

The twentieth meeting of the Faculty Executive Committee (FEC) for the academic year 2022–2023 was called to order by Professor Call, chair of the committee, in the president’s office on Monday, May 15, at 4:00 p.m. Present, in addition to Professor Call, were Professors Hasan, Martini, Mattiacci, and Polk; President Elliott; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Epstein; and Associate Provost Tobin, recorder.

Under “Topics of the Day,” President Elliott noted how pleased he has been with the attendance and participation at the on-campus meetings with finalists for the position of chief equity and inclusion officer (CEIO), and he said that he looks forward to reviewing feedback about the candidates from members of the community. The president noted that he has been impressed with the candidates during his meetings with them and expressed appreciation to the members of the search committee for all of the work that has led to generating such an outstanding pool. (The members of the search committee are Professor Javier Corrales; Professor Pawan Dhingra, associate provost and associate dean of the faculty; Rosemary Effiom, director of the Mellon Undergraduate Fellowship Program and academic engagement and student success; Professor Tekla Harms; Frida Hernandez, ’24; Amy Hunter, director of compliance; Matt McGann, dean of admission and financial aid; Grace Nyanchoka, ’24; and Christina Santana, associate director of community learning. Pawan Dhingra and Matt McGann are co-chairing the committee.)

Continuing with his remarks, President Elliott informed the committee that the faculty dinners that he had held recently about ways to foster interest among Amherst students in careers in public service, and other ways of contributing to the common good, resulted in wide-ranging and helpful conversations. He is still digesting all that he learned and is considering next steps. President Elliott thanked the members of the committee for their participation in these productive conversations.

Turning to another topic, the president informed the committee that a presentation for the board of trustees about the college budget has been occupying a good deal of his and the senior staff’s time and attention, as the commencement board meeting approaches. He also shared that the board will be reviewing the financing and other plans for the new Student Center and Dining Commons project at its commencement meeting and will decide whether to proceed with construction. In regard to the budget, Professor Polk asked about the outcome of the request that departments across the college reduce their non-compensation-related budgets by 15 percent. Provost Epstein said that all departments have submitted their budgets with

15 percent cuts. President Elliott said that he expects that the cuts that will be implemented overall will represent an 11 or 12 percent reduction of the non-compensation, discretionary spending of the college.

Professor Call informed the president, provost, and the members who will be transitioning off the committee at the end of this year that he and Professor Polk had met earlier in the day with the newly elected members of the FEC. It was agreed that Professor Call would chair the FEC again next year.

The members next discussed the deadline by which the committee would review the transcripts and departmental recommendations for students who have been recommended for summa cum laude honors. Professor Call commented that it is his hope that next year’s FEC will be given access to all the theses that were recommended for summa honors. In this way, members could read the theses if they wish, though the committee is no longer required to do so. (Theses are no longer submitted in hard copy, and individual theses will be available to the committee this year by request.)

The committee then set the dates for faculty meetings for the next academic year, selecting Monday, September 4 (first faculty meeting and convocation); Tuesday, October 17; Tuesday, November 7; and Tuesday, December 5. (Setting the dates in advance of upcoming semesters has now become the practice, and the new meeting time for faculty meetings will begin in spring 2024.) Professor Polk asked how many faculty meetings will be held in the spring semester. Provost Epstein responded that she expects that there could be meetings in February, March, and April, in addition to the May commencement meeting. Plans call for faculty meetings to be held only if there are sufficient agenda items to discuss.

Under “Questions from Committee Members,” Professor Martini asked about a report in the *Amherst Student* that the college will no longer be providing free Amherst Cinema movie tickets to students. President Elliott clarified that the administration has never provided financial support for the movie tickets. A student club began the practice, and funds to support the tickets have been drawn from the activity fee paid by all Amherst students. The president noted that costs have escalated quickly, and that there is not an additional source of funding for the ticket program. While understanding the financial implications of continuing the program, Professor Polk wondered if, perhaps, the college might provide one or two free movie tickets to students each semester, which could be a nice way to engage students in the local community. The president said that students would have to vote to allocate activity fee funds if they wish to provide tickets to the student body.

Conversation turned to [a note that Professor Hastie sent to the committee](#), in which she had expressed concern that faculty and staff raises this year will not meet inflation. At the last faculty meeting, the president had noted that this would be the case, in response to a question about the issue posed by Professor Honig. In her correspondence, Professor Hastie inquired as to whether it would be possible, at least, to have higher raises for staff who are paid at the lower end of the scale. Professor Call asked when the college expects that it will be able to offer salary increases that will meet inflation, and the signals for which the community should look that might suggest that increases at this level could occur. President Elliott explained that the college has two sources of revenue—levers to work with so to speak—funding from endowment returns (which are tied to the broader economy) and net tuition revenue. One or both of these factors would have to outperform inflation for raises to cover inflation. It was noted that the college has not tied raises to inflation and/or the cost of living; had Amherst done so, annual raises would have been lower in many years, the provost said.

Continuing the discussion, the committee asked about performance of the endowment. The president said that, given the financial climate, the best hope at present would be that the endowment would be flat. The college is operating under a placeholder projection of negative 2 percent, for planning purposes at this time, he noted. In regard to tuition revenue, in the past, during periods in which there have been significant inflationary pressures, colleges raised tuition at a rate higher than inflation, the president explained. The “sticker price” for an Amherst education would have to be raised dramatically to be able to offer raises that are above the rate of inflation, he noted; that is a highly unlikely scenario, particularly in an inflationary environment, the president said. Even if this were to occur, he noted that the cost of an Amherst education far exceeds what most students and their families actually pay, particularly for those who receive financial aid from the college, but even to some degree for those who don’t. A member asked how Amherst’s salaries for faculty and staff compare with those of peer institutions. Provost Epstein said that, in comparison to its peers, the college is in the top two to four for salaries for faculty (full professor, second; associate professor, fourth; assistant professor, third). The college’s goal is to be in the top three in every category. The differences among these ranks is about \$200.00 she noted. The college watches benchmarks carefully, and the current numbers are from two years ago, so things may have changed. The faculty salary report of the Committee on Priorities and Resources (CPR), which is made available to faculty, is a helpful tool, the provost said. In regard to staff, the president said that the college has engaged the consulting firm of SullivanCotter to provide benchmarking data for staff salaries to inform compensation strategies. Concluding the conversation, the president commented that the college needs to continue to think carefully about ways to curtail the expansion of expenses/spending going forward, including considering trade-offs when making decisions. For example, in the current inflationary environment, Amherst could have decided to have a true hiring freeze during this time, but it was agreed not to do so as this approach would not have served faculty, staff, and students well, he noted.

The members next returned to its selection of this year's recipient of the [Jeffrey B. Ferguson Memorial Teaching Prize](#). Following a robust conversation, and after acknowledging the difficulty of choosing a single faculty member given how many stellar nominees there were, the committee made

a selection. The winner of the prize is announced annually at the commencement faculty meeting.

The committee continued its discussion about a proposal from the College Council to replace the current honor code with a very brief statement that would serve as the code. See below.

As a member of the Amherst College community, I will be honest in all of my academic pursuits, submit my own work, and fully acknowledge the ideas of others in my work. I will, in words and deeds, engage others with integrity and respect. I will contribute to this community in ways that promote wellbeing and belonging.

After the members' previous discussion of the proposal, the committee had requested that the College Council provide additional context. In response, Professor Holleman, chair of the College Council, and Corey Michalos, director of community standards, sent [a letter to the FEC](#) on May 11, which the members felt was helpful. The committee expressed appreciation for the College Council's efforts, and some members said that they found some of the language in the proposed statement to be compelling and saw value in having a clear and succinct honor code. At the same time, the committee wondered whether some of the fundamental statements within the current honor code would remain in place and would be available elsewhere, since they would apparently no longer be part of the code under the proposal. The members agreed that these statements are fundamental and serve to define the academic community at Amherst, what it means to participate in it with integrity and honor, and the rights and responsibilities of faculty and students. Professor Hasan was particularly troubled by the apparent lack of specificity in the proposed statement in this regard. The committee expressed the view that it is important to retain this content; some members also felt that it would be best if such statements were not dispersed and remained a part of the code, as it would be frustrating to have to search for them elsewhere. Examples would be the *Statement of Intellectual Responsibility*, which includes an article on student responsibility and an article on faculty responsibility, and the *Statement of Expression and Dissent*. Ultimately, the committee agreed that, since the proposed language for the honor code would represent a significant change if adopted, it would be helpful to meet with some members of the College Council to discuss the proposal and the questions it raised for the committee. Provost Epstein agreed to invite some members of the College Council to meet with the FEC at one of the committee's early meetings in fall 2023.

The provost next noted the deadline by which the committee has been asked to review draft chapters of the college's five-year interim reaccreditation report to the New England Commission of Higher Education. She thanked the committee for undertaking this work and for sharing their comments about the drafts.

Provost Epstein next asked the members if they would approve the continuation of the Ad Hoc Committee on Student Learning (CSL), pending further conversation by the FEC in the fall. It was agreed that the committee is doing very valuable work, and the members supported having the body continue doing so. In addition, the committee agreed that next year's FEC should be provided with the two letters that Professor Hall, who is chairing the ad hoc committee, had recently forwarded to the FEC. [In one letter he proposed bringing a motion to the faculty to make the CSL a standing committee. The other focused on the ad hoc committee's proposal to re-think the sophomore experience at the college.](#) The remainder of the meeting was devoted to committee assignments.

The meeting adjourned at 5:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty