

Amended November 22, 2013

The seventh 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, October 28, 2013. Present were Professors Corrales (via Skype), Kingston, Lyle McGeoch, Miller, and Schneider, Dean Call, and Assistant Dean Tobin, Recorder. Professor Harms and Provost Uvin were absent.

Under "Announcements from the President," President Martin informed the members that she is in the process of inviting a small group of scholars who are experts in American colonial history to conduct research on Lord Jeffery Amherst and to offer an outside perspective on him as a historical figure. As the conversation about the College's mascot moves forward, this group's views and findings will be most valuable, President Martin noted. The members agreed that having these colleagues weigh in would be helpful.

Turning to the search for the next Dean of the Faculty, President Martin informed the members that, based on feedback that she has received from faculty members, it is clear that there should be an internal search for the next Dean of the Faculty. The President noted that a national search would be launched if strong internal candidates who are interested in the position of Dean do not emerge. President Martin informed the members that she has asked Professor Servos to serve as chair of a committee that will seek input from the Faculty about the nature of the position, the structure of the Office of the Dean, and the list of possible candidates. She asked for the members' suggestions about faculty who might join Professor Servos in this important work. The members then turned briefly to a personnel matter.

In preparation for the members' discussion about precedents regarding Memorial Minutes, the Dean had provided the Committee with confidential minutes of the Committee of Six that had addressed the question of whether administrative colleagues should be memorialized in this way. The members noted that, within the past five years, the Committee of Six had agreed that having Memorial Minutes for some non-faculty members of the Amherst community and not for others was problematic and potentially divisive. Rather than trying to develop criteria for deciding for whom a Memorial Minute would be appropriate, the Committee of Six had decided that these tributes should be limited to members of the Amherst Faculty. The current Committee of Six agreed with the rationale and the final decision. The Committee noted that the College should and does honor deceased members of the community in many ways other than through the creation of Memorial Minutes.

Under "Questions from Committee Members," Professor Corrales shared concerns on behalf of himself and colleagues surrounding the new "Grab-N-Go" program, which is located in Schwemm's Coffee House in the Keefe Campus Center. While recognizing the benefits of the program, he noted that a problematic consequence of locating the "Grab-N-Go" in Schwemm's has been the loss of an important venue on campus for conversations over an informal breakfast or lunch. Professor McGeoch agreed and said that he too has felt the loss of the old Schwemm's. While it was agreed that the "Grab-N-Go" is meeting an important need for the community, particularly for students who, at times, had been missing meals because they did not have enough time to dine at Valentine, some members wondered whether the program could be moved to another location. Schwemm's past operations could then be reinstated. President Martin asked the Dean to share the members' concerns with Jim Brassord, Director of Facilities and Associate

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Treasurer for Campus Services, and to report back to the Committee. Dean Call said that he would be happy to do so. Professor Kingston wondered whether this issue could perhaps be considered by the Facilities Working Group as part of the Strategic Planning effort.

Under “Announcements from the Dean,” Dean Call said that there seems to be a sense that some colleagues wish to have a Faculty Meeting on November 5, since there has not been a meeting since Labor Day. The members reviewed a draft agenda and decided that it would be informative to have Kevin Weinman, Chief Financial Officer, and Tom Parker, Dean of Admission and Financial Aid, offer reports. (It was learned later that Dean Parker would be out of town on November 5 so his report was postponed.) Professor McGeoch argued for having a meeting on November 5, noting that he agreed with the view expressed by Professor Schneider previously that the Faculty should gather to vote on proposals for new courses before pre-registration, lest faculty approval of courses become a hollow gesture. The members then voted five in favor and zero opposed to forward the Faculty Meeting agenda to the Faculty.

Before meeting with the members of the Housing Committee, the Committee of Six clarified the purpose of the conversation. The members noted that, while final decisions about the housing program are within the purview of the administration and the Board of Trustees, it would be helpful to have a sense of the Faculty’s views about this program, and how this benefit should be shaped and prioritized in relation to other identified needs. Professor Schneider noted, that, after reviewing the Committee’s minutes of previous discussions about the Housing Committee’s [proposals](#), it appears to him that the only point of significant disagreement between the Committee of Six and the Housing Committee is whether the housing program should provide incentives for faculty to live close to campus.

At 4:00 P.M., the Committee was joined by Professors Barbezat, Hanneke, and Redding, representing the Housing Committee. Professor Barbezat thanked the Committee of Six for agreeing to meet with the Housing Committee. Professor Barbezat explained that the committee had been charged with recommending a revised housing policy. The committee’s work has been informed by the efforts of K. Backus and Associates (KBA), a real estate consulting firm that was engaged to assist with the process of gathering data and to offer recommendations. Professor Barbezat noted that the areas that the Housing Committee had been asked to address included the allocation of College-owned rental units, including the amount of time this process takes; the question of rental subsidies and who should receive them; support for purchasing homes in the open market; and purchasing plans for Amherst-owned homes. Professor Barbezat commented that, while some of the changes proposed by the committee were put into effect last year, others were not. The committee would like to see any changes to the housing policy implemented as soon as possible, in order to accommodate the next cohort of new faculty.

Continuing, Professor Barbezat pointed out that it is in Amherst’s interest to own property surrounding the campus as a means of creating a physical buffer zone around the “site plan” of the College. Given that Amherst has and should retain these houses, it makes sense, he noted, to consider how best to use them in the long run. In considering the housing program, the committee feels that it is important to consider equity within and across cohorts, and factors that may be producing asymmetries. The committee stressed the importance of developing a policy that can be revised easily, as needs change. Professor Redding explained that last spring four colleagues who were eligible for College housing were turned away because of a unit shortfall. The Housing Committee commented that the problem of not having sufficient rental units to accommodate all of the Amherst faculty and administrators who qualify for rental housing is expected to worsen, as the number of new hires increases over the next few years. Research suggests that, once the surge of new hires winds down after five or six years, and these faculty

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members complete their tenure track, there will no longer be a shortage of College rental housing. The committee proposed that the subsidy be offered only during the period in which there is a greater demand for rental housing and be discontinued once the need is reduced. KBA has determined that the peak of the housing shortage will be in 2019 and that housing will return to a state of equilibrium by 2023. The Housing Committee noted that the construction of the new dorms and science center may exacerbate the College housing shortage, if the site of the Merrill apartments is used.

Professor Barbezat stressed the importance of being able to provide high quality rental housing near campus as part of recruitment efforts to hire the best possible candidates for faculty positions. The Housing Committee noted that KBA has determined that the differential between a subsidized two-bedroom College rental and the open market in Amherst is \$480.00 per month. After consultation with the Committee on Priorities and Resources (CPR), the committee is recommending that all those eligible for rental housing receive a subsidy of \$400.00 per month, and that there be no distance limit imposed for renting non-College-owned units. The committee noted that the Dean authorized a subsidy of \$300.00 a month to the four colleagues who were turned away from College housing this year. The Committee of Six, the President, and the Dean argued that a subsidy should be offered only to those who are actively turned away from the housing program, not those who choose not to participate. Professor Hanneke argued for allocating the subsidy to all faculty members who are eligible for rental housing, in order to support everyone. While some faculty may wish to rent housing to be near campus, others may find it necessary to live further away to accommodate their needs, such as the desire to be equidistant from the College and their spouse or partner's workplace, for example. These faculty should receive the same housing benefit as colleagues for whom living close to campus is preferable, the Housing Committee argued. Some members of the Committee, President Martin, and the Dean noted that giving a subsidy to everyone would amount to an income benefit. Most members, the President, and the Dean expressed the view that there is a benefit to having faculty live near campus and that the housing program should provide incentives for faculty to do so.

The Housing Committee expressed concern that some colleagues who are eligible for College housing are effectively turned away at present, because rental units are allocated so slowly and thus so late in the academic year. The committee argued that the long waiting period for College housing makes it challenging for new hires to participate in the housing program. New colleagues may have to make a decision not to make use of College housing, as a result. A major part of the problem, the committee noted, is the amount of time it takes Human Resources to determine individuals' eligibility for housing and to assign points to them, which is the underpinning of the housing system. Some of those hired in early spring are now waiting until mid- to late-June to hear about housing. The Housing Committee noted that, in addition to the administrative problems that have occurred in regard to defining eligibility through the ranking process, some faculty who are already in rental housing are unwilling to make a decision about whether they will stay in their units, a situation that makes it difficult to know which units will be available. Professor Hanneke explained that some improvements have been made and praised the work of the rental housing office, which now posts photographs and floor plans of available units. Colleagues now have three days to make a decision about their housing choice after seeing units (either online or in person). Nevertheless, beginning the process of allocating housing late in the spring is problematic, and it would be better for everyone if the process occurred earlier. President Martin agreed and said that she will review this matter and seek to make improvements.

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President Martin asked about the ranking system. Professor Hanneke explained that untenured faculty, visiting faculty, junior lecturers, and coaches who have not received senior contract status are eligible for College rental housing. Tenure-line faculty members are given priority under the system. Rental housing is assigned on the basis of a point system that is based on the number of years of service, number of children, and rank when appointed to Amherst. Professor McGeoch expressed surprise that the assignment of points was seen as such a complicated process. The Housing Committee and the Committee of Six agreed that the process by which points are assigned and the ways in which the housing policy is administered should be more transparent, and that the policy should be communicated more broadly.

Returning to the question of awarding a housing subsidy, Professor Kingston argued that one of the main purposes of the housing program is to provide an incentive for faculty to be in close proximity to the campus to make it easier for them to participate in the life of the College. Professor Barbezat expressed the view that this should not necessarily be one of the goals of the housing program. One of the program's primary goals, he said, should be to serve as a recruitment tool for new faculty, in addition, of course, to providing high quality housing to all eligible members of the Amherst community. Professor Redding expressed the view that, if a \$400.00 housing subsidy is provided to everyone, and doing so results in an exodus from College housing, the subsidy could be recalibrated or eliminated. Most faculty prefer to live near campus—and more than 80 percent do at present—so she doesn't envision that the subsidy will drive a large number of faculty away. Professor Kingston commented that it would likely be difficult to withdraw the stipend once it had been provided. The Housing Committee noted that providing the subsidy would also be an incentive for the administration to provide high quality housing for faculty because colleagues would be able to use the subsidy to opt out of the College system if they found College units to be unsatisfactory. Some members and the Dean noted that the housing provided is already of high quality.

The Housing Committee next raised the issue of changing the current policy for home purchase subsidy options. The options are now available to tenure-line faculty, junior and senior contract coaches, and certain administrators who are first-time purchasers of a house while employed by Amherst College. Professor Barbezat noted that the Housing Committee had previously suggested that eligibility should be extended to those who are purchasing a home and had not yet used a College home purchasing benefit. Members of the Housing Committee believe this change should be implemented. One of the other conditions, at present, is that the house be located within a thirty-mile radius of the center of Amherst. Professor Barbezat suggested that the thirty-mile radius restriction be reconsidered for home purchases. While some members of the Committee of Six expressed support for extending the home purchasing benefit to anyone who is eligible and had not previously used a College home purchasing benefit, most expressed the view that the thirty-mile radius is in the best interest of the College. Dean Call noted that the rental program helps faculty to decide where they wish to live and the purchase program provides support to help them to live in that area permanently. Providing incentives to live close to campus both for rentals and purchases is beneficial to the College.

The members of the Committee of Six, the President, and the Dean agreed that a desirable policy would be that those eligible to participate in the College housing program should be informed about their housing by June 1 or, if they will not receive a unit, should be informed by June 1 that they will be provided with a housing subsidy by the College. Professor Miller noted that many science faculty begin working with students in their labs in early- to mid-June. The Dean noted that, since tenure-track searches are typically completed in early spring, the first calculations for awarding housing could be done much earlier for this cohort. Professor Corrales

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expressed the view that a flat subsidy does not help with equity issues, as it would not be of equal value to everyone, depending on their resources. He wondered if the amount of the subsidy could be adjusted based on faculty members' financial need. Professor Redding commented that most tenure-track faculty members are in the same income range, and that it would be a difficult matter to assess need. The other members of the Committee of Six and the Housing Committee agreed that tying the amount of the stipend to individual financial situations would not be appropriate or workable.

As a final argument for allocating housing stipends to all those eligible to live in College housing who are turned away, not just to those who rent within a thirty-mile radius of campus, Professor Barbezat noted that neighborhoods in Amherst have changed in recent years. For those who are turned away from College housing, it can be very difficult to find suitable housing in Amherst. The open market is dominated largely by students, who have changed the face of many neighborhoods. The Committee thanked the Housing Committee, which left the meeting at 5:00 P.M.

The Committee continued its discussion of the housing policy briefly. President Martin said that steps would be taken to improve the administrative oversight of the housing program, including the process of allocating College housing, which is occurring later than it should. Professor Schneider questioned whether the home purchase options should be extended to senior administrators appointed from outside the College, since they may not have the same level of need as faculty who are making the transition from renting College housing to making a purchase. Professor Miller expressed the view that developing greater clarity about the intent of the housing policy should be the next step. She wondered which body should be responsible for doing so and whether it would be appropriate for the CPR to have a conversation about this matter. Dean Call noted that two different CPRs have discussed many of the issues raised and that there has been a difference of opinion expressed about the thirty-mile radius question, for example. Professor Schneider said that he feels that a residential college should not provide incentives for faculty to live outside of the local area.

Conversation returned briefly to the Faculty's policy on Consensual Sexual Relationships between Faculty Members and Students ([\*Faculty Handbook IV., 3.\*](#)). The members thanked Ms. Rutherford, who had joined the meeting after the departure of the Housing Committee, for drafting three potential policy options, as the members had requested. She provided a policy for each of the following: prohibiting consensual romantic and/or sexual relations between faculty members and students in cases of direct supervisory contact; discouraging consensual romantic and/or sexual relations between faculty members and students, but allowing these relationships if they are disclosed to the Dean; and prohibiting these relationships completely. The Committee first considered whether there is a need to replace the current policy. Professor McGeoch suggested that perhaps the College's values in regard to these issues could be expressed more clearly and eloquently if the current policy is amended. It was noted that the current policy strongly discourages consensual relationships between faculty and students and requires faculty to remove themselves from supervisory roles with students that they have had (or are having) relationships with; however, it does not require reporting of such relationships to the Dean of the Faculty. Professor Schneider commented that the most important thing is to have a process in place to address these relationships when it becomes known that they are taking place, and to make sure there is sufficient flexibility in the policy to allow for a range of solutions, depending on the circumstances and needs. There are many reasons why the College might discourage or prohibit these relationships, but moving into the realm of specifics might not be the best approach, he noted. Professor Corrales suggested that, if it were decided to bring this matter to

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the floor of the faculty for discussion, then two draft policies ought to be presented: the one that calls for an absolute prohibition and the one that does not call for a prohibition but requires disclosure to the Dean. Professor Corrales also agreed with other members' caution that having a structured conversation on the floor of the Faculty about this sensitive matter might prove unproductive. Since Amherst's current policy resembles that of most peer schools, and because there is no pressing requirement or need to change it at this time, the Committee decided that more time and thought should be given to this issue.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory S. Call  
Dean of the Faculty