Minutes of the Faculty Meeting  
May 4, 2016

I. Report from the Secretary.

The collective silence was taken as an imprimatur, so the minutes of the April meeting were accepted.

II. Reports from College Officers

A. The President’s Report – President Greene opened his report by saying that he had nothing to report, so his report would not take long. He thanked the faculty who have been meeting with the candidates for Dean of the College. A decision is imminent. He then acknowledged this year’s retirees – Deb Aitken (Athletics, since 1985); Russ Cole (Environmental Studies, 1977), Susan Cole (Libraries, 1978); Natalie Harris (English, 1978); Cal Mackenzie (Government, 1978); David Mills (English, 1984); and Mark Serdjenian (Athletics, 1976) – and remarked on their many years of service. (Although “many years” hardly does justice to a total that, by the reckoning of this lapsed mathematics major, is more than a quarter of a millennium.)

B. Provost’s Report – Provost Lori Kletzer reported that she too had nothing to report, albeit a slightly lengthier nothing which would include some expressions of gratitude and some reminders. She thanked and congratulated the faculty for their efforts that culminated in the impressive displays of scholarship at CLAS, and gave special thanks to the CLAS steering committee for orchestrating that showcase: Kim Besio, Melissa Glenn, Julie Millard, Philip Nyhus, Travis Reynolds, and Jim Sloat. It is hard to imagine that committee negotiating the logistical labyrinth without recourse to their secret weapon: Sloat’s 24/7/365 dedication fueled by his near-delusional optimism (although there is some controversy about the “near”).

The reminders concerned the upcoming faculty retreat on Thursday, May 19; the survey from the Task Force on the all-college curricular requirements (the results of which will be used to shape morning discussions at the retreat); the Library Planning Group’s upcoming open sessions; and the May 20 faculty meeting, scheduled for 9:00 a.m. to vote the degrees.

Finally, Kletzer expressed immense gratitude, not for the first time and not for the last time, to the Senior Associate Provost and Dean of Faculty. “There are many things you can say about Paul Greenwood,” she began, followed by a pause inappropriately long enough to let faculty imaginations go to work. Noting that her 6 years as Provost included Paul’s 5 years, there is “little evidence I know how to do my job,” a disclaimer immediately belied by her recognition of Paul’s “intelligence, capacity, judgment, wisdom, respect, and unbelievable well of humor.”

III. Old Business
Karen Kusiak, representing the Athletics Advisory Committee, reintroduced the motion from last month to eliminate the first “3” in the 3-year old “3-3-16” policy. She pointed out that Colby is the only school in NESCAC with these limits – or with a faculty Athletics Advisory Committee (distinctions applauded by Cheryl Townsend Gilkes). There being no discussion, the question was called. The motion PASSED by a sizable majority, with 9 or 10 negative votes and perhaps half a dozen abstentions.

IV. New Business

On behalf of AAC, Greenwood then brought two motions before the faculty on the issue of Independent Studies. The first, a “sense of the faculty” motion simply hoped to formalize our assumed guidelines concerning the workload, meeting times, and credit hour allocations for Independent Studies. At present, some departments have no specifications at all. The second motion proposed a ban on Independent Studies for first-year students in their first semester at Colby. As a policy issue, the second motion could not be acted upon at this meeting.

There was considerable discussion, begun by Patrice Franko who asked about internships, particularly 1-credit internships. Greenwood said they are not counted as Independents, but the subject could be included in the September discussion. To Marilyn Pukkila’s inquiry about how many first-years currently take this option and on what topics, Greenwood answered, “very few”, which Beth Schiller could corroborate: the number is less than ten for the last few years, and that includes some CAPS students getting Independent credits in the fall semester for work done in the summer. Only anecdotal information about topics was currently available. Judy Stone, Jeff Katz, and Laurie Osborne asked about the impact of this for Presidential Scholars, CARA students, and CAPS students, respectively: in each case, the opportunities for independent research and scholarly activity were integral parts of the package attracting them to Colby. Greenwood noted that much of their first-year activity would be as paid research and lab assistants rather than as Independent Studies for academic credit hours. Where, Jan Holly asked, would these statements end up? The sense of the faculty motion could be included in the faculty handbook. Cheryl Townsend Gilkes asked about students who come with significant advanced placement or sufficient experience in a field to justify Independent Studies right away. Greenwood allowed that we could allow exceptions.

Dan Cohen then inquired – incisively and insightfully – about whether the term “first-year” was really intended to mean first-years, as that term is currently defined, thus including transfers entering as sophomores or juniors (as opposed to the older use for “the students formerly known as freshmen”). Greenwood clarified: “first-year students” did not in fact mean all first-year students. Marta Ameri followed up with a similarly analytic question about students whose first semester was in a Global Entry Semester: Does the “first semester at Colby” refer to their first semester as Colby students or their first semester on Mayflower Hill, which would be their second semester as Colby students? Greenwood thought the policy would not
affect them. Leo Livshitz also wanted clarification about several terms in the proposed sense of the faculty motion, including “product” and “regular meetings”, as well as how we are to gauge the hours that a student spends on an Independent Study. Greenwood explained that the reference to products and regular meetings was to encourage faculty and students to negotiate the terms and expectations of the project at the outset. The problem of measuring student hours spent outside of the regular meetings is problematic, but no more so than for regular classes. He counseled the faculty to “Use your best professional judgment” (although perhaps as an example from his “unbelievable well of humor”). Mark Tappan then asked whether the issue of student workloads outside of classes was a topic of discussion in the AAC. Yes, Greenwood acknowledged, but as a basis for guidelines. There is too much variation from department to department, and even within departments, to consider any sort of 1-size-fits-all template. Ameri concurred, adding that the AAC wanted flexibility. Livshitz wondered whether we might be heading to some sort of application process, complete with too many boxes to check off, because what was being offered was flexible to the point of vacuity. What we have now, Greenwood admitted, might qualify for that description: there is little or no oversight. Chairs might not even be aware of all the Independent Studies in their programs and departments. Kletzer commended this discussion as a potential basis for conversations between faculty members and students before any independent project, as well as for conversations within departments on the subject.

V. Committee Reports

No committees reported.

VI. Announcements

Bevin Engman announced the opening of the Senior Art Show on Thursday, Cinco de Mayo, from 4:30-6:30.

Addendum

Maisel moved we adjourn.

Serenely submitted,
Dan Cohen
Faculty Secretary
May, 4, 2016