

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

Under “Questions from Committee Members,” Professor Sims followed up briefly on her question from November 18 about space concerns, as she had been advised during that meeting to ask again about specific numbers in a future meeting at least two weeks later. Her question was how the number of offices and classrooms that will be gained as a result of the renovation of the house located at 197 South Pleasant Street, as well as the Keefe Campus Center, compares to the number that may be needed, based on anticipated hiring of new faculty and staff that is already planned. Provost Epstein responded that Jack Cheney, associate provost and associate dean of the faculty, is still preparing information for the committee regarding this question. She said that the expectation is that there will be sufficient offices for all tenure-line faculty, including new hires, in the years to come. The provost noted once again that visiting faculty who are occupying offices that have been designated for tenure-line faculty will be moved to other spaces, as needs arise. Several members asked if there is an ongoing study of classroom and office space at the college, as there appears to be concern among many faculty members that there is a space shortage. In fact, administrators often tell faculty that classroom and office space is very tight at the college, Professor Brooks noted. She commented that there seems to be some tension between the president and provost’s understanding and the impressions that many faculty members seem to share. The shortage does seem real and goes beyond numbers and facts, she said, as issues related to offices are having a negative impact on departmental culture, in her experience. For example, space limitations necessitate that some faculty be assigned to offices outside their departments, which has an impact on the ability to build community, including having full opportunities for informal conversation within departmental spaces. President Martin said that a study of classroom and office space is under way and noted that she would consult with Jim Brassord, chief of campus operations, to inquire when the results of the study will be available. (The president later learned that the study is focused on offices, but not classrooms.)

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

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein
Provost and Dean of the Faculty