

Amended November 22, 2013

The eighth 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, November 4, 2013. Present were Professors Corrales, Kingston, Harms, Lyle McGeoch, Miller, and Schneider, Dean Call, Provost Uvin, and Assistant Dean Tobin, Recorder.

Under "Announcements from the President," President Martin discussed a personnel matter with the Committee. Conversation then turned to the "Grab-N-Go" program. Following up on the concerns expressed by some members, Dean Call reported back on what he had learned from Jim Brassord, Director of Facilities and Associate Treasurer for Campus Services, about the possibility of restoring Schwemm's to its original service configuration and moving the "Grab-N-Go" to another location. Mr. Brassord noted that students appreciate the convenience of the new program; he reported that approximately six hundred students are served each day at the "Grab-N-Go", which has revitalized Keefe Campus Center. Many students "grab" a meal but don't "go." Many tend to linger in Keefe, which has had a positive impact on the social dynamic there, Mr. Brassord commented. Students would see moving the program to another location as a significant loss, in his view.

Continuing with his summary of Mr. Brassord's comments, Dean Call said that utilization of Schwemm's for breakfast and lunch was quite low before the implementation of the "Grab-N-Go". Charlie Thompson, Director of Dining Services, estimates that no more than twenty to thirty faculty/staff had breakfast at Schwemm's on any given day. Interestingly, many faculty and staff now use "Grab-N-Go" as a convenient à la carte alternative, Mr. Brassord noted. Using Keefe for both "Grab-N-Go" and Schwemm's counter service is not possible, given the volume of traffic. Mr. Brassord said that expanded breakfast menu offerings have been added at the Frost Café, which is now open earlier (beginning at 9:00 A.M.) to address concerns expressed about the curtailed hours. Menu offerings have been expanded during the lunch period at Frost Café to include sandwiches, salads, yogurt, and side dishes, in response to feedback given last year by a couple of faculty members. Lunch activity at Frost remains slow, however. Continuing, Dean Call said that Mr. Brassord reports that locating the "Grab-N-Go" in Keefe has enabled him to efficiently redeploy Schwemm's staffing to cover this program. If the "Grab-N-Go" were to be moved to another location and counter service were to be reinstated at Schwemm's, it would become necessary to hire three new FTEs at an estimated cost of more than \$130,000 per year. Locating the "Grab-N-Go" in another location would require significant capital investment in counters, coolers, etc. That cost would be well over \$100,000. Mr. Brassord said that it would not be possible to move the program to Valentine, which would have no space to house it. Producing the volume of food offered through "Grab-N-Go" requires a major preparation operation, he noted. If the "Grab-N-Go" were not in Keefe, the food would have to be prepared in Valentine during the third shift, which would require hiring a full-time runner and keeping the Valentine kitchen open twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

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President Martin said that the evidence is clear that the “Grab-N-Go” program is filling an important need, and that it would take a significant investment to move the program. Professor McGeoch reiterated his view that the changes that have taken place in Schwemm’s have resulted in a significant loss. Professor Schneider asked why the Frost Café cannot serve the same purpose as the “old Schwemm’s.” Professor McGeoch responded that, even if the café is expanded, it would not be a substitute for a full snack bar. Professor Corrales expressed the view that the crowding and long lines that have resulted from the “Grab-N-Go” have compromised the essence of the campus center. He wondered if the organization of the program could be improved, perhaps by having additional staff and additional lines. Professor Harms agreed, suggesting that the way that the space is being used in Keefe is far from ideal. Dean Call said that he would be happy to share this feedback with Mr. Brassord.

President Martin next noted conversations that have been taking place among students about the possibility of creating a Mountain Day tradition at Amherst. Consideration is being given to launching the tradition this spring. The Committee shared its views about the prospect of having a Mountain Day, the ideal timing for it, and adjustments that would need to be made to the academic calendar and in planning by faculty in their courses. The Dean noted that this year there is a five-day reading period, three more days than had been typical for many years in the spring semester, in part because the term now ends on a Wednesday. He proposed that, if Mountain Day occurs on a Thursday, another Thursday class day could be added to the semester. Dean Call said that he has been consulting with the Registrar about making changes to the calendar to allow for a Mountain Day this year and in future years. Another option for this year would be to condense the exam schedule to make up for the lost day of class. Professor Schneider said that, in the past, colleagues at Mount Holyoke and Smith, particularly science faculty, have shared with him their frustrations about Mountain Day, including the disruption that it causes with their labs. Professor Miller agreed, stating that labs often build on one another, such that a Mountain Day could be disruptive if it affects the lab schedule. She suggested learning more about how other schools that have Mountain Days address this concern. Professor Harms expressed serious concerns about the impact that Mountain Day would have on many courses, noting in particular that course sections would be out of sync for the remainder of the semester following the loss of a day on which lab or discussion sections are held. The Dean suggested that Mountain Day should occur as late into the semester as possible, perhaps in April, to minimize the disruption. The members wondered about the motivation for having a Mountain Day. President Martin said that students have expressed the desire to have more traditions at the College. They have not yet decided what kind of Mountain Day experience that they would want - some would like to focus on hiking, others would prefer a day of community service, and

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still others have argued for an educational experience resembling last year's Day of Dialogue. They feel that it is important that the day be a surprise, as this would be part of the fun. Professor Harms questioned how well the element of surprise could be maintained if Mountain Day always occurred on a Thursday in late April.

Under "Questions from Committee members," Professor Schneider asked how and when it is possible for a faculty member to co-teach a Mellon Tutorial with a staff member, for example a librarian or a member of the Academic Technology Services (ATS) staff. The Dean said that the process has been to include the information about the co-teaching arrangement in the course proposal for the tutorial. This type of arrangement has been successful in the past, he noted. Professor Schneider asked if the Mellon Tutorials are being evaluated. Dean Call said that there is an assessment component to the grant, and that the program is going so well that the Mellon Foundation has funded a second grant (for three years), a year earlier than expected. It was noted that a faculty member can teach the class as an overload and receive an honorarium, or can teach his or her regular load, in which case the department receives the honorarium in order to hire someone to teach a class for the department.

Continuing with "Questions from Committee Members," Professor Corrales asked if members of the search committee for the new Dean of the Faculty can be nominated for the position. President Martin said this is entirely possible, and that service on the Committee does not preclude an individual from being a candidate for the position. If a member of the committee should become a candidate, he or she would need to withdraw from the committee. That person might or might not be replaced on the committee, depending on the phase of the search at the moment, President Martin commented.

Provost Uvin raised the topic of the process and structures that could be used for revamping Orientation and the role of the Orientation Committee. As background for the conversation, he informed the members that, last May, several changes to Orientation were made in response to the report of the Special Oversight Committee on Sexual Misconduct (SMOC). These changes focused on sexual misconduct and improved facilitator training. The response from students was less than enthusiastic. Provost Uvin noted that Pat O'Hara, Dean of New Students, has expressed the view that Orientation should be reconceived from the ground up. She also said that organizing this massive effort should not be the responsibility of the Dean of New Students, who has many other responsibilities and whose time and expertise can be put to better use.

The Provost informed members that he has created a small working group to consider the goals of Orientation and ways in which this program can be improved. He asked for the Committee's views on how the working group should share its ideas with the Faculty Orientation Committee, which Dean O'Hara chairs, and seek feedback from this committee. He noted that

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Dean O'Hara has announced plans to step down as the Dean of New Students at the end of this academic year. Since she will not be involved in next year's Orientation planning, Dean O'Hara has offered to give up her role as chair, if that would be preferable. The Faculty Orientation Committee has been reduced in size, the Provost noted, and now consists of seven members of the Amherst community. Dean Call expressed the view that there may not be a need at this time to change the structure of the Faculty Orientation Committee. Typically, the outgoing Dean of New Students would plan the Orientation, passing the baton to the new dean at the end of the academic year. The new dean would run the program that fall.

Continuing the discussion, Dean Call said that he could imagine that the Provost's working group could take on the task of rethinking Orientation, while having Dean O'Hara and the Faculty Orientation Committee available for comment when needed. Professor Harms expressed the view that, while it is important that there be faculty oversight of Orientation to ensure that there is substantive educational content in the program, faculty should not do the work of running Orientation. Dean O'Hara, perhaps, could continue in an oversight role this year, Professor Harms suggested. President Martin noted that Orientation, under the present structure, is apparently based to some degree on the history of participation by different groups and could be more cohesive. The President suggested that staff who have expertise in event planning and student life could plan and run Orientation, inspired by faculty members' vision of the program. In that way, much of the burden on the Dean of New Students could be removed. Professor McGeoch suggested that the Faculty Orientation Committee could go on hiatus for the most part, while the working group reimagines Orientation, perhaps acting as a sounding board for the smaller group's ideas as it proceeds with its charge. Perhaps, one recommendation might be to change the make-up of the Orientation Committee going forward. Professor McGeoch suggested that Professor O'Hara remain as the chair, with the understanding that the committee would not be responsible for planning next year's Orientation. Dean Call said that, perhaps, the Committee of Six could consider the make-up of the Faculty Orientation Committee in the spring. If changes are suggested, a motion could be brought to the Faculty, perhaps at the same time that a motion to revise the membership of several major committees to include the Provost is brought forward. Professor Corrales noted that an ad hoc committee was charged several years ago with considering issues relating to the First-Year Seminar Program, but had not been charged with running that program - a task that had been left to the First-Year Seminar Program. He wondered if this is a model that could be replicated by the bodies that will consider Orientation. Professor Harms noted that, in this case, the group that is reimagining Orientation should be the same group that runs it. President Martin noted that Jim Larimore is currently in the process of reimagining the staffing structure of the Dean of Students office and that, while this effort is under way, it would be helpful to have Pat Allen, Director of Conferences and Special Events, assist with the events planning work surrounding Orientation. Professor Kingston commented

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that, during his time on the Orientation Committee, he had felt that faculty members' time was not being used effectively, as the focus was primarily on organizational details, but that greater faculty involvement in developing an overarching vision for the program would be valuable, as such a vision was lacking.

The Committee next considered a proposal (appended via link) from the Department of Physics, forwarded by the Committee on Educational Policy, to rename the Department of Physics the Department of Physics and Astronomy. The members noted that, since the proposal would result in the elimination of the Department of Astronomy, the change actually represents a merging of two departments, rather than simply a change of departmental titles. The Dean informed the members that the intention would be that the requirements for the two majors would remain the same. The members noted that an open-rank search is currently under way for an astronomer and discussed the ways in which the merger might affect that individual and future requests for resources in this field, as well as the relationship between Amherst's astronomy major and the Five-College Department of Astronomy. The Dean commented that the Amherst hire would also be part of the Five-College department. Professor Harms said that Amherst would be poorly served by not having the teaching of astronomy appear explicitly in our catalog. She expressed the view that having "astronomy" in the title of a department, rather than just offering the major within a Department of Physics, is essential for attracting young scientists to Amherst. Noting that the Five-College Astronomy Department is central to the major at Amherst, Professor Harms asked what steps had been taken to coordinate this change with the Five-College Program. The Dean noted that a member of the Five-College Astronomy Department is working with the physics department on the search committee for the new astronomer. Professor McGeoch noted that housing the astronomer in the physics department would be beneficial to the new astronomer, particularly if the person is in a tenure-track position. This structure will enable the astronomer to have departmental colleagues at the College, not just within the Five-College Astronomy Department. Professor Harms said that she would like to have seen the rationale for the change in title articulated in the proposal. The Dean said that the argument for the change of name was made more fully in the physics department's FTE request for the astronomy position. Professor Corrales noted that having "astronomy" in the title of the department means that the physics department might feel more compelled to offer courses in astronomy and that the astronomer would not end up only offering courses in physics. Professor Miller suggested that it would be important to discuss, more generally, the process by which new majors are incorporated into existing departmental structures. The remainder of the meeting was devoted to personnel matters.

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The meeting adjourned at 6:15 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory S. Call

Dean of the Faculty