

Amended June 10, 2014

The twenty-fourth meeting of the Committee of Six for the academic year 2013-2014 was called to order by President Martin in the President's office at 3:30 P.M. on Monday, May 12, 2014. Present were Professors Corrales (who attended via speaker phone), Kingston, Harms, Lyle McGeoch, Miller, and Schneider, Dean Call, Provost Uvin, and Assistant Dean Tobin, Recorder.

Much of the meeting was devoted to regular business of this time of year. The members reviewed the nomination from the Department of Physical Education and Athletics for the Edward Hitchcock Fellowship and voted unanimously to support the awarding of the fellowship to the nominee and to forward the nomination to the Faculty. The Committee also reviewed three proposals for Senior Sabbatical Fellowships and agreed that they should be forwarded to the Board of Trustees for approval.

Under "Questions from Committee Members," Professor Miller said that, during a recent meeting of the chairs of science departments, there had been a discussion about lengthening Interterm. It had generally been agreed that abbreviating Interterm has had a negative impact on faculty productivity, student research, and also some laboratory courses. Professor Harms commented that, in her recollection, last year's Committee of Six had asked the College Council to gather data on the impact of shortening Interterm. She noted that the Amherst Faculty had been opposed to shortening Interterm, but had acquiesced to the change in the spirit of Five-College cooperation. It was noted that the calendars of the schools are not in sync, in any case, with Amherst in the middle between UMass and Smith in terms of conformity with other calendars. While Smith had initially agreed to change its calendar to match the UMass one, and the Amherst Faculty had made its decision with this knowledge in mind, Smith had ultimately decided not to do so. Dean Call said that he would check with the College Council about gathering data on the impact of the shortening of Interterm and would ask that the Council report to the Committee of Six. Professor Miller next thanked President Martin for facilitating the creation of the report on the process that is used for allocating College vehicles for academic use, which Mr. Brassord, Chief of Campus Operations, had provided. Professor Miller noted that she has shared the report with her colleagues and replied directly to Mr. Brassord with thoughts about improving access to College vehicles.

The members turned to a conversation about the theses and transcripts of students who had been recommended by their departments for a summa cum laude degree and having an overall grade point average in the top 25 percent of the graduating class. The Dean noted that the Committee had also been asked to review the theses of students who had received summa cum laude recommendations from their departments and whose overall grade point average was likely to land below the top 25 percent but within the top 40 percent of the class, since these students would qualify for a magna cum laude degree under the honors guidelines. After discussing the merits of the theses, the members voted unanimously to forward the recommendations to the Faculty and offered high praise for the quality of the work done by this accomplished group of students. Professor Harms, while agreeing that the theses are outstanding, commented on the "narrowness" of a great many of the students' transcripts. Professor Miller concurred that some of the "summa" transcripts were troubling in this regard, as some students had taken courses in a small number of departments and that some students had not taken any courses in the sciences. Professor Miller asked whether the level of honors awarded is linked to students' overall grade-point average (GPA) or their GPA within their major and/or division. Dean Call responded that the overall GPA is used to calculate honors. Professor Schneider said that

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he is not troubled when students who have passionate interests within a small number of disciplines choose to concentrate exclusively on these areas, as is permitted by the open curriculum.

The thesis conversation prompted Professor Miller to recall a recent discussion that she had had with the chairs of the strategic planning committees about possible changes to the ways in which credit is awarded at Amherst, proposing the idea of adopting variable credits. A radical idea would be to re-think credits for all courses across the College, she said. If there is a desire not to make too much of a change to the current credit system, Professor Miller had proposed offering variable credits (e.g., 1.5 credits for courses with lab) for labs to represent the workload more effectively. Doing so, while still only requiring that students take four credits per semester, might well make a big difference in terms of outcomes for students with less preparation, she noted; for example, some students might choose to take two courses with labs and only one additional course for four total credits in a semester. Some members raised the concern that students in the sciences (i.e., those who take many labs) might then not take courses in other disciplines and not take full advantage of the curriculum. Professor Miller said that, in her experience, the problem is the opposite; science majors distribute themselves fairly effectively across the curriculum, but non-science majors are less likely to do so. Professor Harms agreed. Dean Call noted that the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), the College's accrediting body, is placing more emphasis on ensuring that colleges and universities comply with the federal definition of a credit hour when determining and awarding credit.

The Committee then turned to committee nominations. Associate Dean Cheney, who had prepared some suggestions of faculty to serve on standing committees, joined the meeting at 4:10 P.M. and left the meeting at the conclusion of the conversation. Professor Harms asked what the paradigm is for assigning assistant professors to committees. Associate Dean Cheney said that some tenure-track faculty members would have the opportunity to serve on committees and that some would not, depending on the need for replacements on committees. Every effort is made to protect assistant professors from committee service that would be extremely time-consuming.

Following the discussion about committees, the Dean presented nominations for endowed professorships. The next step will be for President Martin to recommend these professorships to the Board, Dean Call noted. The members then reviewed draft faculty meeting agendas for meetings to be held on May 22 and Labor Day, September 1, and voted six in favor and zero opposed to forward the agendas to the Faculty.

The members discussed some [possible revisions to the guidelines for departmental external reviews](#) that had been proposed by the Committee on Educational Policy and agreed that the Committee of Six should take up this topic in the fall, when time would allow for a fuller discussion. The members decided that it would be fine to share the proposed revisions with departments that would be undergoing reviews in the next academic year, noting that approval of the changes is pending discussion by the Committee of Six. The members next returned briefly to the topic of attendance and voting at Faculty Meetings and agreed that this matter should also be placed on the agenda of the new Committee of Six. The members thanked Professor Harms for her excellent work in preparing information about the pertinent issues.

Conversation turned to the Library Committee's new policy for the allocation of library carrels in Frost Library. The proposal had already been shared with the Faculty

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via a link from the Committee of Six minutes of April 21 (see [cover letter from the Library Committee](#) and [the proposal](#)). The Library Committee is seeking to address drawbacks to the current system, practices that have evolved without a formal policy. The prevailing feeling at present is that a carrel, once allocated, belongs to a faculty member “for life.” Under the new policy, current carrel-holders who are full professors as of July 1, 2014, and emeriti faculty will be “grandfathered,” that is allowed to continue to use their assigned carrels without term. Under the policy, in the future, study spaces, like offices, will not be provided to emeriti faculty. Each spring, the Library Committee will ask those who are occupying carrels without limit if they would be willing either to give up the carrel or to loan it to another faculty member for the next academic year, a single semester, or the summer. All other faculty members who currently occupy a carrel will be asked to vacate their carrels by August 15, 2019. These faculty members will then join the request pool under a series of new procedures. Open carrels will be divided into two categories. Group A carrels will be intended for long-term use, and Group B carrels will be for short-term use. Carrels in Group A will be reserved for tenure-track faculty members in the humanities and social sciences, and are available for five-year terms upon request. The Library Committee will try to meet as many of these requests as possible, while still reserving carrels for Group B. Carrels in that category may be assigned to regular faculty members for terms ranging from one semester or summer to two academic years. Each year, those requesting carrels will be asked to send an application to the Library Committee. The committee will consider all requests and forward recommendations to the Office of the Dean of the Faculty. Final decisions about the allocation of carrels will be made by the Dean’s office. Professor Corrales commented that it might be helpful to offer incentives to faculty to encourage them to apply for carrels in Category B. Perhaps there could also be some kind of disincentive for applying too frequently for carrels in Category A. Professor Kingston said that some carrels are currently under-used because faculty members have an incentive to keep their carrels in case of a future need. Because the new system reduces the incentive to hoard carrels, there may not be a shortage of carrels under the new system. Professor Harms applauded the new system as a way to start changing attitudes about carrels. Professor Schneider said that he has no objection to the new system, as outlined, but raised the topic of considering and formalizing the benefits that the College extends to emeriti. He commented that, at present, emeriti are provided with study spaces, offices, and/or other services by means that are largely ad hoc and as a result, inequities may occur.

On the occasion of his last Committee of Six meeting as Dean, and on behalf of the Committee of Six, Professor Harms read the following citation for Dean Call and asked that it be included in the minutes of the meeting:

The Committee of Six, and the faculty we represent, have been immeasurably well served by Dean Call. His care for and care of not only the corps of the faculty but for and of each individual faculty member has been the hallmark of his tenure. Dean Call has worked with superhuman patience and limitless generosity to support the work that we do, to pave the road to excellence and to remove obstacles along that road.

Dean Call has affectionately been called, and with typical good humor has referred to himself as the “Dean of Free Lunch” and the “Dean of Yes”—and

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we can think of no more appropriate recognition. All that *Free Lunch* and *Yes* has, over the past decade, produced a remarkable Faculty that is international, multiracial, socioeconomically diverse, cross-disciplinary, innovative, and academically accomplished. Dean Call has given Amherst this most-far reaching legacy that is at the very heart of the College's mission, and in so doing has preserved Amherst's leadership position in American education for decades to come. The Committee of Six, and the Faculty we come from, is often contentious, occasionally insane, but always aware of our great good fortune to do our work under his administration—the Committee of Six, on behalf of the Faculty, is grateful to Dean Call and happy to welcome Professor Call back to the fold.

The meeting concluded with the members expressing their appreciation to the Dean.
The meeting adjourned at 6:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory S. Call
Dean of the Faculty