks stressed the need to gather data

systematically, in order to learn more about the issues of concern to tenure-track faculty. Provost Epstein said that her office would be happy to support such efforts, with the help of J. Barba.

The question of how members of the consultative group are chosen was the next topic of conversation. In regard to the idea of having an election, Professor Umphrey noted some potential complexities. Would being included on the ballot be optional, for example? Would service, if elected, be mandatory for tenure-track faculty? She suggested putting off the idea of an election and the idea of constituting the group as a standing committee (which would require a vote of the faculty) for now, as a focus on procedure at the expense of articulating the group's immediate concerns could prove to be a distraction. Distilling what the substantive issues are for tenure-track faculty, and what they see as the work that the consultative group should undertake, seems most important at this juncture, in Professor Umphrey's view. The other members concurred. Formalizing structures for the group should also be a top priority.

The committee next asked why there are only two members of the consultative group at this time. Professors Edwards and Hicks said that there have been four members in the past, but that two members of last year's group have rotated off. Professor Edwards noted that the process for selecting new members has been informal, and has relied on internal recommendations from current members. Some tenure-track faculty have expressed concern about this process and have shared that they do not feel that they are being represented by the members of the group. Without being able to gather information, it is challenging to know what views to represent, Professor Edwards commented.

Continuing the conversation, President Martin expressed some concern that, constituting the consultative group as a standing committee could cement the idea that tenure-track faculty should not serve on major faculty committees. It might be felt that tenure-track faculty should be relegated to their own committee, if one exists. As it is, President Martin said that she has been surprised that tenure-track faculty tend to be "protected" from such service for the most part. The president expressed the view that having tenure-track faculty engaged in service that presents opportunities for leadership is good for tenure-track faculty, and good for Amherst. Professor Trapani said that he served on a number of major committees prior to being tenured and often felt like an outlier. He shares President Martin's view that it is important to have the perspectives of tenure-track faculty represented on college committees; it is his hope the ethos surrounding such service at Amherst will change, including its value toward tenure.

Responding, Provost Epstein noted that, in her experience, the Committee of Six has been responsible for the absence of tenure-track colleagues on major committees, as members often discourage inviting pre-tenure members of their own departments to serve in the interest of protection. In her view, this approach works against the idea that committee service is for everyone. Professor Trapani asked whether committee service is currently valued at the time of tenure. Provost Epstein said that the value must be weighed against the time that service on a committee requires. Professor Hicks expressed the view that serving on a standing committee for tenure-track faculty should not preclude serving on other committees, in her view. She can imagine that serving on the consultative group, should it become a standing committee, would not be a weekly commitment. At the same time, Professor Hicks expressed the view that there has been a spike in the service burden among faculty of color during the pandemic that should be recognized.

Professor Hicks, returning to the issue of how the consultative group should gather information about tenure-track faculty members' views, noted that this has been done in the past through informal listening sessions that have been held in person in the early morning. Professor Kingston asked if holding a listening session for all tenure-track faculty via Zoom could be workable, now that it is not possible to gather tenure-track faculty for an in-person meeting. Such a session would provide a venue for authoring a set of survey questions that could be included in the October survey, he suggested. More generally, Professor Trapani asked what the mechanism might be for consultation when decisions involve tenure-track faculty. The Committee of Six should consider this question, in his view. The members thanked Professors Hicks and Edwards for meeting and said that they look forward to working

with them on the envisioned charge for the consultative group, and in other ways that they may find helpful. Professors Edwards and Hicks said that they would begin work on the charge and will look forward to sharing a draft with the members. They left the meeting at 4:30 P.M.

In the time remaining, the members reflected on the conversation with Professors Edwards and Hicks. Professor Kingston emphasized the need to help these colleagues create more structure for the consultative group, and find a better approach for selecting the group's membership. The approach used now, which involves having current members float some names by one another, seems unlikely to ensure a breadth of perspectives. In his view, the consultative group could be a venue for cultivating leadership opportunities for tenure-track faculty, and it is his hope that the group will become a recognized and visible body. Professor Leise stressed the importance of helping the group become representative. To this end, she would avoid the approach of holding elections in favor of a method that would allow for carefully constituting a committee; having representatives who would bring a range of experience and perspectives to their work is critical, in her view. The other members agreed, and Professor del Moral suggested that, to this end, it would be a good idea for the membership to include representatives from the humanities, social sciences, and sciences. All agreed that more thought and clarity is needed if the group is to become a robust, constructive, and collaborative body. The committee also expressed concern that only two colleagues are leading the group at this time, and the burden that it is placing on them.

The meeting concluded with a brief related conversation about the need to address issues surrounding departmental cultures at the college. The members noted that this is an area that includes—and also extends beyond—the concerns of tenure-track faculty. Professor Umphrey said that she senses that departments may not currently be the cement that glues colleagues together, even as the college does not seem to be fostering interdisciplinary collaboration as much as has been the case in the past. There are interesting questions to raise and explore that go beyond the detailing of policy, she noted. Provost Epstein expressed the view that clarifying policies and procedures across departments could be a good place to start when it comes to addressing complaints about departmental cultures. She noted that many tenure-track colleagues' concerns about equity may stem from the fact that, at Amherst, departments have different policies and expectations. Given the decentralized structure of the college and the autonomy of departments, President Martin wonders about the degree to which departmental culture contributes to retention challenges. She suggested that it might be useful to do a faculty climate survey to learn more.

The meeting adjourned at 4:45 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The seventh meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2020–2021 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 3:05 P.M. on Monday, September 7, 2020. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors del Moral, Kingston, Leise, Manion, Trapani, and Umphrey; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The meeting began with the consideration of several committee assignments, after which the members turned to “Questions from Committee Members.” Professor Trapani noted that, while driving by the campus recently in the evening, he had seen a number of students congregating and not wearing masks. Some were drinking and being boisterous, while other students nearby were following social-distancing rules and wearing masks. He asked Provost Epstein whether coaches are now present on campus in the evenings later in the week and on weekends to support the efforts of student affairs staff to remind students about the rules related to COVID-19. Provost Epstein said that it is her understanding that some coaches are now walking around campus on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings. In addition, as part of efforts to have more adults on campus in the evening, especially in residence halls, the college has increased the number of community development coordinator (CDC)s. The CDCs are staff members who are part of the residential life staff, the president noted. President Martin said that it is her understanding that there are now six CDCs (five are on campus and one is in the process of being hired), and Provost Epstein said that she believes that they are observing what is going on between 4 P.M. and 1 A.M. The CDCs are working to engage with students to build community and are also focusing on the need for safety, including the need to follow rules surrounding COVID-19 precautions. In addition, Dean of Students Liz Agosto often walks through campus late at night to get a sense of what is going on. President Martin said that she would inform Dean Agosto about the gathering that Professor Trapani had observed, and she thanked him for making her aware of it.

Professor Umphrey next asked about the status of the Ad Hoc Curriculum Committee’s recommendation that a new required sophomore seminar be developed. Provost Epstein responded that a number of faculty members have formed a group to pilot a sophomore seminar that would focus on issues of migration. She is not sure if the group is working on this project this semester, but said that she would check in with its members to get an update. Colleagues who are interested in bringing a proposal forward for a required sophomore seminar feel that it would have more potential for success if experimentation occurred before bringing the idea to the faculty for discussion and a vote.

The remainder of the meeting was devoted to a discussion of possible ways to address the intersection of hateful and harassing speech and the college’s [Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom](#), an issue that the student leaders of the Black Student Union (BSU) raised last spring. In preparation for the conversation, the provost’s office provided the members with a good deal of background material about the current Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom, which was approved by the faculty in May of 2016; [the BSU’s proposal to revise that statement](#); academic freedom statements from other institutions that the BSU collected and shared with last year’s committee; and the minutes of the Committee of Six’s conversations of last year about this issue. The committee was also provided with [the committee-of-the-whole notes from the faculty meeting of April 19, 2016](#), and [the faculty meeting minutes of May 3, 2016, when the statement was approved](#).

Continuing the conversation, President Martin noted that the college is moving forward with addressing a number of proposals that originated with the BSU, and also with other recommendations about ways in which the college might move forward with anti-racism efforts. She informed the committee that work will soon be completed on drafts that address three interrelated initiatives—a policy devoted to identity-based harassment and discrimination; a change to the honor code that will be based on the new policy on harassment and discrimination; and the development of a bias-reporting and response protocol, which will rely heavily on the implementation of restorative practices at Amherst (a recommendation of the External Advisory Committee on Diversity, Inclusion, and Excellence, the president noted). Laurie Frankl, Title IX coordinator, and Dean Gendron, senior associate dean of students, have worked on the policy and its translation into the language of the code, and the Presidential Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion has worked on the latter. President Martin said that

the BSU is aware that making changes to the college's Statement of Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression is a faculty governance issue. The Committee of Six drafted the statement, and the faculty approved it, and any changes to the statement will require a vote of the faculty, it was noted. The committee felt that it would be informative to meet with the colleagues who have been working on the processes/policies that the president had just described, which should be considered by the committee in tandem with any proposal that may emerge to revise the Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom, the members agreed. The provost agreed to organize this discussion. The committee noted that any bias-reporting and response protocol that encompasses classroom activity will need to be considered very carefully.

In anticipation of the discussion about whether to revise the statement, the members had asked Professors Manion and Umphrey to prepare drafts of approaches/language to revise the Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom, with the goal of including limits on hateful and harassing speech—including the use of racial epithets that are targeted toward certain groups. Ahead of the meeting, Professor Umphrey had reviewed the statements of peer schools that had been gathered by the BSU, as well as policies on both academic freedom and anti-discrimination of fifteen institutions (including those the BSU noted), and had provided additional material to the committee.

Professor Manion began the conversation by expressing the view that any proposal to revise Amherst's Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom should be framed within the context of the current moment, which is drawing greater attention to the impact of systemic racism in this country, and leading to change on many other campuses. Listening and responding to what Amherst students are requesting vis-à-vis the statement is very important, she noted. Professor Manion commented that many institutions are now addressing the use of racial epithets and other forms of harmful and harassing speech. If the faculty does not take action, Professor Manion feels that will indicate a lack of understanding and responsiveness to Amherst students' needs.

Suggesting a somewhat different approach, Professor Umphrey said that, while she agrees that it is important to respond to the concerns of the BSU, she also is cognizant that Amherst's Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom is a recent document (passed by a wide margin in 2016), and that a great deal of thought, conversation, and effort led to its development and approval. She wants to honor that work and to consider carefully the best path forward. If the issue at hand is how to address the use of racist epithets, she expressed the view that it would be preferable to bolster the college's [Statement on Respect for Persons](#) in ways that address the concerns the BSU has raised, and to strengthen the statement more generally. At present it is very short and not very specific, she noted. Her research has revealed that most other institutions address the use of harassing and hateful speech, including racial epithets, in documents that resemble the Statement on Respect for Persons, rather than in statements on academic freedom. In her view academic freedom revolves around ideas, and an epithet is not an idea.

Continuing, Professor Umphrey commented that the idea of limiting speech in the classroom, a highly protected space, must be considered with great care. Such limits, she noted, could otherwise have a chilling effect on intellectual discourse. In her view, the issue of racial epithets and other hateful and harassing speech should be addressed as a matter of professional behavior on the part of faculty. The Statement of Respect for Persons already raises the issue of behavior in the classroom, without intruding into the realm of course content. Currently, Professor Umphrey noted, the following is part of the Statement on Respect for Persons: "Each member of the community should be free from interference, intimidation or disparagement in the work place, the classroom and the social, recreational and residential environment." Professor Umphrey suggested that language she had drafted and circulated to the Committee of Six about not permitting harassment and racial epithets could be incorporated into the final sentence of this statement. Professor Leise agreed that it would be preferable to revise the Statement on Respect for Persons, expanding it to include all behavior toward groups of people and individuals that the college does not condone, and only minimally revising the Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom. She concurred with Professor Umphrey that, for

example, defining a racial epithet as an idea could lead to complexities surrounding academic freedom that would best be avoided.

Professors Kingston and Trapani commented that, in the faculty meeting minutes of April 19, 2016, there had been a discussion of the relationship between these two statements. At the time, they noted, Professor Sarat had asked whether the Statement on Respect for Persons would impose limits on the new Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom. It was noted that the president, at the time, had said that the new statement was intended to serve as foundational protection of freedom of expression, including freedom against limits that might be imposed by the administration or the trustees. She had noted that the Statement on Respect for Persons sets norms for behavior, but that the Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom would generally trump the Statement on Respect for Persons, commenting that it would be important for the college to provide the strongest possible protections for academic freedom. For this reason, Professors Kingston and Trapani noted, it seems preferable to address within the Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom—as the overarching document—that the use of hateful and harassing speech, including racial epithets, is not protected speech. Professor Manion agreed, commenting that not addressing this important issue within the Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom will be selling Amherst's students short, as they understand the issues at hand. In her view, students are pushing back against harmful content that has been taught for decades, despite its negative impact on underrepresented groups, in some cases. They are asking for change surrounding ideas, not just hateful and harassing speech, she noted. Provost Epstein said that, while she supports setting limits on the use of hateful and harassing speech that is targeted at particular groups, she is uncomfortable with the idea of course material not being taught because it may be disturbing, if there is an educational reason for doing so. She noted the tension between making students feel safe and shying away from difficult and sensitive material and conversations. Professor Umphrey noted that academic freedom is not a concept that is imagined by its proponents to be ahistorical or apolitical, as had been suggested. Concerns for its protection have arisen out of quite specific historical and political circumstances.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Kingston, who commented that he also supports having more discussion about the revision of the Statement on Respect for Persons, said that he is in favor of adding to the Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom a portion (shown in red here) of the language that the BSU students has proposed. It reads as follows:

Even the most vigorous defense of intellectual and creative freedom knows limits. The college may properly restrict speech that, for example, is defamatory, harassing, invades a protected right to privacy or confidentiality, constitutes incitement to imminent violence, or otherwise violates the law. **THE TARGETED USE OF DISCRIMINATORY STEREOTYPES, EPITHETS, AND DEROGATORY REMARKS IS BEYOND THESE LIMITS AND HAS NO PLACE IN OUR COMMUNITY.** It may place reasonable limitations on the time, place, and manner of expression, and may restrict speech that directly interferes with core instructional and administrative functions of the college. But these restrictions and limitations must be understood as narrow exceptions to the college's overriding commitment to robust open inquiry

Professor Umphrey expressed concern that *discriminatory stereotypes* is too broad a phrase and too difficult to pin down. A stereotype for one person is an identity for another, she noted, commenting on the ambiguity, from a legal perspective that is inherent in the proposed language.

Continuing, Professor Umphrey asked the following question: how are we going to think about what a classroom is? Teaching is a relationship in which good teachers meet students where they are; but in asserting the value of academic freedom, faculty and staff also model for students an approach to thinking. The targeted use of epithets in a classroom is unprofessional and can be regulated on that basis alone, in her view. It would be best to avoid the abrogation of principle that can occur when trying

to define limits on academic freedom, she noted. The Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom, she commented, is written at a principled level, as is appropriate for one of the central statements of the academic enterprise. Setting unclear limits is unwise, and racial epithets are better handled as abhorrent behavior, she reiterated, so as to maintain the clarity of the principle of academic freedom.

Professor Manion expressed support for drawing from the language provided by the students, but also had concerns about the inclusion of the phrase *discriminatory stereotypes*. She noted that the use of racial epithets has not been addressed in the past, despite the existence of the Statement on Respect for Persons. As a result, Professor Manion commented, students do not feel that there is a pathway to achieving accountability, particularly when tenured faculty members are involved. She argued that the college should meet students where they are; any changes that are made should be legible to students—or they will not be meaningful, in her view. President Martin said that she feels that making a short revision to the Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom, in the section that the students had identified, seems an appropriate course.

Continuing, President Martin noted that the students are correct that the college has not had the mechanisms in place to bring forward complaints against students, staff, and faculty who have used targeted racial epithets and other forms of harmful and harassing speech—and to hold members of the community accountable. The new bias-reporting and response protocol and the new policy on harassment and non-discrimination will address this need. If it is determined that harassment and/or discrimination has taken place, the relevant grievance processes for faculty, staff, and students that are already in place will be used, she noted.

Returning to the discussion of the possible revision of the Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom and/or the Statement on Respect for Persons, Professor Trapani said that he supports making changes to both to address the use of racial epithets and other harmful and harassing speech. He expressed the view that the two statements should ideally appear in close proximity, as they complement one another. Professor Kingston said that he does not support the BSU suggestion of adding restrictions on speech that advances historic forms of violence and oppression (see below) to the Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom.

Even the most vigorous defense of intellectual and creative freedom knows limits. The targeted use of discriminatory stereotypes, epithets, and derogatory remarks is beyond these limits and has no place in our community. The language we reference above is weaponized in the advancement of historic forms of oppression and violence and those that may merely be offensive or cause discomfort.

He is unclear who or what body would judge what speech would constitute the advancement of historic forms of oppression and violence.

Commenting on the suggestion to revise the Statement on Respect for Persons to address students' concerns about hateful and harassing speech, President Martin expressed the view that the statement is essentially a values statement rather than a policy. The policy work that was done over the summer on identity-based harassment and non-discrimination has Title VI as its basis. With respect to institutional values, as opposed to policy, she noted that staff members have long been interested in having the college community develop a values statement for Amherst that is not exclusively focused on the academic mission. The Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom is a faculty document, and the faculty is being asked to decide how to respond to the BSU's request, the president noted. Professor Manion commented that it seems to her that the faculty gets defensive when issues surrounding race and racism come up. In her view, the faculty is being asked to do something visible that acknowledges racism. It is her hope that the faculty will do so, she said. At the very least, a proposal to revise the Statement on Academic and Expressive Freedom should be brought to the faculty floor for a vote, Professor Manion said. She noted that the current statement already includes language that conveys

that academic freedom “knows limits.” In her view, the targeted use of racial epithets should be added to the list of “limits,” i.e., speech that can properly be restricted. It will be clarifying to make visible and transparent that racism falls into one of these categories, Professor Manion stressed.

The committee turned to next steps. Professor Umphrey expressed the view that the Committee of Six should consult with small groups of faculty about any proposal to revise the Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom, before engaging in a committee-of-the-whole discussion at a faculty meeting. The other members agreed and considered ways to facilitate such consultation, in order to receive feedback. It was agreed that Professor Manion should develop a revised proposal to share with the committee. Once finalized, the proposal could then be discussed by colleagues in an open listening session organized by the provost, the members decided. Professor Trapani suggested that the materials from the BSU be provided in advance of these conversations, to offer the context for the proposal. The other members agreed that this would be a good idea. (At the committee’s next meeting, it was decided that a committee-of-the-whole conversation would be held at a faculty meeting on October 6, and that there would not be a listening session prior to that discussion.)

Concluding the meeting, the members considered whether to charge an ad hoc committee with exploring more holistic approaches to the evaluation of teaching that will be used during reappointment and tenure processes. The committee agreed to do so. The first step will be to develop a charge.

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The eighth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2020–2021 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, September 21, 2020. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors del Moral, Kingston, Leise, Manion, Trapani, and Umphrey; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The meeting began with the members agreeing that teaching evaluations for January 2021 courses will not become part of the reappointment dossiers of candidates who are standing for reappointment this spring, as there will not be enough time to solicit retrospective letters. End-of-semester evaluations and retrospective letters for courses taught in January will become part of future tenure dossiers, the committee concurred.

Provost Epstein next informed the members that Norm Jones, chief equity and inclusion officer, and Jesse Barba, director of institutional research and registrar services, have concluded that it would be best to conduct the demographic survey of faculty and staff after the new Workday system is operational. Otherwise, all the data that are collected will need to be re-entered into Workday, which would be labor intensive. The survey will be done this spring, Provost Epstein said.

Conversation turned to the question of whether to hold a faculty meeting on October 6. Professor Trapani commented on the concern and anxiety that many tenure-track faculty members are feeling about the future. He expressed the view that bringing the faculty together for a meeting on October 6 to listen and provide additional reassurance that the college is here to support them, and that the impact of the pandemic will be taken into account as part of reappointment and tenure deliberations, would be helpful. Professor Manion suggested that, rather than holding a listening session about the committee's proposed revision to the college's Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom, as the members had agreed to do at their last meeting, it would be preferable to have a committee-of-the-whole discussion of the proposal at a faculty meeting, because faculty already have the time reserved and would be more likely to participate. Professor Trapani said that he supports this approach, as a listening session would likely draw a narrow group of faculty participants, in particular those who hold strong views about this issue. Having a discussion with the full faculty would be most informative.

In regard to bringing such a proposal forward, Professor Umphrey continued to advocate for a more gradual and deliberative approach. She said that she prefers, as a first step, holding a listening session, as proposed by last year's Committee of Six. This approach would allow time to hone the committee's proposed language, based on colleagues' feedback, and be responsive to questions that are raised. Professor Umphrey also expressed the view that having committee-of-the-whole conversations via Zoom does not typically provide an ideal forum for faculty deliberation. President Martin and Provost Epstein expressed support for having a faculty meeting, both to consider the proposal to revise the Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom, as well as to provide an opportunity to update the faculty about planning for spring 2021 and to answer questions. As guests were expected to join the Committee of Six's meeting imminently, the members agreed to continue their discussion about the faculty meeting after the conversation with the visitors concluded.

At 2:45 P.M., Lisa Rutherford, chief policy officer and general counsel, and N. Jones joined the meeting. L. Rutherford offered general legal advice related to the tenure process and answered questions posed by the committee. Prior to the meeting, the committee had been provided with a document titled "Practical Advice regarding Tenure," which had been written by former attorneys for the college, and "Good Practice in Tenure Evaluation," a document prepared by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). Professors Umphrey and Manion asked if these documents might be shared with departments, if doing so is not the practice already. Professor Manion found the information to be helpful and thought that departments would as well, she said. Associate Provost Tobin informed the members that these documents are not shared currently. L. Rutherford responded that it is fine to make the AAUP document available and that she would review the second document to make sure that all logistics are accurate. It can then be distributed as well, she said. In her remarks to the committee, L. Rutherford emphasized the importance of applying consistently the criteria for tenure and of limiting the committee's discussion and consideration to

the defined criteria of scholarship, teaching, and service. She advised the members to strive for consistency and to follow established procedures. N. Jones spoke with the committee about approaches to mitigating bias when reading teaching evaluations, and in the tenure process more generally. He then responded to the members' questions.

At 3:25 P.M., Pawan Dhingra and Allen Hart, faculty equity and inclusion officers, and Laurie Frankl, Title IX coordinator, joined the meeting to discuss a draft of a policy on identity-based harassment and non-discrimination and a proposal for a bias-reporting and response protocol. The discussion began with Professor Trapani asking if some context could be provided for the creation of the two drafts, and if there is a relationship between them. Professor Hart said that the processes can be seen as two pieces of a puzzle. The Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (formerly known as the Presidential Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion) drafted the bias-reporting and response protocol, and Laurie Frankl drafted the harassment and non-discrimination policy. Professor Hart first described the organizational structure that is being proposed to address reports of identity-based discrimination and harassment, as well as bias incidents. The goal, he noted, is to put in place policies and processes that provide a mechanism for the community to report, respond to, and repair harm surrounding identity-based incidents of discrimination, harassment, and bias.

Continuing, Professor Hart noted that, under the proposed structure, when a report is received from a member of the community, a review team would forward the report to the appropriate office. The team would take into account whether aspects of the report involve discrimination and harassment, Title IX violations, community standards, and/or bias. One team would manage reports of discrimination and harassment and resolve them using adjudication processes that are already in place for students, faculty, and staff. The Title IX team would manage Title IX complaints, which fall under the interim Title IX policy, under which resolution would be sought through formal and/or informal processes. The community standards team would address reports of possible violations of community standards, resolving them under formal adjudication process or informal resolutions. Incidents of bias that do not meet the criteria for discrimination or harassment would be addressed by the Bias Education Response Team (BERT).

Professor Manion thanked the colleagues who have been undertaking this complex and important work. She asked if the purpose of the policy on identity-based harassment and discrimination is to enforce relevant state and federal law, and if the bias-reporting and response protocol is anticipated to function as a way of building a campus culture of inclusion and respect. She expressed discomfort with anonymous reporting, a feature of the proposed non-discrimination and harassment policy and bias-reporting and response protocol, and asked L. Frankl to clarify if this is indeed "best practice." L. Frankl commented that some members of the community who initially bring forward concerns anonymously may reveal their identities once a relationship of trust is built. She noted that the Ethics Point reporting tool allows her to communicate with those who make reports, while preserving their anonymity if they wish.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Manion asked about the investigatory piece of the proposed harassment and non-discrimination policy. L. Frankl noted that, under the policy, every report would be investigated, and that either a college staff member or an outside investigator would conduct the investigation. Commenting that the proposal notes that a report would be produced and would be used by the review team, Professor Manion asked who else will have access to such a report. L. Frankl responded that the reports would inform grievance processes that are used for formal complaints, in which case they would be available to all parties involved. They might also be used as part of efforts to resolve more informal concerns, she said. The reports may range from one-page memo to lengthy documents, depending on the nature of the situation. Continuing, L. Frankl informed the members that, if the review team determines that a report describes actions that appear not to rise to the level of discrimination or harassment as defined in the policy, but which are otherwise in violation of the honor code, the BERT would be notified. It was noted that, under the proposed bias-reporting and response protocol, the team would attempt to bring together the reporting party, the involved party, and/or any relevant affiliated organizations, with the purpose of identifying, addressing, and repairing the harm that had been caused. As

part of this effort, the team would recommend follow-up measures.

Professor Umphrey, who also acknowledged colleagues for their efforts and commented on the importance of their work, asked what the timeline is for implementing the bias-reporting and response protocol, and what resources are being allocated to support the development and administration of the new system. She attended restorative practices training and had found it to be informative and helpful, she said. Professor Hart noted that forty-five members of the Amherst community—students, faculty, and staff—had participated in the two-day introduction to restorative practices held last January. He said that it is hoped that the college will be able to create a cohort of highly trained community members to facilitate restorative circles and other practices. David Karp, professor and director of the Center for Restorative Justice in the School of Leadership and Education Sciences at the University of San Diego, has been engaged to offer additional training this fall, Professor Hart informed the committee.

Continuing, Professor Hart noted that the college is laying a strong foundation for future restorative work with the launch of the Center for Restorative Practices. (Professor Hart will serve as the inaugural director, and a search is under way for an assistant director.) N. Jones informed the members that the Office of the President is providing start-up funds for this work; he expects the center to grow into a national model, he noted. Professor Umphrey expressed enthusiasm for this project, including linking the bias-reporting and response protocol to efforts to foster restorative justice at the college, and the leadership role that Amherst intends to play in this work. She said that she shares Professor Manion's concern about anonymous reporting, however, commenting on the possibility that unintended consequences could arise. In particular, she is worried that there is a lack of clarity in some of the wording of the proposal that could lead to complaints of harassment or discrimination bumping up against issues of academic freedom. The question is how to provide a climate free from harassment and discrimination, without having a chilling effect on one of the foundational principles of the academic enterprise, Professor Umphrey noted.

Continuing the discussion, Professor Umphrey expressed the view that more work needs to be done on the language of the proposal, in order to address the classroom as a protected space. In particular, the section that discusses the possibility of "academic discomfort" resulting from reasonable educational purposes should be clarified and revised in a way to reduce the tension with academic freedom that is conveyed. Professor Hart said that he welcomes the committee's help in thinking about how to bring the proposed policies into mutual agreement with a commitment to academic freedom. He said that anonymous reporting presents a particular challenge for restorative practices. If an individual feels harmed, how can there be a structured conversation between two parties, for example, if one party is not known? In discussing harm that may take place in the classroom, Professor Dhingra noted that there is a difference between a professor discussing a sensitive topic, articulating arguments surrounding it, and encouraging a debate about ideas—and targeting students based on their identities. Professor Manion pointed out the complexity of the task at hand, noting that she teaches texts in which deplorable ideas are espoused to justify heinous laws. She feels that faculty should be more responsive to student concerns. For example, she noted that many people defend the right of Charles Murray to speak about his debunked racist theories about racial difference, but that, increasingly, students are challenging us to reconsider whether this is actually right and necessary, given the negative impact these ideas and events have on students of color and the community more broadly. Reading through the proposed bias-reporting and response protocol's examples of incidents that might contain components of identity-based bias, Professor Manion wondered who would judge whether a given incident would constitute bias. She is concerned about the lack of clarity in the examples that are given to delineate what is and isn't bias. She hopes that excellent models from other colleges and universities were consulted.

Professor Umphrey concurred with some of Professor Manion's concerns. She noted that, while the BSU students have proposed the use of "targeted speech" to describe harassing and hateful speech that is directed at an individual, she thinks it might be clearer to use wording such as "intention to demean." She feels that it is important to define the provocations that can be termed as causing "harm," particularly in the classroom. Professor Umphrey said that it would be helpful to have specific examples to think about, and

more detailed and specific language. Professor Hart said that he will work to reinforce the importance of academic freedom as a principle, without conveying a sense that reporting incidents of bias necessarily creates tension with the principle. Professor Umphrey said that she continues to see a distinction between unprofessional behavior in the classroom and academic freedom. An epithet expressed in ways intended to demean is not speech worthy of being called an idea, and doesn't have any academic value, she reiterated. If a classroom conversation about the content of a text has academic value, however, that matters materially to how these situations should be assessed, she noted.

N. Jones commented that it is important to come back to the whole notion of harm. One of the merits of a bias-reporting and response protocol, in his view, is that it allows individuals to bring their concerns about harm forward. The college can then respond. While recognizing the principle of academic freedom, it is still possible to recognize the legitimacy of a student's experience with harm in the classroom. A student can feel harmed, even if what takes place in a classroom is protected under academic freedom, he noted. Professor Manion reiterated her view that the faculty should listen to what students are saying about feeling harmed by material that includes sexual assault and racial violence, and take more responsibility for the impact of such content on some students' well-being and ability to learn. Professor Manion said that her understanding of the severity of the impact has changed her as a teacher.

Professor Kingston commented that, in one section of the bias-reporting and response proposal, it is noted that, if there is disagreement about the facts surrounding an incident, the college may engage in a different kind of resolution. He asked what is envisioned in this regard. Professor Hart said that, depending on the nature of the incident, a process other than restorative practices could be used. Restorative practices center around the nature of the harm; there is no dispute about the facts or investigation. The important thing is for individuals to take responsibility for their actions and to recognize the impact of their behavior. Professor Kingston noted that, in the proposal, there are four different investigatory categories (non-discrimination and harassment, Title IX, community standards, and bias), and that it appears that some incidents could fall into more than one category, and that the boundaries among the categories are permeable. Professor Hart responded that three of the four processes are already in place, with bias being the new addition. Under the proposal, some incidents could fall into more than one category, the boundaries among the categories would be permeable, and components of a single reported incident could be addressed through more than one process. The review team would determine the categories into which an incident would fall. He noted that there are legal parameters that govern some incidents, for example laws surrounding Title IX and non-discrimination and harassment. The college wants to know if a community member experiences harm, but it is not up to the community member to know how the college defines and addresses particular kinds of harm.

Concluding the conversation, some members said that it appears that too much leeway is being given to faculty in the proposed bias-reporting and response protocol. It was noted that harm that might arise from a discussion of course content is being differentiated from harm that may be experienced through an intentional comment, for example. N. Jones noted that, while it may be hard for a student to accept and confront certain content, this is not a matter of bias. Professor Trapani said that he sees the virtue of having an avenue for students to report experiences that they feel have harmed them. Other people behind the scenes can then determine if bias is involved, he noted. President Martin asked if the subjective experience of harm is assumed to constitute harm, and she wonders if the college is moving forward with this idea in mind. If so, this needs to be made clear. Professor Hart said that course content is not covered by the bias-reporting and response protocol. President Martin noted that, if this is the intention, it is important to say so. Professor Manion reiterated that there is a lot of complexity involved. In her view, there should be accountability for the common practices of some faculty, though she is aware that the language of a statement will not accomplish this. Offering a final point, Professor Umphrey noted that, while the idea seems to be that students will largely engage in bias reporting, the policy has been written for the entire community. It is possible that unexpected situations could arise, for example a faculty member bringing a complaint against a student for bias in a teaching evaluation—an important concern under discussion at the

college this year. She suggested that those developing the bias-reporting and response protocol consider how they expect the community to engage with the system. The members expressed their appreciation to the colleagues who had joined the meeting, who, in turn, thanked the committee for its feedback and left the meeting at 4:42 P.M.

Under “Questions from Committee Members,” Professor del Moral asked, on behalf of a colleague, if it is anticipated that faculty on leave will be allowed to use travel and research funds for travel this spring. Provost Epstein responded that college-funded travel has been suspended until further notice, due to the pandemic. Continuing, Professor del Moral said that a colleague asked her to inquire whether the provost will provide data on retention and tenure rates for Black and Latinx faculty. Provost Epstein said that she will consult with Jesse Barba, director of institutional research and registrar services, to see if these data can be made available without identifying individuals, given the small sample size. The provost also noted plans for N. Jones to create a dashboard of data on his website that may include information sorted by demographic.

Concluding “Questions from Committee Members,” Professor Umphrey asked if Professors Edwards and Hicks, in their roles as members of the Consultative Group for Tenure-Track Faculty, have been in communication with the provost about a possible charge for the group. Provost Epstein said that she has not heard from Professors Edwards and Hicks about this issue, but would be happy to check in with them about it.

In the time remaining, the members discussed their proposal to revise the Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom. The committee agreed that the revision should convey that the targeted use of racial or other derogatory epithets falls outside protected speech. Professor Umphrey said that the proposed language of the revision should make very clear what is not permitted. It was agreed that epithets and derogatory remarks intended to demean those to whom they are addressed on the basis of actual or perceived group identity should be prohibited. Professor Trapani suggested that the [Statement on Respect for Persons](#) also be revised to make this prohibition clear in that statement. Professor Umphrey noted that the Statement on Respect for Persons may ultimately be superseded by the new college policies and protocols under discussion, and she recommended continuing to refine the language of the proposed revision to the Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom. She also continues to believe that the committee should hold a listening session before having a committee-of-the-whole conversation at a faculty meeting, or in the alternative, that it would be helpful to present the faculty with several possible proposals to revise the statement—and a list of pros and cons of each. Professor Trapani suggested sharing the committee’s proposed revision with the Black Student Union before bringing the language to the faculty. The other members did not think it was appropriate to do so, given that the Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom is a faculty policy. Most members agreed that the committee-of-the-whole format would lend itself well to laying out the arguments for revising the statement, and garnering feedback on the committee’s proposed language. The committee agreed to take this approach and to approve an agenda for an October 6 faculty meeting as soon as possible.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The ninth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2020–2021 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 11:15 A.M. on Thursday, September 24, 2020. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors del Moral, Kingston, Leise, Manion, Trapani, and Umphrey; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The purpose of this brief meeting was to finalize the committee’s proposal to revise the [Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom](#) and to approve an agenda for a faculty meeting that the committee had agreed earlier should be held on October 6. The members also reflected briefly on intersecting aspects of their discussion with colleagues who are working on a policy on identity-based harassment and non-discrimination and a bias-reporting and response protocol. That conversation took place on September 21, 2020.

In considering the language that they would propose to revise the Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom, the members discussed questions surrounding intentionality and impact, in relation to restricting discriminatory remarks that demean those to whom they are addressed on the basis of actual or perceived identity. The committee noted that determining intentionality in this context could be challenging, and discussed the differing effects that a focus on either intentionality or impact could generate. It was decided that the word “targeted” suggests intentionality and impact and would be useful to include in the proposed language (see below).

Professor Kingston expressed the view that the committee’s proposal should draw on some of [the language that the Black Student Union \(BSU\) has proposed](#), in particular the following line shown in red:

Even the most vigorous defense of intellectual and creative freedom knows limits. **THE TARGETED USE OF DISCRIMINATORY STEREOTYPES, EPITHETS, AND DEROGATORY REMARKS IS BEYOND THESE LIMITS AND HAS NO PLACE IN OUR COMMUNITY.**

The members had agreed earlier not to use “discriminatory stereotypes,” finding the phrase problematic to define. Professor Kingston suggested that the proposal should go beyond a focus on discriminatory language alone. He proposed adding “discriminatory gestures or symbols.” Professor Manion stressed the importance of including “racial” in the proposed language. Professor Leise commented that it should be clear that making a revision at the level of principle, while important, will not in and of itself bring about change. Doing so is essentially a gesture of acknowledgement of the harm that many have experienced. It will be important to convey that the revision is part of an overall effort to effect concrete changes, for example, through actions such as the adoption of a non-discrimination and harassment policy and a bias-reporting and response protocol.

Turning briefly to the proposed protocol, Professors Manion and Umphrey expressed concerns surrounding the clarity and specificity of the draft that the committee had reviewed. Professor Manion commented on the need for those drafting the protocol to provide specific examples of the types of incidents that would be addressed through this mechanism, and how enforcement would work. Professor Umphrey said that she would be troubled if the standard that is used to define a bias incident emphasizes impact over intention, which could have a chilling effect, in her view.

The members then decided to discuss with the faculty the following proposal for a revision (shown in blue) of one section of the Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom:

Even the most vigorous defense of intellectual and creative freedom knows limits. **THE TARGETED USE OF RACIAL OR OTHER DISCRIMINATORY EPITHETS, REMARKS, GESTURES OR SYMBOLS IS BEYOND THESE LIMITS AND HAS NO PLACE IN OUR COMMUNITY.** The college may properly restrict speech that, for example, is defamatory, harassing, invades a protected right to privacy or confidentiality, constitutes incitement to imminent violence, or

otherwise violates the law. It may place reasonable limitations on the time, place, and manner of expression, and may restrict speech that directly interferes with core instructional and administrative functions of the college. But these restrictions and limitations must be understood as narrow exceptions to the college's overriding commitment to robust open inquiry (voted by the faculty, May 3, 2016).

The members reviewed the faculty meeting agenda and voted six in favor and zero opposed to forward it to the faculty.

The meeting adjourned at 12 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The tenth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2020–2021 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, October 5, 2020. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors del Moral, Kingston, Leise, Manion, Trapani, and Umphrey; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The meeting began with the members discussing two letters that they had received from faculty members ([one from Professors Douglas, George, and Shah](#), [another from Professor Kunichika](#)). In their communications, these colleagues had raised concerns about the committee's approach to facilitating the faculty's consideration of a possible amendment to the [Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom](#). The committee discussed the letter-writers' questioning of its decision not to hold meetings with small groups of faculty prior to having a committee-of-the-whole discussion at a faculty meeting. Professor Kingston said that he sees trade-offs associated with both approaches. Having discussions with small groups could enable the committee to receive feedback that could be helpful in shaping the proposed language, in advance of bringing it forward to the full faculty. On the other hand, holding discussions with a subset of the faculty initially would privilege certain voices, in his view. Noting that the committee envisions its proposed language as a starting point for open and inclusive conversation by the faculty about this important issue, Professor Kingston said that he continues to favor having a committee-of-the-whole discussion as a first step. The other members agreed, noting that they will consider the next steps in the process, based on the conversation at the faculty meeting. The committee concurred that it is important to remain mindful that the Black Student Union and many Black alumni have requested that the faculty consider an amendment to the statement, and to remember that consideration of this issue is just one part of a [larger anti-racism effort](#) that the college is undertaking.

Turning to a related issue, Professor Manion proposed that the committee reexamine asking attendees to keep their Zoom video feeds on throughout faculty meetings that are being conducted via Zoom. She finds it intrusive that everyone has been asked to do so, given the large size of the meeting. Instead, perhaps, faculty could turn their video feeds on once they have been recognized to speak, she suggested. This approach would also draw more attention to the speaker, reducing visual distractions in Professor Manion's view. Professor Umphrey requested that the members have a broader conversation about facilitating faculty meetings using Zoom, with an eye toward finding ways to improve the experience, if possible. She commented on the loss of human connection and other challenges associated with this modality, which have an impact on the quality of discussion. At the same time, there are many important issues to discuss, and she recognizes that there is no alternative to Zoom. The members agreed to discuss this topic at a future meeting, and that it would be helpful to consult with colleagues in IT about options. Commenting on another issue related to the faculty meeting, Professor Trapani asked that the chair seek to recognize colleagues who haven't yet spoken, before turning to those who have already expressed their views. In this way, discussion can be informed by the fullest range of views. President Martin and Provost Epstein, who serves as the chair of committee-of-the-whole conversations, agreed that this is a good approach.

Noting with great sadness the death of Sigrit Schütz, Senior Lecturer of German, Emerita, on September 19, 2020, the provost next proposed colleagues who could be invited to serve on a memorial minute committee.

Under "Questions from Committee Members," Professor Umphrey said that some students have asked her about the college's plans for bringing students to campus for the spring 2021 semester, and she inquired what the current thinking is on this front. Provost Epstein responded that, while no plans have been finalized, it is still hoped that juniors and seniors will be invited to campus, as will students whose home circumstances impede their academic progress. In this way members of all classes would have had the opportunity to be on campus for a semester this year. The intention is to make an announcement in early November. President Martin and Provost Epstein commented that all plans are subject to change, depending on the course of the pandemic.

Continuing with questions, Professor Kingston said that it has come to his attention that some tenure-track faculty members who were promised Gregory S. Call interns in their appointment letters did not receive the promised number of interns last summer, and that this has affected their ability to conduct their research. He asked why the decision was made, how many tenure-track faculty members were affected, and if there are plans to provide the interns. Provost Epstein said that, in this case, budgetary concerns led to a decision that, in an effort to provide all faculty with at least one intern, most faculty would not be awarded multiple interns this summer. The provost said that she would look into this matter further to identify the tenure-track colleagues who have been affected, and to meet their needs. Professor Kingston expressed the view that tenure-track faculty should be prioritized in the intern allocation process, perhaps starting in January. Provost Epstein said that this would mean that some tenured faculty will not have any interns. Professor Kingston said that, under the circumstances, this seems like the best approach. The provost said that the college is continuing to honor the contracts of all faculty, and that any colleagues with questions about their individual circumstances should contact her.

Professor Trapani next expressed gratitude to President Martin and to Michael Roth, president of Wesleyan University, for co-writing [a statement](#) expressing outrage over the Department of Education's civil rights investigation of Princeton University, surrounding racism and adherence to federal non-discrimination law. He noted that a number of other college presidents were signatories to the statement. President Martin thanked Professor Trapani for his support.

Turning to another topic, President Martin informed the committee that she has heard from the members of the student advisory group on COVID-19 with which she meets regularly, and from some faculty members, about the challenge of not having a fall break this semester. She asked the members for their thoughts about the possibility of having the equivalent of a mountain day, as a means of providing some fun and pleasure during this very difficult time. The idea would be to call off classes on a Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday in October, as a surprise. Students could spend time outdoors at the farm or on the other side of the bike path, for example, or even catch up on sleep, if they prefer. The college might organize some activities, but it would be a fairly unstructured day, the president said. Faculty would have the option of making up missed classes on November 30, which is the first day of the reading period. There are no make-up days scheduled in the fall, and the reading period is longer than usual this year, the provost noted. For this reason, it seems permissible to have a single make-up day during the reading period, during this highly unusual semester, she noted. The members agreed. This will be particularly important for those who are teaching seminars that meet once a week, in her view. The members expressed enthusiasm for the idea of having a mountain day, as it was felt that both students and faculty would benefit from some relief from the pressures of the current circumstances. Professor del Moral, who said she supports the proposal, also noted that some faculty members might not benefit if they do not teach on the day of the week on which mountain day will ultimately be held. Perhaps mountain "day" could extend over two days, she suggested. Professor Leise said that she supports taking off one day of class but would not want to miss two. Professor Trapani commented that it might be a bit challenging for STEM faculty to make up multiple sections and/or labs that would be missed, but he feels that colleagues could work around this situation—much as they do when there is a snow day. He expressed enthusiasm for having a mountain day. President Martin thanked the members for this feedback.

The committee turned next to [a proposal for an education studies major](#), which had been forwarded by the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP), along with [a cover note from Professor Melillo, chair of the CEP](#). The committee noted that the proposal has been in development since 2014, that there has long been great interest in this field at Amherst, and that the proposal has been refined over time to address questions that have been raised. The committee also commented that the CEP, according to Professor Melillo, now unanimously supports the proposal. The members agreed with the CEP that the proposal is very compelling and well developed. Provost Epstein, while expressing support for the proposal, also raised the broader issue of the fracturing of Amherst's curriculum—as the trend toward

adding new majors and programs continues, while the number of students at the college has not grown for some time. The impact can already be seen on majors that attract a small number of students and have difficulty mounting upper-level courses, the provost said. At present, the college has three or four large majors, while many other departments have smaller ones. Professor Kingston, who prefaced his comments by noting that the proposal seems excellent, agreed with the provost that regularly adding new majors will dilute the curriculum at some point. He expressed the view that it is important for students to have a cohort in which to engage with a major together. Splintering the curriculum excessively may ultimately entail costs both for students and in terms of additional layers of bureaucracy, he noted. In addition, with a fixed number of faculty positions spread across an ever-growing number of departments/majors, expansion of one program must ultimately come at a cost elsewhere.

Professor Leise expressed enthusiasm for the proposal. She said that she is particularly excited that the education studies major would present opportunities for faculty from a diverse set of fields to come together to participate in an interdisciplinary effort, pulling together different parts of the college community. At present, many students can be isolated in one discipline as they focus on a major; this major would encourage students to explore the curriculum. Professor Manion, who described the proposal as “phenomenal,” wondered whether education studies, as presented, should actually become a major. She noted the lack of a structured curriculum and guidance as to how students should navigate the open curriculum are existing weaknesses that this proposal seems to address. She wonders what the proposed major would achieve that a major in American studies does not already provide. Rather than a major, this proposal seems to describe more of a pathway through the curriculum. Professor Manion wonders if this seemingly pre-professional track would be a good thing for Amherst students and the college generally. Provost Epstein said the focus of the education studies major would not be on career preparation, but rather on studying a part of society.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Umphrey commented that she sees similarities between the proposed major in education studies, and the major in law, jurisprudence, and social thought (LJST)—which is not designed to prepare students for a career in law. In fact, many LJST majors pursue careers in education, she noted. Professor Umphrey said that she finds the proposal to be thoughtful, and the idea of a liberal arts approach to the professions to be compelling. She does have some concern about enrollment draws, anticipating that the major would be very popular among students. With only eight required courses for the major, students may choose it as part of a double major, however. Professor Umphrey wonders how important having a tenure line devoted to education studies would be, and if the college would be making a commitment to having such an FTE if the major is established. There are already a number of faculty members who are focusing on education, as revealed within the proposal, she noted. Provost Epstein expressed the view that it would be important to have a faculty member who would anchor the major. Since the CEP is supporting the establishment of the major, she feels that an FTE in education studies would be allocated eventually. She also noted that there is likely a donor who would fund the line. Since there would not be an associated department and FTEs are not allocated to programs, the FTE would need to reside in a department—for example, American Studies, Economics, or History, Provost Epstein said. The individual’s primary activity would be education studies, however.

Professor Trapani said that he also finds the proposed major to be compelling, in particular because it would bring together faculty from a number of departments. At the same time, he expressed some worry about issues surrounding community and coherence. He expressed the view that, since there is only one required (introductory) course being proposed for the major, students might find it difficult to form a community with their fellow education studies majors; they would attend classes for the major across the curriculum, and essentially would be tailoring their own education. By comparison, environmental studies, both when it was a program and now as a department, has a core course and an upper-level seminar that majors enroll in as a cohort. Provost Epstein responded that, as noted in the proposal, there is a very strong career community within the Loeb Center for Career Exploration and

Planning that centers around education and is led by Robert Siudzinski, program director of the Careers in Education Professions Program. Students who are interested in education form a strong cohort through their interactions in this venue. Provost Epstein commented that the focus on career in this context is situated within the Loeb Center, which is appropriate.

Continuing, Provost Epstein noted that, after some time, it is possible that the faculty who are involved in the major may decide that they want more structure in regard to the curriculum. It is also possible that, if there is a major, students may no longer coalesce as a community within the Loeb Center. Professor del Moral commented that Latinx and Latin American studies majors navigate their own curricular pathways to meet major requirements, and that this approach has been working well. She does not see a need for more structure. She feels that it is important to support this student-driven proposal, which is a reflection of their own academic interests. In many ways, the college is responding to the changing demographics of the student population, and that can include a recognition of shifting academic interests. The faculty should move the major forward, in her view.

Returning to a comment made by the provost, Professor Umphrey said that, as a general matter, she wonders about the idea of a donor funding a faculty line and generating the foundation of curricular innovation. She asked for clarification on this point, at the same time expressing confidence in the integrity of Amherst's processes, and noting the energy of faculty and students surrounding this particular proposal. Provost Epstein commented that the college would not accept funding for a faculty position that is focused on a particular field, unless a department had an intellectual interest in the field and desired to have an FTE, and the CEP had recommended the allocation of the position. President Martin commented that Amherst regularly accepts donations, including for the endowment of faculty lines, that allow the college to move forward with initiatives in new areas, and/or to meet the college priorities. In regard to faculty hiring, the college has declined and should decline gifts for an FTE that would require that the occupant hold particular political views. This is an ethical line that would not be crossed, President Martin said. Professor Umphrey thanked President Martin and Provost Epstein for this clarification. The members then expressed support for the education studies proposal and agreed to forward it to the faculty for a vote at the next faculty meeting after the October 5 meeting.

The committee turned next to three other proposals forwarded by the CEP—developed in consultation with the class deans—to revise catalog language surrounding some academic policies. These policies focus on the adoption of a [new pass/fail option](#) that, if passed, would replace [the flexible grading option \(FGO\)](#); [a revision \(shown in red\) to the readmission policy](#); and [changes \(shown in red\) to the course requirements section of the Amherst College Catalog](#). The Committee of Six's discussion was informed by [a letter from Professor Melillo](#) and a review of [relevant CEP minutes](#).

The committee was generally in favor of the proposed revisions, which will require a vote of the faculty to implement. A number of questions were raised about the pass-fail proposal, including the timing of the declaration deadline and whether there should be a separate declaration deadline for seniors (so that the deadline could be later for all other students), as well as the practicality of requiring students to obtain permission from their advisors to declare a course pass-fail. After some conversation, the committee decided that the proposal should go forward, rather than being returned to the CEP for revision, given that the faculty would vet the proposal during a faculty meeting.

The committee's other questions centered on the proposed revisions to the course requirements section of the catalog. Professor Trapani said that he finds it contradictory that Amherst prefers that students make up failed courses at other institutions, rather than at the college, while also not accepting credit for courses taken at other institutions under most other circumstances. Referring to catalog language that the CEP is proposing to strike (see below), he also asked if students would be able to combine half courses at Amherst (potentially serving as a fifth course in a given semester) to make up a limited number of deficiencies. Specifically, these would be courses that are not required for the major, but which could be counted as course credits toward graduation. Professor Trapani also expressed equity concerns if this practice is allowed; he wonders if such half courses are spread across the

curriculum to a degree that all students would have access to this option—or whether some students would be advantaged.

In exceptional cases a student may, with the permission of both the student's academic advisor and class dean, take five full courses for credit during a given semester. Such permission is normally granted only to students of demonstrated superior academic ability, responsibility, and will. Fifth courses cannot be used to accelerate graduation. ~~On occasion, a student who has failed a course may be permitted to take a fifth course in a given semester if, in the judgment of the Committee on Academic Standing, this additional work can be undertaken without jeopardizing the successful completion of all courses taken in that semester. Students may only retake a course for which they have received a failing grade or from which they have withdrawn in a prior semester.~~

Provost Epstein said that she would ask the CEP for clarification about these issues and report back to the members. The members supported the CEP's recommendation to revise the policy on readmission to the college after a voluntary withdrawal.

The meeting ended with a brief discussion of possible ways to honor the accomplishments of faculty members, a topic that arose during an earlier conversation of the results of the COACHE (Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education) survey, and which last year's Committee of Six had recommended be discussed this year. Professor Trapani said that he would like to see colleagues recognized and rewarded for contributions that necessitate carrying a workload that is heavier than the norm, particularly in the realm of college service. He sees this as separate from the idea of public celebrations for scholarly achievements, he noted. Provost Epstein asked what form this acknowledgement and reward might take. Professor Trapani said that he envisions a system that would be flexible and that would offer different options. For example, a colleague who chairs a number of burdensome committees, serves as a liaison to an athletic team, and organizes a lecture series might be rewarded with a course release or a similar time-based reward. Someone who takes on numerous honors students every summer for five years might be rewarded with summer salary. He noted that many tenure-track faculty members have expressed to him that they do not feel recognized for work that they do that goes beyond what is expected. He shared the sentiment that the college communicates what it values by what it incentivizes and rewards. President Martin commented that Amherst does not have a celebratory culture, which she has long thought is unfortunate. At present, it is difficult for her and the provost to know all that faculty members are doing in the realms of service to the college and the profession. In her experience, the idea of faculty annual reports has been resisted at the college. Having this documentation from each professor would be a useful tool when considering forms of recognition, she noted, providing information, which would otherwise be invisible, about professors' service to the college and the profession, as well as accomplishments in the realms of teaching and scholarship. Professors del Moral and Manion suggested that the members revisit this idea. Professor Umphrey commented that there is a longstanding ethos of equality at the college that informs many processes, as well as an expectation of just doing the necessary work without recognition. While there are positives about such a system, it also obscures inequitable workloads. With little time remaining, the members agreed to return to this conversation at a future meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 4:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The eleventh meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2020–2021 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, October 12, 2020. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors del Moral, Kingston, Leise, Manion, Trapani, and Umphrey; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The meeting began with Provost Epstein informing the members that she has requested that all academic departments develop departmental handbooks, with the goal of documenting their procedures and practices. Among these are the ways in which departmental decisions are made, tenure-track faculty are mentored and evaluated, budgets are prepared and funds are allocated, and staff are supervised. The provost commented that making departmental processes more transparent will be particularly helpful to tenure-track faculty members. She has asked that departments aim to have at least part of their handbooks done by this summer. Professor Trapani expressed strong support for this project, but added that many faculty members are overburdened, given the extra demands that the pandemic has brought; as a result, they may find it challenging to find time to work on this important handbook. Professor Kingston wondered if one goal of the project is to move toward greater consistency of departmental procedures and practices across the college—which he feels would be desirable. In this context, he asked Provost Epstein how it is envisaged that the handbooks will be employed once they are completed. The provost responded that she and the faculty equity and inclusion officers will review the documents, in an effort to gain a better sense of the range of departmental practices and procedures, before determining next steps. It is her hope that it may be possible to develop some best practices that would span all departments.

Under “Questions from Committee Members,” Professor Umphrey, noting [the president’s email to the community](#) about the discovery that swastikas had been carved into a table at the Book and Plow Farm, asked whether any more has been learned about this very troubling incident. President Martin said that nothing more is known at this time, but that John Carter, chief of police and director of public safety, will continue to investigate the matter.

Continuing with questions, Professor Trapani said that he wonders to what degree students understand that part of the purpose of wearing a mask is to protect others, as well as themselves. He is concerned that some individuals are not wearing masks in the science center, including early in the morning. They may feel it is not necessary to do so in empty spaces when not many other people are around, he believes. In the interest of everyone’s health and safety, messaging should be enhanced, in his view; it should be conveyed that the virus likely remains for a period after individuals have vacated an indoor area, that faculty and staff are here for the students, and that all members of the community should take care to protect each other. Professor Trapani commented that increased signage in the science center would be welcome. President Martin agreed that, with colder weather approaching, it will be important to reemphasize the need to wear masks at all times, except when eating. She said that she would speak with Jim Brassord, chief of campus operations, about installing signage in the science center and other campus buildings.

The members turned next to a discussion of the October 6 faculty meeting, focusing on what they could learn from the committee-of-the-whole conversation, and next steps in their effort to bring forward a proposal to amend the [Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom](#). [A couple of letters from faculty members](#) that had been sent just before the faculty meeting informed the committee’s discussion. Professor Kingston said that he feels that the committee made the right decision in taking the approach of having a committee-of-the-whole discussion, despite the fraught nature of some of the exchanges that had occurred among colleagues, insofar as there had been an open discussion that had allowed divergent and strongly held views to be aired openly as part of a transparent process. While he had felt that having conversations in small groups prior to having an open discussion could have privileged certain voices, he supports doing so as a follow-up to the conversation that took place at the faculty meeting.

Continuing the discussion, Professor Umphrey commented that, as it turned out, very little had been said in the first half of the faculty meeting about the committee's proposed language, and she worries that some of what transpired resulted in some damage to faculty governance and comity. Without the possibility of on-campus conversation, it can be difficult to move through and past these kinds of abrasions, Professor Umphrey fears. She noted the challenge of speaking on Zoom and how much harder it is to make use of informal person-to-person connections when processing proposals and discussions. Professor Umphrey suggested creating a forum for written comments, which could be sent either directly to the Committee of Six, or made available to all faculty—both before and after faculty meetings. She also wonders if the faculty might consider adopting some speaking norms to create more order, which might include asking colleagues to speak for no more than two minutes, and to speak directly to the motion or issue. Professor Umphrey also proposed asking colleagues to speak to the chair, rather than addressing other faculty members. In her view, it might be useful to have only the speaker and the chair visible in the video feed. The purpose of the proposed changes that she had described would not be to constrain the expression of strong opinions, but to keep discussions focused and on track—so that things can get done, Professor Umphrey noted. She commented on the fragility of the current environment, and the importance of connection and care.

Professor Leise, noting that any group of more than eight-or-so people speaking on Zoom together presents difficulties in regard to engaging in discussion, expressed the view that the same issues that were raised in the faculty meeting would likely also have come up in small-group discussions. She stressed the need to find ways to have conversation in which everyone can speak freely. In her view, it is particularly important that tenure-track faculty members feel comfortable speaking at faculty meetings, including when they have controversial things to say, without the fear that tenured faculty will criticize them. Professor Umphrey expressed hope that some cultural change will come via the implementation of restorative practices.

Continuing the discussion, Professor Kingston said that he would be in favor of soliciting written commentary about the language that the committee has proposed to amend the Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom, as Professor Umphrey has suggested, in the hope of receiving thoughtful and productive feedback. He feels that such feedback ought not to be anonymous. The members discussed the possibility of making use of a Google drive, Moodle, or Slack channel to gather feedback from the faculty. Professor Manion expressed the view that it would be constructive to solicit faculty members' proposals for an amendment to the statement. Professor Trapani said that, reflecting on what was shared at the faculty meeting, he feels he has learned a great deal, outside the tense and hurtful moments that had occurred. While he regrets the way in which the discussion unfolded, he feels that it was important for both the committee and the faculty as a whole to hear the different views that were expressed. Professor Kingston said that he has learned a great deal as well. In particular, it appeared that, while the committee's intention had been to make a modest and limited revision to the statement to prohibit egregious racist behavior, the proposed language—particularly the word “targeted”—was not read in this way. Some colleagues interpreted the proposal as broad and sweeping, and supported it. Others also read it that way, and raised significant concern. Professor Kingston noted that examples offered at the faculty meeting of behavior that might be limited if the committee's language were to be added to the statement—for example, the idea that someone might feel targeted in the presence of a person wearing a “Make America Great Again” hat, or that faculty would not be allowed to teach material that students may find offensive—were not what the members had intended. It was agreed that the language of the proposal needs to be reworked to offer greater clarity to convey the committee's intentions.

Reflecting further on the discussion at the faculty meeting, some members of the committee noted that the idea that had been advanced that no harm has taken place in the classroom under

the current Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom had been particularly divisive. President Martin commented that faculty, staff, and students have reported experiencing harm as a result of racial epithets and other demeaning slurs, for example. It seems these statements led to emotional responses that were not only focused on the proposal to amend the Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom. Instead, they were about deeper and more fundamental issues. Professor Umphrey said that she continues to believe that it would be preferable to amend the non-discrimination and harassment policy and/or [the Statement on Respect for Persons](#), rather than the Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom. President Martin reiterated that the Statement on Respect for Persons functions as a college value statement and is not a formal policy. The proposed non-discrimination and harassment policy, however, will provide a policy under which claims of bias can be brought under Title VI.

Professor Leise suggested that the committee move forward on two fronts—proposing a narrowly aimed amendment to the Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom, and a larger effort directed at anti-racism work more broadly, with the goal of changing Amherst’s culture. Provost Epstein suggested that it would have been helpful if the faculty could have been provided with the finalized bias-reporting and response protocol before the discussion of the committee’s amendment to the statement, to better understand the relationship between the statement and the protocol. Professor Trapani inquired as to whether it would be useful to consult with experts on academic freedom and its relationship to anti-racist work, in order to have some guidance before developing language to bring forward to the faculty. He fears that soliciting written comments via some kind of online forum might result in a replication of the discussion that took place at the faculty meeting, especially if they are seen by all faculty, which could result in colleagues responding to one another’s comments. If the committee does create a forum for faculty comments, he suggested that it might be helpful to share readings about academic freedom to inform the conversation. Professor Umphrey proposed that, given the urgency of the moment, it would be best for the committee to work on the language of the amendment to the Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom, and to bring a new proposal forward as soon as possible. There could then be a transition in focus to substantive anti-racism work. Professor del Moral concurred. She said that she recognizes Professor Manion’s frustration that the focus seems to be on process, while at the same time noting the anti-racism efforts that are already under way—for example the provost’s lecture series, the development of the bias-reporting and response protocol and restorative practices, the interim non-discrimination and harassment policy, and the efforts of the Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, on which she serves. In her view, these initiatives will contribute to the robust anti-racism work to come.

Further discussion of how the language of the committee’s proposed amendment to the Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom might be revised revealed some differing views as to the goal of the amendment, most prominently the degree to which course content should be protected. The committee then decided that the best course would be for the members to gain greater clarity about what an amendment should seek to address. To this end, the members decided to review the request from the Black Student Union to amend the statement, the draft of the interim non-discrimination and harassment policy, a final draft of the bias-reporting and response protocol (if it is available), and material relating to academic freedom that had been provided to the committee previously, including the academic freedom statements of peer institutions that Professor Umphrey assembled. Rather than discussing these pieces in isolation, the committee agreed that it would be most helpful to have a holistic conversation to inform its thinking about how best to move forward. The members agreed to do so at their next meeting.

The members next reviewed a draft agenda for a possible faculty meeting on October 20. Provost Epstein first provided the committee with a response to Professor Trapani’s question about one aspect of [the Committee on Educational Policy \(CEP\)’s proposal to revise the course](#)

[requirements policy](#). Referring to the paragraph on making up course credits that the CEP proposes to strike from the policy, Professor Trapani had asked whether students would be allowed to take two half courses to make up course credits toward graduation, if the failed course is not a requirement of the major. He had also wondered if such half courses are sufficiently available across the curriculum to provide all students with this option, or whether some students would be advantaged, depending on their major or ability to play an instrument, for example. According to Provost Epstein, the CEP said that all students have the option of taking half courses and combining them to make up a limited number of deficiencies, noting that this is documented on the registrar's website. Some CEP members think that the equity question is more complicated, but had concluded that all Amherst students should be capable of taking half courses, which don't have prerequisites and are available in both humanities and STEM subjects. Professor Trapani noted that it would be preferable to state explicitly in this part of the course requirements section that two half courses may be used to make up course credits toward graduation, if a failed course is not a requirement of the major—even though this policy appears elsewhere. Otherwise, under the CEP's revision, it could appear that all failed courses cannot be made up at Amherst. He would not insist on this revision, however, he said.

The members then voted six in favor and zero opposed on the substance of [the proposal to establish an education studies major at the college](#), which would be administered as a program and begin in the academic year 2021–2022. The members then voted six in favor and zero opposed to forward the proposal to the faculty. The committee turned next to the other proposals forwarded by the CEP, and discussed previously (and, in the case of one, at today's meeting), to revise catalog language surrounding some academic policies. These policies focus on [the adoption of a new pass/fail option](#) that, if passed, would replace the flexible grading option (FGO); a revision (shown in red [in the linked document](#)) to the readmission policy; a revision ([shown in red in the linked document](#)) to the policy on academic credit from other institutions; and changes ([shown in red in the linked document](#)) to the course requirements section of the *Amherst College Catalog*. In the case of each proposal, the members voted six in favor and zero opposed on content, and six in favor and zero opposed to forward the proposals to the faculty. If approved, all of the proposals would be effective on July 1, 2021. The committee then voted six in favor and zero opposed to forward the faculty meeting agenda to the faculty.

The meeting concluded with a discussion of [a letter sent to the committee by Professor Hunter-Parker](#). The members noted that Professor Hunter-Parker expressed concern that the college seems to see care-giving during the pandemic as a personal choice, rather than as a structural challenge. Professor Kingston commented that Professor Hunter-Parker doesn't seem to be requesting particular action items, but primarily to be seeking greater acknowledgment of the challenges that care-givers are facing in this unprecedented time. She is also conveying that the measures that the college is taking in response are not sufficient. Professor del Moral noted that Professor Hunter-Parker also expresses fear that, at the time of reappointment and tenure, the college will not be mindful of the hardships that the pandemic caused to care-givers, and the impact that it has had on teaching and research productivity.

The members discussed Professor Hunter-Parker's view that the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee on Academic Structures during COVID-19 have put tenure-track faculty in the difficult position of having to advocate for their interests, since requests for course reduction must come from them. This would not be the case, she suggests, if the college provided "uniform course reduction for untenured faculty." Professor Trapani agreed that an approach that requires faculty to make requests to the provost for relief from hardship on an individual basis seems deeply problematic, particularly for tenure-track faculty. He suggested that there could be an institution-wide policy that would grant course relief to all faculty who have significant care-giving responsibilities at home, with an allowance that those who choose to forgo the relief would be

noted and possibly credited a half-semester toward their tenure clock, for example. In this way, tenure-track colleagues would not have to navigate potential departmental politics to gain relief, while others may still choose to teach despite the challenge of care-giving, knowing they are helping the college and their departments during this exceptional moment. Provost Epstein responded that, last spring there were multiple channels available for tenure-track faculty to make known their need for a rebalancing of their teaching loads. In addition, she does not believe that the college could mount its curriculum if such a policy were adopted. Already, staffing certain areas of the curriculum is a challenge at this time.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Umphrey asked what the effect would be, as a budgetary and curricular matter, if the college did grant course release across the board for all faculty with children. She expressed concern about the impact of the pandemic on faculty members' research productivity and teaching, and also noted its impact on publishing within the humanities. Provost Epstein said that all candidates for reappointment and tenure and their departments have been asked to document the impact of COVID-19 on research, teaching, and service. This will be the case annually going forward. In addition, outside reviewers will also be asked to document the impact of the pandemic on candidates' disciplines. Professor Trapani said that, depending on the reviewer, the impact and implications of COVID-19 on a candidate's scholarship may be addressed in different ways, which could be problematic depending on the reviewer's institution, location, and personal perspective during the pandemic. Professor Manion, who served on the ad hoc committee, noted that tenure-track faculty had requested that the ad hoc committee not take the approach of recommending that the college lower its expectations for research productivity, due to the impact of the pandemic. Essentially, the committee was told that lowering research expectations would potentially harm tenure-track faculty members' careers and create more stress for these colleagues, and that it would be best to add additional time to the tenure clock instead, Professor Manion noted. Perhaps this view should be reconsidered, she commented. Provost Epstein responded that, while she thinks that a universal course release for tenure-track faculty and/or all faculty with young children would likely not be feasible, she feels that it is important to gather data about this matter. The provost said that she would solicit information from Jesse Barba, director of institutional research and registrar services, and provide the data to the committee at its next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The twelfth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2020–2021 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, October 19, 2020. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors del Moral, Kingston, Leise, Manion, Trapani, and Umphrey; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The meeting began with President Martin informing the members that the meetings of the board of trustees, which had taken place over the course of the previous week via Zoom, had gone very well. The trustees had expressed tremendous appreciation for the extraordinary efforts of the faculty and staff during this challenging time. The president said that the trustees view two presentations by faculty and students as the highlight of their meetings. Professors Bailey, Durr, and Edwards and several of their students discussed [the STEM Incubator Program](#), and Professors Kunichika, Sitze, and Umphrey spoke about [Ailing States](#), a colloquium they are co-teaching this semester that focuses on the history of plague narratives and how they relate to governance and the state. Several students in the course also shared their experience. Also as part of the board meetings, Provost Epstein reported on the results of the academic portions of surveys that had recently been administered separately to students and faculty about the experience of teaching and learning this semester. The provost said that she would give an overview of these results at the faculty meeting the next day. She noted that both surveys suggest that the academic program is working well, and that the experience of faculty and students has improved since last spring. At the same time, she commented, the results also make clear that the costs to faculty members are enormous, in regard to hours worked, and research time lost. Turning to another matter before concluding her remarks, the president informed the members that, to foster staff participation in the electoral process, time that is taken to vote or work at the polls will be considered regular worked time, and will not be charged against leave accruals.

Under “Questions from Committee Members,” the committee discussed [comments that Professor Grobe asked Professor Trapani to share with the members](#). Professor Grobe reported learning of incidents in which students have treated staff with disrespect surrounding the enforcement of COVID-related policies. He expressed the view that on-campus staff face the greatest risk of exposure to COVID-19, and that the faculty should be expressing support for staff colleagues in the face of student misconduct. President Martin said that, when such incidents are reported, steps have been taken, and will continue to be taken, to address this behavior toward staff. Provost Epstein commented that students have tremendous respect for the faculty, and that professors should not leave it to staff alone to intervene when student behavior of this kind is observed. The committee expressed support and admiration for the staff and agreed that addressing student misbehavior is the responsibility of both faculty and staff.

Turning to another topic related to COVID-19 rules, President Martin informed the members that students have been asking the college to relax some of the COVID-19-related rules that are in place. While most rules will remain in effect, she said, two pilot programs are being launched in an effort to help improve students’ on-campus experience. A beer and wine delivery service will soon be made available to students over the age of twenty-one, with the alcohol being delivered to a central location on campus for pick up. Present Martin commented that it is safer to have alcohol delivered than to have students going off campus to buy it, which is not permitted but which likely has been happening. In addition, President Martin said, students will be allowed to reserve common areas in residence halls and to spend time in one another’s rooms (practicing social distancing and wearing masks). The president noted that, with cold weather approaching, students need more indoor spaces in which to socialize. If the two two-week pilots go well, these changes will be extended, President Martin noted.

Continuing with questions, Professor Leise informed the members that several faculty members have contacted her about Mammoth Day, asking her to share their views with the committee. Some colleagues were supportive of holding the event, while others conveyed that it would have been helpful if the faculty had been informed that there would be a general window of time in which Mammoth Day would take place. In this way, faculty could have built flex time into their course scheduling and would not have been caught off guard. Provost Epstein said that she has received a number of emails from faculty who were highly critical of Mammoth Day. Professor Sitze expressed his concerns in [a note that he sent to the Committee of Six](#).

President Martin commented that she had also received messages from faculty, some conveying positive views of Mammoth Day, and others noting concerns. The president said that, while she understands that there was some disruption associated with cancelling classes, which she takes very seriously, she was heartened to see so many students enjoying themselves outdoors on Mammoth Day. At this unprecedented time, it was very important for students to have this much-needed break, which was requested by the COVID-19 Student Task Force. Prior to the meeting, Professor Trapani had shared with the members [an article](#) that had appeared in the *Amherst Student*, emphasizing the importance of a break such as that provided by Mammoth Day. He noted that, while he certainly understands the challenges, some of which were quite large, faced by some faculty when classes were cancelled without notice, he also feels that Mammoth Day was valuable, and much appreciated by students. Professor del Moral said that students have informed her how grateful they were for Mammoth Day. She commented that students should be the priority, and expressed support for Mammoth Day. Other members concurred.

Thinking ahead to the next semester, Provost Epstein informed the members that she will soon ask the Committee on Educational Policy to consider building a few break days into the calendar of the spring semester, since there will not be a spring break this year. One possibility is that Senior Week could be reduced by a day or two, and that these days could instead be used to provide respite earlier in the semester. A change to the spring calendar will require a vote of the faculty, Provost Epstein noted. The members expressed support for this plan.

Conversation turned to a continuation of the committee's discussion of [a letter sent to the members by Professor Hunter-Parker](#). In that note, she shared her views on the impact that the pandemic is having on faculty with children. The provost, prior to the meeting, provided the committee with relevant data to inform the conversation. This information, prepared by Jesse Barba, director of institutional research and registrar services, spotlighted the consequences for the curriculum of putting in place some of the possible solutions that the members had proposed the previous week—most prominently, the potential effect of granting course releases in spring 2021 to all tenure-track professors and all tenured professors with dependent children who are age twelve or younger.

According to J. Barba, assuming a standard course load of two courses, granting a course release to all assistant professors would remove at least 12 percent of the courses in the spring 2021 catalog (the catalog is already somewhat reduced by the movement of some courses to the January session). Given that spring pre-registration is quickly approaching, he noted that it would be difficult for departments to rearrange their curriculums to cover critical courses that might not be taught if course releases were granted. In addition, he reminded the committee that departments have already submitted their courses, and that the registrar is preparing the catalog for scheduling, advising, and registration. Granting course releases to all assistant professors would also likely require a change to the academic calendar, he noted, as departments would need time to adjust their academic planning, and the registrar would need to restart the process of scheduling the catalog.

J. Barba also informed the members that the curricular effect of such course releases would be felt differentially across departments. His review of spring courses taught by assistant professors suggested that computer science, economics, math, psychology, and statistics would lose several popular courses that also serve as pathways into their majors. In J. Barba's view, practically speaking, course releases might be difficult to grant in some areas, which could create a sense of inequity among assistant professors. Finally, the enrollments from cancelled courses would need to be absorbed elsewhere in the curriculum, he noted. Even assuming that most students would opt for the three-course load recommended by the college this year, his rough estimate is that average section sizes would need to increase by at least three students in the remaining courses. (This projection is based on a rough estimate of expected average section sizes, based on the college's current catalog and a projection for the spring enrollment.) In J. Barba's view, it is unlikely that the shift in enrollments would be shared across the curriculum, which would mean that the experience of this change could be quite different across departments. He noted that surveys of students and faculty, and practical experience, suggest that smaller classes sizes are important to make remote courses effective, so that this increase could work against pedagogical efforts.

In a separate analysis, J. Barba also provided information (by rank, division, and spring 2021 leave status) to the committee about tenure-line faculty with dependent children aged twelve and younger. Granting a single

course release to all tenure-line faculty who have young children would result in logistic, curricular, and pedagogical challenges that resemble those posed by granting a course release to all assistant professors. He noted that, if the college were to combine the two proposals and grant a spring 2021 course release to both all assistant professors and all other tenure-line faculty with children twelve and under, the result would be an 18 percent reduction in spring 2021 course catalog.

In the view of J. Barba, a universal spring course-release policy would be unwise. He described the challenges and costs as daunting and noted that, under such a policy, students' academic choices would be greatly reduced. In some departments, the challenges might simply be insolvable in the time available, he noted. He also said that the academic calendar leaves little time for consultation and planning before students need to register for spring classes.

Concluding his report, J. Barba noted, that, with more time and coordination with departments, it might be possible to grant a single course release to assistant professors that would be spread out over the next several years. While this approach would not solve workload issues during this academic year, it could provide some extra time to focus on research, for example. Finally, J. Barba noted that it is possible that some departments might have the space in their curriculum to grant limited releases this spring, but he argued that spreading out the reductions to the curriculum would alleviate most of the problems he had highlighted. Any such plan would need to be carefully coordinated to ensure that the college could still mount all parts of the curriculum in the coming years, in his view; some use of strategic backfill would also likely be necessary.

The committee expressed thanks to J. Barba for all the work he had done to assemble the information noted above. The members agreed that it is clear from the data that universal course release is not a viable option this spring, given the impact that such a program would have on the curriculum.

The committee discussed whether tenure-track faculty should be the priority when considering course-release and other options to provide additional support during this time. With the view that tenure-track faculty are the most vulnerable, members supported this approach, while noting that tenured faculty who are in distress should contact the provost to explore ways of receiving additional help. The members agreed that, while associate and full professors certainly are experiencing significant challenges, faculty who have not yet achieved tenure face additional pressure and stress, and have a different structural relationship to the college. Professor Kingston suggested that departments be encouraged, where feasible, to allow assistant professors to teach multiple sections of the same course, thus reducing preparation time. His department is providing this opportunity to tenure-track faculty, he noted.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Umphrey proposed giving consideration to the adoption of flexible tenure clocks. Such a system, which some other schools use, she noted, would give tenure-track colleagues greater agency, and build structural flexibility into the tenure process. Faced with significant life events, pressing responsibilities, and other unanticipated situations, tenure-track faculty could have the option of adjusting when they stand for tenure (within a range of years after their initial appointment). Provost Epstein noted that, essentially, Amherst already has a system of this kind in place for faculty parents. Those who take parenting leave, some on multiple occasions before tenure, have the option of standing for tenure in a number of different years. These colleagues are asked to inform the college of their intentions by the spring before the fall of the year in which they wish to stand. Professor Umphrey expressed the view that greater flexibility in the tenure system may also become necessary, due to the state of academic publishing. It is feared that some academic presses may not survive in the years to come, she noted. President Martin said that she does not support the adoption now of a system of flexible tenure clocks, believing that problems of equity could too easily emerge. She suggested waiting to see how the pandemic unfolds, including the effect of COVID-19 on academic presses, rather than trying to predict the future. Based on what happens, the college could extend tenure clocks again, if doing so is considered necessary, the president said.

Professor Trapani stressed the responsibility that the college has to the faculty. He noted that Amherst has been very generous in the support that is providing to students, and that the college should also be creative in developing different forms of support for faculty during this time. For example, he understands that faculty at

UMass, Amherst, who have a full teaching load receive credit toward their next sabbatical. Stipends for childcare might be a welcome form of support for some faculty, he noted. President Martin asked if providing such stipends would be helpful, as the college has heard that, for some, finding childcare providers is more of a challenge than paying for this service. Professor Trapani said that stipends, which could be used flexibly to help faculty manage care-giving responsibilities, and other forms of support, would most importantly represent acknowledgement of the exceptional contributions and dedication of faculty during this exceptional moment. A menu of options would be the most equitable, in his view, as colleagues have been affected by the pandemic in different ways.

In regard to child care, Provost Epstein noted that the college has been considering possible ways to provide additional support to faculty and staff with young children. She noted the challenge of finding high-quality care during this time, and the recognition that a one-size-fits-all approach will not work—as families have a range of needs. The provost informed the members that Lisa Rutherford, chief policy officer and general counsel, in collaboration with the Office of Human Resources, is exploring a number of ideas—beyond what has been made available via [Care.com](#). For example, consideration is being given to offering Amherst students the opportunity to tutor the children of faculty and staff, remotely, which could be very helpful while schools are closed. The provost also reminded the members that there are a small number of slots for children of different ages that are still available at the Woodside Children's Center.

Turning briefly to another issue, the provost noted that Amherst is enrolling U.S. veterans in increasing numbers. As a result, she explained, a [proposed military activation policy](#) is needed to clarify procedures for veterans who are called into obligatory military service, convey a sense of welcome, and bring Amherst into alignment with other colleges. The provost noted that last year's Committee of Six had recommended some small changes to the document, which have now been incorporated. Professor Trapani asked if the college's lawyers have reviewed and approved the policy, which he imagines is in line with legal requirements. Provost Epstein replied in the affirmative.

The members turned next to a discussion of how best to refine the language that the committee intends to propose to amend the [Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom](#) and related issues. The provost noted that the revised draft of the bias-reporting and response protocol is not yet ready to be given to the committee, but that she expects that the document will be provided to the members before the next Committee of Six meeting. Provost Epstein said that those who are revising the protocol in response to the committee's feedback would like to have a better sense of the members' view of what content should be protected under the Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom, so as to align the protocol accordingly. The provost said that, in her view, classroom content should be protected by the statement, and should not fall under the protocol.

Professor Kingston expressed the view that, while considering the committee's proposal to amend the statement, the members should be guided by AAUP guidelines on freedom of expression, which affirm that no viewpoint or idea, however offensive, should be forbidden from being expressed. He disagrees, however, with the AAUP's assertion that "racial or ethnic slurs, sexist epithets, or homophobic insults almost always express ideas." In his view, therefore, while the college should proscribe hateful language, gestures, epithets, and symbols directed against individuals or groups, it should also be made clear that classroom content conveys ideas and therefore cannot be restricted. Professor Trapani said that he is not sure that there should be a blanket statement that all classroom content should be protected, expressing some concern that faculty might be able to mask racist views and targeted racial epithets directed toward students by reading aloud from a racist text, while directing or targeting the delivery toward particular students. He feels that there could be ambiguity surrounding what is meant by classroom "content" and the material chosen to be taught in a classroom. Professor Kingston commented in response that faculty have the freedom to assign texts of any kind, but that the reading of a text in a manner intended to target a particular student would still be seen as harassment. The committee discussed whether, perhaps, it might be preferable to address the restriction of speech directed against individuals or groups in a harassing way through the college's non-discrimination and harassment policy (which is close to being finalized), rather than through an amendment to the Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom. Perhaps violations under this policy would allow for greater accountability, it was noted.

In considering this and other possibilities, the committee referred to the academic freedom statements of Harvard, Skidmore, and Reed. It was agreed that the approaches and some of the language used in these statements might provide good models for the amendment that the members are considering. President Martin noted that, while academic freedom statements are not legal policies, there is a good deal of case law that protects academic freedom and faculty members' right to it. She commented that the directed speech, gestures, epithets and symbols that the committee has been considering prohibiting in the statement would also be considered harassment, and would also thus be covered by the non-discrimination and harassment policy. Professor Umphrey noted that framing the problem as one of addressing speech that is directed against individuals or groups in a harassing way solves certain definitional difficulties. Several members felt that linking to the non-discrimination and harassment policy within the Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom, as some other institutions do, might be an effective approach. Noting the importance to students of doing so, the president expressed support for proposing a modest amendment to the Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom. While preserving what needs to be protected inside and outside the classroom under academic freedom, such an amendment can state explicitly that directed speech that is harassing—which is conduct—is prohibited.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Manion suggested that it would be useful for the committee to develop a better sense of the kinds of moments in which the envisioned policy might be invoked. Amherst-specific examples would be particularly helpful as illustrations, in her view. She wonders what scenarios the Black Student Union (BSU) feel their proposed amendment to the Statement on Academic and Expressive Freedom might remedy. From what she understands, some students might feel that an amendment to the statement could apply to some situations about which the faculty would disagree. President Martin said that, in her discussions with the BSU, she has not gotten the sense that the students want to try to control classroom content. Even if they did, the college would not do so, she noted. The language of the amendment to the statement needs to be very clear on this point, she said. The president also commented that the language of the bias-reporting and response protocol also appears to be protective of academic freedom.

In regard to the suggestion that developing some scenarios would be helpful, President Martin commented that it is impossible to foresee all the ways in which a broad principle can be applied, and that academic freedom cannot be restricted to address specific situations in advance. Professor Manion expressed the view that having examples would provide greater clarity, and that the committee has been thinking about the amendment in ways that are too abstract. The committee discussed whether race should be singled out in the proposed amendment to the Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom that it would propose. It was noted that a far-reaching academic freedom statement must live beyond a particular historical moment, and that it would be best not to single out a particular protected category. The protected categories are already established, and the amendment should be applicable to all of the protected groups, Professor Umphrey noted. She agreed that the proposed amendment should prohibit speech that is specifically directed against individuals or groups in a harassing way, but should not seek to determine all the ways in which this restriction would be applied. President Martin commented that the review team that is a feature of the bias-reporting and response protocol would make an initial judgment about what rises to the level of bias or discrimination.

Conversation turned to the bias-reporting and response protocol. Professor Kingston said that it seems to him that the bias-reporting and response protocol lacks "teeth" and seems to be directed toward community building. Professor Umphrey disagreed. She noted that, under the protocol, faculty who are most vulnerable could be called out about content on a syllabus, for example—which could represent a threat to academic freedom by deterring them from teaching potentially challenging materials. It is very important that it be stated explicitly that course content not be covered under the protocol, she noted. Professor Leise wondered if the committee's proposed amendment to the statement, which would be narrowly constructed, could be separated from the bias-reporting and response protocol. Professor Manion said that she found the first draft of the bias-reporting and response protocol to be too vague and is eager to see the revised version. She also said that it is not clear to her what students want redressed under the protocol. President Martin responded that she believes that what students want is to have a process in place so that they know what to do when they feel that offensive things have been said

or done, and they have experienced harm. Again, it is the review committee that will decide if incidents rise to the level of discrimination or bias.

President Martin said that other issues are of great concern to students. They want the faculty to be better educated about issues surrounding gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity to a degree that they won't comment on a student's hair, for example, and won't call on a Black student to explain "the Black experience." They want the college's curriculum to take into account a broader range of cultures and experiences. They want departments to reexamine their curriculums with the goal of broadening their scope. President Martin said that it is her hope to have the committee engage with these issues. After agreeing to finalize the proposal to amend the Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom at its meeting the next week, the committee noted its intention to discuss how best to share the proposed language with the faculty, in order to garner feedback, before bringing the amendment forward for a vote.

The members next discussed a draft charge for an ad hoc committee that might conduct a comprehensive examination of the ways in which the effectiveness of teaching is evaluated at the college, and make recommendations that could be brought to the faculty. Professor Manion said that it was her understanding, based on the committee's last conversation about such an ad hoc committee, that the charge would be narrower—focusing on issues surrounding bias in the evaluation of teaching. Professor Umphrey commented that, if a committee is charged to examine the ways in which teaching effectiveness is evaluated more broadly, the stated spring 2021 deadline for the completion of the ad hoc committee's work is not realistic. Professor del Moral, who said that she likes the charge that was shared and favors the broad mandate, concurred that the ad hoc committee would need more time to address this matter. Professor Kingston noted that faculty are already overburdened, and that modes of teaching are in flux at this time, which would currently make it difficult to have a deep discussion of this very important and complex topic. He commented that, in developing the common teaching evaluation form, the committee that he had chaired had examined issues surrounding bias in the evaluation of teaching. It would be beneficial for the form to be used until sufficient experience has accumulated to see if any issues emerge, he suggested. Professor Trapani expressed support for charging an ad hoc committee to review the evaluation of teaching more holistically. Student reports of their experiences in the classroom are just one measure of teaching effectiveness; the student retrospective letters, faculty classroom visits, and other forms of evaluation are also important and should be considered, he noted. At the conclusion of the discussion, it was agreed that the members would return to this topic this spring and decide the timing regarding charging an ad hoc committee to conduct a comprehensive examination of the ways in which teaching effectiveness is evaluated.

The meeting ended with the members expressing gratitude to Norm Jones, chief equity and inclusion officer, for [three informative memos about the work of his office](#) that he had sent to the committee, in response to questions raised during previous Committee of Six conversations. Professor Trapani commented that he would be most interested to learn more, from an organizational point of view, about the ways in which offices and centers fit together to conduct this important work.

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 2020–2021 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, October 26, 2020. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors del Moral, Kingston, Leise, Manion, Trapani, and Umphrey; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The meeting began with the president informing the members that [an announcement of the college's preliminary plans for inviting students back to campus for the spring 2021](#) would be made on Wednesday. The hope is to bring approximately 1,200 students back to Amherst, Provost Epstein commented. (The details of the plan, including the continuation of COVID-19 health and safety measures, are included in the email.) The president and the provost said that they would hold a virtual meeting with students and their families the day after the announcement.

Under “Questions from Committee Members,” Professor Trapani, on behalf of a colleague, asked whether the college is thinking about ways to engage and support students, faculty, and staff, as the presidential election approaches, on Election Day, and in the aftermath of the election. President Martin responded that [an email with information about all that will take place, and resources that will be available](#) was about to be sent to the Amherst community (this information went out during the committee's meeting). In addition to providing opportunities for discussion and other events on Election Day, there will be programming that focuses on reflection and analysis following the election, she noted. President Martin informed the members that the Office of Student Affairs will have staff on campus on election night and will be available, should students need resources or support. The Counseling Center will also have same-day appointments available on, and in the days following, November 3. The president said that more information is available on the website [2020 Election Support Programming | Student Affairs](#).

Turning to another topic, Provost Epstein apologized for the difficulty that had occurred when some faculty had tried to access one motion (shown below) on the October 20 faculty meeting agenda. (As a result of this technical problem, there had been a brief discussion, but a vote on the motion had been postponed.) The provost noted that the language being proposed by the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) as a new pass-fail policy would, if passed, replace the current catalog language, which had been provided via a link in the motion. The motion, as presented on the agenda, read as follows:

### Motion 3

That the flexible grading option (FGO) be eliminated and that the language describing it in the *Amherst College Catalog* be removed; that [a new pass/fail policy](#) be adopted and that the language describing this policy replace the current language [describing Flexible Grading and Pass/Fail Options in the Regulations & Requirements Section of the Amherst College Catalog](#). If approved, these changes would take effect on July 1, 2021, with the exception\* noted below.

\* By previous vote of the faculty, FGOs used in spring 2020 will not count against the maximum number of FGOs that students are allowed; the first FGO used in each term of the 2020–2021 academic year will also not count against this maximum.

Continuing, the provost asked the members if they wished to propose any changes to the motion, given that some substantive concerns and some confusion seemed to emerge during the brief discussion of the proposed policy at the faculty meeting. (To inform the members' discussion, prior to the meeting, Jesse Barba, director of institutional research and registrar services, provided some clarifying information about the proposal.)

Professor Kingston commented that, during the faculty's brief conversation at the faculty meeting, the question had been raised as to whether instructors should be notified when their students make the decision to take a course pass-fail. Another point to consider, in his view, is whether a declaration

of pass-fail should require the permission of the student's instructor, in addition to the student's advisor. Under the proposal, only the advisor's permission would be required for the declaration. In addition, Professor Kingston commented that, under the current proposal, the date by which such a declaration would need to take place would be the final day of the exam period. He proposed that the faculty be asked to consider whether the requirement should be that the declaration be made before the final day of classes. Finally, he suggested that separate votes be taken on these possible amendments to the proposal. The members discussed the challenges that professors face when students seem not to be intellectually engaged with course material, and/or appear to be struggling, and the professor is not permitted to know if the student is taking a course pass-fail. It was noted that students who decide to take a course pass-fail very early in the semester can dilute the intellectual rigor of a course, including through a lack of participation. On the other hand, it was noted that, if a student were permitted to delay declaring a pass-fail until the end of exam period, there would be an incentive for the student to try to do well in the course, until it becomes clear that doing well in the course is impossible. It was agreed that Professor Kingston should draft some motions that would permit the faculty to weigh in about possible options for a new pass-fail system to replace the FGO. The members would then decide what motions to bring forward to the faculty.

Most of the remainder of the meeting was devoted to finalizing the committee's proposal to amend the [Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom](#), at the level of considering principles, goals, community values, tone, reach, acknowledgement of past harm—and engaging in intensive wordsmithing. As part of doing so, the members drew on their extensive conversations over recent months about the Black Student Union's request that the college revise the statement, experiences shared by Black alumni, the college's anti-racism plan, the history of systemic racism in the United States, issues raised during the committee-of-the-whole discussion at the October 6 faculty meeting, the policies of peer institutions, the relationship of the Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom to other college policies that protect Amherst community members from discrimination and harassment, and the committee's own views on this important matter. After finalizing [the draft proposal](#), the committee discussed once again the most efficacious way to solicit feedback from faculty and staff. Given the challenges of engaging in discourse over Zoom, the committee decided to gather commentary about the proposal via a Google form. The members also agreed to urge colleagues to provide their names when sharing their views via the form, but also decided to provide an option for anonymous submission. It was agreed that the submissions would not be made public and would be used only to inform the committee's future deliberations about the proposal, the final version of which will be voted on by the faculty.

In the short time remaining, the members discussed whether the approach to minuting the committee's meetings should change. It was agreed that the committee, faculty, and staff could be better served if the minutes were to become less detailed, and had a greater focus on summarizing salient points made during the members' discussions, and the rationale for and impact of decisions. Some members expressed the view that direct attribution of speakers in the minutes can create barriers to engagement in free-and-open discourse during the committee's conversations, in the name of ensuring accountability and transparency, while others thought that a moderate level of attribution is important to transparency in faculty governance. It was agreed that making the minutes more focused and concise could also make them more accessible. At present, it was noted, tasks surrounding the minutes are placing a tremendous burden on the committee, the recorder, and the readers; it is questionable whether the attention that is being devoted is worth the cost, the members concurred. The committee also agreed that having shorter and less complicated minutes would also improve the efficiency of the approval process for the members, allowing for more timely distribution of the minutes and enhanced communication. While concurring with much of what was said, Professor Umphrey commented that the committee's minutes have served a valuable archival function over many years. She said that it is her hope that a record of the reasoning that leads to decision-

making is not lost in in the quest for concision. Professor Umphrey also raised issues surrounding transparency and fostering trust and suggested that the transition to a new approach to minuting not be too abrupt or shift to an extreme of brevity. Others concurred.

Just prior to the meeting, the committee had received a revised draft of the bias-reporting and response protocol and related documents. The meeting concluded with the members noting that they would discuss this topic at their next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The fourteenth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2020–2021 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 12:30 P.M. on Friday, November 6, 2020. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors del Moral, Kingston, Leise, Manion, Trapani, and Umphrey; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The meeting began with a brief discussion of ways in which the common teaching evaluation form might be customized for co-taught courses, a conversation prompted by a proposal that the biology department had sent to the provost. (Last year's Committee of Six had also discussed this topic, which had been raised by the Consultative Group for Tenure-Track Faculty.) In advance of the meeting, the biology department had provided a sample evaluation form for one of its co-taught courses that had been adapted so that separate evaluations could be solicited and extracted easily for each faculty member. Professor Kingston, who had chaired the Ad Hoc Committee for the Development of a Common Form to Evaluate Classroom Teaching in 2019, noted (for reference) that the ad hoc committee had offered some [recommendations about the use of the common form for co-taught courses](#). He expressed the view that what the biology department has designed is consistent with the common form, and noted that the introductory paragraph should be the preamble/framing of the common form. The committee concurred that the customization proposed by the biology department represents a reasonable solution for its co-taught courses going forward.

The members turned next to a discussion of a revised version of the bias-reporting and response protocol and related materials, which had been shared with the committee prior to the meeting. The protocol has now taken the form of a handbook, it was noted. According to Professor Hart, who had forwarded the documents on behalf of the Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, the handbook has been designed to "outline in a single document the mission, intention, and structure of our bias protocol, how it sits adjacent to the college's statement on academic and expressive freedom, and connects to the Center for Restorative Practices."

The members engaged in a wide-ranging conversation about the protocol document, expressing concerns, once again, surrounding the clarity and specificity of some of the language and processes; the illustrative scenarios included in the proposal; and the complexity and vagueness of aspects of the proposed system. Some members also wondered why the approach to developing a system for Amherst seems to rely on reinventing the wheel, rather than drawing on, as models, similar systems that have been in place at other institutions. Provost Epstein commented that those who have been working on the proposal have been trying to build a system that they feel makes sense for Amherst. President Martin commented that the leadership of the Black Student Union, when recommending that Amherst adopt a bias-reporting and response protocol, had examined some systems at other institutions, including the University of Chicago. She believes that the colleagues who are developing Amherst's proposal have also done so. Some members expressed the view that the protocol has not been thought through sufficiently, and that the feedback that the members had provided is not reflected in the revised document. Some members commented that they are unclear about the role of the Committee of Six vis-à-vis the proposal. If the idea is for the committee to endorse the protocol on behalf of the faculty, some members said that they would feel uncomfortable doing so at this point. The ways in which a bias-response and reporting system might intersect with academic freedom and classroom content is a significant concern for the faculty, the members pointed out. They agreed that, within the document, it should be stated clearly that classroom content is protected under academic freedom and is not covered under the proposed system, if this is the case.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Umphrey raised some concerns and questions. First, she said that she has a broad concern that the introduction of restorative practices at the college is apparently being limited to addressing incidents of bias. In her view, this tack could appear to limit the potential for restorative practices to have a more far-reaching impact at the college. Professor Umphrey also expressed continuing concern about the risk of tenure-track faculty (in particular) feeling vulnerable and anxious in the classroom, if the proposed protocol were to be put in place. Under the envisioned system, it appears

that faculty could be reported anonymously for something that they might say or do, including in the classroom. As a result, there potentially could be a chilling effect on the content that some faculty might teach, Professor Umphrey fears. The committee also shared the view that there is a lack of clarity within the proposal about what kind of complaints can be brought under the proposed system. The scenarios that were provided do not convey a sense of how the ways in which the most challenging situations that might arise would be addressed, the members concurred.

Discussion returned briefly to the topic of restorative practices. Some members wondered what would happen if an individual refuses to join a restorative circle, even if it is determined that harm has been caused through the person's actions. President Martin responded that she does not think that a restorative circle would work if an individual is unwilling to engage in the process, but that other restorative practices could. The members also wondered about whether confidentiality might be a problem, particularly if those involved have unequal statuses. Some thought that the circles might work best if those involved have relatively equal statuses, and if the number of participants is kept small. President Martin commented that restorative practices encompass more than just circles. One-on-one discussions can take place between parties, facilitated by a trained administrator, for example. At times, the president said, the emphasis within a restorative practice will be to support a person who feels harmed, even if the episode that the individual had reported does not appear to the review team to rise to the level of bias, and/or nothing restorative can be done that includes the person who caused the harm. Professor Kingston reiterated his concern that the proposal mentions "other methods" of addressing incidents that cause harm, but does not make clear what these methods would be.

Returning to the topic of the role of the Committee of Six in relation to the proposal, Professor del Moral expressed the view that the Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, of which she is a member, needs more concrete feedback on the proposal from the Committee of Six. Provost Epstein agreed that having specifics to provide to the committee is important. The members agreed that the protocol should make clear what forms of identity-based harm will be addressed under the protocol, how it will be proven what harm has taken place, and who will determine what constitutes harm. The committee also expressed the view that the issues surrounding adjudication are not clear in the document, and that processes, and how they will work, are vague. Professor Manon raised the question of how other college policies, including the new non-discrimination and harassment policy relate to the proposed protocol.

President Martin responded that bias incidents will be handled through restorative practices, not adjudication. If it is determined that harassment and/or discrimination, as defined by Title IX or Title VI, has taken place, the relevant grievance processes for faculty, staff, and students that are already in place will be used, she noted. If a student's conduct violates the honor code, it will be treated as such by student affairs. She reiterated that some editing of the bias protocol document could help make the definition of a bias incident clearer to those who have not been involved in the discussions that have occurred in the Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Provost Epstein commented that those who have been working on the protocol are waiting to learn more about the Committee of Six's proposal to amend the Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom. They will then think further about some of the possible intersections of academic freedom and the proposed protocol.

In regard to including examples in the protocol, President Martin said that it appears that the protocols of peer schools typically do not include them, which makes sense to her. She believes that some of the confusion about the bias protocol can be addressed by making some of the language more straightforward, and by shortening the document. The president agreed to discuss the issues that had been raised with Professor Hart and to review the document in detail with him and Norm Jones, chief equity and inclusion officer, suggesting edits based on the committee's discussion. The committee agreed to review the revised version of the protocol when it is completed.

In the short time remaining, the members returned to a discussion of their preferred approach to minuting the committee's meetings. The committee continued to agree that the minutes should become less detailed and more concise. Conversation focused on whether there should continue to

be some individual attribution in the minutes, as a matter of sound faculty governance and transparency, and to offer consistency in the presentation of individual members' lines of argument (including when members change their minds about an issue over time). In the end, the committee agreed that there should be a presumption of attribution when the committee discusses significant matters of policy, notably when the members are presenting a range of viewpoints on a subject, in particular when there is disagreement regarding these ideas. Rather than adopting rigid rules under which attribution would be required, however, the members agreed to navigate questions surrounding the need for attribution flexibly, as discussions unfold.

The meeting adjourned at 2:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The fifteenth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2020–2021 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, November 9, 2020. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors del Moral, Kingston, Leise, Manion, Trapani, and Umphrey; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The committee turned first to personnel matters.

President Martin next informed the members that she had met with Norm Jones, chief equity and inclusion officer, and Professors Dhingra and Hart, faculty equity and inclusion officers, who have been developing the bias-reporting and response protocol. She said she had conveyed the members' concerns about aspects of the document that the committee had shared at its last meeting (e.g., the clarity of some of the language, the vagueness and complexity of some of the processes, and the issue of equating speech and action). These colleagues had stressed that the proposed protocol is not meant to curtail academic freedom, and that the protocol would not cover course content. They had noted that the protocol could be invoked, however, when complaints are made about something that was said or done in a classroom setting that might constitute bias. Restorative practices might then be used to address the incident.

Continuing, the president noted that students sometimes now convey such complaints to the class deans, who may inform the provost and dean of the faculty, depending on the nature of the incident. Under the proposed protocol, there will be a review committee, which will be made up of faculty, staff, and students, that does not have an adjudicative function. It would seek to determine whether harassment and/or discrimination, as defined by law, has taken place. The seriousness of the incident would determine whether it rises to the level of the legal definition of harassment or discrimination, violates the student honor code, or constitutes a bias incident. Conduct that rises to the level of harassment or discrimination or violates the honor code will be referred to the relevant grievance processes for faculty, staff, and students. These constituency-specific processes are already in place, the president noted. In cases in which harm may have been caused, but in which no formal consequences are called for, the committee might recommend that the parties involved participate in restorative practices, she said. Restorative practices might prove helpful under serious circumstances, as a supplement, as well, the president noted.

President Martin informed the members that she is satisfied that the committee's concerns about the protocol document can be addressed through an editing process, in which she will participate. Once the document has been revised, she suggested introducing the protocol and assessing the system in a year or two. Professor Hart proposed that the non-discrimination and harassment policy be shared at the same time as the protocol. In this way, there could be greater clarity about the mechanisms that the college will use to address identity-based harm, including harassment, discrimination, and bias, depending on the nature of an incident. The members agreed that providing more specifics about these processes, and more clarity about the nature of the forms of harm that will be addressed, should help alleviate some of the nervousness and anxiety that surrounds the idea of a bias-reporting and response protocol. The committee agreed to review the protocol document again, once the editing process is completed, and to offer feedback.

Professor del Moral said that she is glad that the committee has had the opportunity to discuss the bias-reporting and response protocol, the adoption of which was requested by students during Amherst Uprising. She stressed the importance of moving forward with the pilot and putting the system into practice. Professor del Moral also commented on the care with which colleagues in the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion have developed the protocol, expressing appreciation for their efforts and the outcome of their work. Some members commented that, after reading the commentary that some faculty submitted recently via the Google form that the committee had shared, it seems clear that some feel that amending the [Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom](#) will not do much to advance anti-racism efforts at the college. Putting a bias-reporting and response protocol in place, however, may have more of an impact and could play a significant and welcome educative role, several

members noted.

Under “Questions from Committee Members,” Professor Umphrey asked whether some students will be staying on campus through the holidays. Provost Epstein said that the vast majority of students will leave campus when classes end, but that some will stay through the end of the exam period. Some international students and students who cannot go home for reasons of hardship will remain on campus until early January, she noted. It is anticipated that this latter group comprises around fifty or sixty students.

The remainder of the meeting was devoted to finalizing the committee’s proposal to amend the Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom. The members discussed the feedback that the committee had received via the Google form, commentary that the members agreed was informative and helpful. While there were some suggestions about ways to revise some of the language of the draft document, and some issues that were raised, for the most part, there was support for the intent and most of the language of the proposal. After some discussion, the members agreed to remove “protected classes” from the proposal, a phrase that some colleagues had said stood out as being too legalistic. The committee also considered issues of intent and impact, and in this context, different meanings that would be conveyed by words such as “directed,” vs. “targeted,” vs. “intended.” The committee also discussed whether the amendment should refer to individuals only, groups only, or individuals and groups. A conversation also took place surrounding the use of “reasonable” vs. “necessary,” and “intellectual” vs. “educational.” In the end, the committee agreed to propose the amendment to the section of the statement shown below. (The proposed changes are shown in blue.) The members decided to finalize the proposal at their next meeting, after taking some time to reflect further.

Even the most vigorous defense of intellectual and creative freedom knows limits. The college may properly restrict speech that, for example, is defamatory, harassing, invades a protected right to privacy or confidentiality, constitutes incitement to imminent violence, or otherwise violates the law. **IT MAY ALSO RESTRICT DISPARAGING OR ABUSIVE SPEECH (E.G., RACIAL EPITHETS) DIRECTED AT AN INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP BASED ON THEIR ACTUAL OR PERCEIVED GROUP IDENTITY, FOR WHICH THERE IS NO REASONABLE ACADEMIC, EDUCATIONAL, OR ARTISTIC JUSTIFICATION. THE COLLEGE** ‡ may place reasonable limitations on the time, place, and manner of expression, and may restrict speech that directly interferes with core instructional and administrative functions of the college. But these restrictions and limitations must be understood as narrow exceptions to the college’s overriding commitment to robust open inquiry (voted by the faculty, May 3, 2016).

The meeting adjourned at 5:17 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The sixteenth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2020–2021 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, November 16, 2020. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors del Moral, Kingston, Leise, Manion, Trapani, and Umphrey; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The meeting began with President Martin informing the members about two new student COVID-19 cases on campus; she expressed great concern and disappointment about a number of unauthorized student gatherings that had taken place over the previous weekend. The president noted that it has been reported that a number of those attending at least one of these parties, which had exceeded the group-size limit, had not been wearing masks. She said that the possibility of the virus spreading on campus has led to a decision to implement a number of additional health and safety rules, which will be put in place immediately ([see Dean Agosto's email outlining these measures](#)). Discussion then turned to a personnel matter.

The members returned to a discussion of their proposal to amend the Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom. After reviewing the most recent iteration (finalized on November 9), the committee refined the language further. Much of the conversation focused on whether the proposed amendment is too broad. The members considered whether narrower definitions should be articulated within the statement so as to protect academic freedom to the fullest degree possible, while also limiting disparaging or abusive speech directed at individuals or groups based on group identity. In this context, the members discussed whether there should be greater specificity regarding the categories to which the restriction on directing disparaging or abusive speech would apply, according to the statement. Otherwise, most members agreed, there was a risk that the meaning of *group identity* and the range of groups that could be covered could be too broad, and therefore too inhibitory of speech. For this reason, the committee decided that the language of *protected class*, which offers the advantage of clear definitions and is consistent with the college's non-discrimination policies, would be preferable. It was agreed that it would be important to share what these protected categories are by including the college's non-discrimination policy at the end of the statement.

The committee also discussed the following line from the statement: "The college may properly restrict speech that, for example, is defamatory, harassing, invades a protected right to privacy or confidentiality, constitutes incitement to imminent violence, or otherwise violates the law." A member suggested that the sentence should be more declarative. Rather than saying the college *may* restrict such speech, the member proposed saying that the college *restricts* such speech. Professor Kingston disagreed and expressed the view that the use of *may* grants the college the flexibility to develop policies that articulate in more detail when speech would be restricted. The committee decided to retain *may*. The members also discussed whether to retain the word *reasonable* in the new language that would be proposed, which they had drafted earlier as follows: "It may also restrict disparaging or abusive speech (e.g., racial epithets) directed at an individual or group based on their actual or perceived group identity, for which there is no reasonable academic, educational, or artistic justification." Professor Umphrey expressed support for retaining the "reasonableness standard," noting that it provides some basis for assessing justifications for certain speech in the classroom, and the other members concurred.

After finalizing the language (shown below), the committee decided to have a meeting with the faculty to discuss the proposal, including the rationale for the wording. The purpose of the meeting would be informational, and the session would also provide an opportunity to answer the faculty's questions, the members agreed. This meeting was then set for December 1, at 5:00 P.M. The committee also agreed to bring its now-final proposal to amend the statement to the faculty for a vote at a formal faculty meeting on December 15.

### **November 9 Iteration of the Proposal to Amend the Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom**

Even the most vigorous defense of intellectual and creative freedom knows limits. The college may properly restrict speech that, for example, is defamatory, harassing, invades a protected right to privacy or confidentiality, constitutes incitement to imminent violence, or otherwise violates the law. **IT MAY ALSO RESTRICT DISPARAGING OR ABUSIVE SPEECH (E.G., RACIAL EPITHETS) DIRECTED AT AN INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP BASED ON THEIR ACTUAL OR PERCEIVED GROUP IDENTITY, FOR WHICH THERE IS NO REASONABLE ACADEMIC, EDUCATIONAL, OR ARTISTIC JUSTIFICATION. THE COLLEGE** It may place reasonable limitations on the time, place, and manner of expression, and may restrict speech that directly interferes with core instructional and administrative functions of the college. But these restrictions and limitations must be understood as narrow exceptions to the college's overriding commitment to robust open inquiry (voted by the faculty, May 3, 2016).

### **Final Language of the Proposal**

Even the most vigorous defense of intellectual and creative freedom knows limits. The college may properly restrict speech that, for example, is defamatory, harassing, invades a protected right to privacy or confidentiality, constitutes incitement to imminent violence, or otherwise violates the law. **IT MAY ALSO RESTRICT DISPARAGING OR ABUSIVE SPEECH (E.G., RACIAL EPITHETS) DIRECTED AT AN INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP BASED ON THEIR ACTUAL OR PERCEIVED AFFILIATION WITH A PROTECTED CLASS\*, AND FOR WHICH THERE IS NO REASONABLE ACADEMIC, EDUCATIONAL, OR ARTISTIC JUSTIFICATION. THE COLLEGE** It may place reasonable limitations on the time, place, and manner of expression, and may restrict speech that directly interferes with core instructional and administrative functions of the college. But these restrictions and limitations must be understood as narrow exceptions to the college's overriding commitment to robust open inquiry (voted by the faculty, May 3, 2016).

*Amherst College subscribes fully to the AAUP statements of principles on academic freedom published in 1940, and assumes that faculty members know their rights and their responsibilities as members of the academic profession.*

*\* Amherst College does not discriminate in admission, employment, or administration of its programs and activities on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, sex or gender (including pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender expression and gender identity), age, disability, genetic information, military service, or any other characteristic or class protected under applicable federal, state or local law. Amherst College complies with all state and federal laws that prohibit discrimination, including Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, Title IX, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Equal Pay Act and the Age Discrimination in Employment Act.*

Prompted by a review of language that the framers of the bias-reporting and response protocol had recently added to the document, the members discussed whether pedagogy should not be covered under the protocol. The new language reads as follows: "The curriculum, course content, and pedagogy are the province of the faculty and are not covered by this protocol." A member initially expressed the

view that only the curriculum and course content should be excluded from the protocol. Following a wide-ranging discussion that included the consideration of a number of different classroom scenarios, the committee agreed that it should be possible for the protocol to be invoked when complaints are made about some things that are said or done in a classroom setting that might constitute bias. Some members expressed the view that pedagogical methods—for example dividing a class into discussion groups based on gender—should not be excluded from the protocol, as it is possible that strategies such as this one could result in incidents of bias, or even trauma, in one member’s view. In addition, a member of the committee wondered whether students would interpret the proposed exception as meaning that the college does not want to provide any avenue for them to report incidents of what they consider to be bias, if such incidents take place in a classroom.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Manion commented that the protocol should be a vehicle for holding faculty members accountable for the experiences that result from the way they run their classrooms. Professor Manion noted that students may have different expectations and reactions than faculty anticipate. If a student files a report about a faculty member, it could be an informative educational experience for the professor, it was noted. Other members disagreed, while recognizing the challenge that faculty may face when trying to address students’ feedback. Under the protocol, Professor Umphrey noted, reports that are made will focus on incidents of bias. For untenured faculty members, in particular, the accusation that they have committed bias could create a great deal of anxiety; the identity-based protocol is not a neutral system, she commented. Professor Umphrey suggested that, instead of calling a faculty member out, other ways should be available to communicate concern about bias taking place as a result of pedagogical strategies.

Some members concurred that it would be helpful to provide ways for students to engage in a conversation about a pedagogical practice that does not rise to the level of bias. This could be a less formal and less loaded process. Professor Trapani suggested that removing *reporting* from the name of the protocol would set a better tone—pivoting from an emphasis on calling individuals out to an emphasis on sharing experiences and education. It was noted that the protocol is not a faculty-specific policy, and that it is expected that the majority of reports will involve students reporting experiences related to other students. President Martin agreed to convey the committee’s suggestions to the colleagues in the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion who are developing the protocol. She also agreed that pedagogical methods should be covered by the protocol, commenting that there is a distinction between pedagogical methods and bias expressed while using them, and that the distinction matters. Aware of the distinction, the review team will determine if an incident rises to the level of bias.

The meeting ended with a brief conversation about how best to familiarize the community with the bias-reporting and response protocol, once the document is finalized. President Martin said that she anticipates sharing the protocol as part of an update that she will provide about progress that the college is making on its anti-racism plans.

The meeting adjourned at 4:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The seventeenth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2020–2021 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 11:15 A.M. on Tuesday, November 17, 2020. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors del Moral, Kingston, Leise, Manion, Trapani, and Umphrey; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The meeting was devoted to personnel matters. It adjourned at 1:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The eighteenth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2020–2021 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 12:15 P.M. on Friday, November 20, 2020. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors del Moral, Kingston, Leise, Manion, Trapani, and Umphrey; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The meeting began with Provost Epstein informing the members that, due to spread of COVID-19, which is expected to increase in the coming weeks and months, consideration is being given to starting the spring semester later than originally anticipated—perhaps as late as the last week of February. The semester would end thirteen weeks after the start date, in June, she explained, and the hope would be to build in a couple of long-weekend breaks. The ability of students to pursue summer opportunities is part of the calculation, in regard to the semester’s end date, the provost said. Professor Trapani asked if any of the other colleges and/or the university within the Five-College Consortium are also considering later start dates in the spring. Provost Epstein said that, at this time, Smith is already planning on starting in mid-February; she does not know if the other colleges are considering changing their plans. The provost noted that she would keep the committee posted about the spring calendar; its approval would require a vote of the faculty.

Turning to another matter, Professor Trapani, expressed his appreciation for the series that was organized to commemorate the fifth anniversary of Amherst Uprising, including the November 19 event titled “[From Protest to Progress through Partnership: Five Years of Being Human in STEM @Amherst and Beyond.](#)” He thanked the provost and president for attending the Being Human in STEM event. President Martin noted that the HSTEM initiative, an outgrowth of Amherst Uprising, has become a national model. She and the provost commented on how significant and impressive all these events have been. The members then turned briefly to a personnel matter.

The committee next discussed some fine points of the near-final draft of the bias-reporting and response protocol. The members identified some issues surrounding structure and nomenclature and suggested some additional revisions, with the goal of enhancing clarity. Professor Umphrey also suggested a change to some of the language in the document, commenting that the tone of several references seemed inconsistent with the educative restorative practices that are interrelated with the protocol. Professor Manion expressed thanks to the framers of the document for incorporating a working definition of *bias* that is consistent with the prevailing views of the field, as the committee had suggested. President Martin thanked the members for the close reading they had done of the draft protocol and for the recommendations they had made. She said that she would share them with the colleagues who are working to finalize the document in the coming days. Some members asked how the protocol would be assessed. President Martin responded that she expects that there will be reviews of the full range of measures that the college is taking and will take and that the protocol will be included in such evaluations. The college administration will remain open to change, as needed, the president said. In addition, several members noted, it appears that the Center for Restorative Practices has built assessment into its work. Professor Kingston noted that the bias response team will include two faculty members, and he asked how these individuals will be selected and whether this will be viewed as committee service. The answer was not known at this time. Professor Kingston also noted that it is his understanding that the bias-response process is fully optional for the party accused of bias; while it is certainly hoped that those accused of bias will take advantage of the valuable opportunities for education and community-building that the restorative-practices model offers, it is not an adjudicative process, and if they decline to participate in it, the process will terminate. The provost agreed that this is her understanding also.

Conversation turned to [a letter from the Committee on Educational Policy](#) proposing once again that the flexible grading option (FGO) be replaced with a new pass-fail policy. (As the result of a technical problem with the agenda for the October 20 faculty meeting, a vote on the CEP’s motion about this matter had been postponed.) Provost Epstein noted that, following the brief discussion of the motion that had taken place at the faculty meeting, during which some substantive concerns and some confusion seemed to emerge,

the CEP had reviewed the proposal again (see the CEP minutes of October 28, 2020, and November 4, 2020). The provost noted that the CEP had had a robust discussion about whether faculty members should have the option of designating that their courses will not be pass-fail. The CEP is divided on this point. (Provost Epstein commented that, if the CEP's motion passes, departments would continue to have the option of not allowing courses that are counted toward the major to be taken pass-fail.) The provost noted that the CEP had voted three in favor and five opposed on the question of allowing faculty to decide whether to make their courses ineligible for pass-fail. Professor Kingston said that he continues to support the idea of having the faculty choose the details of the proposal by means of votes on possible amendments to the proposal (brought forward as separate motions as part of the faculty meeting agenda).

Professor Kingston commented once again on the challenges that professors face when a student may appear to be struggling, and the professor is not permitted to know if the student is taking a course pass-fail. He said that he had had a conversation recently with a senior colleague who had expressed the view that the pass-fail policy struggles to accomplish two conflicting objectives: to encourage students to take intellectual risks, and to bail out students experiencing academic difficulty. Decisions about the first objective, however, need to be made during the advising process, while decisions about the second objective are made late in the semester. In this colleague's view, this proposal's emphasis seems to be more on providing a safety valve for students who are having academic difficulty, and less on encouraging curricular exploration.

The other members of the committee expressed the strong view that it would be best to forward the CEP's motion to the faculty without a series of Committee of Six motions to amend it. They noted that the CEP, as well as the Ad Hoc Curriculum Committee, has considered the relevant issues thoroughly and has spent some time deliberating. A member asked if the CEP had consulted with a variety of constituencies before developing its proposal. Provost Epstein responded that consultation had indeed taken place. Through discussion of the motion at the meeting, the faculty could weigh in on the questions that Professor Kingston had raised, as well as other issues, the other members agreed. If desired, amendments could be moved, and votes taken, it was noted. The members asked the provost to invite Professor Melillo, chair of the CEP, to outline at the faculty meeting the points that the CEP had considered when developing its proposal, and its rationale for what is being brought forward. Professor Umphrey asked if the intention is for the new pass-fail policy, if approved, to take effect in the spring. Provost Epstein said that, if approved, the proposal would be effective on July 1, 2020. The members agreed to vote on the proposal when they vote on the December 15 faculty meeting agenda, but said that they anticipate forwarding the CEP's motion to the faculty.

The committee turned to some issues of concern that the provost had conveyed, based on some of the results of the 2020 Amherst College staff survey, the focus of which was Amherst's work culture. Ahead of the meeting, the provost had provided the members with some [aggregated data](#), including [qualitative information](#), that the company that had administered the survey had provided to the administration. The provost explained that the results of the first staff survey, which had been conducted in 2017, had also indicated that many staff members feel that faculty do not value or respect them. This continues to be the case, based on the more recent survey results. The college would like to find ways to ameliorate this problem, which is of longstanding, the provost noted. She asked the members for their views on the matter and to suggest possible approaches to addressing it.

The committee noted that the survey results indicate that there has been improvement in the staff's views of other areas of the college's work culture, which is promising, and were disappointed that the faculty-staff divide remains an issue of concern. The members wondered whether the views of professional staff and support staff differ on this issue and felt would be useful, to gain additional perspective, to have the data disaggregated further. Provost Epstein said that concerns about the ways in which faculty treat staff seem to be shared by many staff in different kinds of positions across the college. As an example, the provost noted that some staff conveyed that some faculty members expect immediate results after making requests and demand or insist that their needs be met, without going

through normal college processes. Some staff have shared that some faculty do not seem to respect their professional expertise. There are complaints that faculty ignore requests made by email and do not respond. Some members wondered whether the data suggest that issues surrounding race and gender may intersect with the results that point to a faculty-staff divide. President Martin said that she would look into this question.

Continuing the conversation, Provost Epstein noted that academic department coordinators expressed their own set of concerns via the survey, and she said that she plans to share an aggregated report of these responses with department chairs. Several members commented that the college should hold faculty members accountable for disrespectful behavior toward staff, noting that having some consequences in place could effect change. The members discussed a number of steps that could be taken to try to address some of the issues that had been raised, including appointing more staff to standing committees as full voting members, and finding other ways to integrate staff into the governance of the college to a greater degree; devoting some portion of faculty meetings to reports by staff members about administrative areas of the college; documenting staff members' responsibilities to make clear what work is appropriate for faculty to request and what work is not; creating more organic opportunities for staff and faculty to engage with one another around activities and/or opportunities for intellectual discourse; making college-wide and departmental processes and deadlines more transparent to faculty; and employing restorative practices, when needed.

Several members noted that faculty who serve as the supervisors of staff—largely department chairs—would benefit greatly from having robust supervisory training to help them carry out this role effectively. President Martin, who agreed that the Office of Human Resources should be asked to develop such training, also expressed support for the current efforts of academic departments to document their practices in department handbooks. She commented that building in more structure of this kind at the college is a positive step. In her experience, a more casual approach to the ways in which work gets done can tend to benefit individuals who have been at the institution the longest, know how to get things done, and may be able to exercise more authority as a result; transparency about policies and practices, as well as decision-making processes, results in greater clarity for everyone. The president expressed concern about the fact that the Employee Council is not more formally integrated into governance processes at the college, which can limit the role that the council can play.

Concluding the conversation, some members suggested asking staff what measures they would recommend to address the faculty-staff divide. The members agreed to return to the topic of the survey results at a future meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 2:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The nineteenth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2020–2021 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 1 P.M. on Thursday, December 3, 2020. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors del Moral, Kingston, Leise, Manion, Trapani, and Umphrey; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The meeting began with Provost Epstein informing the members that she expects that the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) will soon forward to the Committee of Six the proposal to revise the spring 2021 academic calendar, which she had mentioned to the members previously. The provost said that, while she has argued for a start date toward the end of February, the CEP seems to be leaning toward a start date in mid-February. She understands that many students are eager to return to campus, and that they would prefer that the end of the semester not extend too far into June, particularly since they want to be able to pursue summer opportunities. Professor Kingston asked whether the CEP has considered the idea of relaxing the constraints on the January term schedule, in the event that the spring term starts later than originally planned. He would welcome having such flexibility, he said, since the current schedule is very compressed. Provost Epstein responded that this idea had not been discussed. The provost noted that the intention is to have the faculty vote on the spring calendar proposal at the December 15 faculty meeting, and to inform students soon after, if a new calendar is approved.

The committee discussed some topics that had been raised at the December 1 informational meeting for faculty, which the members had held to discuss the committee's proposal to amend the [Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom](#). The members noted the many thoughtful questions that had been asked, and it was agreed that the meeting had been productive. On the topic of the inclusion of *protected class* in the proposal (see the end of these minutes), the members agreed to retain this language, noting once again that it offers the advantage of clear definitions and is consistent with the college's non-discrimination policies. Some faculty had noted at the meeting that the language is legalistic and is based in employment law, and one faculty member had suggested substituting "minorities and other historically underrepresented groups." Professor Trapani commented that, while the college's non-discrimination statement, which includes a list of the protected classes, now appears at the end of the proposed revision to the Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom, it could be helpful to make the language more explicit. Perhaps it would be useful, he noted, to say that the categories listed in the non-discrimination statement are, in fact, the protected classes referenced in the committee's proposal. In regard to a question asked at the meeting about Amherst's guidelines that lay out the time, place, and manner in which the college can restrict speech, and the consequences of impinging on the limits that have been set, President Martin pointed to Amherst's [policy on protests and free expression](#) and [Statement on Freedom of Expression and Dissent](#).

Conversation turned briefly to the question of when the bias-reporting and response protocol would be shared with the community. Most members agreed that it would be desirable to share the document as soon as possible, and definitely before the December 15 faculty meeting. Professor Trapani stressed the importance of making it clear that the bias-reporting system does not cover course content, is not adjudicative, and does not impinge on academic and expressive freedom. The other members concurred. It was noted that, while a faculty member might be invited to participate in a restorative practice if a concern is raised about something that might have been said in a classroom, the purpose would be educative and participation would be voluntary. The members agreed that it is important to remember that the scope of the protections provided by academic freedom are broad and cover many areas beyond the classroom, including, for example, bringing speakers to campus who may hold controversial views. President Martin said that she would check in with Professor Hart to see whether the bias-reporting document is now complete. She knows that he has found the Committee of Six's suggested revisions of the document, which she understands have been incorporated, to be very helpful.

The members then turned to personnel matters. The meeting ended with a brief conversation about the issue of attribution in the committee's minutes, as some members had expressed the desire for more attribution under particular circumstances. With little time remaining, the members decided to return to this topic at the next meeting.

**Language of the Committee's Proposal to Revise the Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom**

Even the most vigorous defense of intellectual and creative freedom knows limits. The college may properly restrict speech that, for example, is defamatory, harassing, invades a protected right to privacy or confidentiality, constitutes incitement to imminent violence, or otherwise violates the law. **IT MAY ALSO RESTRICT DISPARAGING OR ABUSIVE SPEECH (E.G., RACIAL EPITHETS) DIRECTED AT AN INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP BASED ON THEIR ACTUAL OR PERCEIVED AFFILIATION WITH A PROTECTED CLASS, AND FOR WHICH THERE IS NO REASONABLE ACADEMIC, EDUCATIONAL, OR ARTISTIC JUSTIFICATION. THE COLLEGE** ~~it~~ may place reasonable limitations on the time, place, and manner of expression, and may restrict speech that directly interferes with core instructional and administrative functions of the college. But these restrictions and limitations must be understood as narrow exceptions to the college's overriding commitment to robust open inquiry (voted by the faculty, May 3, 2016).

*Amherst College subscribes fully to the AAUP statements of principles on academic freedom published in 1940, and assumes that faculty members know their rights and their responsibilities as members of the academic profession.*

The meeting adjourned at 2:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The twentieth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2020–2021 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 3:30 P.M. on Tuesday, December 8, 2020. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors del Moral, Kingston, Leise, Manion, Trapani, and Umphrey; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The meeting began with Professor Trapani commenting on how much he had learned from the first conversation in the [President's Colloquium on Race and Racism](#). This event, which had taken place on December 3, had featured Anthony Jack '07, an assistant professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and Shutzer Assistant Professor at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, and Imani Perry, Hughes-Rogers Professor of African American Studies at Princeton University and a faculty associate with the programs in law and public affairs, gender and sexuality studies, and jazz studies. Professor Trapani thanked the president for organizing the series.

Turning to another topic, Professor Trapani suggested that, at some point, the committee return to a topic that he had raised over the summer—exploring the adoption of a structure in which one Committee of Six might focus on faculty personnel matters, while another addresses executive committee work. In his experience so far, he has found that, even with a course release, the workload of the Committee of Six is quite heavy, particularly in combination with another significant service obligation. He noted the high number of personnel cases that the committee will consider in the spring and the challenges he believes that he will face doing this work without the benefit of another course release. Further, he noted that, in cases in which faculty members are both chairing a department and serving on the Committee of Six, which seems to happen regularly, he worries that both important duties may suffer from a lack of adequate time to carry out each of them to the best of one's ability. Professor del Moral said that she also can see the benefit of splitting the functions of the committee.

Provost Epstein responded that the committee could certainly consider this proposition, on which the Committee of Six has weighed in many times over the years. One argument has been that divorcing the responsibilities of personnel and the work of the executive committee could allow for more sustained focus on college-wide matters. A counterargument has been that, under the current structure of the Committee of Six, the members' experience of being immersed in personnel matters gives them a valuable perspective from which to address college-wide issues. Provost Epstein noted that another counterargument has been that the faculty committee that does some of the most important work of the college should be the same committee that does the most important work in regard to faculty personnel matters. Professor del Moral said that, in her experience thus far, it seems that these two forms of work do not intersect. In regard to workload, Provost Epstein said that she has observed that past members of the committee, knowing that they would have one course release a year while serving, have sometimes chosen to stay on the committee for a second year when it would have been possible for them not to continue because they were eligible for leave.

On a somewhat related note, several members said that it would be useful for them and their departments to know soon whether they will be serving on the committee next year. Since all six members are new to the committee this year, and no one is planning to be on leave next year, three members must rotate off, in accordance with the faculty legislation that requires that "at least three of the members of the Committee of Six are elected in the spring of each year by direct faculty ballot." (See [Faculty Handbook, IV., S., 1.](#)) It was agreed that, relatively soon, the committee would use a virtual version of the practice of drawing straws to determine which members would rotate off the committee.

The members next discussed a request from Professor Sims and Jim Brassord, chief of campus operations, to reactivate the Sanctuary Stewardship Committee, which in the past had played a role in the oversight of Amherst's Wildlife Sanctuary and which had been deactivated previously. Professor Sims and J. Brassord feel that, as part of an effort to move forward with a "Mammoth Trails" project for the college's bicentennial, reactivating the committee would provide continued long-term direction and facilitate the sustainability and engaged use of the sanctuary. Professor Sims and J. Brassord are proposing revising the committee and making the following changes to the existing charter and

structure: adjusting the committee's charge so that it references stewarding inclusive use of the space, and adjusting the mechanisms for appointing staff members to the committee in a way that ensures more connection to student programming and complementary uses of the space. Specifically, they feel that one staff member should be designated to represent the Office of Student Affairs or the resource centers, one staff member should be the director of the Book and Plow farm, and one staff member should be drawn from the areas of Athletics and Wellness. They are also suggesting adding another member of Buildings and Grounds, another faculty member, and another student (particularly because student schedules sometimes make it difficult for them to attend meetings). The changes to the committee's charge that Professor Sims and J. Brassord are proposing appear below.

The Amherst College Wildlife Sanctuary Stewardship Committee is composed of ~~two~~ **THREE** members of the Faculty, ~~the Director of Facilities Planning and Management~~ **THE CHIEF OF CAMPUS OPERATIONS**, the Grounds Supervisor **AND A DESIGNATED REPRESENTATIVE**, ~~two~~ **THREE** other staff members (~~either Trustee appointees or staff appointees~~), and ~~two~~ **THREE** students. The faculty members of the committee are appointed by the Committee of Six and serve for three-year terms. ~~The Advisory Committee on Personnel Policies~~ **THE SENIOR STAFF** appoints the staff members, who **SHALL INCLUDE ONE REPRESENTATIVE FROM STUDENT AFFAIRS OR THE RESOURCE CENTERS, ONE REPRESENTATIVE FROM ATHLETICS AND WELLNESS, AND THE DIRECTOR OF THE BOOK AND PLOW FARM AND** serve three-year terms. The ~~two~~ **THREE** student members of the committee are ~~elected~~ **APPOINTED** by the Association of Amherst Students each year. The committee, which is charged with the long-term oversight and management of the sanctuary, recommends priorities and policies; oversees academic, research, and other uses of the sanctuary; and acts as a steward for the sanctuary's wildlife and habitats **AND FOR THE INCLUSIVE USE OF THIS SPACE**. The committee may be advised by **OTHER MEMBERS OF FACILITIES AND GROUNDS**, the conservation director (current or former) of the town of Amherst, and other consultants." There is some urgency to it in order that a revised committee might play a role in planning for the bicentennial. If that is desired, a new committee should be appointed and meet during the January term.

Professor Kingston, while acknowledging that he finds the rationale for the proposal compelling, expressed some concern that a committee that had been deactivated previously would now be reconstituted. Further, he said that, given the service burdens of the faculty already, he worries that the proposal includes adding another professor to the membership of the committee. He asked if membership on this committee will count as faculty members' service if the proposal is approved. Provost Epstein said that she believes that the committee will not meet frequently, and she noted that those who have served in the past have been on other committees at the same time. In response to questions about the Mammoth Trails project, President Martin said that it is her understanding that it involves renewing the sanctuary trails system and promoting increased access to and use of this resource for the college and region, in support of sustainability and wellness. The goal is to revitalize and upgrade existing trails and improve wayfinding and information. The project will also involve coordinating related bicentennial events showcasing the sanctuary. The members expressed support for the project and recommended that the Wildlife Sanctuary Stewardship Committee be reconstituted as an ad hoc committee for the period necessary to complete the trails project. Professor Umphrey suggested that establishing a public space committee in the future might be useful.

On a related note, Professor Trapani once again expressed concern that not all faculty committee service is tracked and credited, including service on some of the college's [compliance committees](#).

Provost Epstein said that her office tracks faculty service for standing committees (those that are included in the *Faculty Handbook* with voted charges, the members of which are largely appointed by the Committee of Six). The new Workday system may make it possible to more easily track other committee service, she noted. She will consult with her office about this matter.

Conversation turned to two options for a revised spring 2021 academic calendar that the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) had forwarded to the Committee of Six ([see a letter from Professor Melillo](#), chair of the CEP, which includes a link to the options). The provost had previously discussed with the committee the reasons—which center around protecting the health of the community during the time of COVID-19—for starting the semester later than originally planned. Maximizing the time when everyone can be outdoors will be very helpful, as the fall semester revealed, the provost said. Other schools are also considering, or have already adopted this approach, she noted. Provost Epstein commented that both options have the spring semester starting on February 15, include one-day and two-day breaks, and would achieve the goal of ending the semester in time to allow students to pursue summer opportunities and faculty to preserve time for research. Under both proposed options, the semester would conclude by the end of May. Commencement (which will likely be virtual) would take place on May 30. (The provost noted that, even if students on campus are permitted to attend a commencement ceremony, all graduating students would not receive their degrees until June, in order to give the registrar's office time to process them.)

Professor Kingston expressed a slight preference for option one. He noted that missing a Monday but not a Tuesday in week six (as in option two) might be awkward; under this scenario, he pointed out that, for some classes (Monday/Wednesday), it would mean effectively missing half a week, while for others, (Tuesday/ Thursday), it would mean not missing any class time. Later, the same thing would happen in reverse, when a Thursday and Friday would be missed. He feels that it would be better to miss a Monday and Tuesday together (as in option one), so that everyone gets half a week off at the same time, particularly when there may be multiple sections that want to stay in sync. Professor Trapani said that he prefers having a Monday/Tuesday break. He wondered if one option would better serve courses that are taught one day a week, labs, or courses that meet twice a week. Provost Epstein responded that she feels that both options are workable. Her only preference is that the one-day break precede the two-day break, as faculty and students will need a longer break later in the term, in her view. Provost Epstein asked the members how they would feel about having an even later start date, which would mean extending the spring semester into June. The committee agreed that doing so would not be the best approach (such a change would intrude on faculty research time and students' ability to be competitive for summer internships and jobs), and that a February 15 start date seems like a good compromise.

President Martin noted that a small number of students have written to her to express concern about delaying the start of the semester. Most of the issues that they have raised center around the start and end dates of leases that students have signed to live off campus this spring. Provost Epstein noted that, if the start date is delayed, she anticipates that college will need to allow some students to return to campus early, as their circumstances may leave them with no place else to go during the time in between the original start date and the new one. President Martin said that, while she appreciates the concerns that students have shared thus far, mitigating the risk of COVID-19 is the priority, which argues for a later start date. The committee agreed and expressed support for bringing [option one](#) to the faculty for a vote at the December 15 faculty meeting. After President Martin noted that Baystate appears to be filling up with COVID-19 patients, a member asked if the college has plans to provide the vaccine to the college community when it becomes available. The president said that it is premature to make plans at this point, as it is unclear whether the vaccine will be made available directly to colleges and universities.

The committee returned briefly to an issue surrounding the inclusion of the language of *protected class* in the members' proposal to amend the Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom (see the

final proposal at the end of these minutes), given that many will not know what categories fall under *protected classes*. While the college's non-discrimination statement was added to the end of the proposal to amend the Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom, and the non-discrimination statement does list the categories, it is not stated explicitly that they are the ones that fall under the term *protected class*. Even so, most members agreed that clear definitions of the categories are readily available (including simply by Googling the term *protected classes*), and that it is desirable to use this language because it is consistent with Amherst's non-discrimination policies and the law. After further discussion, most members agreed that it doesn't seem appropriate or necessary to include the non-discrimination statement itself as a footnote as part of the Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom, and it was removed from the proposed amendment.

The members next reviewed the faculty meeting agenda for the December 15 faculty meeting and then voted on three motions. They voted six in favor and zero opposed on the substance of the motion to revise the spring 2021 calendar (see [option one](#)), and six in favor and zero opposed to forward the motion to the faculty. They then voted six in favor and zero opposed on the substance of the motion to amend the Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom, the relevant section of which is shown below, and six in favor and zero opposed to forward the amendment to the faculty. They also voted six in favor and zero opposed on the substance of a motion to eliminate the flexible-grading option and replace it with a new pass-fail policy (see motion below), and six in favor and zero opposed to forward the motion to the faculty. They then voted six in favor and zero opposed to forward the faculty meeting agenda to the faculty.

#### **Proposal to Amend the Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom**

Even the most vigorous defense of intellectual and creative freedom knows limits. The college may properly restrict speech that, for example, is defamatory, harassing, invades a protected right to privacy or confidentiality, constitutes incitement to imminent violence, or otherwise violates the law. **IT MAY ALSO RESTRICT DISPARAGING OR ABUSIVE SPEECH (E.G., RACIAL EPITHETS) DIRECTED AT AN INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP BASED ON THEIR ACTUAL OR PERCEIVED AFFILIATION WITH A PROTECTED CLASS, AND FOR WHICH THERE IS NO REASONABLE ACADEMIC, EDUCATIONAL, OR ARTISTIC JUSTIFICATION. THE COLLEGE** ‡ may place reasonable limitations on the time, place, and manner of expression, and may restrict speech that directly interferes with core instructional and administrative functions of the college. But these restrictions and limitations must be understood as narrow exceptions to the college's overriding commitment to robust open inquiry (voted by the faculty, May 3, 2016).

*Amherst College subscribes fully to the AAUP statements of principles on academic freedom published in 1940, and assumes that faculty members know their rights and their responsibilities as members of the academic profession.*

#### **Flexible-Grading Option/Pass-Fail Motion**

That the flexible grading option (FGO) be eliminated and that the language describing it in the *Amherst College Catalog* be removed; that a new pass/fail policy be adopted and that the language describing this policy (shown below in **red caps**) replace the current language (shown struck below) describing Flexible Grading and Pass/Fail Options in the Regulations & Requirements section of the *Amherst College Catalog*. If approved, these changes would take effect on July 1, 2021, with the following exception: by previous vote of the faculty, FGOs used in

spring 2020 will not count against the maximum number of FGOs that students are allowed; one FGO used in each term of the 2020–2021 academic year will also not count against this maximum.

#### ~~FLEXIBLE GRADING OPTION (FGO)~~

~~The purpose of the Flexible Grading Option (FGO) is to encourage students to explore the breadth of Amherst's open curriculum as they seek to meet the college's stated learning goals. Students who enter Amherst College as first years may elect to take up to four of the total number of courses required for the degree under the FGO; transfer students who enter as sophomores may elect to take up to three courses required for the degree under the FGO; and transfer students who enter as juniors may elect to take up to two courses required for the degree under the FGO. Students may not take more than one such course in any one semester. Courses taken in the second semester of the senior year are not eligible for the FGO.~~

~~To elect a course as FGO, students must file the FGO form, signed by their advisor(s), with the Office of the Registrar by the end of the add-drop period. Instructor permission is not required on the FGO form, and instructors are not informed if students have elected the FGO option for their course.~~

~~Students will have five days after the date grades are due to either accept the grade assigned by the instructor, or, in the case of passing grades ("D" or better), elect to have a pass ("P") displayed on their transcript for the course. (No grade-point equivalent will be assigned to a "Pass.") If the letter grade assigned by the instructor is an "F," an "F" will be recorded. If the student takes no action, the assigned grade will remain on the transcript.~~

~~Second-semester seniors who have not exhausted their FGO options may select one course to be taken Pass/Fail. To do this, seniors submit a Pass/Fail form, signed by their advisor(s) and the course instructor, to the registrar by the end of the add-drop period. (No grade-point equivalent will be assigned to a "Pass.")~~

~~In exceptional circumstances, and only once during their career at Amherst College, students who have not previously exhausted their FGOs and have not elected an FGO in that semester may, with the permission of their instructor, academic advisor, and class dean, convert one course to an FGO after the end of the add/drop period.~~

~~In exceptional circumstances, and only once during their career at Amherst College, students may, with the permission of their instructor, academic advisor, and class dean, convert one course to Pass/Fail after the end of the add/drop period.~~

#### **PASS-FAIL (P/F) GRADING OPTION**

**THE AIM OF THE PASS-FAIL (P/F) OPTION IS TO ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO TAKE**

INTELLECTUAL RISKS, TO EXPLORE THE BREADTH OF AMHERST'S OPEN CURRICULUM, AND TO REWARD STUDENTS FOR ENGAGING FULLY IN ALL THEIR COURSES. UNDER THIS OPTION, STUDENTS MAY ELECT TO DECLARE ONE COURSE PER SEMESTER, AND NO MORE THAN FOUR COURSES OVER FOUR YEARS, TO BE TAKEN PASS-FAIL. A DECLARATION OF PASS-FAIL REQUIRES THE PERMISSION OF THE STUDENT'S ADVISOR(S) AND MUST BE MADE BEFORE THE FINAL DAY OF THE EXAM PERIOD. IF A STUDENT DESIGNATES A COURSE PASS-FAIL, THE STUDENT'S TRANSCRIPT WILL HAVE A "P" RECORDED IN THE CASE OF PASSING GRADES ("D" OR HIGHER). NO GRADE-POINT EQUIVALENT WILL BE ASSIGNED TO A "P." IF THE LETTER GRADE ASSIGNED BY THE INSTRUCTOR IS AN "F," AN "F" WILL BE RECORDED ON THE STUDENT'S TRANSCRIPT AND WILL COUNT TOWARD THE STUDENT'S GPA AND CLASS RANK. ONCE STUDENTS HAVE DECLARED A COURSE PASS-FAIL, THEY CANNOT LATER OPT FOR THE GRADE. STUDENTS ADMITTED AS FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS MAY ELECT THE PASS-FAIL OPTION FOUR TIMES DURING THEIR AMHERST COLLEGE CAREER. TRANSFER STUDENTS ADMITTED AS SOPHOMORES SHALL HAVE THREE PASS-FAIL OPTIONS, AND THOSE ADMITTED AS JUNIORS SHALL HAVE TWO. THE FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR IS NOT ELIGIBLE TO BE TAKEN PASS/FAIL.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 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 2020–2021 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 2:00 P.M. on Thursday, December 10, 2020. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors del Moral, Kingston, Leise, Manion, Trapani, and Umphrey; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The meeting began with President Martin noting that four students have asked to speak at the December 15 faculty meeting to express concerns about the proposal to delay the start of the spring 2021 semester. Provost Epstein said that she would prefer that Jeremy Thomas '21, president of the Association of Amherst Students (AAS), and other students find ways to gather a broad sense of student sentiment about this issue, rather than allowing three or four students who hold the same views to speak at a faculty meeting. President Martin commented that the COVID-19 student advisory group supports delaying the start of the spring semester, recognizing that health and safety should be the priority. The president said that most of the emails that she has received from students about this issue have focused on impact that the delay would have on them because of the leases that some students have signed to live off campus. She noted that the college is prepared to have students who have nowhere else to go between February 1 and February 15 return to campus early, and said that there would be a petition process to do so if the revised calendar is approved. The committee agreed that it would be preferable not to have the students speak at the faculty meeting, but to try to learn more about any broad concerns that students may have about delaying the start of the spring semester. President Martin said that she would inform the AAS president and ask that he encourage students to send their reasons for opposing a later start.

The members next reviewed some additional demographic information to inform their discussion of the results of the staff survey. They had requested the data to try to determine whether there are any patterns relating to issues that had been raised and respondents' race, ethnicity, and/or chosen gender identity, for example. It was noted that, overall, male-identifying respondents seem more satisfied with their jobs at Amherst than female-identifying respondents, and that the survey had drawn more responses from women as a whole. The provost noted that there are more female-identifying than male-identifying staff overall. The members wondered whether anyone has tried to learn more about the views of staff who had declined to respond to the survey. Another interest was in whether the polling company could provide better infographics than the large somewhat unwieldy and difficult to interpret table. The provost said that she does not believe so. Some members said that they are interested in learning more specific results about particular divisions or departments. It was noted, however, that when broken down in this way, the numbers would likely often be too small to make inferences based on them. Privacy concerns could also be raised.

Provost Epstein was asked what the role of the Committee of Six is vis-à-vis thinking about ways to address the concerns that had been raised. She said that it is her hope that the committee will help brainstorm about possible interventions. The members also wondered if staff have been asked what they want and need, in order to address their concerns. Provost Epstein said that, through their commentary in the survey, staff have conveyed specifics about interactions with faculty members in which there has been a lack of respect on the part of professors. After the first staff survey, she had read a list of staff concerns to the faculty as a whole at a faculty meeting, and at a meeting of the chairs of academic departments and programs. Raising awareness seems to have made little difference, based on the survey results, the provost noted. Incidents range from faculty not responding to staff emails, to demanding that their needs be met immediately and insisting that they be treated differently because they are faculty.

Professor Trapani asked if it is possible that staff have experiences of this kind with a small number of faculty, who may be having an impact on many staff, or whether the behavior that had been described is pervasive. Conversation returned briefly to the importance of providing chairs of academic departments with robust training on how to work with and supervise staff, a topic that had been discussed in more detail at a previous meeting. The committee asked if the new Workday system might be a positive

influence in relation to some of the issues that staff have identified. The members also noted that, if faculty do not have clarity on staff roles and/or job descriptions, then they may unknowingly be requesting things that fall outside the staff members' responsibility. President Martin said that, in some ways, she expects that it will, as there will be greater clarity about the roles and responsibilities surrounding many administrative processes. More needs to be done about the issue of some faculty not respecting staff and making some staff feel undervalued. The remainder of the meeting was devoted to personnel matters.

The meeting adjourned at 3:30 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 2020–2021 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 12:30 P.M. on Wednesday, December 16, 2020. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors del Moral, Kingston, Leise, Manion, Trapani, and Umphrey; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The meeting began with President Martin informing the members that the COVID-19 student advisory group with which she has been working has asked to meet with the Committee of Six to discuss academic workload issues. In addition, students would like the college to consider the possibility of allowing courses to be taken abroad over the summer for credit, since many students have missed opportunities to study away as a result of the pandemic. Provost Epstein commented that, under Amherst's policies, courses can only be taken over the summer for credit to make up deficiencies. There are a number of complexities associated with the students' proposal, she said, including constraints surrounding financial aid. The members agreed that President Martin would inform the students that the committee would not be meeting again until the very end of January, at which point the members could decide whether to meet with the students. It was noted that many students are finding it difficult to study from home, and that some face additional challenges because they must work and/or have significant family obligations. The members said that they have observed some of these dynamics among their students, many of whom are struggling, and have tried to be as flexible as possible. At the same time, all agreed that "watering down" courses is not an educational approach that is in students' best interests.

Conversation turned to [an email to the committee from Professor George](#), in which he had expressed concerns about some of what had transpired at the December 15 faculty meeting and at some other faculty meetings that had taken place earlier in the semester. In his communication, Professor George noted that, at the faculty meeting the previous evening, some questions had been called when some faculty still had their hands up, indicating that they wished to speak. In addition, no one had had an opportunity to speak to one of the motions before the question had been called, he noted. In his view, while procedures had not been violated, college custom had been, and he fears that damage is being done to collegial culture at the college. The members discussed Professor George's letter, and most members did not fully agree with his characterization of what had taken place at the most recent faculty meeting.

Professor Umphrey stressed the importance of having full debates and minutes taken to record them at faculty meetings. She expressed some concern about the trend toward having many committee-of-the-whole conversations, the notes of which are not shared (but which may be requested by members of the faculty), ahead of minuted discussions. Having a record of the discourse surrounding decision-making is essential from a faculty governance perspective, in Professor Umphrey's view. Professor Manion suggested that the committee communicate to the faculty that the Committee of Six welcomes their thoughts, questions, and correspondence, commenting that a very small number of faculty currently take advantage of this channel of communication, and that many tenure-track faculty or more recently tenured might not even know they can communicate directly with the committee as a group. The other members agreed that expanding the number of voices that weigh in on important issues will strengthen engagement in faculty governance.

Turning to another topic, Professor Kingston said that he welcomes the two-week gap between the January term and the spring semester that has been created as a result of approving a revised calendar, specifically shifting to a February 15 start date for the spring term. He asked the provost if there is room for flexibility in regard to the parameters of January term as a result. Provost Epstein said that, while all students must be done with their courses by the end of January term, and that no formal changes can be made (e.g., changing the timing of the exam period or when grades are due), professors may have opportunities to incorporate some flexibility into their January term courses, within these constraints.

Professor Trapani next commented on how much he appreciates receiving the comprehensive, useful

information contained in the Clery report, which is emailed to the Amherst community each year. (The Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act Report, which is required by law, contains information about campus security policy and certain campus crime statistics. In addition, the report includes information about fire safety, fire detection/suppression systems, and statistics of damage, injury, and death caused by fire.) Professor Trapani suggested that it would be desirable to find more prominent ways to communicate about the report—beyond the community email—as the email can easily be overlooked. He feels that many members of the community would be interested in reading the report if they were more aware of its contents. ([The report is posted online.](#))

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 twenty-third meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2020–2021 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 12:00 P.M. on Friday, January 29, 2021. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors del Moral, Kingston, Leise, Manion, Trapani, and Umphrey; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

Turning first to the schedule for faculty meetings this spring, the committee agreed that the following dates should be held for possible faculty meetings: February 16, March 2, March 16, April 6, April 20, May 4, May 18, and June 8 (9:00 A.M.). The members then considered several committee assignments, after which they turned to a personnel matter.

The committee next reviewed [a proposal from Professor Harper](#), director of the Center for Humanistic Inquiry (CHI), to deactivate the Folger Undergraduate Fellowships Committee. That committee's main function is to select students to participate in the Folger Undergraduate Fellowship program. Professor Harper has recommended, for reasons described in his proposal, that the faculty members of the CHI's advisory board serve on the Folger committee, rather than having the Committee of Six appoint faculty to the body. Professor Umphrey, who previously served as director of the CHI and worked with the Folger committee in this capacity, expressed support for the proposal. The other members concurred, and it was agreed that the Folger Undergraduate Fellowships Committee should be deactivated. The members next agreed to nominate colleagues to serve on a memorial minute committee for Dean of the Faculty Emerita Mary Catherine Bateson.

Under "Questions from Committee Members," Professor Umphrey asked how college bicentennial events are progressing this spring, given the challenges of the pandemic. President Martin said that a number of virtual events are taking place, and that the renewal of the sanctuary trails system is also under way. The president noted that bicentennial events will continue throughout the 2021–2022 year, when it is hoped that some events can take place in person.

Anticipating the upcoming election for next year's Committee of Six, the members drew straws virtually to determine who would leave the committee at the end of this academic year. Since all current Committee of Six members are in their first year on the committee, and none is going on leave next year, three members must leave the committee at the end of this academic year, in accordance with the *Faculty Handbook (IV.,S., 1., a.)*, where the following is noted: "At least three of the members of the Committee of Six are elected in the spring of each year by direct faculty ballot." The process of drawing straws will result in Professors del Moral, Kingston, and Trapani leaving the committee on June 30, 2021. The remainder of the meeting was devoted to personnel matters.

The meeting adjourned at 1:30 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 2020–2021 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 3:30 P.M. on Tuesday, February 2, 2021. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors del Moral, Kingston, Leise, Manion, Trapani, and Umphrey; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The meeting began with Provost Epstein informing the members that, with the support of President Martin, she has engaged a consultant, Susan Pierce, to help think through issues surrounding shared governance at the college. The provost said that conversations that she has had with associate professors have revealed that many at this career stage do not find college service to be meaningful or useful. She was disappointed to learn that most of these colleagues seem to view service as a burden, rather than as a rewarding way to contribute to the life of the college and to have an impact. The provost noted that, having spent their first seven years at Amherst focused mainly on teaching and scholarship, associate professors return to campus after their sabbaticals and are expected to play more robust roles in terms of governance and other service. At the same time, many senior Amherst faculty members who had been deeply involved in college service for decades have retired. The president and provost agreed that it would be helpful to have an outside consultant interview faculty about shared governance at the college, given the views that colleagues have expressed, and the transition that has occurred in the faculty in recent years.

The provost noted that she and President Martin have each had a preliminary conversation with Ms. Pierce and were impressed with her experience and expertise, and her approach to considering this issue. The consultant has now been asked to make recommendations about how best to move forward to ensure that faculty time on service is being used most effectively—that is, in ways that have the most purpose and value—and to support faculty in balancing service with their other critical responsibilities.

Continuing, Provost Epstein informed the members that plans call for Ms. Pierce to begin her work by having a Zoom conversation with each member of this year’s Committee of Six, to learn about what members think works well, and what needs to be improved, in regard to service. Over the coming weeks, the consultant will also talk with previous members of the Committee of Six, chairs of key faculty committees, other faculty at all ranks, chairs of academic departments and programs, the faculty equity and inclusion officers, and many others at the college, including administrators who support the academic mission of the college. The committee expressed support for this effort.

Provost Epstein noted that another goal of this exercise will be to consider more ways of making the service of the faculty visible, including at the departmental level, where a good deal of “invisible” service now takes place. The provost noted that Amherst appears to be the only school among its peers that does not require that faculty submit an annual report of their activities. She feels that this might be a helpful mechanism to adopt, as it could contribute to greater transparency about how faculty are spending their time, including how much time they are devoting to service. On a related note, Professor Manion commented that, for many colleagues, it is not clear what service “counts” for reappointment, tenure, and promotion. Provost Epstein said that all service is considered as part of these processes. She is aware, however, that some faculty are frustrated that some service—for example advising—does not seem to be recognized.

Concluding the conversation, the provost said that it is her hope that service can be reconceived so that it does not feel like it is a burden. President Martin pointed out that there is a difference between governance and service. She feels that it will be very helpful to consider whether faculty are engaged in thinking about things at a strategic level, rather than being drawn into the weeds—which she has observed is sometimes the case at the college. The provost expects that Ms. Pierce will share her insights about service at the college this spring.

Under “Questions from Committee Members, Professor Manion noted the uptick in COVID-19 cases among students recently, and she asked if the college has adjusted its planning accordingly. President Martin responded that most students who have tested positive for the virus in recent days live in town; they are allowed to come to campus only for the purpose of being tested (which is conducted at special

times just for off-campus students). The college has learned that about twenty Amherst students who live near one another in two houses, and who interact, have been infected, or have been exposed. Amherst has informed the town manager about these positive cases, and public-health officials are conducting contact tracing.

Conversation turned to a draft of a charge for the ad hoc committee that will consider the evaluation of teaching at Amherst, which will be appointed this spring and begin its work in the next academic year. The members suggested some edits to the document, while approving most of the content. It was agreed that the committee would discuss the charge again once the members' revisions had been incorporated.

The members next discussed draft guidelines for the administration of the common form to evaluate classroom teaching that had been proposed by last year's Committee of Six. Last year's committee supported the development of a consistent process that would be used across departments to introduce the purpose and importance of teaching evaluations, and had begun work on this issue, the provost said. She commented that departments appear to have varying levels of enthusiasm for standardizing the processes surrounding the administration of teaching evaluations, while noting that tenure-track faculty members feel strongly that, as a matter of equity, all departments should follow the same practices. A related issue is finding ways, across departments, to ensure high student response rates—a critical part of the evaluation process. In regard to this latter issue, Professor Trapani expressed the view that adopting a college-wide policy of withholding grades until evaluations are submitted would be an effective approach.

The committee agreed that framing the purpose of the evaluation process in a consistent way is critical. It was also noted that many students are not aware of the importance that is placed on student evaluations as part of the reappointment and tenure processes, and about these faculty personnel processes themselves. The members felt strongly that information about reappointment and tenure should be a part of the messaging that is provided to students in advance of the evaluation process. The committee agreed that the ways in which bias can enter into the process of the evaluation of teaching should also be discussed with students. In addition, some members expressed the view that students should be informed that, beyond the evaluative purpose of their evaluations, student feedback is often very helpful to faculty as a way of gauging whether their pedagogy is meeting their goals, and/or should be adjusted in order to improve learning outcomes.

In anticipation of the conversation about the guidelines for administering teaching evaluations, the members had watched a short video that had been prepared last year as a way to introduce the purpose and importance of teaching evaluations to students. While agreeing that the video format could be useful, the committee expressed some concerns about aspects of the proposed video. The members asked the provost to convey some recommendations for improving this tool, and she agreed to do so. It was also noted that, in addition to having guidelines for departments' administration of teaching evaluations, it will be important to develop a comparable document for students, to provide the information that the members had discussed. The committee suggested that, perhaps, the Center for Teaching and Learning could be asked to help draft student guidelines, which the committee would review.

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 2020–2021 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 2:00 P.M. on Thursday, February 4, 2021. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors del Moral, Kingston, Leise, Manion, Trapani, and Umphrey; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The meeting began with a lengthy discussion of a personnel matter, after which the committee turned to “Questions from Committee Members.” Professor Umphrey asked if there is any possibility that rising seniors could study abroad in the fall and still pursue honors work that is required to take place over two semesters. If, for example, they register in January term for honors courses, as well as in the spring, would it be possible to consider this two semesters? Provost Epstein said that she would consult with the registrar about this approach.

Conversation turned to the Jeffrey B. Ferguson Memorial Teaching Prize. In the past, current Amherst faculty and students, and alumni who graduated from the college within the last twenty years have been 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.

Provost Epstein explained that last year’s Committee of Six had suggested that it would be helpful to make some refinements to the process of nominating colleagues for the prize and selecting prize recipients. Issues that had been raised included whether the Committee of Six should continue to select the recipient of the prize. It had been agreed that, if the Committee of Six functions as the selection committee, current Committee of Six members would not be eligible for the prize while they served on the committee. Last year’s committee had also begun a discussion of the criteria that should be used to decide on the recipients of the prize and possible ways of strengthening the nomination process, 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. Last year’s committee had agreed that 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 excelling in the classroom and as mentors. This approach, it had been noted, would honor Professor Ferguson’s own contributions 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 current members shared many of the concerns pointed out by last year’s Committee of Six; they felt that it would be important to clarify what qualities and accomplishments might distinguish an Amherst faculty member as an excellent teacher, and as someone who has had a major pedagogical impact on the curriculum. Professor Trapani suggested revising the current nomination form to solicit this information more explicitly, with the goal of garnering more substantive responses. It was noted that, while faculty might be in a position to speak to the impact that a faculty member has had on the curriculum, current students and alumni likely would not have the information needed to do so. Alternatively, most faculty would not have experienced other colleagues’ teaching in the classroom over an extended period. Thus, the members wondered whether the questions on the nomination form should be tailored to the different constituencies. Professor Manion suggested that faculty be asked to

nominate fellow faculty, replicating the approach of professional societies. Once a short list of nominees emerged, a portfolio of commentary from other faculty, students, and alumni could be assembled. Some members wondered whether current students should continue to be asked to participate in the process, as they already give a teaching award through an Association of Amherst Students process. Discussion also focused on whether one award recipient should be selected each year, rather than two, and whether the current eligibility criteria for faculty should be expanded to include faculty at all ranks—with no restriction on years of service at the college. In regard to making one award annually, with a prize of \$10,000, it was suggested that half be awarded for the recipient's personal use and half be awarded to support the recipient's pedagogical and curricular endeavors. At the conclusion of the discussion, it was agreed that President Martin should think further about the award and share her views of possible changes with the members at a future meeting.

The remainder of the meeting was devoted to personnel matters.

The meeting adjourned at 3:30 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 2020–2021 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, February 8, 2021. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors del Moral, Kingston, Leise, Manion, Trapani, and Umphrey; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The meeting began with “Questions from Committee Members.” Professor Trapani shared a colleague’s concerns surrounding the recent communication to faculty that students who are already on campus will be required to be in quarantine until February 19, at the earliest, once students who are traveling to Amherst to begin the spring term arrive on campus. The decision means that the work of some honors students in STEM, and their advisors, will be interrupted, which could have an impact on their ability to complete experiments and other research, the colleague conveyed. The faculty member is also concerned that very little notice was given about this shift in policy. Provost Epstein responded that the reason for the short notice was that the college had not made this decision until just recently, after weighing current health information and considering risks. The worry is that newly arrived students could expose students who are already on campus to the virus, and could also put faculty and staff at risk, including in the science center. The provost said that Jack Cheney, associate provost and associate dean of the faculty, will be working with the Science Center Steering Committee to identify those honors students for whom it is critical to continue to be able to have access to the science center. Every effort will be made to accommodate these students, Provost Epstein said, while noting the expectation that there will be a small number of students who meet the criteria for having access to the science center during the quarantine period. Professor Trapani thanked the provost for initiating this review process. Continuing to convey the concerns of the faculty member, he then noted that the colleague is experiencing frustration, more generally, over last-minute announcements of decisions. This trend is having an impact on the ability to make plans, according to the colleague. The president commented that the health of the community is the college’s top priority, and that decisions are being made in response to the course that the pandemic takes. At the same time, she agreed that thinking further about communication strategies, including how best to share information with different campus constituencies as soon as possible after decisions are made, would be helpful.

Continuing with questions, Professor Kingston asked how likely it will be that classes will need to be taught remotely beyond the first week of the semester. President Martin responded that the college will need to see how many students test positive for the virus during the first week of classes. Each student will be required to have a negative test result at home before traveling to campus, which should help minimize the number of cases the president said. The college has also ordered rapid antigen test kits, which should be another useful screening tool, she said. The president commented that she will be surprised if there will be a need to extend the quarantine period, but that everyone will need to wait and see how things unfold.

The committee next engaged in a brief discussion about the ad hoc committee that the members expect to charge with making recommendations about how best to obtain feedback about teaching effectiveness at Amherst. 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-seventh meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2020–2021 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 2:30 p.m. on Monday, February 15, 2021. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors del Moral, Kingston, Leise, Manion, Trapani, and Umphrey; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The meeting began with “Questions from Committee Members.” Professor del Moral asked Provost Epstein about the schedule for discussing the letter that Professor Hicks had sent to the committee regarding the impact of the pandemic on tenure-track faculty, and the college’s response. Provost Epstein responded that the letter would be on the committee’s agenda very soon, hopefully for the members’ next meeting, but that tenure deliberations for this year must be completed before turning to this topic. On a related note, Professor Trapani asked if the college is considering expanding the ways in which faculty members’ scholarly accomplishment and productivity is evaluated. As an example, he noted that, when serving as an external reviewer for a tenure case at another institution recently, he had learned about Boyer’s model of scholarship. According to Ernest Boyer, who introduced the model in 1990, the ways in which research is defined should be broadened, with the goal of creating more flexibility. Under this approach, scholarship and research are divided into the following four categories: the scholarship of discovery, the scholarship of integration, the scholarship of application (also later called the scholarship of engagement), and the scholarship of teaching and learning. Provost Epstein said that she is not familiar with Boyer’s model, but finding ways to be more flexible during this time has been on her mind, she said. The provost informed the members that she has been impressed with the ways in which the University of Massachusetts has been thinking about possible changes in procedures and practices that recognize the impact of COVID-19 on faculty, including in the realm of faculty evaluation, that could provide more equitable support for colleagues. The provost said that she would be providing materials from UMass, with the goal of informing the committee’s consideration of this issue. The hope is to discuss Professor Hicks’s letter in the context of this conversation. The members then turned to personnel matters.

Following that discussion, the committee reviewed drafts of the letters that the provost sends annually to candidates and chairs regarding tenure procedures; some minor revisions to these documents were suggested. The committee recommended that ways of streamlining this document be considered, and the provost agreed to have her office reimagine the letter, which has been used for decades (with updates from the Committee of Six added each year). She noted that, in addition to sending candidates, chairs, and academic coordinator (ADC)s two letters, one geared toward candidates and the other toward chairs, which currently quote liberally from the *Faculty Handbook*, the provost’s office has developed a series of concise documents that focus on procedures and logistics (e.g., a checklist for candidates, guidelines for the submission of materials, and a timeline for departments and candidates). All such documents [are posted on the provost and dean of the faculty’s website](#). In addition, members of the provost’s office meet with candidates and chairs and ADCs (separately) each year to review all material and to answer questions, Provost Epstein noted.

The meeting concluded with a brief conversation about the charge for an ad hoc committee that will examine issues surrounding teaching effectiveness at the college, with a focus on tenure-track colleagues. The members’ review of a draft charge provided by the provost’s office as a starting point for discussion prompted a conversation about the purpose and goals of the envisioned ad hoc committee. The provost said that it is her understanding that the ad hoc committee would be charged with assessing the scope and methods of evaluating teaching at the college, including the interpretation of student evaluations. She believes that it would be helpful if the body considers whether any or all of the current methods should be retained, revised, or discontinued, and whether new systems for assessment and/or measures of teaching effectiveness should be adopted. She also imagines that the body would examine ways to mitigate bias in the assessment and evaluation process. Provost Epstein said that recommending ways to standardize procedures and practices across academic departments and programs would also be useful.

Continuing the conversation, Professor Manion said that she thought that the idea of constituting such an ad hoc committee had been an outgrowth of the college's anti-racism plan (announced in August of 2020). She feels that the focus of the committee should be on the mitigation of racial and gender bias in the assessment of teaching effectiveness. While all agreed that doing so is very important and should be part of the charge, most members felt that the ad hoc committee should address other issues as well. Professor Kingston, who chaired the ad hoc committee that developed the common teaching evaluation form, said that the charge of that body had been narrowly defined, focusing only on that project. The committee had paid considerable attention to designing questions to try to mitigate bias, he noted. Requiring students to sign evaluations, rather than submit them anonymously, is also important in this regard, he believes. Professor Trapani, who also served on the ad hoc committee, noted that, while that body had tried to mitigate bias as part of the overhaul of the student evaluation form, given that the form continues to serve as the core reference for the assessment of teaching effectiveness—which is a central component of the evaluation of faculty for reappointment and tenure—a more comprehensive view of the administration and interpretation of the form, as well as other ways in which to assess teaching beyond student reflection, is warranted, in his view. Professor Leise suggested that, in regard to the work of the ad hoc committee, perhaps there should be less emphasis on the evaluation of teaching and more attention given to developing ways to ensure excellent teaching at the college, which includes review and assessment as a component. At the conclusion of the discussion, it was agreed that Professor Kingston would draft a charge for the committee to consider, based on the members' views, and drawing on the initial charge that had been shared. The committee would then discuss the draft charge at a future meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 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 2020–2021 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, February 22, 2021. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors del Moral, Kingston, Leise, Manion, Trapani, and Umphrey; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The meeting began with Provost Epstein informing the committee that a member is needed to serve on the Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (CODEI); Professor del Moral, who has been serving as the liaison to the committee from the Committee of Six, has rotated off the CODEI, the provost noted. Professor Trapani agreed to serve on the CODEI during this semester, at the end of which he will rotate off the Committee of Six.

Under “Questions from Committee Members,” Professor Trapani commented on how much he had enjoyed the Rapaport Lecture on February 18, which was delivered this year by jazz pianist, composer, and visual artist Jason Moran and hosted by Professor Sonya Clark. He asked whether there are plans to post a recording of the lecture. Provost Epstein responded that a recording will be posted by the Office of Communications in the coming days.

Continuing with questions, Professor Manion informed the committee that a group of associate professors is planning to send a letter to the Committee of Six, requesting a meeting. Professor Kingston next asked how faculty members who will be serving on the Bias Education Response Team will be chosen. Provost Epstein responded that Professor Hart, in his role as a faculty equity and inclusion officer, is chairing the team, and that Professor Hayashi is serving as the other faculty member. In the future, the Committee of Six will nominate the faculty members who serve on the team, the provost said.

Professor Kingston, asked if there is information posted on the college website about protocols for faculty members who are teaching on campus. He had looked and could not find any guidance. Provost Epstein said that both instructors and students must wear masks, and that instructors must work to ensure that social distancing is maintained in the classroom and in office hours and other small group meetings with students. There are no special guidelines for faculty members who are teaching in person, she noted.

Continuing with questions, Professor Umphrey asked what the next steps will be after Susan Pierce, the outside consultant who is helping think through issues surrounding shared governance at the college, completes her interviews with some faculty members and staff. Provost Epstein responded that plans call for Ms. Pierce to meet with the Committee of Six about how best to move the process forward following this initial stage of her work.

Professor del Moral next asked whether faculty and staff have been providing personal demographic information, in response to the college’s invitation to do so. She wonders whether any reminders have been sent about this process. Provost Epstein said that she would speak with Norm Jones, chief equity and inclusion officer, about the status of this project and plans going forward. The members then turned to personnel matters.

The committee next discussed a request from Professors Basu and Polk, co-chairs of The Faculty Leadership Committee for the Anti-Racism Plan, to discuss [the faculty committee’s proposal](#). The members expressed support for having a committee-of-the whole conversation about the proposal at a faculty meeting on March 2. It was agreed that it would be helpful to discuss the proposal and for the faculty to provide feedback. Provost Epstein noted that members of the faculty committee recently discussed the proposal with the chairs of academic departments and programs and would soon discuss it with the staff in the provost’s division.

Discussion turned to proposals from the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) for [an academic calendar](#) and [course schedule](#) for the 2021–2022 academic year. Prior to the meeting, the committee was provided with [a letter from Professor Melillo, chair of the CEP, about the proposals](#), and [two related memos from Jesse Barba, director of institutional research and registrar services, and Addy Free, the registrar](#).

It was noted that a salient feature of the proposed calendar included starting the fall semester on Wednesday, September 1, rather than on the Tuesday following Labor Day. The provost explained that this change from traditional practice would allow the fall semester to end on December 17. She noted that starting the semester any later would pose challenges at the end of the semester, since exams would conclude very close to the holidays, creating difficulty for some students who wished to travel home. When Labor Day falls later in September, as it will this fall (September 6), this has often been the challenge, the provost said. The proposed calendar also included a January term that would run from January 3 to January 26, which represented fifteen instructional days (the January term this year had sixteen instructional days) and a two-day evaluation period.

Under the proposal, the second semester would begin on February 3, providing a short break between the end of January term and the start of the spring semester. Under the proposal, the number of make-up days was reduced from three to one to create the break. It was noted that spring break would take place between March 14 and March 18. The members commented that, in his letter, Professor Melillo wrote that a member of the CEP had expressed some concern that, under the proposal, spring break would be too early in the term, leaving seven-and-a-half weeks between the end of spring break and the end of classes. The CEP had felt that scheduling Amherst's spring break earlier would likely create the even greater problem of being out of sync with the University of Massachusetts and the rest of the Five-College Consortium, presenting problems for some students and faculty.

The committee raised a number of questions. A member wondered why Amherst doesn't simply adopt the UMass calendar, since the colleges are essentially being held hostage to the university's calendar. Provost Epstein explained that the university starts its spring semester right after Martin Luther King Day. Under such a schedule, Amherst's January term would be truncated, which is clearly not desirable. Some members wondered why the semester could not start on a Monday instead of a Wednesday, which would mean including the last two days of August as a result. It was noted that, at the end of August, most faculty are already advising students, and the academic year has effectively begun. Provost Epstein said that the CEP had been wary of breaching September 1, but she would be happy to bring this idea forward. One member suggested that, rather than beginning the semester on a Wednesday and having a short week during the first week of classes, perhaps the Thanksgiving break week could be shortened to two days, and the fall semester could then start on the following Monday, rather than on a Wednesday. Provost Epstein said that taking this approach would mean that some students who live outside the Northeast would likely not be able to travel home for Thanksgiving. The member also wondered why Amherst's proposed calendar did not include a holiday on Indigenous Peoples' Day (October 11), as UMass's calendar does. Amherst's mid-semester break occurs the previous week on Monday and Tuesday (October 4 and 5), under the proposal, and it was suggested that, perhaps, it should be moved to the next week so that the Monday of the break is Indigenous Peoples' Day. Some concern was also raised about reducing the number of instructional days for January term. The provost noted that it would be possible to exchange one of the make-up days or evaluation days for a sixteenth day of instruction in January. She thanked the members for their feedback and said that she would consult with J. Barba about the committee's ideas.

Discussion turned to the CEP's proposal for a course schedule for the next academic year. It was noted that a decision about the schedule is needed soon, due to departmental planning needs and to inform the next round of pre-registration. A member asked why the proposal calls for adding time blocks in the early evening. Provost Epstein responded that, if there is a need for social distancing in the fall, which is not unlikely, or the spring as well, classroom capacity will continue to be reduced. It could be necessary to have courses taught during additional blocks to keep enrollment numbers lower than would be typical and to minimize co-curricular conflicts for students. The need for smaller classes would also reduce the availability of classrooms that are suitable for particular pedagogical needs. Under the proposal, faculty who want to schedule class meetings beyond 4:00 P.M. would be encouraged to do so for courses with multiple sections, with the intention that one or more sections would meet during an earlier block as well. A member asked what the impact of the proposed schedule would be on student-athletes. Provost Epstein said that she has consulted with Don Faulstick, director of athletics about this question. He has said that athletics could make the proposed schedule work, as long as dining hours are extended. It was noted that there would be budget implications under this approach, and President Martin asked the provost to consult with Kevin Weinman, chief financial and administrative officer, on this point; she agreed to do so. Some members commented that, in their experience, many student-athletes would not take courses after 2:00 P.M., even under the traditional course schedule. They worried that, under the proposed schedule, student-athletes might limit their curricular choices even further, in order to preserve time for activities related to athletics. Provost Epstein noted that it would be ideal if large introductory courses, for example, were offered in multiple sections both early and late in the day. There would then be the possibility that student-athletes could enroll in the section that met earlier, leaving time after 4:00 P.M. for athletics. A member suggested that it might be helpful to reserve some slots for student-athletes earlier in the day. Discouraging this approach, other

members expressed the view that privileging student-athletes in this way would lead to inequities at a number of levels.

The members noted that, under the proposal, the time between classes has been reduced from twenty minutes to ten. Provost Epstein commented that, if twenty minutes are allotted, time slots would definitely need to be extended past 4:00 P.M. A member asked what the consequences might be of deciding to retain the traditional schedule, in which classes are not taught after 4:00 P.M. Provost Epstein said that the proposed schedule will offer the greatest flexibility and is workable under multiple COVID-related scenarios. If social distancing is required during the next academic year, and the college keeps the traditional schedule, there will not be a sufficient number of appropriate classrooms. The proposed schedule allows for flexibility for social distancing, without compromising much, the provost noted. It was agreed that the wisest course is to prepare for all contingencies, particularly in light of predictions that “herd immunity” will not be achieved before next January, and that even that timeline is far from certain. The committee wondered how the college will ensure that classes are spread across all time blocks, which will be necessary for the proposed schedule to be effective. Provost Epstein said that departments will be strongly encouraged to do so. Provost Epstein noted that the “course bunching,” particularly in the humanities, continues to be a problem. As a result, students have fewer curricular choices, and, in her view, enrollments in humanities courses would improve if they were offered during a greater range of time slots. One member asked if it would be possible to create a mid-morning time slot that would enable courses to be taught on a Monday/Wednesday schedule. Provost Epstein said that it is her understanding that this would not be a viable option because such a schedule would overlap with the Monday/Wednesday/Friday schedule from 10:00 A.M. to 11:00 A.M. and 11:00 A.M. to noon, which is essential to maintain for a significant number of STEM and language courses.

Discussion returned to the Jeffrey B. Ferguson Memorial Teaching Prize. President Martin first noted that she has just learned that the book that Professor Ferguson had been completing in the last months of his life will be published in March, with an introduction by historian David Blight. It is her hope to mark this occasion at the college in some way. In regard to the prize named in Professor Ferguson’s honor, the committee agreed to expand the eligibility requirements and to offer some clarification about the criteria that will be used to select recipients. It was agreed that those who receive the award will have demonstrated excellence and accomplishment in all or some of the following areas: teaching, broadly; pedagogical and curricular innovation and impact, in particular; and advising. In addition, in regard to contributions to the curriculum, the strongest nominees will have had an impact in their department or program and on the broader college curriculum. Those making nominations will be asked to describe the ways in which a faculty member has excelled in these and other areas. It was agreed that all current tenured faculty, senior lecturers, and senior resident artists will be eligible for the award, and that all current faculty, all current students, and all alumni of the college will be invited to make nominations. The strongest nominees will be those who receive nominations from multiple constituencies, and multiple individuals within each constituency. One prize, which will carry a \$10,000 award, will be given annually. Those who receive the funds may choose to receive the award as compensation, in which case they will be taxable, or as college funding that can be used to support activities surrounding teaching, scholarship, and professional development—or as a combination of these forms of support.

Provost Epstein next asked the members for their thoughts about the possibility of focusing on developing a proposal this spring to clarify the criteria for tenure ([Faculty Handbook, III., E., 3. and 4.](#)) at the college. Prior to the meeting, the committee had been provided with background information about work done by past Committee of Six members to develop such a proposal during 2017–2018 and 2018–2019. The members decided that the committee should review the language of the tenure criteria, with the goal of enhancing clarity as much as possible. The emphasis of this work will focus on codifying current standards and policy, rather than developing new policies and expectations, it was agreed.

Discussion turned to [a letter sent to the members by Professor Hicks](#), in which she stressed the importance of the college taking additional steps to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on untenured faculty at Amherst, including making accommodations surrounding expectations and standards for tenure. Professor Hicks also commented on the undue impact on faculty from underrepresented groups and raised concerns surrounding

tenure equity. She called for a discussion by the full faculty of these issues. The members expressed appreciation to Professor Hicks for sharing these views, recognizing the challenges that many tenure-track colleagues are facing, and the high level of concern that many have about the tenure process.

Professor Kingston commented that Amherst has already taken some significant steps to support tenure-track faculty during the pandemic, including providing the option to delay tenure clocks by a year, and should continue to think systematically about the most viable and effective ways to address the impact of the pandemic as it unfolds. Professor Manion said that she found Professor Hicks's request that a faculty-wide standard be adopted as to which metrics and criteria are used to assess reappointment and tenure, and that these standards be clearly articulated, compelling. Professor Manion expressed the view that it would be useful to provide more transparency surrounding, for example, the attributes of a strong tenure case, and the relative importance of factors that are considered as part of the evaluation process for reappointment and tenure. Professor Kingston commented that, while he appreciates the desire to have more clarity and transparency, it is equally important, in his view, that the college continue to have a holistic tenure process. Making standards more explicit can be a double-edged sword, as doing so has the potential to make standards narrower and more rigid, and to impinge on the ability to be flexible. Faculty who have pursued non-traditional paths or work in non-traditional fields might be disadvantaged in the process, he believes. President Martin commented on the important role that departments should play in making the expectations for tenure in their fields clear to their tenure-track faculty, as these expectations differ by field, including what will constitute a strong case for tenure.

Professor Leise commented on the importance of the conversations that are under way. She asked the provost whether expectations of accomplishment are raised if a tenure candidate has an extended tenure clock. Provost Epstein said that the number of years in rank does not affect expectations surrounding the rate of a candidate's progress and accomplishment. Professor Trapani commented that the anxiety of untenured faculty would be reduced if this fact was made more explicit and that it would be important for departments to convey this to external reviewers at the time of tenure. At the conclusion of the discussion, Professor Umphrey suggested that it could be helpful, in a year or so, to form an ad hoc group to gather data on the impact of the pandemic on scholarly productivity at Amherst and within academia more broadly. She suspects that professional organizations may be amassing this information already. Provost Epstein viewed this as a sound idea. Some other members concurred.

The meeting adjourned at 5:15 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 2020–2021 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, March 1, 2021. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors del Moral, Kingston, Leise, Manion, Trapani, and Umphrey; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The members turned first to a committee nomination. Provost Epstein then shared [a draft of a revised college Section 504 Grievance Procedure](#) with the committee. She noted that Amherst needs to have this procedure as a condition of its receipt of federal funding. The procedure that was in place previously placed too much of a burden on students, in particular, to prove their cases through the regular procedure for student grievances against faculty members, the provost explained. The primary substantive change in the revised procedure is to provide a clearer avenue for the college (via Jodi Foley, director of accessibility strategy and resources, or, if circumstances warrant, an outside investigator) to investigate these grievances. This procedure does not give Ms. Foley any disciplinary authority, the provost said, but establishes a fact-gathering role for her. Any subsequent discipline would still have to occur through the appropriate disciplinary procedures of the college. Professor Trapani asked if Ms. Foley still oversees the college's Office Accessibility Services. Provost Epstein responded that Ms. Foley has a new role at the college within the Office of the General Counsel. Larissa Hopkins is the new director of accessibility services. Professor Trapani said that he has found Ms. Hopkins to be an excellent resource and suggested that faculty be encouraged to get to know her. Provost Epstein said that Associate Provost and Associate Dean of the Faculty Austin Sarat has already organized a virtual gathering with faculty to introduce Ms. Hopkins and will host another event of this kind this spring. The members raised no questions about the draft of the procedure.

Under "Questions from Committee Members," Professor Umphrey asked if the provost would share information about the renovation of a college-owned house located at 197 South Pleasant Street. Provost Epstein noted that, coincidentally, plans call for Jim Brassord, chief of Campus Operations, and her to describe the project for members of the community at a virtual meeting the next day. She explained that a recent article in the *Daily Hampshire Gazette* had contained a number of inaccuracies. The provost said that the renovation of the house, which will include building an addition, will take place over the next two years. An adjacent college-owned house will be moved this spring as part of the project. Once the renovation is complete, the building will house the Center for Humanistic Inquiry on the first floor. The history department and faculty from some other humanities departments will occupy the second and third floors. The donor who is funding the majority of the project had a vision to create a lyceum that would foster intellectual exchange among humanities scholars, students, and the broader community. The building will also include facilities for public events, the provost said. It is expected to open at the start of the 2023–2024 academic year.

Discussion turned to [a revised calendar proposal for the next academic year](#) that was forwarded by the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP), informed by suggestions made by the Committee of Six the previous week. The members expressed support for this version of the calendar and agreed that it should be brought to the faculty for a vote on March 16. Provost Epstein noted that the CEP's course schedule for 2021–2022 should also be forwarded to the faculty for a vote at the same meeting. She explained that the proposed schedule will be workable as long as dining hours are expanded, which will accommodate the needs of student-athletes, in particular. It was noted that the date of pre-registration will need to be pushed back, since the faculty will not vote on the course schedule until March 16. The provost said that she would announce a new start date for pre-registration at the faculty meeting the next evening.

The committee next reviewed [another CEP proposal, this one focusing on replacing the college's 14.0 grading scale with a 4.33-point scale](#). The provost noted that most CEP members support retaining the grade of A-plus, thus the 4.33 scale. Provost Epstein explained that Amherst is an outlier among educational institutions, nationally, in not having a 4.0 scale, and that the question of whether or not to make a change to a new scale now was prompted by the implementation of Workday Student. If there is a desire to switch, this is the time to do so, the provost noted. She explained that the current grading

scale is not easily translatable for graduate schools and fellowship and internship applications, and that many students try to convert their GPAs to a 4.0 scale on their CVs, which can result in inaccuracies. In addition, at present, the registrar's office must convert the GPAs for some students for some purposes (e.g., for nomination forms for NCAA academic honors), but does not do so for all students. Under the proposal, the grading scale would be standardized for all students, creating greater equity. The committee expressed enthusiasm for changing to the new grading scale. Provost Epstein informed the members that, if approved, the change to the scale would be retroactive, that is, it would be used on all current students' transcripts, as well as those of alumni who request transcripts. The members raised some questions, largely focusing on the impact that the method of numerical rounding used in the GPA conversion process could have on the transcripts of some alumni. In particular, some members wondered whether the new numerical GPA might translate to a different letter value for the GPA, if a graduate's GPA is on the borderline of two grades. Some members wondered if the transcripts of alumni, using the current grading scale, could be archived in some way. The provost said that creating and maintaining an archive would place too much of a burden on staff and that it would be best to have a consistent system, but she said she would consult with Jesse Barba, director of institutional research and registrar services, about this issue. The members thanked the provost and were generally supportive of the proposal.

Discussion turned to the last [proposal sent to the committee by the CEP, which focused on phasing out the flexible grading option \(FGO\) and replacing it with a new pass/fail policy.](#) Under the proposal, the deadline for the pass/fail declaration would be the last day of the final examination period. Students would still be limited to four pass/fail options (transfer students would have a lower quota based on their class standing at admission) and would be limited to one pass/fail per semester. Approval of the motion would also result in the prohibition of the use of a pass-fail for first-year seminars, the provost noted. Under the proposal, any FGOs used in spring 2020 and one FGO used in each term of the 2020–2021 academic year would not count toward the maximum number of pass-fails allowed during a student's time at the college. Pass-fails or FGOs used prior to spring 2020, or in addition to the one allowed for each term of 2020–2021, would count against each student's allotted number of pass-fails.

The members raised some questions about the CEP's proposal that students be prohibited from using a pass-fail option for any course in which they had been found responsible for academic dishonesty. The committee agreed that there is a lack of specificity in the proposed policy that would likely lead to challenges surrounding implementation and enforcement. Some members were uncomfortable with both the ambiguity of the language of this part of the policy as well as its spirit, noting that the emphasis seems to be punitive rather than educative. The committee wondered who would be responsible for determining whether a student was responsible for academic dishonesty. The members also commented that the forms of academic dishonesty that would result in the application of this policy were not specified, which they viewed as problematic, noting that there is a continuum in regard to the severity of infractions. Given the complexities involved, the members agreed not to include the academic dishonesty portion of the proposal as part of the motion that would be brought to the faculty. It was noted that other college policies and practices, at both an institutional and departmental level, address the consequences of academic dishonesty. This fact could, perhaps, be referenced in the proposed language, the members agreed.

Concluding the conversation about the FGO/Pass-Fail proposal, a member expressed some concern about the following proposed language: "Not all courses are eligible for the pass-fail option." The committee agreed that, with the exception of first-year seminars, all courses should be able to be taken pass-fail, and that individual faculty members should not be able to decide that their courses cannot be taken pass-fail. At the same time, it was agreed that it would be helpful to add language to the motion that is brought to the faculty to indicate that departments and programs may decide not to accept courses taken on a pass-fail basis in fulfillment of major requirements. The members agreed that the

CEP's proposal, with some revisions made by the Committee of Six, should be brought to the faculty on March 16.

Conversation turned to two documents (one titled "[Keeping the Pandemic from Sidelining Equity: Institutional Support for Faculty,](#)" and the other titled "[Documenting Pandemic Impacts: Best Practices](#)") that the provost had obtained from the University of Massachusetts and had provided to the committee ahead of the meeting. Her purpose was to inform discussion about ways that Amherst might provide support for the work of departments and tenure-track faculty to document the impact of the pandemic on candidates for reappointment and tenure. Such documentation, it was noted, should include the impact on faculty members' scholarship, teaching, and service, and also the impact on faculty members' fields. A member also suggested that departments convey to external reviewers in tenure cases that it would be helpful if they, as experts, would discuss in their letters the impact of the pandemic on the field. In addition, it would be helpful, if departments would note the ways in which COVID-19 has affected faculty at Amherst (e.g., that labs had to be shut down for a period). The committee found the documents to be very useful, particularly the second one listed above. It was agreed that they should be provided to the faculty and that they would serve as a useful tool for candidates and chairs and other tenured colleagues. The provost noted that some other colleges have created similar documents that might also be helpful. The members said that they would be interested in seeing other models.

The members also discussed a proposal that Amherst approve the Five-College Biomathematics Certificate (see [the cover letter](#) and [proposed catalog language](#)). The certificate is an outgrowth of a \$1 million five-year National Science Foundation grant awarded to Amherst, Hampshire, Mount Holyoke, and Smith in 2011. The award was made to support cross-disciplinary training of students majoring in the experimental life sciences (broadly inclusive of biochemistry, biology, biophysics, chemistry, and neuroscience) and students majoring in the quantitative sciences (mathematics, statistics, computer science) and to catalyze research collaborations between faculty pairs who also span that divide. Professor Leise, one of the participating faculty in the program, noted that the other three colleges have already approved the certificate. She explained that some Amherst students are already taking the courses that meet the requirements of the certificate, and that adopting the certificate formally would allow Amherst students to have more guidance and a useful structure for their endeavors. She noted that the current proposal reflects changes that were made in response to some concerns articulated by a previous Committee of Six (see [the Committee of Six minutes of April 29, 2019](#)). A member wondered whether the college should consider curtailing this form of credentialing, while not raising specific objections to this proposal. Another member wondered whether an effect of the certificate might be that some students focus too heavily on STEM courses and take fewer courses in the social sciences and humanities. Professor Leise responded that previous research on the course-taking patterns of Amherst math and science students has shown that they typically take courses across the curriculum. As always, the role of the advisor ensuring that students receive a broad education is an important one, she noted. Professor Leise anticipates that a very small number of students will pursue the certificate, around three per year, she estimates. Professor Trapani, commenting on the high demand for student research experiences at Amherst already, expressed some concern that students might not be aware that off-campus experiences count for the certificate requirement. Professor Leise noted that most students fulfill the certificate's research requirement off campus, and that the research requirement has been interpreted very broadly. She does not feel that the certificate will place a burden on Amherst faculty to offer additional research experiences to enable students to meet the requirements of the certificate. At the conclusion of the discussion, the members expressed support for the proposal and agreed to bring it forward to the faculty on March 16. The remainder of the meeting was devoted to personnel matters.

The meeting adjourned at 4:49 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The thirtieth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2020–2021 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, March 8, 2021. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors del Moral, Kingston, Leise, Manion, Trapani, and Umphrey; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

Under “Topics of the Day,” President Martin shared with the members plans to announce that, beginning in April, the college will relax some of the restrictions that have been in place for those on campus due to the pandemic. Based on public health guidance and experts’ advice, Amherst is developing more recreational, arts, music, and athletics opportunities for students on campus (engaging students who are studying remotely whenever possible). All opportunities will be limited to those that allow for necessary safety protocols, President Martin said. She anticipates that students will be allowed to travel off campus for organized activities—out of doors and without crowds—with a staff or faculty member; members of club sports that are not high-contact will be allowed to practice and play on campus only; and that an outdoor stage will be set up to allow for different kinds of performances that follow health and safety guidelines. In addition, President Martin said that, following the [decision of the NESCAC presidents](#), spring athletics competition will be allowed for an abbreviated season and with strict health and safety protocols in place (for more details, see [President Martin’s email of March 9, 2021](#)). The members were pleased that students will be able to take advantage of these opportunities.

Provost Epstein next informed the committee that the Faculty Lecture Committee has selected Yael Rice, assistant professor of art and the history of art and of Asian languages and civilizations, as the 2020–2021 Lazerowitz Lecturer. A member of the Amherst faculty below the rank of full professor is selected annually for this appointment, the provost noted. The lecture, titled “Books that Bind: The Persianate Album and Its Widespread Circulation,” will take place on Tuesday, April 6, from 4 P.M. to 5 P.M. The members then [reviewed a note to the Committee of Six from Professor Hall, chair of the Faculty Committee on Admission and Financial Aid](#), in which he informed the members of the college’s plans to continue its standardized test-optional policy through the 2025 admission cycle. A comprehensive assessment at the end of this three-year pilot period will inform Amherst’s approach to the use of standardized tests going forward, Professor Hall noted in his correspondence.

Turning to another topic, the provost noted that it is clear that the pandemic has caused significant setbacks for some colleagues’ scholarly and creative trajectories. She asked the members for their views about the idea of extending by an additional year the tenure clocks of all tenure-track professors who began their positions during or prior to the 2020–2021 academic year. The provost noted that she and President Martin support taking this step. The members agreed that it is appropriate to do so. Provost Epstein said that these extensions would be in addition to the initial one-year extension granted to all tenure-track professors, as well as any parental leave extensions that might also apply. As has been stressed earlier, the decision about whether or not to extend a tenure clock will have no bearing on tenure decisions. The provost said that, for faculty members who have taught for three years following reappointment and choose to delay standing for tenure, a one-semester sabbatical will be permitted prior to the tenure decision. Post-tenure, however, individuals would then receive a one-semester leave, until they accumulate enough teaching semesters to earn another semester of sabbatical. In addition, Provost Epstein explained, following a positive tenure decision, colleagues who choose to extend their tenure clocks due to COVID-19 will receive a promotion raise that will keep their salaries in line with those of their original cohort. On behalf of the faculty, the committee expressed appreciation for the college’s willingness to grant this additional extension under these extraordinary circumstances.

Continuing the discussion, Professor Umphrey wondered how the use of this option might affect the number of colleagues standing for tenure in upcoming years and sabbatical schedules. She suggested that projections be developed to inform planning efforts on behalf of future Committees of Six. Provost Epstein responded that, due to extensions of tenure clocks that may result from one or multiple parental leaves and/or COVID-19, some tenure-track faculty could stand for tenure in a number of different years. For this reason, it may be challenging to develop projections, but she said that her office would explore

the viability of doing so. In regard to reappointment, the provost said that she has encouraged tenure-track faculty to stand for reappointment according to their regular clocks, thus ensuring that they have a full-year of sabbatical on the regular timetable. Colleagues may choose to delay reappointment if they wish, however, and she would be open to being flexible about sabbatical options, with some limitations, as noted above. Professor Kingston asked if new tenure-track faculty who begin their careers at Amherst on July 1, 2021, will have an extra year added to their agreed upon clocks. Some members noted that, if the extension is not extended to new hires, these colleagues could potentially stand for tenure before some faculty who were hired before them. Provost Epstein said that this happens already, due to parental leaves. She feels that it would be premature to adjust the tenure clocks of new hires now, but said that she would be open to considering doing so in the fall. Professor Trapani asked if the standards by which tenure candidates' scholarship will be judged will be changed, due to the impact of the pandemic, given the two-year extension of tenure clocks for tenure-track faculty. Provost Epstein responded that candidates should seek to achieve the level of scholarly accomplishment that they had anticipated prior to the pandemic. Professor Trapani noted the importance of candidates and departments conveying to external reviewers the unique circumstances that may have resulted in an individual's loss of productivity, due to the pandemic, for example Amherst's need to shut down labs and to have staff move to remote work. Other institutions, for example R1 universities, may not have taken these steps, and the reviewers should be aware of what occurred at Amherst.

Under "Questions from Committee Members," Professor Trapani asked why, under [the proposed course schedule](#), 8:30 A.M. classes could start any time between 8:00 A.M. and 9:00 A.M. Provost Epstein noted that this is fine because a 50-minute class will not overlap with another block so long as it starts between 8:00 A.M. and 9:00 A.M. It was noted that 50-minute classes that start at 9:00 A.M. will show that start time in the catalog, for example.

The members next reviewed proposals for senior sabbatical fellowships. Following a brief discussion, the committee voted to forward them to the board of trustees for ratification.

Conversation turned to a draft faculty meeting agenda for a March 16 faculty meeting. The members discussed again the Committee on Educational Policy's proposal that the college discontinue use of the current 14-point grading scale and adopt a 4.33 grading scale. The members continued to have some of their previously expressed concerns about aspects of the proposal (see [the Committee of Six minutes of March 1, 2021](#)), including some implications of retaining the grade of A-plus—unless its numerical value is changed to 4.00. The members then voted on the motions on the agenda, approving them unanimously and voting unanimously to forward them to the faculty. They then voted unanimously to forward the faculty meeting agenda to the faculty.

Professor del Moral asked if, prior to bringing the GPA motion forward, the committee could consult with Jesse Barba, director of institutional research and registrar services, about some of the issues that had been raised. The provost's office consulted with J. Barba immediately after the Committee of Six meeting and then informed the members via email that it seemed best not to bring the GPA motion forward until some of the committee's questions could be addressed. J. Barba agreed to meet with the committee for this purpose. No member responded with any objection, and the motion was removed from the agenda.

The meeting concluded with a discussion about how the committee might move forward with developing a proposal this spring to clarify the criteria for tenure ([Faculty Handbook, III., E., 3. and 4.](#)) at the college. Some members favored using as a starting point a proposal finalized by past Committee of Six members in 2019, and the idea of meeting with some of these colleagues to learn about their reasoning was discussed. Some members felt that the committee should start this work anew. After some discussion of whether the relative importance of teaching, scholarship, and service should be made more explicit and whether new areas (e.g., advising and summer research students) should be incorporated into the evaluation at the time of tenure, the members did not reach a conclusion. Some members felt that the college should become more transparent about the expectations that must be met to receive tenure.

President Martin commented that, in undertaking this work, it might be helpful to review the tenure criteria of some peer institutions, as the previous Committees of Six had done. She also expressed the view that it would be desirable for departments to be more explicit about expectations within their disciplines for tenure. Since these expectations vary, only so much can be done in this regard at the institutional level, in her view. The members agreed to return to this subject at an upcoming meeting.

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 2020–2021 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, March 15, 2021. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors del Moral, Kingston, Leise, Manion, Trapani, and Umphrey; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The members turned first to personnel matters. Following those discussions, at 3:30 P.M., Susan Resneck Pierce, the consultant who has been engaged to think through issues surrounding service at the college, joined the meeting to offer her impressions after interviewing some faculty—including the members of the Committee of Six—and some administrators, as part of the initial stage of her work. The goal of this exercise, it was noted, is to ensure that faculty time on service is being used most effectively—that is, in ways that have the most purpose and value—and to support faculty in balancing service with their other critical responsibilities. The premise of the effort is that faculty time is precious. In addition to sharing what she has learned and identifying some issues to consider, Ms. Pierce asked for the members' thoughts about possible processes and structures that the college might use to set priorities and effect change—once Ms. Pierce shares her full findings and offers recommendations.

Ms. Pierce informed the members that a consistent narrative has emerged from her discussions. Most with whom Ms. Pierce spoke commented on the impact on associate professors of the abrupt shift that occurs after faculty receive tenure—a transition from focusing mainly on teaching and scholarship and being largely “protected” from time-consuming service obligations, to assuming the “burden” of playing more robust roles in terms of service. Many noted the negative impact that service obligations have had on their scholarly productivity. Another theme was that these colleagues saw the sudden change in their role vis-à-vis service as a prelude to a commitment to a lifetime of service. Ms. Pierce commented that the perspectives that were shared with her are consistent with the most recent results of the Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE) survey. She noted that Amherst associate professors conveyed more concern about their service obligations than faculty at this rank at peer schools.

Continuing, Ms. Pierce said that some of the colleagues with whom she spoke commented on the need to distribute service more equitably at the college, noting, in particular, in this context advising and equity and inclusion work. Some said that, while they support the college's efforts surrounding equity and inclusion, this commitment has created a disparity in regard to service, particularly when it comes to invisible and uncompensated labor—notably for women faculty and faculty of color. In some departments, it appears that some assistant professors are spending a great deal of time on this form of service, whereas those in other departments may be discouraged from doing so. Some expressed concern that this work might have a negative impact on faculty recruitment and retention. At the same time, Ms. Pierce noted, some faculty commented on the absence of data about the ways in which faculty are spending their time. Some were skeptical that there is a disparity in the amount of service performed by faculty, and some were also skeptical that faculty members' research productivity is reduced because of service obligations. Some also commented that service is not acknowledged or rewarded sufficiently and does not play a significant role in decisions about tenure and promotion. In particular, some faculty noted, promotion to the rank of professor appears to be pro forma.

Another theme that emerged, Ms. Pierce noted, was that time spent working on faculty committees is often inconsequential. Some faculty commented that it is not uncommon for colleagues to spend a great deal of time developing proposals and reports, only to have them voted down by colleagues. In regard to the idea of finding ways to streamline service, Ms. Pierce commented that some faculty supported taking steps to do so, while a few worried that this approach could weaken the faculty's role in governance at the college. Although expressing confidence that the current administration values the faculty's role in governance, two of those with whom Ms. Pierce spoke feared that a subsequent administration might use any changes to reduce faculty autonomy.

The generational shift that has occurred within the faculty was another topic that was raised with some frequency, particularly in relation to the Amherst faculty's strong tradition of faculty governance,

Ms. Pierce commented. According to some, it can appear that the values and attitudes regarding service of newer faculty differ from those of what some referred to as the “old guard.” Some feel that there are traditions of doing things in a particular way that have worked well and should not change. Yet, with the generational shift, many individuals’ lives are structured differently and the ways in which they spend their time may have changed, according to what Ms. Pierce heard. In her experience, faculty at other institutions are typically not as involved as Amherst faculty are in some areas—for example, benefits, course scheduling, and admission—and rely on professional staff to a greater degree. While many said that the college has benefitted from President’s Martin’s efforts to professionalize the administration, some faculty noted that the work of faculty committees largely has remained the same. Ms. Pierce noted that most administrators commented on how much they enjoy working with faculty. At the same time, President Martin said, she is aware that some staff at the college do not believe that faculty consistently respect or make use of the expertise of staff, a view that was also shared with Ms. Pierce. Ms. Pierce noted that another theme that emerged was that elaborate processes at the college can prevent nimbleness when it comes to decision-making.

Continuing, Ms. Pierce said that, in order to gather more information and to gain more insight, it might be helpful to survey the faculty. She suggested a number of questions and said that she welcomed the Committee of Six’s ideas. For example, Ms. Pierce thought it would be informative to ask the faculty whether the college should continue to “protect” tenure-track faculty members from service. She noted that some of those with whom she has spoken felt that it would be helpful for tenure-track faculty to serve on committees, for example, as a way of informing them about Amherst and introducing them to colleagues across the college. Others expressed the view that tenure-track faculty should not serve until they have been at the college long enough to understand the culture. Some felt that associate professors and senior faculty who are new to the college should not serve on the Committee of Six.

Other possible questions include asking whether all committees involving faculty have value, or whether some should be discontinued. In this vein, Ms. Pierce said that it is important to ask what the college really needs and to develop a structure that allows the faculty’s time to be put to the best use. In regard to the question of whether committee charges should be more specific, Ms. Pierce noted that, if charges are too vague, the focus of a given committee can become reliant on the individual who serves as chair. Since committee membership rotates regularly, she suggested that greater clarity about the specific responsibilities of committees could ensure continuity over time. Re-writing some committee charges might be a helpful step to take, she noted.

Continuing, Ms. Pierce commented that, when she had asked whether the faculty should be more focused on the larger strategic issues facing the college, rather than dealing with tactics, some had suggested the following questions:

1. How can Amherst retain its commitment to being a research college over the arc of a faculty member’s career? In particular, what should be the balance among teaching, scholarship, and service for tenured faculty?
2. Why is the open curriculum of value to Amherst’s students? What is working and what is not?
3. Is there enough clarity about who is responsible for what in terms of diversity, equity, and inclusion?
4. To what extent should the college be striving for greater transparency in departmental practices and more standardization?
5. Should the college continue its practice of having the faculty come together in meetings of the whole to conduct faculty business? If so, how often? For how long? How can the culture of

faculty meetings be changed so that members of the faculty would welcome participating in them?

Some members then discussed their own experiences as members of faculty committees that focus on work that is very complex and technical—and questioned whether they had made meaningful contributions and whether serving had been the best use of their time. In regard to identifying the issues that might be the most important to address first, the committee agreed that a faculty survey could be a valuable tool for making a determination. Professor Trapani suggested that, as part of the survey, it would be helpful to ask respondents to rank-order a set of possible issues that might be addressed. In this way, the priorities that are most important to faculty could emerge.

It was agreed that it would be important for Ms. Pierce to continue to speak with staff members who support the academic mission. In particular, the issue of some staff feeling that they are excluded from the business of the college is relevant to the question of the make-up of committees. It was agreed that another issue to discuss is the distinction between service and governance, as many faculty members seem to equate service with governance. A related issue is what is meant by faculty autonomy, which some equate with individual autonomy. Professor Trapani commented that, coming from a large public university, he has not understood some of these distinctions and feels that other faculty may not as well. Educating faculty in this realm would be helpful, in his view. As an overall approach to considering many of the issues that had been raised, Professor Umphrey suggested that examining them with a structural lens might lead to solutions that would allow faculty to make the best use of their time.

Conversation turned briefly to the *Faculty Handbook*. Ms. Pierce noted that, in her experience, the authority that handbooks carry at institutions varies. It was agreed that, at Amherst, the *Faculty Handbook* has the status of a constitution. Some felt that the handbook is in need of refinement to offer greater clarity and to reflect the present time. Another approach might be to start from scratch and create a new handbook, it was noted; it was agreed that this would be a significant undertaking.

Professor Umphrey suggested that, when Ms. Pierce completes her next set of conversations and after the faculty is surveyed, it might be helpful to constitute an ad hoc committee to consider recommendations that are made and proposals that might be brought forward. Professor del Moral expressed support for taking this approach, commenting that the Presidential Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion (now the Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion), which was created in 2016 as an outgrowth of the Amherst Uprising, has been a very successful vehicle for effecting change over the past five years—in this case, in making Amherst a more inclusive campus.

Concluding the discussion, the committee agreed that Ms. Pierce should speak with additional faculty and staff in small groups—among them some chairs of academic departments and programs, chairs of key faculty committees, other faculty at all ranks, some administrators who support the academic mission, and others who request to meet with her—and that it would also be helpful to survey the full faculty. The committee thanked Ms. Pierce for her efforts, and she left the meeting at 4:30 P.M.

Conversation returned to the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP)'s proposal that the college discontinue use of the current 14-point grading scale and adopt a 4.33 grading scale. Jesse Barba, director of institutional research and registrar services, who ahead of the meeting had provided the members with data about the use of A-plus grades at some peer institutions, joined the meeting at 4:45 P.M. to answer the members' questions. It was noted that seven schools (Barnard, Columbia, Cornell, Oberlin, Stanford, Trinity, and Vanderbilt) give an A-plus that is worth 4.33. Seven schools (Duke, Pomona, Rice, Swarthmore, Chicago, the University of Pennsylvania, and Washington University) give an A-plus that is worth 4.0, the same value as an A. Thirteen other colleges don't give A-plus grades at all.) Discussion focused on the implications of moving to a 4.0 scale and continuing to offer the A-plus, but making this grade worth 4.0 and thus an honorific grade; to stop giving A-plus grades all together; or to give the A-plus grade and make it worth 4.33, which would mimic the current 14-point grading scale (the CEP's proposal).

J. Barba explained that, if the A-plus is taken off the scale or becomes worth 4.0, and this change takes effect immediately, it would be necessary to archive the GPAs of current students and alumni, since individuals may have earned A-pluses that would have been factored into their GPAs. In this vein, he noted that, if either of these changes were to be made, he would recommend having the new GPA scale take effect with the class of 2025, so that the GPAs of current students would not be calculated using two different scales. There would still be a need to create an archive for these students and alumni in this scenario. J. Barba noted, in addition, that those who were admitted under the current policy should not be subject to a change that would not be equivalent to the current scale (the only scenario that would be comparable would be a transition to a 4.33 scale, which would mean retaining the A-plus). J. Barba also commented that, if a 14-point scale continues to appear on the transcripts of current students and alumni, these individuals will not receive the benefit of having a GPA that is easily translatable for graduate schools and fellowship and internship applications. Basically, if this course is taken, the CEP's proposal of adopting a grading scale that would be standardized for all students, creating greater equity, would not come to fruition for a number of years.

Continuing, J. Barba noted that eliminating or reducing the value of the A-plus would have the greatest impact at the GPA margins—for students with the highest GPAs—in terms of the cut-offs for Latin honors and the determination of the winner of the Woods-Travis Prize (which is awarded to the student each year who attains the highest GPA). J. Barba noted that 5 percent of grades at Amherst are A-pluses at present. If the A-plus were not awarded, there would be less separation among students with the very highest GPAs, he explained. Noting that the awarding of honors is unequal across departments, a member asked if no longer giving A-plus grades would have the effect of leveling this discrepancy across the college. J. Barba said that it could. A member wondered whether the .33 of an A-plus has more meaning (that is shift the GPA more) on a 4.33 scale than on the current scale. J. Barba said that this would not be the case, as the gaps between grades remain the same under both systems. A member also expressed concern that external audiences might regard an Amherst GPA (e.g., a 3.5 GPA) in a 4.33 grading scale as less than (e.g., a 3.5) in a 4.0 scale.

Most members expressed a preference for retaining the A-plus grade (as a way of acknowledging a student's extraordinary performances in a course), but making the A-plus worth 4.0, and truncating the grading scale at 4.0. Some members suggested giving an A-plus worth 4.33, but only if doing so would not enable a student to have a GPA over 4.0. If a 4.33 grade would have that effect, the grade should be rounded down to ensure that the GPA did not exceed 4.0, they proposed. J. Barba said that this approach would create challenges, from an administrative perspective. A couple of members wondered whether the CEP had considered the question of the A-plus and the 4.33 scale in depth, apart from issues surrounding the continuity of practice and ease of converting the 14-point GPA to a new scale. It was agreed that the CEP should be asked about this question.

To inform further conversation, the members asked J. Barba to provide the following information: the percentage of students who receive A-plus grades at Amherst and the proportion of A-plus grades given by departments. J. Barba agreed to share these data. In conclusion, he noted that another decision is needed in regard to implementing the change to a new grading scale, be it a 4.0 scale or a 4.33 scale. While the GPAs in the Workday system must be numerical, it is an independent decision as to whether the GPA should continue to appear on transcripts as a letter value (based on a rounded average). The members thanked J. Barba, and he left the meeting at 5:00 P.M.

The meeting adjourned at 5:15 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 2020–2021 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, March 29, 2021. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors del Moral, Kingston, Leise, Manion, Trapani, and Umphrey; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The meeting began with a discussion of nominees to serve on the memorial minute committee for David Armacost, professor of mathematics, emeritus, who died on March 10, 2021.

Under “Topics of the Day,” President Martin, noting the plans of the Association of Amherst Students (AAS) to host an open meeting on the topic of reimagining the Amherst College Police Department (ACPD), suggested that it would also be helpful to engage faculty and staff in a conversation about the issues under discussion—among them whether the college should consider disarming the ACPD. John Carter, chief of police and director of public safety, has been thinking through a number of possibilities and has developed a preliminary proposal for some changes to the ACPD. He and Jim Brassord, chief of campus operations, would be attending the AAS meeting to participate in the discussion and answer questions, the president said. It is their hope also to speak with students, faculty, and staff in small groups this semester. The open meeting, to which President Martin said she understands some alumni have been invited, would be held in the evening (on March 29). Referencing the complexities involved in the issues at hand and the range of views that individuals hold on the subject of policing, the president commented that she feels it is important to share information and to provide opportunities for the exchange of ideas among members of the college community. President Martin noted that the student anti-racism advisory group conveyed to the board of trustees its views about reimagining the ACPD, and informed the committee that the Faculty Leadership Committee for the Anti-Racism Plan has also discussed this issue. Having a broader conversation seems essential, in her view, to inform decisions that are ultimately within the purview of the board of trustees, she noted. The members agreed and decided to return to this subject later in the meeting when considering the faculty meeting agenda.

Under “Questions from Committee Members,” Professor Umphrey first asked, on behalf of a colleague, whether faculty and staff will be able to use the gym this summer. The provost said that, while it is hoped that providing access will be possible, it is too early to know, given the uncertainty about the pandemic.

Professor Umphrey next asked, on behalf of another colleague, about finding ways to inform the faculty further about [the bias-reporting protocol](#) that was developed by the Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, with input from the Committee of Six, and shared with the community in December of 2020. Among other things, the colleague wishes to know how the review process will work in relation to incidents that take place in the classroom, Professor Umphrey noted. There was then a discussion about possible ways of sharing additional information about the college’s [anti-discrimination and harassment policy](#) and the bias-reporting protocol, and particularly the process that is now being used to consider and address reports of identity-based bias, discrimination, and harassment, including incidents that may take place in a classroom setting. It was noted that there is now an [online portal](#) through which complaints of identity-based harm, including bias incidents, harassment, and discrimination, can be submitted. A team of professional staff and faculty reviews all complaints. Based on legal standards and college policies, the review team evaluates whether the incidents appear to constitute bias or discrimination and harassment. If the incident is a possible Title IX violation, it is handled through the Title IX process. If an incident appears to fit the legal definition of any other identity-based harassment or discrimination under civil rights or other relevant laws, the incident is managed under the college anti-discrimination and harassment policy and is investigated by internal or external individuals with expertise in the relevant law. If the subsequent investigation shows that harassment or discrimination may have occurred, the matter will be referred to the existing grievance or

disciplinary processes for faculty, staff, and students. If the initial review team considers the incident to be bias, it will activate the resources associated with the [Center for Restorative Practices](#).

After reviewing this process, the committee considered possible venues for sharing information—among them, during a meeting of the chairs of academic departments and programs, the Committee of Six (with information included in the minutes), and/or at a faculty meeting. After weighing the pros and cons of each possibility, and trying to gauge current interest about this issue, the members decided that it seems premature to move forward with presentations about this topic at this time, given the current lack of data about how the new protocols are being applied. Since the new procedures and policies have been launched quite recently, it would be best, all agreed, to wait to see how things are working and then to engage in further conversation. It was noted that faculty who have questions are always welcome to contact the Norm Jones, chief equity and inclusion officer, and/or Allen Hart or Pawan Dhingra, faculty equity and inclusion officers.

Continuing with questions, Professor Kingston asked the provost if it would be possible to learn the current status of the [open-access resolution](#) adopted by the faculty in 2013 and [the Octagon](#), the related online repository of open-access articles written by Amherst faculty. Professor Kingston wondered about the viability and efficacy of the resolution and the Octagon, given advances in technology (in particular, modes of online searching that are now available). There are also financial implications related to the current policy that might be useful to consider, it was noted. Provost Epstein responded that the subject of open access and the Octagon had been discussed at a meeting of the chairs of academic departments and programs last year. She said that she would reach out to Martin Garnar, director of the library, who had not yet assumed his appointment when the conversation had taken place, to learn more about his views on this matter and current usage of the Octagon and report back to the committee. Provost Epstein noted that M. Garnar is already scheduled to give a presentation at the April 16 chairs' meeting and could perhaps address this issue then.

Professor Trapani next inquired, on behalf of a colleague, as to whether the college has considered using [turnitin](#) software as one way of trying to curb academic dishonesty. Provost Epstein, who noted that there is a rise in the number of cases of academic dishonesty at the college that is very disturbing, said that some faculty have had concerns about aspects of the use of this tool. The provost said that she is aware that, while some peer institutions use turnitin, others, like Amherst, do not. She noted that the class deans and others are concerned about the growing number of academic dishonesty cases and hopes that the full faculty will address this issue soon.

Concluding his questions, Professor Trapani suggested that it would be helpful to have those who are leading the implementation of Workday attend a meeting of the Committee of Six or the chairs of academic departments and programs to discuss some issues with Workday about which they may not be aware. Provost Epstein noted that she understands that, in response to issues that have been raised, a number of changes to Workday will be put into effect in mid-April to address matters that are having an impact on the workload of chairs. Professor Trapani expressed the view that it is important to have clear lines of communication between users and those who are leading the development of the Workday system to make sure all concerns are being conveyed, so that they may be addressed. The provost said that she would contact Sarah Barr and Katie O'Hara Edwards to see if they can attend a meeting of the chairs to discuss Workday. The members then turned to personnel matters.

Conversation turned to the proposal of the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) that the college discontinue use of the current 14-point grading scale and adopt a 4.33 grading scale. Initially, most members hesitated to revise the proposal from the CEP, deferring to that committee's consideration of this issue. However, after reviewing information about the percentage of students who receive A-plus grades at Amherst and the proportion of A-plus grades given by departments—data provided by Jesse Barba, director of institutional research and registrar services, at the members' request—the committee raised concerns surrounding student equity. On the basis of these concerns, the members expressed a

strong preference for a 4.0 scale and continuing to offer the A-plus, but making this grade worth 4.0 and thus an honorific grade. The data revealed that departments vary widely in the frequency with which they assign A-plus grades, with some awarding none or few, while in other departments, more than 10 percent of all grades awarded are A-plus. As a result, GPA cut-offs used for Latin honors may be unfairly skewed by the tendency of a few departments to award the grade, rather than reflecting unbiased measures of student achievement. Professor Trapani noted that, in majors with courses that rarely or infrequently award A-plus grades, students are ultimately earning GPAs that are lower than if A-plus grades were more frequently awarded within their courses. In addition, he expressed that a student's GPA on a 4.3 scale may be viewed differently than the same GPA on a 4.0 scale (e.g., 3.6 on a 4.3 scale vs. 3.6 on 4.0 scale), which might have an impact on graduate program applications, for example. The committee also commented that the number of A-plus grades being awarded is on the rise and is contributing to grade inflation among departments. Given these equity concerns, which are structural in nature, the members decided to provide the CEP with the data that had been shared by J. Barba and to ask the CEP to reconsider its proposal. It was noted that the revised timeline of the Workday project will allow a vote on this matter to take place at a May 4 faculty meeting, if one is held.

Conversation turned to [the recommendation of the steering committee for the Five College Certificate in Queer and Sexuality Studies](#) that the certificate be renamed the Five College Certificate in Queer, Trans, and Sexuality Studies. [The CEP supported renaming the certificate](#), as did the Committee of Six. The members voted six in favor and zero opposed to propose that Amherst adopt the new name and discontinue use of the previous name, and six in favor and zero opposed to forward the proposal to the faculty. It was noted that the requirements for the certificate will not change.

The members next reviewed a draft agenda for an April 6 faculty meeting. Conversation returned to the topic of having Chief Carter attend the meeting to provide an update on the conversations around reimagining the ACPD. The members felt that it would be desirable to do so, both to inform those who attend faculty meetings and to learn more about individuals' views on this subject. It was noted that individuals have very different opinions about what constitutes a safe campus, and that the goal of a faculty meeting conversation should be to provide a safe and productive space in which colleagues will feel comfortable sharing what they think. In addition, it was agreed that it would be informative to have Betsy Cannon Smith, chief advancement officer, provide an update on the *Promise* campaign. Professor Manion requested that Matt McGann, dean of admission and financial aid, be invited to speak to the faculty about admissions. Given the extraordinary challenges of the past year, she feels that faculty would be interested in hearing from him about how things have been going.

The members voted six in favor and zero opposed to forward the faculty meeting agenda to the faculty.

The meeting adjourned at 5:15 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The thirty-third meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2020–2021 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 2:30 p.m. on Monday, April 5, 2021. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors del Moral, Kingston, Leise, Manion, Trapani, and Umphrey; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The meeting began with President Martin informing the members that Norm Jones, chief equity and Inclusion officer, will be leaving his position at the college in May to help lead a foundation that his family established recently. Among other priorities, the foundation supports Black men pursuing leadership positions in secondary education, the president said. She noted N. Jones's foundational accomplishments as Amherst's first chief equity and inclusion officer and his many contributions to the work of the college more broadly, as a member of the senior staff. She also expressed gratitude and wished him well as he embarks on an exciting new opportunity. On behalf of the faculty, the committee echoed these sentiments and thanked N. Jones for his leadership and accomplishment in building the college's Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and exceptional work on behalf of Amherst faculty, staff, and students. President Martin said that a national search will soon be launched for N. Jones's successor and that she is speaking with Professor Hart, faculty equity and inclusion officer, about taking on the role of interim chief equity and inclusion officer, as needed. Provost Epstein, noting her recent announcement that Professor Dhingra will join her office on July 1 as associate provost and associate dean of the faculty, said that plans are also under way to appoint a new faculty equity and inclusion officer to succeed him.

Under "Questions from Committee Members," Professor Kingston noted that the recent announcement about the college's plans for an in-person commencement did not mention the faculty, leading him to ask if there is a role envisioned for professors in this event. President Martin responded that the college is eager for faculty to participate, but only if they feel comfortable doing so. Students have indicated that they would be very excited to have faculty participate in the in-person commencement, she noted.

Continuing with questions, Professor Manion asked why the college has not made any proactive statements in favor of transgender students in recent weeks. Nationally, there are more than thirty anti-trans bills before state legislatures, which directly and indirectly affect Amherst students. It is consistent with the college's non-discrimination policy to make a statement, yet even the college social media accounts have been silent—something that is quite noticeable since Transgender Day of Visibility just passed without a mention. Furthermore, Professor Manion asked if consideration can be given to producing a practical guide for faculty about transgender issues, including the resources the college makes available for transgender students, so that faculty might better understand and support trans students at the college. Professor Manion noted that trans students are struggling with access to safe and affirming environments, access to healthcare, and even homelessness. These challenges have been exacerbated due to both the pandemic and a climate of discrimination in which many states are threatening or removing their rights. President Martin and Provost Epstein expressed support for Professor Manion's proposal and said that they would move it forward. Professor Umphrey underscored Professor Manion's points and commented that this is a particularly precarious time for many students, noting that there are different forms of distress related to homelessness, for example, that the college could address. President Martin agreed and said that Amherst may draw on its pandemic emergency fund to provide additional support, and that she and others will look into this set of issues and determine how best to help.

Professor Umphrey, prompted by a recent discussion that the committee had had with the Consultative Group for Tenure-Track Faculty, which had touched on ways in which the pandemic is affecting pre-tenure colleagues, asked a series of questions. She inquired whether the college is considering the following: reflecting on the impact that the pandemic has had on the Amherst community; thinking about what has been learned from the COVID-19 experience; considering continuing needs that have arisen and possible changes that might result; and thinking about ways in which Amherst's response to the pandemic could inform future planning. President Martin said that conversations of this kind are

under way—and will continue—as part of a near-term planning exercise. In regard to the impact of the pandemic on tenure-track faculty specifically, Provost Epstein said that she and President Martin had also met with the consultative group recently and had agreed to survey tenure-track faculty to learn more about the pandemic's impact on them, and their needs going forward. (Both the Committee of Six, alone, and the president and the provost, together, will soon meet with all tenure-track faculty.) The members then turned to personnel matters.

The members turned to consideration of [a letter, sent to the committee by twenty-six tenure-track Amherst faculty in STEM fields](#), requesting that the college examine its research support infrastructure, with the goal of remedying the problems that the scientists had identified. [A letter from the chairs of STEM departments](#) conveying support for this request was also sent to the committee. Provost Epstein expressed appreciation to the signatories of both letters for bringing these matters to the attention of the president, the Committee of Six, and herself in such a helpful and constructive way. Professor Trapani, noting the STEM faculty members' view that some of the issues that they have raised, and perhaps others, are likely having an impact on faculty beyond the STEM fields, said that it may have been with this idea in mind that the request was made to constitute a committee to work on these issues. Provost Epstein expressed the view that the tenure-track faculty basically performed the work of the envisioned committee by identifying the pertinent issues, which can be addressed by the administration. She does not see the need for a committee at this time. Professor Kingston suggested that, procedurally, the first step should be to consult with colleagues in Information Technology and the Grants Office to get their perspectives. In his view, it would then make sense to consider in a systematic way the issues that were described in the letter, and to see which problems could be addressed using current resources and which might necessitate additional support to solve.

Continuing the conversation, the provost said that, while there are a number of complexities involved, for example, when it comes to federal contracts, she and other senior leaders are committed to making improvements. She said that she will coordinate this effort and will communicate with the faculty regularly about progress that is being made. In fact, the provost noted, work is already under way in some offices to address some of the issues that have been raised. Provost Epstein informed the members that she has organized a meeting with Jack Cheney, associate provost and associate dean of the faculty; David Hamilton, chief information officer; Lisa Rutherford, chief policy officer and general counsel; and Kevin Weinman, chief administrative and financial officer, to think through these matters. Plans call for sending a communication to the faculty in the next weeks about what is already being done to address the concerns that have been raised, what can be accomplished in the coming weeks and months, and what will likely take a bit longer to figure out.

Some members then noted that the college has been hiring a large number of stellar STEM faculty who have robust research agendas in recent years, and who require a large amount of funding. Provost Epstein said that, while this is true, there are still more humanities faculty than STEM faculty at the college, and that the research needs of faculty drive resource allocation. Professor Umphrey, while very sympathetic about the needs noted in the letter, expressed some concern that the humanities might suffer, as more and more resources are allocated to STEM faculty. President Martin noted that the college has hired one faculty member into one of the twelve new FTE lines that will be created with gifts as part of the Promise Campaign. Thus far, \$28 million in gifts and pledges have been made to support the new FTEs. Departments cannot hire fast enough to fill replacement positions at the moment, she noted. In addition, President Martin informed the members that, since the college is conscious of the high costs associated with STEM faculty—e.g., having technicians to support their research—funding beyond salary is being raised to support positions in STEM. Hiring in the humanities will not be cut in order to hire STEM faculty, the president said. Concluding the discussion, Professor Trapani commented that having regular communication about the ways in which the college is making progress on addressing the issues raised by

STEM faculty would be welcome. The committee thanked President Martin and Provost Epstein for their responsiveness to the problems that the STEM faculty have identified.

Conversation turned to a draft of an [anti-racism action plan for the provost's division](#) that Provost Epstein shared with the members ahead of the meeting. She noted that the purpose of the plan is to guide the work in the provost's division to confront and remedy racism at all levels, and to foster equity and inclusion. She explained that the Provost's Anti-Racism Leadership Group (which includes, in addition to herself, Sarah Barr, advisor to the provost on campus initiatives and director of the Center for Community Engagement; Jack Cheney, associate provost and associate dean of the faculty and Samuel A. Hitchcock Professor of Mineralogy and Geology; Martin Garnar, director of the library; Emily Griffen, director of the Loeb Center for Career Exploration and Planning; Darryl Harper, director of the Center for Humanistic Inquiry and associate professor of music; Michael Kunichika, director of the Amherst Center for Russian Culture and associate professor of Russian; Austin Sarat, associate provost and associate dean of the of the faculty and William Nelson Cromwell Professor of Jurisprudence and Political Science; and Janet Tobin, associate provost) drafted the plan, which has now been shared with a variety of groups, including department heads and all staff in the division; the Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; the Faculty Leadership Committee for the Anti-Racism Plan; and the chairs of academic departments and programs, and now the Committee of Six. Provost Epstein said that the challenge has been to create a plan that will be helpful to the departments and offices within the provost's division, the work of which is quite varied.

Professor Umphrey thanked the provost for sharing the plan with the committee, noting how thoughtful the document is and how much work was clearly involved in developing it. She asked if more details could be provided about allocating resources to support anti-racism, wondering what kinds of resources are envisioned. Provost Epstein said that different forms of support might be provided, depending on the work being undertaken. For example, funding could be offered to bring experts to the college to advise an academic department on reimagining its curriculum, or to help provide training that focuses on the work of a given office, or to provide a department with books for a common read. Professor Umphrey also noted that, at least in her field, no one "anti-racist" perspective can easily be identified. She wondered whether the plan proposes a particular substantive approach to the work it recommends, given that it uses implementation language that refers to "an anti-racist perspective." (A revision was later made to the plan to refer to anti-racist perspectives.) Professor Trapani said that he is pleased to see that anti-racism work will be championed by the provost's division. He asked what structures will be in place for implementing the plan, as this will be critical for helping departments and divisions carry out the work. Provost Epstein said that priorities will need to be set in regard to what will be worked on now, and what will need to wait, as some aspects of the plan will take longer than others to fulfill.

The committee next engaged in a brief conversation about next steps in the members' efforts to charge an ad hoc committee to review matters related to teaching at the college. The members discussed what the focus of the ad hoc committee's work should be, considering whether the charge should focus only on ways to address bias in the teaching evaluation process, or be broader in scope. Most members favored having the ad hoc committee conduct a comprehensive review and assessment of the ways in which Amherst supports the professional development of faculty as teachers, especially with regard to the support, mentoring, and evaluation of tenure-track faculty members. This charge will encompass an examination of the issue of bias as it relates to the evaluation of teaching, it was noted. The members agreed to refine the charge over the course of the next week and to return to a discussion of this matter at their next meeting.

In the time remaining, the committee discussed how it should proceed with the work of clarifying the criteria for tenure at the college. It was agreed that this effort should focus on aligning the language of the *Faculty Handbook* with practice, with the goal of providing greater transparency. Professor Kingston

expressed concern that, at this point in the semester, there will not be enough time to complete this project, which will require a good deal of thought and consultation. Still, all agreed, progress can be made and momentum built during this term. The members decided to return to this topic at their next meeting and, as a first step, to review the tenure criteria of some peer institutions.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The thirty-fourth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2020–2021 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, April 12, 2021. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors del Moral, Kingston, Leise, Manion, Trapani, and Umphrey; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

Under “Questions from Committee Members,” the members discussed briefly the concerns that Professor George had raised during the April 6 faculty meeting surrounding attribution in the committee’s minutes. It was agreed to continue to strive for clarity and concision in the minutes and to make use of individual attribution, as needed.

Attention turned to a review of the most recent iteration of a draft charge for the Ad Hoc Committee on the Enhancement of the Procedures and Practices Used for the Assessment of Teaching Effectiveness. This group will be asked to conduct a comprehensive review and assessment of the ways in which Amherst supports the professional development of faculty as teachers, especially with regard to the support, mentoring, and evaluation of tenure-track faculty members. The ad hoc committee will consider the evaluation of classroom teaching, as well as other forms of teaching such as academic advising, thesis advising, and the creation of research experiences for students. The committee agreed that the most recent changes to the charge enhanced the document and decided to nominate faculty to serve on the ad hoc committee at the same time that the Committee of Six considers other committee nominations. This annual task will take place in early May. The ad hoc committee is expected to begin its work in fall 2021 and to make recommendations in the spring 2022 semester. The charge for the ad hoc committee will be shared via a link in the minutes of the Committee of Six’s meeting, after the committee reviews the document one more time—once the most recent revisions have been incorporated.

In the time remaining, discussion returned to the topic of developing a proposal to bring greater clarity to the criteria for tenure that appear in the *Faculty Handbook*. Prior to the meeting, the committee was provided with information about the tenure criteria used by some peer institutions. The members were attracted to a system that combines the articulation of a broad set of college-wide criteria for tenure, which appear in the faculty handbook and complementary departmental expectations for tenure. Based on a review of several examples of one school’s departmental standards, the members inferred that templates and/or rubrics must have been shared with departments to guide the process of laying these expectations out—so as to create some general consistency with college-wide standards and among departments, while also allowing for a level of specificity. The members agreed that it would be helpful to propose some changes to the *Faculty Handbook* language about tenure criteria, with the goal of achieving greater alignment with practice. In addition, the committee felt that it would be informative and useful for each department to undertake the exercise of clarifying its standards in regard to scholarship and creative work, teaching, and service. All departments might be asked, for example, to describe how different kinds of publication venues are viewed in their fields and what constitutes engagement in the profession. In interdisciplinary departments, it would be important to articulate expectations for the different disciplines that are represented by the faculty/tenure candidates in the department.

The committee noted that the approach that was just described could create greater transparency and consistency in departments and thus in tenure deliberations, and that candidates, department chairs, outside reviewers, and the Committee of Six could all benefit from this information. If this system is adopted, however, it would be important that departments not be too specific and explicit at the department level and take care not to create standards that are inconsistent with college-wide criteria. In other words, differential bars for tenure cannot be set, and there would need to be Committee of Six oversight in this regard. The members decided that the provost’s office should gather more information about the system from the institution that uses it to inform the committee’s deliberations. In the meantime, and as a first step in clarifying the tenure criteria process, it was agreed

that the committee should begin thinking about a proposal for new *Faculty Handbook* language. The members decided to have a discussion to specify the committee's expectations surrounding overall quality and accomplishment in regard to scholarship and creative work, effectiveness in teaching, and contributions made through service to the department, the college, and the profession. Professor Umphrey agreed that, following that conversation, she would draft some new *Faculty Handbook* language for the committee's consideration. 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 thirty-fifth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2020–2021 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 3:45 P.M. on Monday, April 30, 2021. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors del Moral, Kingston, Leise, Manion, Trapani, and Umphrey; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

Under “Topics of the Day,” President Martin said that she is considering a request that she has just received that Senior Assembly take place on May 28 or 29, rather than on May 19. If a decision is made to move forward with this proposal, seniors would have another ceremonial event to look forward to after exams conclude, as a part of commencement weekend. In addition, student speakers and the faculty member who will be addressing those who attend Senior Assembly would have more time to prepare, she noted. The members agreed that this change would help to enliven commencement weekend, which has been scaled back dramatically, due to the pandemic. President Martin thanked the members for offering their views and said that she and others who are thinking about end-of-the-year events would consider this proposal further. In a similar vein, Professor Trapani asked if staff members will be invited to commencement, in particular instructional staff. Provost Epstein said that no decision has been made about this question yet. Once it is known how many graduating seniors and their guests, as well as faculty, will be attending commencement in person, the college will be able to gauge if seats might be available on Pratt Field for other members of the college community.

Under “Questions from Committee Members,” Professor Trapani asked if the committee will have an opportunity to report back (in the aggregate) on issues raised by tenure-track faculty at the committee’s annual meeting with assistant professors, which had taken place on April 26. It was noted that the impact of the pandemic on the research productivity of some faculty members has been profound, and that significant concern had been raised about the ways in which the college will continue to address this issue. Some assistant professors had expressed the view that the option to extend tenure-track faculty members’ tenure clocks by one or two years, while greatly appreciated, will not be sufficient to address the impact of COVID-19, particularly on STEM faculty. Many of these colleagues’ research programs have been set back by years, as a result of labs being shut down, it had been noted. President Martin and Provost Epstein said that they look forward to learning more about the concerns of tenure-track faculty, and it was agreed that the committee would share what the members had learned at the next Committee of Six meeting. On a final note, Professor Trapani commented that some concerns that had been raised at the meeting about the observation of teaching suggest that it would be helpful to provide more information about this subject. He proposed sharing more broadly [Center for Teaching and Learning \(CTL\) documents on this subject](#) that were recently discussed with the chairs of academic departments and programs. It was agreed to do so via a link from these minutes.

Continuing with questions, Professor Manion asked, on behalf of a colleague, why the Pfizer vaccine that was administered on campus had not been offered initially to faculty who are teaching on campus, but only to students. President Martin said that the college was not sure how much vaccine it would receive at first, and how many students would take advantage of this opportunity. Students were given priority to receive the vaccine, as they are for COVID-19 testing, because they live in close proximity with one another on campus, she noted. Once it was clear how much vaccine would be available, the opportunity to receive it was extended to all staff and faculty who are approved to be on campus. Professor Manion noted that the colleague also wonders about how the schedule (April 28 and May 19) for administering the vaccine was determined, as there might be an impact if students have side effects from the second shot. President Martin explained that these dates were determined by the availability of the vaccine. Professor Manion noted the colleague’s view that the faculty’s health and well-being are not being prioritized, and she asked why the Committee of Six, as the executive committee of the faculty, had not been consulted about plans for the vaccine rollout. President Martin reiterated that the college had been provided with very limited quantities of the vaccine, and that the COVID-19 Health Readiness Group had evaluated the options and had made recommendations that the president felt were appropriate.

Discussion turned to the question of orientation advising, with the committee expressing concern about plans that have been announced to have faculty participate in orientation advising over three periods during the summer—one in mid-July and two in August. Professor Kingston commented that this model, which was described in the announcement as not increasing demands upon faculty time and as allowing for flexibility, in actuality represents an incursion on faculty time. The other members concurred and asked that the decision be revisited, commenting on the importance of preserving the summer for faculty research and to provide down time after the intensity of the academic year. The idea of requiring faculty to undertake advising over the summer is symptomatic of a larger trend at the college of asking faculty members to do more and more work, the committee agreed. Professor Trapani commented that faculty have nine-month contracts, and, if asked to work over the summer, should receive additional compensation.

Professor Kingston said that he can imagine efficient alternatives to the proposed advising plan, such as offering students the opportunity to participate in a webinar with experienced Amherst advisors, during which questions could be answered. Professor Trapani, who also advocated for exploring creative solutions (e.g., having faculty who wish to do so conduct advising sessions with groups of students over the summer), commented that he is conflicted about the advising plan. He recognizes the importance of advising and the impact that it has on students. On the other hand, he feels that the summer should be protected as a time in which faculty can focus on research. Professor del Moral also stressed the importance of not intruding on research time over the summer. She noted that many faculty members typically travel to archives to conduct research as soon as the academic year concludes, for example. On a related note, Provost Epstein said that it is her hope to have a policy in place soon for college-sponsored travel over the summer. She thanked the members for their feedback, about summer advising, agreeing with the points that had been raised, and said she would speak with Professor López, dean of new students, about the possibility of rethinking current plans.

Concluding the portion of the meeting that had focused on questions from the committee, Professor del Moral asked about the college's plans to respond to the request from the Black Student Union (BSU) to double the number of counselors at Amherst's Counseling Center. President Martin commented that the college has roughly the same number of counselors as Williams, though the BSU has suggested that Williams has more than twice the number of counselors. While all of Amherst's counselors are full-time employees, many of those at Williams work on a part-time basis, the president explained, noting that this difference might account for the confusion surrounding the number of counselors at the respective institutions. President Martin said that it will be important for the Office of Student Affairs to make use of new strategies to ensure that student life at the college is more inclusive, enjoyable, healthy, and safe. What is needed is a holistic approach to student well-being, and one that begins at the time students decide to come to Amherst, and which extends until the time they leave. Part of this strategy will involve further investment in the counseling center, the details of which is currently under discussion. The members then turned to a personnel matter.

The committee discussed briefly the meeting that some members (Professors Kingston, Manion, and Trapani) had had with the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) on April 21 to discuss the proposal to adopt either a 4.0 or 4.33 grading scale, and the related issue of the grade of A-plus. It was noted that both committees support a change from the 14-point scale, but there appear to be differing views about whether to adopt a 4.0 or a 4.33 scale, based on views surrounding the grade of A-plus. According to [the CEP's minutes of the discussion](#), the CEP generally favors keeping the A-plus, but is still considering whether it should be assigned the same value as an A, i.e., 4.0, or be assigned the value of 4.33. Both committees agreed that the best approach would be to have the faculty discuss and vote on both issues at the upcoming faculty meeting.

Also in regard to the May 18 faculty meeting, Provost Epstein informed the members that Angie Tissi-Gassoway, associate dean of students for diversity and inclusion, has agreed to give a brief presentation on the challenges faced by trans students and the resources available at the college to support them. The

provost noted that she and President Martin had met with A. Tissi-Gassoway recently and had been impressed with the resources and policies that the college has put in place, which she described. The remainder of the meeting was devoted to personnel matters.

The meeting adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The thirty-sixth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2020–2021 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, May 3, 2021. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors del Moral, Kingston, Leise, Manion, Trapani, and Umphrey; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

Under “Topics of the Day,” Provost Epstein informed the members that, based on feedback they had been given about plans to have orientation advising take place over the summer, she conferred with Professor López, dean of new students, about the possibility of rethinking this idea. The provost said that she and Professor López have agreed that orientation advising will take place right before orientation for new students, or during orientation itself. She informed the members that a communication will go out to the faculty about this change and thanked them for sharing their views about the matter.

Discussion turned briefly to plans for the committee to review the nominations for the 2021 Jeffrey Ferguson Memorial Teaching Prize. It was agreed that the members would do so at their meeting on May 17. After discussing whether to consider nominations made in previous years as part of the deliberations, it was agreed that the committee would prioritize this year’s nominations, but would also review nominations received in past years.

Under “Questions from Committee Members,” Professor Trapani commented that, when he had been on campus recently, he had observed many students enjoying the City Streets celebration (held on April 14). He expressed appreciation to those who had organized the successful event for the students.

Discussion turned to [the draft charge for the Ad Hoc Committee on the Enhancement of the Procedures and Practices Used for the Assessment of Teaching Effectiveness](#). The members discussed several revisions and finalized the charge. The provost noted that faculty members will be appointed to this ad hoc committee when the members consider other committee nominations at their meeting of May 10.

The committee next discussed individual letters that [Professors Hall](#), [Holleman](#), and [Kunichika](#) had sent to the committee. Noting Professor Holleman’s suggestion that the Antiracism Student Advisory Group be invited to speak at a faculty meeting, the members commented that these students have offered testimony about their experiences surrounding policing and campus safety on a number of occasions and to multiple constituencies—including at a meeting with the board of trustees and with the Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (CODEI). The group has also met weekly with President Martin this year, she noted. While the committee was open to the idea of extending an invitation to the students to speak at a faculty meeting, some concern was expressed about the toll that recounting their experiences yet again could take on students, and whether the college should be relying on them to do so. It was suggested that an alternative might be for the members of the CODEI to provide an update to the faculty about what the students had conveyed. Professor Trapani, the Committee of Six representative on the CODEI, commented that, in March, the students had given a powerful presentation to the CODEI that may have been similar to what they had given to the board of trustees. He noted that they had provided some survey data about policing and the Amherst College Police Department (ACPD)’s role and relationship to campus safety, had shared some of their on-campus experiences in compelling ways, and had called for change. He noted that the CODEI had a thoughtful and productive conversation and was grateful for the student presentation.

The president commented that time needs to be taken to learn more about the full range of views held by members of the community on the very complex issues that revolve around campus safety and policing. It is clear that some faculty and staff currently do not feel comfortable discussing what they believe at this time, and it is essential to find ways to allow all views to be shared. President Martin informed the members that the college has engaged consultants (Cambridge Hill Partners) to share expertise and advice, facilitate conversations about policing and campus safety, and share information about different policing and public safety models used by other institutions, some of which may be evolving.

Continuing the conversation, President Martin noted that, while John Carter, chief of police and director of public safety, has offered some ideas about how the ACPD might be reimagined, which he has shared with the community in response to questions from students, the administration will be developing the final plans and recommendations that are forwarded to the board of trustees. The president said that, while she will soon announce some changes in the area of campus safety, thinking through some issues will take some time, and will inform recommendations that the administration will make to the board; the trustees will ultimately make final decisions on any proposals for significant changes to the campus police, the president said.

Professor Umphrey, noting that Chief Carter has mentioned the appointment of a consultative group comprising students, faculty, and staff to consider some of the issues that have been raised, asked if there are plans to charge such a group. President Martin responded that she envisions appointing soon an advisory committee made up of students, faculty, and staff to help guide the work of creating a broadly consultative process for co-creating and re-creating Amherst's community safety structure. The committee commented that, since Professor Holleman sent her letter, there has been additional conversation about the ACPD and related issues, and it is clear that plans call for continued discussion.

Turning to [Professor Kunichika's letter](#), it was noted that he had written to the committee on April 23, 2021, the day after the publication of an article titled "[#BlackMindsMatter Protest is 'Reactionary and Performative'](#)" *appeared in the Amherst Student*. Professor Umphrey said that she concurs with the thrust of Professor Kunichika's letter, that, in accordance with the principles of shared governance, faculty committees should respond to student demands that are within the faculty's purview, specifically, in this case, those surrounding excused absences. Such responses, as Professor Kunichika noted, should not be left to the administration alone, in her view. Professor Umphrey commented that it should be made clear to students that faculty retain authority over their own classrooms. (See [the policy on classroom attendance](#), *Faculty Handbook IV, D.*) The other members agreed. Provost Epstein mentioned that the Committee on Educational Policy is currently considering whether to issue a statement that would encourage faculty to be flexible with excused absences during this challenging time. Any formal policy change in regard to excused absences would require a vote of the faculty, she noted.

The members next considered the proposals that Professor Hall, chair of the Faculty Committee on Admission and Financial Aid (FCAFA) had shared in [his letter on behalf of that committee](#). Some Committee of Six members were agnostic about whether continuing members of the FCAFA should not be eligible to serve on the Committee of Six while serving on the FCAFA, as had been proposed, while others did not support the idea. The committee did not feel that retiring members of the FCAFA should be excused from service on the Committee of Six the year after they completed their service on the FCAFA (unless they were on leave). In regard to the proposal, Provost Epstein expressed some concern about reducing further the pool of tenured faculty members who are eligible to serve on the Committee of Six, while noting that exemptions from Committee of Six service that are given current and retiring members of some other committee also do not make that much sense, in her view. Professor Leise wondered if other committees might ask for similar exemptions if current and retiring members of the FCAFA are excused from service on the Committee of Six. In the end, it was decided that it would be best to learn more about the findings and recommendations of Susan Pierce, the consultant who is studying the committee structure at the college and how service is and might be tracked, before making any decisions about these issues, as well as the proposal that the members of the FCAFA be elected. Professor Manion commented that there is a lack of transparency on how chairs are selected for some committees, including the ways in which the chair rotates among the members of a committee who serve for a term of multiple years.

Conversation turned to a draft charge that the Consultative Group for Tenure-Track Faculty had forwarded to the committee for consideration. After noting some concerns about aspects of the

proposal, the members discussed how best to support and guide tenure-track faculty in the work of creating a charge, and also whether the goal of formalizing the consultative group as a standing committee of the faculty is the most effective structure for carrying out the group's work. It is possible that remaining a more informal group would offer the benefit of needed flexibility, Professor Umphrey commented. The members agreed that, once again, it would be helpful to wait for S. Pierce to complete her study before thinking further about this issue. The president and provost said that S. Pierce would like to meet with the Committee of Six before the end of this academic year. S. Pierce will continue with her work over the summer, President Martin noted. Professor del Moral asked whether the proposal to split the Committee of Six into two separate committees—one tenure and promotion and one executive committee of the faculty—could also be discussed with S. Pierce. Provost Epstein noted that she and the president had asked the consultant to make a recommendation about this issue. It was agreed that it can be challenging for the Committee of Six to have the time needed to consider policy issues, while also devoting significant time to personnel matters.

The meeting concluded with the committee reporting in more detail about concerns that had been raised at the committee's annual meeting with tenure-track faculty on April 26. (See also the committee's minutes of April 30, in which some of these issues are also described). The members explained that there appears to be a strong desire among many assistant professors to have a faculty advocate to whom they can turn with concerns around the impact of COVID-19 that they don't feel comfortable sharing with others at the college, including their department chairs. Provost Epstein asked if the assistant professors felt that the faculty equity and inclusion officer (FEIO)s could assume this role. Professor del Moral commented that it doesn't appear that this function is seen as being part of the role of the FEIOs. The proposal was that the advocate be the equivalent of a class dean, but for tenure-track faculty. In addition, a great deal of the discussion had, as mentioned in the April 30 minutes, focused on the devastating impact that the pandemic has had on some faculty members' research productivity, including the magnitude of the impact on some STEM faculty. In this regard, some concern had been raised that the accommodations that have been provided by the college, in an effort to be equitable and to treat all faculty in the same way, do not address the differential impact that COVID-19 has had on faculty in particular disciplines. The members suggested that it would be helpful if those faculty members whose research has been stalled by the pandemic offer greater clarity about what accommodations would be most helpful to them. There was also some discussion about the impact that the pandemic has had on teaching, with the shift to remote learning, and whether the option not to solicit teaching evaluations should be extended to this semester. In regard to this idea, the committee did not recommend taking this approach, and the members had stressed at the meeting that the Committee of Six strives to contextualize evaluations. Finally, the committee commented that some assistant professors seem to feel that they must achieve a level of research productivity that is equivalent to that of a faculty member at an R1 institution. The committee, the president, and the dean stressed the importance of offering greater clarity on the criteria for tenure at the college, without delay, and expressed support for making progress by, as a first step, asking departments to articulate their expectations for what should be achieved by the time of tenure and the standards in their field. It was agreed that the committee would discuss this idea further at one of the remaining meetings of the academic year.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The thirty-seventh meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2020–2021 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 3:15 P.M. on Monday, May 10, 2021. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors del Moral, Kingston, Leise, Trapani, and Umphrey; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder. Professor Manion was absent.

Under “Questions from Committee Members, Professor Trapani, on behalf of a colleague, noted that it appears that the Workday system may not be up to date in regard to reflecting transactions involving some accounts, as the end of the fiscal year approaches. A result could be that some balances being shown may not be accurate because debits are not reflected, and that overspending may occur. Professor Trapani asked how this issue would be resolved. Provost Epstein said that this problem will be addressed, and that those with questions should be in touch with Katie O’Hara Edwards or should also write to AskIT.

Continuing with questions, Professor Umphrey thanked the provost for being so responsive to the committee’s request to change the schedule for orientation advising, so that faculty will not be required to do this work over the summer. Provost Epstein said that she is grateful for the committee’s feedback and was happy to be able to revise the plans that had been announced earlier.

President Martin next asked for the committee’s suggestions for faculty who might serve on the advisory committee, comprising students, faculty, and staff, that will work with Cambridge Hill Partners to generate options for a community safety model that will support the range of needs within the college community and reflect Amherst’s commitment to equity and inclusion. She explained that she has asked the Association of Amherst Students to select student members and the Employee Council to choose staff members. The advisory committee will begin its work shortly and will present its findings to her and the senior leadership by mid-October 2021, President Martin said. She will then bring recommendations to the board of trustees for its consideration. (For more information, [see the president’s announcement that was sent to the community](#) soon after the committee’s meeting ended.) The members then suggested colleagues to serve on the committee.

Discussion turned to a draft of the faculty meeting agenda for the May 18 Meeting. The committee made some revisions to the draft motions regarding the proposal to adopt either a 4.0 or 4.33 grading scale, in the interest of clarity; voted on the motions; and then voted five in favor and zero opposed to forward the agenda to the faculty. (The members voted electronically on the final motions on May 12, 2021, and voted six in favor and zero opposed on substance and six in favor and zero opposed to forward the motions to the faculty.) The members then turned to personnel matters.

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. The committee agreed to continue this work at its next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 5:20 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The thirty-eighth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2020–2021 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, May 17, 2021. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors del Moral, Kingston, Leise, Manion, Trapani, and Umphrey; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The meeting began with a discussion of a personnel matter. Discussion then turned once again to the process of considering committee assignments. After finalizing a list of nominees for each committee, the members agreed that the provost should extend invitations to these colleagues to serve. Some members commented that, in the future, it would be helpful for the committee to have more information about each faculty member's service responsibilities and activities—for example, whether individuals are chairing departments or contributing to programs outside the departments—so that these contributions can be taken into account when proposing committee assignments. The provost said that developing better ways for faculty members to document their college service is one of the issues that consultant Susan Pierce has been asked to consider. One suggestion is to have faculty share information about their activities in an annual report to the provost.

The committee next discussed nominations for the Jeffrey B. Ferguson Memorial Teaching Prize and selected Danielle Benedetto, senior lecturer in mathematics, as this year's recipient. The members noted that D. Benedetto is an outstanding teacher, advisor, and mentor who has made important contributions to the curriculum and has had a significant impact on hundreds of students—many of whom are first-generation and/or low-income students and women—whom she has guided and inspired to pursue studies in STEM. It was agreed that the president would announce the selection of D. Benedetto at the faculty meeting the next day. The committee noted that, in the solicitation for nominations for the prize next year, it should be noted once again that it is permitted to re-nominate faculty whom an individual has nominated before, and that nominations from prior years are considered by the Committee of Six annually. Professor Trapani suggested that future solicitations could encourage recommenders to save their entries offline for resubmission in future years.

Conversation turned to a draft of a survey that the provost intends to send to all tenure-track faculty members at the college, with the goal of learning more about challenges assistant professors have faced during the pandemic, and informing the ways in which the college can continue to support pre-tenure colleagues. The committee recommended some revisions to the document, and the provost said that, after incorporating the members' changes, she would next seek feedback from the Consultative Group for Tenure-Track Faculty about the survey. Professor Trapani asked whether, on the survey, there should be attention given to, or a question regarding, the pandemic's impact on mental health. It was agreed to return to this question at the following meeting. Plans call for administering the instrument in early June, Provost Epstein noted.

The members next discussed [a letter from some members of the college community](#) requesting that all faculty and staff be required to provide proof of COVID-19 vaccination before being permitted to continue or return to work on campus in the summer or fall of 2021. The committee expressed support for taking this step. President Martin and Provost Epstein said that the college plans to require all faculty and staff to be fully vaccinated by August 1. A process will be put in place to request a medical or religious exemption, they explained. Soon after the meeting ended the president sent [an email to the community about plans for on-campus work](#), which included information about the requirement that all faculty and staff be fully vaccinated by August 1 (the same requirement is already in place for students).

The meeting ended with a discussion about clarifying the criteria for tenure, a topic that has been on the agenda of the Committee of Six for a number of years, without significant progress being made. Provost Epstein and Associate Provost Tobin shared what they had learned from a conversation that they had had with a colleague at a peer institution. As had been shared with the committee during earlier discussions about this issue, the school uses a system that combines the articulation of a broad set of college-wide criteria for tenure—with that language continuing to be part of the *Faculty*

*Handbook*—and complementary departmental expectations for tenure. The committee expressed support for adopting this system at Amherst. As a first step, it was decided to move forward now with drafting some revisions to Amherst’s current *Faculty Handbook* language about the criteria for tenure (*Faculty Handbook*, III., E., 3.), with the goal of enhancing clarity and achieving greater alignment with practice. It was noted that any proposal that the committee recommends will be considered in the next academic year. Professor Umphrey agreed that, by the time of the committee’s next meeting, she would draft some new *Faculty Handbook* language for the members’ consideration.

In addition, the members decided that it would be informative and useful for each department to undertake the exercise of clarifying its standards for tenure in regard to scholarship and creative work, teaching, and service, and to include their expectations in their departmental handbooks, provide them to prospective faculty members, share them with external reviewers, and the Committee of Six at the time of tenure, and make them publicly available. The committee noted that, in regard to the Committee of Six, specifically, having more information about the expectations of departments and fields will be another helpful way of putting departmental recommendations and the evaluations of outside reviewers in context, and of ensuring consistency in the evaluation process over time and across different Committees of Six. The provost said that she would speak with chairs of academic departments and programs in the fall about moving forward with this approach, which would be informed by departments’ knowledge of the expectations and standards of their fields. The members noted that it will be important to make it clear that, while any departmental expectations surrounding tenure will provide helpful information to all involved in faculty personnel processes, it is the institutional standards for tenure that will remain paramount. The committee agreed that communication between departments and the Committee of Six would be important, in order to align expectations between the two groups, and that, to ensure consistency with college-wide criteria, departmental tenure standards should be reviewed and approved by the Committee of Six prior to being posted. All agreed that the emphasis of all of the work that will be undertaken surrounding clarifying tenure expectations and criteria will focus on codifying current standards and policy, rather than developing new policies and expectations.

The members also agreed to begin a discussion about ways to align the *Faculty Handbook* language about reappointment with practice.

The meeting adjourned at 4:33 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The thirty-ninth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2020–2021 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, May 24, 2021. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors del Moral, Kingston, Leise, Manion, Trapani, and Umphrey; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

Under “Questions from Committee Members,” Professor Trapani commented that, in the aftermath of the discussion at the last faculty meeting and the vote to change the GPA value of the grade of A-plus to be the same as that of an A, he has been thinking further about the issue of grade inflation. Noting his own challenges in assessing work and assigning a range of grades to students, particularly because so many Amherst students perform at such an exceptionally strong level, he suggested that it would be informative for the Center for Teaching and Learning to offer some workshops on the topic of grading. Professor Trapani wondered if the college will be tracking the number of honorific A-plus grades that are awarded and whether these grades might need to count in some way. Such a situation would be useful for determining Latin honors and the Woods-Travis Prize (currently awarded to the student with the highest GPA in the graduating class). Professor Kingston commented that it would be beneficial to award the prize based on criteria beyond the GPA alone. It was noted that the prize description provides sufficient flexibility to make it possible to do so. (“The Woods-Travis Prize, an annual gift in memory of Josiah B. Woods of Enfield and Charles B. Travis of the class of 1864, is awarded for outstanding excellence in culture and faithfulness to duty as a scholar.”) Provost Epstein said that she would check in with Jesse Barba, director of institutional research and registrar services, about these issues. The Committee of Six can take up the issue of the criteria for the Woods-Travis Prize next year, she commented.

On behalf of a colleague, Professor Trapani next asked the question of whether the college plans to undertake educational outreach efforts that might be aimed at members of the Amherst community who may have fears or different comfort levels about receiving the mandated COVID-19 vaccine. He expressed that it would be valuable for the college to find ways to educate community members as to the importance of the vaccine, much the way it did for the mask mandate. President Martin said that some efforts of this kind are under way. Ultimately, however, all members of the college community will be required to be fully vaccinated by August 1, unless they have an exemption for medical or religious reasons that has been approved through the college’s petition process.

Discussion turned to considering a small number of remaining committee assignments. The members agreed that the provost should extend invitations to the nominees to serve. The members then made some final revisions to the draft of a survey that the provost intends to send to all tenure-track faculty members at the college, with the goal of learning more about challenges assistant professors have faced during the pandemic, and informing the ways in which the college can continue to support pre-tenure colleagues. Provost Epstein thanked the members for their suggestions and said that she would next seek feedback from the Consultative Group for Tenure-Track Faculty about the survey. It was decided not to include a question about mental health, specifically, as another broader question on the survey would provide an opportunity for those who wish to comment on this topic to do so.

The committee next reviewed a proposal that had been forwarded by the Committee on Educational Policy to expand eligibility for participation in an approved study-away program (either domestic or international, and either in person or remote), for the fall 2021 semester only, for students who have a compelling medical or other reason for not being able to return to campus. Provost Epstein explained that, for international students, these reasons may include challenges obtaining a visa for entry into the United States. She noted that this change would not apply to second-semester seniors. Professor Manion asked why second-semester seniors would be excluded. The provost responded that there are concerns that study away during the final semester could make it difficult for students to complete all academic requirements at Amherst in time for graduation, including finishing capstone requirements for the major and securing their study-away transcripts.

Continuing with the conversation, Provost Epstein explained that the purpose of the proposal is to provide an option, in the aftermath of the pandemic, for students who cannot come back to campus in the fall, so that they do not fall behind in their academic programs. It is expected that a small number of students would take advantage of this opportunity to study away and transfer credits toward their Amherst degree (restrictions on how many such courses can be counted [half of a student's courses must be taken at the college] would remain in place). Some students in this situation might choose to take a leave instead of doing so, Provost Epstein said. Offering this option would allow maximum flexibility for students, however, and would mean that faculty would not need to teach courses in a fully remote or hybrid format in the next academic year, in order to accommodate students who cannot return to campus. Provost Epstein said that she is aware that the approach described in the proposal is being taken by a number of peer institutions.

Professor Umphrey asked who would determine if a student's "compelling reason" justified allowing a student who ordinarily would be ineligible (i.e., first-year students and students who have not yet declared a major) to study away to do so, and whether any additional burdens would be placed on advisors as part of the approval process. The provost said that, as noted in the proposal, students who would not normally be eligible for study away would consult with their class deans as a first step toward pursuing this option. Other students who are considering it would probably do so as well. No documentation surrounding medical or other issues would be required. All students pursuing this option would go through the regular, existing study-away process, which is managed by the Office of Global Education. This process always involves a sign off by the academic advisor, the provost noted. If the proposal is approved, students will be allowed flexibility in regard to when and how they register for study away, which could take place over the next several months, Provost Epstein noted. Some international students, for example, may not learn that they cannot get a visa until it is close to the time that they would come to campus. The members expressed support for the proposal and agreed to review the related draft motion later in the meeting, when the committee considered the draft agenda for the commencement faculty meeting on June 8.

At 3:00 P.M., Susan Resneck Pierce, the consultant who has been engaged to think through issues surrounding service at the college, joined the meeting for a discussion about the next steps in her work. She described the steps she is proposing and asked for the committee's feedback. S. Pierce noted plans for a survey to be sent to the faculty, either from the provost or the Committee of Six, in early June. A variation of the instrument would be sent to Amherst staff members who regularly work with faculty on committees. She reviewed the draft survey questions, and the members, after some discussion, suggested some revisions to some items. Overall, the committee found that the survey questions focused on central issues surrounding service. It was agreed that Jesse Barba, director of institutional research and registrar services, would help create and administer the survey and would also be responsible for compiling the results. S. Pierce said that she would provide an analysis of the data that are gathered. Professor Manion expressed concern that undertaking the survey might delay the process of bringing proposals for change forward. S. Pierce said that she expects to have the results of the survey by mid-summer, and that she feels that what can be learned from a survey of this kind is important. In addition, she plans to gather and share information on the practices of other institutions in regard to service.

Continuing the conversation, S. Pierce said that she will come to campus in the fall to give workshops that focus on shared governance, as well as service practices at some NESCAC (New England Small College Athletic Conference) and Research-1 institutions. She would offer the same workshop separately to interested groups of faculty, the senior staff, the board of trustees, and interested staff, she noted. The committee expressed support for the process, as outlined.

The consultant next noted that she also plans to engage interested faculty members (perhaps former members of the Committee of Six and, perhaps, the provost and another senior administrator who works closely with a faculty committee or committees) in what she calls the "zero-based

committee exercise.” Participants in the exercise would imagine a committee structure from scratch, rather than reconfiguring the current structure. When considering the need for committees, the following questions would be asked as part of the exercise: Where does the faculty have the primary responsibility? Where does the faculty need to be consulted? Where does the faculty need to be informed? Professor Manion noted that it would be important to ask specifically about what faculty expectations for their committee service are, such as whether they believe they are setting policy, advising policy-setters, or merely there to become informed on behalf of the faculty. Provost Epstein commented that committees have different roles—for example, some have a focus on policy (e.g., the Committee on Educational Policy); some have a more informational focus (e.g., the Committee on Priorities and Resources); and some are more advisory. In a similar vein, the consultant noted that many committee charges appear not to be clear, according to some faculty. As a result, different chairs may interpret the role and work of the committee differently. After concluding the exercise, S. Pierce noted that participants will elicit feedback from the faculty, perhaps through town halls and/or in other ways. A process would then be created by which a proposal for a new committee structure could be brought to the faculty as a whole. Most committee members found this approach to be intriguing.

The topic of the role of provost and dean of the faculty, and how this role has changed in recent years, was also raised in relation to college governance. The consultant noted that only a small number of peer schools have a separate provost and dean of the faculty. After the meeting, she sent the Committee of Six the [attached document](#) that describes the organizational structure for provost and/or dean at a number of institutions with which Amherst often compares itself. S. Pierce thanked the members and left the meeting at 3:35 P.M.

Discussion turned to the draft faculty meeting agenda for June 8. The members reviewed a draft motion to adopt the study-away proposal for the fall 2021 semester. It was agreed that some minor refinements should be made to the language, and that the committee would then vote electronically later in the week on the substance of the motion and whether to forward it to the faculty. The members then voted unanimously to forward the faculty meeting agenda to the faculty, with the final motion added once it is approved. (The members later voted unanimously on the substance of the motion and to forward it to the faculty.)

In the time remaining, the members continued their discussion about clarifying the criteria for tenure, turning to a draft of revisions to Amherst’s current *Faculty Handbook* language about the criteria for tenure ([Faculty Handbook, III., E., 3.](#)) that Professor Umphrey had drafted as a starting point for the conversation. The committee members felt that the proposal was moving in the right direction, thanked Professor Umphrey for her efforts, and offered feedback. Professor Umphrey agreed to incorporate the committee’s thoughts and revisions and to prepare a second draft for discussion at the members’ next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The fortieth and final meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2020–2021 was called to order by President Martin via Zoom at 3:00 P.M. on Monday, June 7, 2021. Present, in addition to the president, were Professors del Moral, Kingston, Leise, Manion, Trapani, and Umphrey; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

The meeting began with the provost sharing the information that, this year, the Title IX Review Committee has focused on the [interim Title IX policy](#) and obtaining community feedback, before finalizing the policy for the next academic year. Given recent indications from the Department of Education that changes are coming that are very likely to affect Amherst's Title IX policy and grievance process, the Title IX Review Committee is recommending that the college maintain the current interim policy, while awaiting new guidance from the federal government. The committee has drafted a short report that summarizes its activities of the year and its recommendation in regard to the interim Title IX policy. Plans call for the report to be shared with the community soon, Provost Epstein said.

The members briefly turned to a small number of remaining committee assignments. The committee agreed that the provost should extend invitations to the nominees to serve.

Under "Questions from Committee Members," Professor Leise asked on behalf of a colleague, if consideration is being given to raising the salary for "Green Deans" at the college. At present, this compensation is at the same level as minimum wage, she noted. Provost Epstein said that conversations are under way to raise the salary level for "Green Dean" positions, though any increase will not take effect during the coming academic year. On behalf of some statistics faculty, Professor Leise next noted that, while these colleagues are highly supportive of the initiatives surrounding special courses that are being sponsored by the Office of the Provost and Dean of the Faculty, they are also concerned that this effort could affect their ability to offer core courses in their departments' curricula. Professor Leise commented that these faculty members suggested that a mechanism be developed to help balance offering courses that fall under the special initiatives with ensuring coverage of core courses. Provost Epstein said that this is a good point. Concluding, Professor Leise shared a request from a colleague that students who cannot return to campus for the fall semester be given flexibility in order not to fall behind in their academic programs. She noted that the colleague had made this suggestion prior to becoming aware of the proposal for an expanded study-away program for fall 2021, which was designed to offer such flexibility (the proposal was approved by the faculty at the June 8, 2021).

Continuing with questions, Professor Umphrey, noting that she is not aware of the details of the voluntary retirement program that is now available to staff, and its implications, asked if the president and provost would provide information about the program. The Voluntary Retirement Option (VRO) was offered to regular, non-faculty employees who will be age sixty-two or older as of their retirement date and have at least fifteen years of service with the college by December 31, 2021. Through this program, which includes a lump-sum payment, employees may retire during the period between May 1, 2021, through December 31, 2021, at an agreed-upon time that meets the needs of the college and the employee. The incentive payment will total 100 percent of the employee's regular annual wages up to \$75,000, plus 50 percent of any regular annual wages above \$75,000. ([Details of the program are available online.](#)) Provost Epstein informed the committee that seventy staff members met the criteria for the program, and that forty-five staff members have decided to take the option. The provost commented that the college may realize some cost savings over an extended period as a result of restructuring positions and lower starting salaries for some positions. The senior staff has been asked to submit plans for how this might be accomplished.

Provost Epstein commented that there will be a number of retirements in the library and information technology, and that three academic department coordinators will also retire. She is working to ensure that replacing those positions that support the academic mission directly are prioritized. Professor Umphrey commented that the timing of these retirements, which will result in

the loss of expertise on which the faculty and staff rely, seems ill-timed, coming at the conclusion of this challenging academic year. President Martin said that, for some time, the staff has been requesting that an option of this kind be offered. Professor Trapani said that he is aware that some staff would have liked to take advantage of the program, but didn't quite meet the criteria. He asked whether the program will be offered in the future, or whether it is a one-time opportunity. President Martin said that there are no plans to offer another voluntary retirement option at this time. She commented that the new chief human resources officer will be charged with thinking through issues related to workforce planning.

Conversation turned to concerns raised by some members about the variability among the letters that departments provide to the Committee of Six when recommending majors for summa cum laude honors. The committee agreed that it would be helpful to Committee of Six readers, who must read theses outside their disciplines, to have theses situated in the context of the standards of quality held by the department making the recommendation. Professor Kingston felt the letter of recommendation should address the substance of concerns that might have been raised, if department members were not unanimous in recommending summa honors. Professor Umphrey argued that, as long as the process for reaching the recommendation is made transparent to the Committee of Six, the committee should in general defer to department's recommendation, even if some department members disagreed. She does not feel that members of the Committee of Six have the expertise necessary to make substantive judgments about such disagreements in fields not their own. Professor del Moral expressed the concern that, when there are disagreements about whether a thesis merits summa honors, at times, the concerns of faculty members who are not full professors may be dismissed. Concluding the discussion, the committee agreed that, as a matter of equity and transparency across departments and to better inform the Committee of Six, all departments should be asked to describe both why the recommended thesis merits summa honors and the process that the department used to determine its recommendation, including which faculty participated.

The committee continued its discussion about clarifying the criteria for tenure, turning to a second draft of the members' proposed revision to the first paragraph of Amherst's current *Faculty Handbook* language about the criteria for tenure ([Faculty Handbook, III., E., 3.](#)) The members thanked Professor Umphrey for drafting the language as a starting point for the conversation. After making some further refinements, the members agreed to share the language via the committee's minutes (see below), and that next year's Committee of Six should be asked to consider the proposal and to share it with the faculty widely—perhaps, with suggestions provided by the new members.

The college values faculty whose commitment to the life of the mind is demonstrated through **EXCELLENCE IN** teaching, scholarship, and **/OR THE** creation of works of art, and **PROFESSIONAL SERVICE**. ~~and a concern for the general life of the college.~~ **AMHERST TENURES FACULTY WHO DEMONSTRATE GROWTH, ACHIEVEMENT, AND CONTINUING PROMISE IN BOTH SCHOLARSHIP AND TEACHING, EVINced BY A NOTABLE RECORD OF SCHOLARLY AND/OR ARTISTIC ACCOMPLISHMENT AND A DEMONSTRATED ABILITY TO TEACH UNDERGRADUATES EFFECTIVELY. THOSE TWO ASPECTS OF A CANDIDATE'S RECORD ARE OF PRIMARY CONSIDERATION IN THE TENURE DECISION. STRENGTH IN ONE WILL NOT COMPENSATE FOR SHORTCOMING IN THE OTHER. A RECORD OF SCHOLARLY EXCELLENCE MUST INCLUDE EVIDENCE OF ORIGINAL, PEER-REVIEWED RESEARCH AND/OR ITS EQUIVALENT IN THE CREATIVE ARTS. A RECORD OF TEACHING EXCELLENCE MUST INCLUDE EVIDENCE OF THE ABILITY TO CONVEY KNOWLEDGE IN A RIGOROUS AND INTELLECTUALLY STIMULATING WAY AND A COMMITMENT TO STUDENTS' INTELLECTUAL GROWTH, ACADEMIC ACCOMPLISHMENT, AND WELL-BEING. ADDITIONALLY, FACULTY**

**MEMBERS ARE EXPECTED TO CONTRIBUTE TO THEIR HOME DEPARTMENTS AND PROGRAMS, TO THE LIFE AND WORK OF THE COLLEGE, AND TO THEIR PROFESSIONAL FIELDS.**

~~Although distinguishing one quality from another—even for the purpose of discussion—separates what is inseparable in the life of a single individual, the distinctions which follow are an attempt to provide a clear description of the qualities the college seeks, especially among faculty who hold appointment without term. Effective teaching is regarded as a prime factor for reappointment and promotion. The college also gives great weight to the continued scholarly growth of faculty members. Research, publication and creative work are considered important indications of such growth. In addition, the college takes account of a faculty member's general contribution to the life of the college community.~~

~~While the balance among the varieties of intellectual distinction prerequisite to tenure may vary from individual to individual and from field to field, effective teaching or significant contribution to the community's well-being cannot compensate for absence of scholarship or creative work. Institutional considerations may play a role at the time of tenure, but if they are invoked, the president will give a full account of the reasons why. Institutional considerations include factors such as the tenure structure of the department, the rank structure of the department, and the fields of competence of the faculty member being considered for tenure in relation to those already represented in the department. Although the college has no formula for the percentage of faculty on tenure, or for the distribution of faculty by anticipated retirement or rank generally or within departments, a particular judgment may be made which takes such factors into account (adopted by trustee vote, April 4, 1992).~~

Discussion turned to [a proposal from the Housing Committee](#) to make revisions to the college's home purchase program. Provost Epstein noted that the proposal, which the administration supports, is being shared with the committee for informational purposes. The hope is to begin putting homes up for sale this summer. Professor Manion expressed concern that the proposal is predicated on the understanding that faculty are not interested in buying college houses, which she knows not to be the case. She is aware of a number of colleagues who want to live close to campus and would welcome the opportunity to buy a college house, but have not been kept informed about the ones that are available for purchase. Professors del Moral and Umphrey said that this is their understanding as well. The members expressed the view that this communication problem should be rectified. Provost Epstein said that she would share this concern with Jim Brassord, chief of campus operations. (He later reported that, due to the poor condition of the homes that had been available for sale, the home purchase program had been suspended three years ago until a proposal to improve the program was developed. It is for this reason that faculty no longer receive communications about college houses that are for sale.) Professor Umphrey expressed support for moving forward with the proposal, commenting that available college houses are becoming more run down, and that the housing market is so competitive that buying a house has become out of reach for many faculty. The proposal should help, in her view. She suggested that it not be assumed that senior faculty might only wish to purchase larger homes, commenting, for example, that colleagues whose children are out of the house might wish to buy a smaller home. Alternatively, a faculty member at an earlier career stage, who may still have young children, may want a bigger home with more space. Professor Kingston suggested that, rather than selling homes to tenure-track faculty as the proposal suggests, it would be preferable for all involved to develop something like a lease-to-buy option, in order to offer flexibility. Overall, the members expressed

support for taking the steps outlined in the proposal. The members then discussed a confidential matter and a personnel matter.

Conversation turned to the topic of granting accommodations, during this time of the global pandemic, to faculty with serious medical conditions and/or who have other compelling reasons for not being able to teach in person. Some members of the committee suggested that, in such cases, consideration be given to allowing faculty to teach online. Professor Manion noted that a wide range of accommodations have been extended to students because of the impact of COVID-19, and urged the president and provost to provide flexibility to faculty and staff as well. The provost said that she would consider a reallocation of duties for faculty members who are unable to teach in person during the pandemic. Professor Trapani remarked on [a presentation](#) this spring that was related to moving past teaching during the pandemic and what that might look like for the future of Amherst, higher education, and the liberal arts.

Discussion turned to [a letter sent by eight faculty members](#), in which they offered a series of proposals to recognize and compensate faculty and staff for their dedication and contributions during the pandemic. Commenting on the college's decision that staff members may carry over the equivalent of one year of vacation time plus the half year of vacation accumulated between July 1 and December 31, Professor Kingston said that the college should continue to be flexible, given all that staff members have done for Amherst during the pandemic. Professor Trapani expressed support for the signatories' proposal surrounding course release, feeling that it would be a reasonable and generous step for the college to take. President Martin, commenting on the fragile state of many students' mental health in the wake of the pandemic, stressed the need to have as many adults available to students as possible to provide support and to serve as mentors. Keeping in mind students' welfare, the idea of adopting the course release proposal would have to be weighed with great care, in the president's view. Professor Trapani responded that faculty who had a reduced teaching load due to a course release could spend more time than is typical focusing on student-related activities. Professor Kingston said that the proposal, in his view, would not serve students or faculty well. The result would likely be simply to redistribute students and that faculty would need to teach the same number of students overall, and so courses would have, on average, slightly larger enrollments, and students would have fewer courses from which to choose. He suggested that the better option would be for the college to invest in salary increases, given that inflation appears to be rising while salaries were frozen last year due to the pandemic. President Martin agreed that focusing on providing salary increases will be the approach that has the most impact, compounding over time, rather than making one-time exceptions. She indicated that this is the direction in which the college plans to move. The committee expressed support for doing so, and Professor Umphrey concurred, particularly because of the finding of the Committee on Priorities and Resources that salaries at the associate and full professor rank continue to fall below college benchmarks.

In closing, Professor Umphrey suggested that the college find ways to commemorate the experience of the pandemic, beginning in the fall, and continue to foster community and build connections among students, faculty, and staff, after all this time spent apart. The members of the committee then expressed thanks to one another for the hard work that has taken place during this challenging year, as did the president and the provost. The members also expressed gratitude to President Martin and Provost Epstein and especially to Associate Provost Janet Tobin. The committee also expressed thanks to Jesse Barba, director of institutional research and registrar services, for sharing his expertise and providing data to the committee; to other colleagues whom the committee has consulted over the course of the year; to Pam Korenewsky, academic administration/policy specialist, for her outstanding work supporting the committee; and to the academic department coordinators of departments that brought forward tenure, reappointment, and promotion cases this year, for providing essential support for these processes. The remainder of the meeting was devoted to personnel matters.

The meeting adjourned at 5:20 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty