Minutes of the Faculty Meeting  
February 10, 2016

I. Report from the Secretary.

After an emendation necessitated by secretarial distortion in the original posting, the minutes from the January meeting were accepted.

II. Reports from College Officers

The President’s Report.

1. President Greene congratulated Tariq Ahmad (Biology), Jen Coane (Psychology), Annie Kloppenberg (Theater and Dance), Keith Peterson (Philosophy), Winifred Tate (Anthropology), and Stephanie Taylor (Computer Science), all of whom will be promoted to Associate Professor with tenure effective September 1, 2016. A rousing and lengthy round of applause ensued.

2. Similar response also followed Greene’s announcement that Jim Fleming and Judy Stone have been awarded named professorships.

3. Greene then commended Jim Terhune’s important contributions to Colby for the past decade, and thanked him for his dedicated service. Terhune did not actually have to die to earn this eulogy, and will continue as a vice president for strategic initiatives when his tenure as the vice president for student affairs and dean of students ends in June 2016.

4. The President’s final remarks concerned diversity in the Colby community. Faculty are invited to a dinner in Dana dining hall on Monday February 15 to continue the conversation on what kind of community we want to be. At 14%, Colby has the smallest percent of faculty of color in NESCAC with very little recent change. In contrast, there has been some significant movement in the composition of the student body: the percentage of students of color in the early decision admits reached 26% (so far), up from the 20% or so of recent years – meaning that there are more students of color in just the early decision cohort of next year’s entering class than in the entirety of this year’s entering class. The movement among staff has been incremental – “baby steps” – but it is on the radar and those steps are in the right direction.

III. Old Business

With Provost Lori Kletzer presiding and Senior Associate Provost Paul Greenwood facilitating, the faculty turned to the report of the Task Force on Shared Governance. The report reflected months-long efforts of the Task Force – Winifred Tate, Stewart Stokes, Betty Sasaki, Andy McGadney, Lisa McDaniels, Bruce Maxwell, Sandy Maisel (chair), Adam Howard, Paul Greenwood, Michael Burke, Denise Bruesewitz, and Lori Kletzer – which included a series of open meetings with
interested constituencies. The actionable part for this meeting consisted of a set of eight motions. Having been formally introduced originally at the December 2015 meeting, followed by preliminary discussions in January, they are now placed before faculty for action seriatim.

With the floor open for discussion of the first motion, Bill Sullivan noted its reference to the Steering Committee, an entity whose existence depended on the passage of the fifth motion. Would passing the first motion implicitly endorse that part of the fifth? We shouldn’t discuss the first first: we should Take the Fifth instead. Maple Rasza rose to thank the Task Force for its efforts and provide an historical context by re-reading the preface to the motion from the April 2014 meeting that resulted in the Task Force. Paul Josephson asked what happened to late suggestions from and since the January meeting. Kletzer answered that his proposed amendment, relevant to the fifth motion, and Stone’s proposal, relevant to the fourth, would be given priority consideration when the relevant motions came up. Stone commented that it was interesting we had two months to review the procedural elements rather than the policy content. Stone also argued against motion 1: setting the agenda for faculty meetings by calling for divisional meetings followed by Steering Committee and Divisions Chairs meetings with the President hardly streamlines things or facilitates involvement; moreover, committee reports back to the faculty are neither reliable nor timely. What problem are we trying to solve by this? Maisel answered that this would provide a structured way for faculty to put things on the agenda, that it would use the existing meetings between Division Chairs and the President, and that it does not preclude any of the other existing mechanisms for introducing motions. Timely and reliable reporting from committees is a desideratum that we all share. Elizabeth Leonard also argued against motion 1 on the grounds that it does not capture the sense of the original impetus for action: the issue is not just committees and reports but about how things get decided, who gets to decide, and participatory democracy in governance. The Steering Committee has the potential to be more of a frightening concentration of power than an empowering mechanism. Greenwood replied that nothing here requires that items must go through the Steering Committee, so the Steering Committee would act as a gateway rather than the gatekeeper to the agenda. Laura Saltz, with Parliamentarian Joe Reisert’s input, moved that we address motion 5 first, a motion that passed without objection (but 2 abstentions).

The discussion of motion 5 opened, as promised, with Josephson introducing an amendment: that the Library Committee retain its current composition. Greenwood provided the motivation for the Task Force’s proposed changes, viz., that greater input from librarians and IT would be helpful, adding that while the proportion of teaching faculty on the committee would change slightly, the absolute number would actually increase by one. Josephson replied that this is listed as a committee that “serves as a forum for faculty and students” and its members are fully capable of inviting others with more expertise on relevant questions as appropriate. Clem Guthro spoke against the amendment because input from the Director of IT will become increasing critical going forward. Maxwell worried whether the faculty’s voice could be diluted if it is not explicitly stated that faculty members chair these committees. Leonard connected this to larger concerns,
beyond either this amendment or motion, about the roles different types of faculty
get to play on committees. The vote on Josephson’s amendment to motion 5 failed,
with (approximately) 20 votes in favor, 10 abstentions, and the remaining majority
opposed.

Sullivan thanked the Task Force for its work, but argued that many
committees were a waste of faculty time. Since going through the committees one by
one would be inordinately time-consuming, he urged a No vote on motion 5.
Leonard worried about the faculty representation to the Board of Trustees, but
Kletzer deferred that discussion to motion 6. Patrice Franko spoke in favor of
motion 5, saying that service is a choice and this motion puts it squarely on faculty
laps by giving even junior faculty a seat at the table. Saltz returned to the topic of the
Steering Committee, noting that Division Chairs are not compensated, effectively
putting those positions beyond the reach of many faculty, thereby thwarting the
ideal of a more direct, universally participatory democracy. Greenwood responded
that the Steering Committee actually levels the playing field because it adds
additional faculty voices to those of the Division Chairs in setting our agendas. Stone
asked whether the Steering Committee would be obligated to report on their
discussions, Greenwood endorsed that as a good idea. Kletzer reported that the Task
Force did consider the topic of Division Chair compensation for their service as the
“kitchen cabinet” (to bring food to the table to end up on the laps of the faculty?), a
role that has not really changed all that much over the years, but the Task Force
thought compensation was properly a topic for ACFPP. Maisel reminded the faculty
that all committees are supposed to produce minutes, despite the widespread
failure to do so. Confidential issues discussed among the Division Chairs are, of
course, exempted from inclusion in those reports. Mark Tappan asked for a point of
clarification to make sure that the Promotion and Tenure Committee would not be
affected by this motion. Assurances given; vote taken; Motion 5 passed with what
appeared to be about a quarter of the faculty voting in the negative.

Motion 1 returned to the floor for discussion and without much new
discussion, Motion 1 passed without much opposition but with a significant
number of abstentions.

Mary Beth Mills, while acknowledging that there are some as-yet unsettled
issues about implementation, spoke in favor of adding an IDS representative as a
10th member of the P&T Committee. Greenwood affirmed that the implementation
pathway is complex but that it is under discussion among members of IDS and
ACFPP. The motion can go into effect only after the issues are resolved. Kletzer
wondered whether we could vote on the principle, with implementation contingent
on an effective solution. Maisel answered Tappan’s question about who would
decide and how, by referring to consultations and negotiations between ACFPP and
IDS, with their resolution then coming back to the faculty as a whole. Tappan then
moved to postpone the vote on motion 2 until next faculty meeting in March, after
ACFPP and IDS get back to us. Franko offered support for voting on this now while
Fleming favored deliberating with deliberation. The motion to postpone motion 2
passed, overwhelmingly with only 4 negative votes and perhaps a dozen
abstentions.
With little discussion, the sense-of-the-faculty motion 3 passed with a single vote in opposition and around 10 abstentions.

Stone offered an amendment to motion 4 that would strike some language on expectations about serving with respect to faculty who are appointed to committees. Bob Nelson asked whether it has often happened that people who were appointed to committees declined to serve. Kletzer and Greenwood both affirmed that it has indeed happened, with Maisel emphasizing that shared governance entails shared responsibilities in addition to shared authority. Jorge Olivares testified that it had happened to him – he had been “insulted” by being asked to serve on the Faculty Lounge committee – so faculty need to be able to refuse such appointments. Sullivan concurred that there are some committees on which he would not want to have to serve. Maxwell explained that appointments were not meant to be coercive; rather they distribute the shared responsibilities of governance more widely, so I-just-don’t-feel-like-serving would not pass muster as a reason for sitting out, and they represent more opportunities for participation, especially for junior faculty. Stone spoke of the travails of serving on committees with unwilling colleagues. The amendment to motion 4 passed by a significant margin. The vote in favor of motion 4 as amended was even greater: 1 negative vote and 4 abstentions.

Motion 5 having already been discussed and passed, we turned to motion 6. Leonard asked whether the language in the motion excluded or omitted the elected Faculty Representative to the Board. Kletzer said that was not certainly not the intention, Maisel noted that they were covered in a different part of the Faculty Handbook, and Greenwood explained that their status was not being changed, so Leonard’s contribution was taken as a friendly amendment. Motion 6 passed unanimously, with one abstention.

Motion 7 and motion 8 both passed with little discussion and little opposition (no negative votes and 4 abstentions for the former, one No and 4 abstentions for the latter).

And so it came to pass that we set foot down the Eight-motion Path whose End is Suffrage (or Something Like It).

IV. New Business

Greenwood, on behalf of the Academic Affairs Committee, introduced a motion calling for the creation of a new concentration in Astrophysics within the Physics major and for the creation of a minor in Astronomy. It will lie over until the March meeting.

V. Discussion

In the wake of the previous discussions, the Provost thought to spare the exhausted faculty by postponing discussion of the Target of Opportunity Initiative to a later time.

VI. Committee Reports
Clem Guthro, reporting for the Library Committee, directed our attention to the report that had been distributed, noting that it was mostly concerned with budgetary priorities. He hoped we would be able to discuss at the March meeting.

VI. Announcements

After apologizing for the recent avalanche of emails originating from his direction, Jim Sloat announced that the second candidate for Director of the new Center for Teaching and Learning would be speaking at 2:30 and available for discussion at 3:30 on Thursday afternoon, February 11. Faculty feedback was encouraged.

Sloat also announced summer funding opportunities for incorporating technology in the classroom. Contact Jason Parkhill with any questions.

Maisel moved we adjourn.

Dispositively submitted,
Dan Cohen
Faculty Secretary
February 10, 2016