

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The meeting adjourned at 5:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty