MINUTES
COLBY COLLEGE
TASK FORCE ON SHARED GOVERNANCE
Monday, March 9, 2015
Diamond Conference Room 146; Waterville, Maine

Staff in Attendance: Denise Brusewitz, Michael Burke, Lisa McDaniels, Paul Greenwood, Adam Howard, Lori Kletzer, Lisa McDaniels, Andy McGadney, Sandy Maisel, Bruce Maxwell, Betty Sasaki, Winifred Tate

Guest: Mark Reed, Administrative Secretary to Andy McGadney

Sandy Maisel opened the meeting at 4:03 p.m.

There were no minutes reviewed. Mark Reed was introduced by Sandy as support staff for Andy McGadney to take meeting notes on Andy’s behalf. It was agreed unanimously that the sole agenda item would be review of the draft document (aka “Straw Proposal”)

Sandy began the discussion by posing the question: what is role of faculty in college governance? Lori replied by referring to the first paragraph of the document to suggest that the task force consider what is the area of authority [purview] of the faculty in addition to curriculum and distribution. She articulated the fact that the bylaws clearly dictate that the Board has ultimate authority and that any changes to the bylaws would need approval by the Board of Trustees.

The discussion continued by exploring in more detail additional areas of purview by the faculty. Sandy posited that faculty should be involved with decisions that affect sense of intellectual community and Winifred expressed that governance concerning intellectual community encompasses authority but also consultation, informing, influencing characteristics.

An exploration of the definition of intellectual community ensued culminating in the broad view that the sense of intellectual community is more than curriculum and distribution requirements. Paul added that the metaphor was like ripples on a pond - start with the middle of the pond (issues central to the faculty sense of intellectual community) and move out. Bruce added that it could be considered as concentric circles of influence, with curriculum and distribution requirements at the center.

It was noted that faculty does not grant degrees. Andy confirmed that degrees are conferred by the Board upon the recommendation by the President and faculty. The conversation resumed further questions on the faculty’s role in other areas of educational experience. Adam suggested that we consider areas such as civic engagement, life outside of the classroom, etc.

Sandy expressed that the discussion be careful to distinguish between authority and system of governance themes. He clarified by stating that the intent of the task force is to define faculty role,
not to eschew ultimate Board responsibility. Sandy asked the task force to consider: how do we get the faculty’s attention to voice concern over areas on which the faculty has no authority (for example, Admissions defining POSSE requirements which the faculty has no authority over but does create impact). He likened the relationship of faculty to Board similar to the relationship of a medical staff at a hospital to its Board.

The topic of discussion then re-centered on who chairs (or ought to chair) the faculty meeting. It was suggested that the concern is not as central as is by whom and how agenda items are added and addressed during the meeting, because in the past at Colby the President leading the meeting has lead to the President dominating the discussion.

Betty commented from the Locus of Authority book identified the need to provide incentive to get faculty motivated to participate. Sandy pointed out that the faculty meeting agenda could be modified so that 1) once per year deal with “maintenance” voting issues 2) as needed “important” items 3) other faculty meetings = other conversation topics. Andy suggested that the role of the task force should consider development of an executive committee or selection of faculty members to participate with the President and Provost in the establishment of the faculty meeting agenda. Paul added that some sort of ad hoc process will necessarily occur to express topics even if the specific mechanism varies.

As a possible cause for lack of participation Sandy referenced lack of voting in American elections. Does non-voting imply that the status quo is good or a perception that nothing is going to change and voters are too frustrated to both voting?

We discussed the time when the Jan Plan was reviewed, and the AAC and the faculty eventually concluded that no fundamental change was needed. Bruce replied that the Jan Plan review led to administrative changes that had impact but were not voted on by the faculty. Also, for meetings to be useful, he added that they must be specific not general. For instance, why were the meetings about the proposed new buildings organized as separate meetings, not part of faculty meeting? Lori explained that the intent was to set aside a dedicated hour of time and this intent was not feasible during a faculty meeting unless very little other business on the agenda. It was agreed upon that this would be a good conversation for future discussion.

Sandy Maisel adjourned the meeting at 5:00 p.m.