Minutes of the Faculty Meeting
April 13, 2016

I. Colby Emergency Response

In a departure from the printed agenda, the meeting opened with a This-is-who-we-are-and-what-we-do presentation from Lily Landry '16 and Peter Wirth '17, representing the Colby Emergency Response team. CER is a student-run, completely volunteer organization that offers its services throughout the school year to students, faculty, staff, and visitors to the Colby campus. There are 25-30 Maine-licensed EMT on their roster working under Health Center supervision. Because their services are available 24/7, it is possible that a student who is on call could be called out of class in an emergency. Last year, over 120 calls were answered. Tom Shattuck asked when we should call 5911, for CER, rather than 911. The message for students is to treat 5911 as the first option.

Ia. Report of the Secretary.

There was a protest registered concerning the Praeteritio in the previous minutes (“Isn’t that technically an example of Occultatio?”). After due deliberation (and some scholarly argumentum ad vericundiam), the objection was overruled. With the correction of one wording error, the minutes were accepted.

II. Reports from College Officers

A. The President’s Report – Noting that this is a very busy time of year, President Greene expressed great appreciation and gratitude for the efforts on behalf of a number of special events on campus. Debra Spark was lauded for sponsoring Richard Forde’s reading; Philip Nyhus, Kerill O’Neill, and Dan O’Shea were applauded for the recently concluded Conservation Conference; and plaudits went out to the Diversity Task Force. Finally, the Football and Women’s Hockey Teams were thanked for their volunteer ground work.

Greene then offered previews of the upcoming meeting of the Board of Trustees:

- Because we have an ambitious agenda in the next few years, planning for a capital campaign will be a major part of the discussions. A campaign consultant has been engaged, and it is hoped that the Board will move into the early, quiet phase of a campaign.

- In conjunction with the Board Meeting, there will be a dinner on Thursday with presentations on biological discovery and innovation by Edison Liu from the Jackson Laboratory and Graham Shimmield from the Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences, with Andrea Tilden moderating; Neil Gross will speak at lunch on Friday on academics’ politics; there will be a Women’s Leadership Panel Friday afternoon;
and the Friday night dinner will honor retiring Trustees Causey, Uchida, and Goldfarb.

- This will be Bob Diamond’s final meeting as Board Chair. Eric Rosengren will be formally elected as his successor.
- Also slotted for discussion are the design and expansion of Grossman Hall and the Career Center, and the development plans for a boutique hotel on Main Street in Waterville.

The preliminary fundraising figures for FY 2015-16 are almost staggering: with more than a month left in the fiscal year, over $50 million dollars has already been raised. This puts us more in line with the amounts raised by peer institutions – and more than double our established levels from recent years. The challenge now is to sustain and advance from this impressive level, rather than have it be a temporary spike, but props have to go to Dan Lugo for this quantum leap forward.

B. Dean Of Students’ Report –

Similarly stunning strides were reported by Admissions: The admit-rate this year fell to 17.5%, down from 28% just two years ago and an all-time low for Colby. We had been significantly off the recent NESCAC average, but this positions Colby very well vis à vis our peers. The vastly larger pool of applicants has made it possible for us to accept a broader, more diverse, and more capable set of students. Those students, naturally, have a correspondingly broader set of options of their own, so more work will be required to attract them to Colby. The outlook is very promising for the near future: in 2014, we had 10,800 inquiries from prospective applicants; in 2015, that figure was about 16,000; so far this year it is about 45,000! To echo what was just said, the challenge now is to sustain and advance from this impressive level, rather than have it be a temporary spike, but props have to go to Matt Proto for this quantum leap forward.

C. The Provost’s Report – Lori Kletzer announced that the deal has been closed: Carol Hurney has accepted our offer to become the founding director of the new Center for Teaching and Learning and will begin in the position this summer. The process may have been slow, but the due deliberation lets us build on a deep foundation. Thanks to all who contributed along the way. Kletzer also gave a save-the-date heads-up for the upcoming Faculty Retreat on Thursday, May 19th (and possibly the evening of the 18th). One item that will be on the agenda will be information gathering discussions by the task force on distribution requirements. The faculty response to the COACHE survey is already at 84%, but the survey closes on Sunday. Those who have not yet responded are urged to do so. On May 5, Gensler and the Library Planning Group will share the results of their survey of the community.

The Provost then opened a discussion on the topic of advanced degrees. The motivation for thinking about this is how it relates to our goal of providing our students with the richest set of opportunities and enabling them to take advantage of those opportunities. Clearly, graduate study should count among those opportunities but there is a dissonance between the quality of our students and the
percentage that choose to pursue and attain higher degrees. Colby currently ranks 81st in the nation in terms of that percentage. There are two caveats that need to attend that figure: first, it includes research universities as well as more comparable liberal arts institutions; and second, it is a “lagging indicator” which could well change in response to changes in admissions and selectivity. But even when interpretation of the data is controlled for those factors (the innumerable charts comprising the voluminous data set from which these observations and conclusions are drawn will all be posted on the Provost’s webpage), Colby still is not where we might be expected to be. Is this even something that should be a concern and a priority target for change? The data and the comments that are offered here are meant to be taken as an opening “kickoff conversation” to at least put the topic on our collective radar.

III. Old Business

No incomplete items inhabited the itinerary.

IV. New Business

Karen Kusiak, on behalf of the Athletics Advisory Committee, introduced a motion to modify the rules governing the allowable hours for sports team practices. In 2013, the faculty voted in a change from the old 2-hours-per-day rule to the current, more flexible “3-3-16” rule (which is still well within the guidelines for NCAA Division III programs). Our experience with the new regimen is that greater flexibility is still needed. The proposal, developed in consultation with Athletics Director Tim Wheaton, calls for a removal of the 3-hours-a-day limit, while retaining the cumulative 16-hours-a-week limit and continuing to count competitions as 3-hour units. This would accommodate those teams that would benefit from an occasional longer practice session (e.g., baseball simulating double-headers or the ski team travelling to practices). Raffael Scheck asked whether this would have undue effects on Friday classes. Wheaton responded that Friday would probably be the least affected day because Friday practices tend to be light in advance of Saturday games. Whitney King’s question about training and preparation times was met with a similar response: the net effect would be minimal. Gary Green asked whether this would impact the “Zone” from 4:00-7:00 pm. Again, there should be no significant effect. This would not increase the time students spent on athletic activities but allow for some as-needed redistribution of already allocated time.

Because this qualifies as a policy change, it will have to lie over until the first meeting in May before it becomes actionable.

Sandy Maisel brought a “housekeeping motion” from the Task Force on Shared Governance. The wording of the motions recently passed by the faculty inadvertently eliminated 4 positions for student representatives on the I.T. Committee. By unanimous consent of the faculty, a vote on the motion to restore those positions was permitted, and the motion itself subsequently passed, also without objection.
Cheryl Townsend Gilkes proposed a motion calling on the Dean of Students and the Office of Campus Life to CEASE AND DESIST IMMEDIATELY from its current room draw which gives students one-minute windows of time to make their choices, or else lose their place in the queue. Because those windows occur throughout the day, including in the middle of class, they have interfered with students’ participation in what ought to be their primary activity – education – making Gilkes so angry, that (by her own report) she cussed! General applause followed (to the motion itself, it is hoped, rather than the report of Gilkes cussing). Stacey Sherriff asked for the provenance of the current 1-minute policy. Paul Greenwood, tactfully avoiding any assignment of blame, said that he has spoken with Campus Life and has received assurances that it was a mistake and will not happen again. Kletzer noted that this morning’s problems with the server undoubtedly exacerbated the problem. Stewart Stokes asked that room draw not be moved to the Zone, for athletes’ sake; and Lydia Moland reminded us that some of us also teach in the 7:00-10:00 p.m. slot. Patrice Franko, to enthusiastic approval and amusement, recommended moving it to Doghead weekend. With hopes that some accommodation will be reached, the motion was overwhelmingly approved.

V. Committee Reports

Michael Donihue, reporting for the Committee on Mission and Priorities, took the faculty on a tour of its website. It includes a compilation of items in connection with “Investing in the intellectual and creative capacities of the faculty” as well as summaries of past faculty retreats, links for updates on various projects, and links to communicate comments, questions, and concerns. Funds are available for intra-faculty collaborative projects – research or teaching – so there is a wiki site to facilitate finding collaborators. Proposals are encouraged.

VI. Announcements

Jim Sloat encouraged faculty to encourage their students to participate in CLAS later this month. With the scheduled events slanted towards senior projects, this encouragement is especially important for younger students. Shalini LeGall announced a Mellon-sponsored workshop on incorporating the resources of the Art Museum into the classroom. The workshop will be held jointly with the Bowdoin museum, at the Bowdoin museum on June 1. Faculty are encouraged to attend.

With all that encouragement, Maisel moved we adjourn.

Submitted in the throes of a vernal delusion,
Dan Cohen
Faculty Secretary
April 13, 2016