I. Report from the Secretary.

The previous minutes were posted and unobjectionable (or ignored), so were accepted.

II. Reports from College Officers

A. The President’s Report – President Greene opened the meeting with the exciting announcement of a major Mellon Foundation grant: $800,000 for “Environmental Humanities” at Colby. It is one of the largest Mellon grants Colby has ever received. Thanks were extended to all who worked to make this happen, including Phil Nyhus, Tanya Sheehan, Margaret McFadden, and Jay Sibara (and Kerill O’Neill’s contributions should not go unmentioned). This opens up a wide range of opportunities in conjunction with Colby’s partnership with Allen Island (and the Wyeth Family).

Sheehan then took the floor to elaborate on the grant. The immediate goal is to link Humanities and Environmental Studies with three long-term goals in sight: (1) establishing Colby as a prime destination for studying humanistic aspects of environmental questions; (2) fostering collaborative work in ES that includes the Humanities; and (3) preparing Colby’s students with the perspectives they will need to take their place among the next generation of leaders on environmental issues. Being awarded this grant qualifies as “a huge win for the Humanities” (more accurately: “a HUGE win”). The key components include: course development grants for courses in the Humanities, perhaps on the model of Humanities Labs; travel grants designated for faculty – and students – to attend conferences; support for lecture series; funding for Distinguished Visiting Fellows positions; and establishing a 3-year post-doc. In addition, the grant will be used to create an annual faculty seminar on topics to be chosen by the faculty, leading to summer institutes. The hope is that these will become permanent features of the campus community beyond the 4 years of this grant, as will the new roles for the Arts and Humanities vis à vis the Social Sciences and Natural Sciences.

Greene resumed his report by lauding an astounding exhibit of the French-born Chinese artist Zao Wou-ki currently on display at the Asia Society in Manhattan. No account of the show can omit the originating efforts of Ankeney Weitz who saw what is now one of the great paintings of the retrospective hanging in the Art Museum (previously, it had been on the wall in Katherine Stubbs’ office). As the first retrospective in the U.S. to focus on Zao’s work, it is a fantastic exhibition and deserving of all the attention it has received. The show is scheduled to come to the Colby Art Museum in February.

The President then updated the faculty on recent institutional developments. The annual USNWR rankings of colleges and universities, however undue and
disproportionate their influence may be, continue to be disproportionately and unduly influential. This year, Colby came in at #12 in the rankings, the highest ever. This apparently is a couple of steps up from our median rank for the past decades – 19th (but mathematical integrity forces us to acknowledge that being in a 7-way tie for 12th place also amounts to a 7-way tie for 12th through 18th places). Greene reiterated his feeling that we should be aiming for the top ten.

The disproportionate effects of those rankings can be seen in the statistically significant changes in the profiles of the 2016 and 2020 classes (changes which reciprocate by their effect on future rankings). The mean SAT scores have risen 40 points; the percentage of entering students who rank in the top 10 percent of their graduating classes has jumped significantly, as has the percentage of students of color; meanwhile, the percentage of New England students has, by design, declined. Still, for all the undeniably impressive progress we have made recently with respect to the numbers of applicants we have attracted, the increased selectivity that has permitted, and the academically stronger and more diverse classes that have resulted, Colby still lags behind the very top tier of universities and colleges by several important metrics. Fortunately, Greene reported, Matt Proto has said that he will have it all fixed by next year. Proto remained silent (but he appeared to this observer to be calculating the possibilities of finding either a very large rock under which he might hide or an easier job somewhere else, like Mars).

Conceptual designs for the Center for the Arts, the product of Bill Rawn Architects, were put up on the screen. The Mary Low parking lot location is the site being considered, but the plans are still in development. Thanks were extended to Jon Hallstrom, Steve Wurtzler, Steve Saunders, Ann Kloppenberg, Jim Thurston, and Margaret McFadden for their help.

The plans are exciting, visionary, and... very expensive, a point that both raises the question of whether we can raise the necessary funds, and also segues very neatly to a report on the plans for a capital campaign.

The so-called "Quiet Phase" or "Leadership Phase" of a fundraising campaign typically lasts 2 years while the public phase typically lasts 5 years (which, by presidential reckoning, typically equals "7 years of hell"). Williams College is currently in a $650 million campaign, which is the largest liberal arts college campaign to date. Ours will be larger. How much larger is yet to be determined, but we already have a taste of how "exciting" presidential reckoning can be. (To this observer, Dan Lugo also appeared to be calculating the possibilities of finding a very large rock under which he might hide or an easier job somewhere else, like Mars.)

The Board of Trustees is enthusiastically (but quietly) on board with such a large campaign. A campaign of this size could have the potential to be genuinely "transformative" in many ways. However, the real world, by way of feasibility studies, throws some cold water on things. We will need to line up significantly more "outsize" donations than we have done in the past. Historically, Colby has not done at all well on this score, but there is significant untapped potential. Part of the job of tapping that potential involves identifying possible donors, but it also involves identifying college needs that will appeal to those donors. Rob Weisbrot asked about the "branding" of Colby for the campaign, and specifically about what the Library – an essential, even foundational, but perhaps not very "glamorous" need – might
expect to get out of this campaign. He was told that there will be a list of targeted needs for priority funding and the Library will indeed be on that list.

Next up was a report on the Annual Fund, where the most positive thing to say might be that there is room for improvement. We’ve been averaging around $6.5m, but that probably should be in the neighborhood of $10m. We’ve been getting a couple of gifts in excess of $100k, while Middlebury, for comparison, received 22 such gifts in FY’15. Overall, we can identify a donor base with a total giving capacity in excess of $3 billion, but realizing that potential will require patience, care, and time.

Greene’s closing point was to put the question of Colby’s size on the radar. We have discussed the desirable composition of the faculty and student bodies, but what would the ideal sizes be?

B. The Provost’s Report – After remarking, “The last two meetings are like postcards of my summer,” because of the lengthy discussions devoted to the Computational Biology, Environmental Humanities, and (upcoming) Global Colby projects, Lori Kletzer ceded her time to the Global Colby Task Force.

III. Discussion: Global Colby Task Force Report

Catherine Besteman was joined on the stage by the other members of the Global Colby Task Force to present their report. She began by listing the three issues on which the committee hoped to gain faculty responses today:

1. An institutional commitment to providing opportunities and insuring access to “global engagements” for students in the course of their study and for faculty in the course of their research (the Global Colby Guarantee).
2. Prioritizing the role of Jan Plan as a vehicle for off-campus teaching and research.
3. The possibility of a high-level administrative appointment, a “Dean of Global Engagement,” to oversee and coordinate the implementation of the program and the Task Force’s proposals.

The subsequent Q and A was somehow able to stay on topic despite the absence of any consensus as to whether we were talking about “the Colby Global Guarantee” or “the Global Colby Guarantee.”

Jim Fleming opened things by asking how the local/global balance was understood and how it informed the statement. Speaking for the Task Force, Walter Hatch acknowledged that there was some dissatisfaction about how we normally think about “the global” as concerning matters outside the U.S. Our sense of the global needs to include the U.S. and Colby.

Winifred Tate thanked the Task Force for its hard work, and asked about the implications for the curriculum and for how we have structured our departments and programs. Is the “Aspirational Statement” for public consumption or a behind-the-scenes orientation? Patrice Franko responded by acknowledging that it is going to create some tension in Global Studies in particular, but, she added, “We welcome it.” Incorporating local dimensions, for example, will efface some boundaries but she
offered assurances that Global Studies was not seeking complete curricular hegemony. Besteman added that the Statement would be public; therefore, it would create expectations; and, consequently, it would create some obligations on our part to live up to them.

Sonja Thomas pivoted to the second point: when it comes to faculty travel and research, “international” sometimes seem to mean “Europe” but it has to be more inclusive. Additional allocations will be needed to accommodate the unequal accessibility and expenses associated with doing research in other parts of the world. Travis Reynolds, responding first, said that the Task Force was well aware of the ambiguities, and that the complexities of international research involved more than just transportation expenses. Collaboration, insurance, risks, etc. all pose potentially different problems with different associated costs in different parts of the world, whether domestic, European, or elsewhere. The Task Force had not made specific proposals regarding funding. Sheehan followed up by emphasizing that the Task Force was explicitly trying to avoid the trap of thinking of some parts of the world as “more global” than others.

Sandy Maisel asked whether the aspirations in Global Colby were meant to distinguish Colby from its peers, to which Matt Proto immediately and unequivocally answered in the affirmative. No other college seems nearly as ambitious. The idea of “Come to Waterville; Connect with the World” is an appealing vision.

Rachel Isaacs raised two pertinent points, one regarding the effect of State Department warnings and international hotspots, the other regarding language requirements to insure that the experience that American students get is not primarily an “American experience.” Besteman addressed the first by reference to more nuanced systems for assessing risks, perhaps a “risk management officer”; Dean Allbritton took on the second, noting that it would be irresponsible to send more students out into the world without more advance preparation on campus. That might require changes in the curriculum on Mayflower Hill, such as larger language programs for Colby. Resources, and resource allocation, are still very open questions. Raffael Scheck asked whether Colby is already relatively distinctive because of its existing language requirement; Besteman confirmed that we are. Gary Green inquired whether Colby might establish some “Colby Centers” abroad, akin to the programs Colby used to run in South Africa and Cork, Ireland, *inter alia.* The Task Force did not explore that option very deeply, Besteman answered, instead directing its attention to the opportunities that Jan Plan offers, albeit with need for better infrastructure and support, and the possibilities for developing partnerships with other institutions.

Bruce Maxwell wondered whether the direction the discussion has taken means that we’ve moved toward in effect to just redefining “global” as simply “Not here.” Besteman agreed that there are some inconsistencies in the Task Force’s thinking, but those inconsistencies reflect the plethora of possibilities being proposed. Sahan Dissanayake asked whether international summer teaching for Colby faculty was among the possibilities being considered. Unlikely, Franko answered, although support for summer research assistants might be adapted. Veronique Plesch remarked on the danger that too much hype for an international
experience while at Colby will aggravate the already visible tendency of some students to regard it as an entitlement. Perhaps we should be emphasizing the depth of the experience to downplay the “educational tourism” aspects. Besteman said we are reviewing all aspects of off-campus study, not just language requirements and other advance coursework preparation, but also how it is presented and how it can be implemented. The palette of options gives us great leeway; its possibilities have not been exhausted.

Martha Arterberry exercised her prerogative as moderator to suggest ending the discussion, but Joe Reisert asked as a point of order what the faculty is really being asked to sign off on: What are the trade-offs? What are we promising, by voting on this? Besteman said that the understanding is that we are guaranteeing a fully-funded experience (in addition to a study abroad term) for international research. President Greene interjected that this is at present “an Aspirational Statement” not a binding guarantee. It is a guide to prioritizing future work, but also a way of defining us (and thus, incidentally, a useful tool for fund-raising). Reisert persisted: Does this mean Global Colby always jumps to the head of the queue, ahead of, say, the Library, whenever there is funding available? Maisel echoed Reisert’s original question: Are we being asked to sign off on the whole package, thereby committing us to pursue a Global Dean, big increases in our Jan Plan offerings, and the guarantee? Ideally, yes, Besteman responded. Maisel then moved that we adopt the aspirational statement and the two plans for moving forward, but that we do so explicitly as aspirations. Reisert, as faculty parliamentarian, noted that this makes it a sense of the faculty resolution, which need not lie over. The vote in favor was overwhelming, with only 3 or 4 votes in the negative and approximately a dozen abstentions.

IV. Old Business

The Academic Affairs Committee had introduced motions concerning independent policies at the last meeting, so they were now actionable. The first motion, a sense of the faculty motion affirming that the credit hours earned through independent study should reflect investments of time and energy comparable to the credit hours earned for regular coursework. The motion PASSED without dissent.

The second motion would establish as policy that first-semester students could not sign up for independent study (although, as ever, exceptions could be granted on appeal through the Administrative Committee). Elizabeth McGrath asked about the application of this policy to students entering Colby at mid-year, including Feb Freshers coming from Colby Programs in the fall. Would their options be limited, putting them at a disadvantage vis à vis their peers? Speaking for AAC, Arterberry said that the policy would not apply to January entrants from Colby programs. Isaacs then asked about students with advanced skills in, say, Hebrew language where the only regular course options are at the more introductory levels? Would students who come with skills beyond the regularly offered course have to put their studies on hold for a semester? Kletzer appealed to the petition process. Adam Howard wondered why this proposal is being brought forward now. Is it in response to a pressing problem? He has found the option of independent study this
semester for entering students to be quite valuable as advance preparation for research work next summer. What is the message we would be sending by saying that our entering students are not ready for this kind of academic activity? Kletzer explained that the policy is not a statement in regards to all possible student circumstances, merely an affirmation that independent studies are meant to be vehicles for advanced work that builds on prior coursework. Kevin Rice thought that even as a policy statement, it runs counter to the spirit of the Presidential Scholars Program. He has hired only first-year students into this program and it has worked out very well as part of his mentoring young scientists. Jeff Katz went further, saying he was “dismayed” by the motion. CAPS students come to campus in the summer before their first years and are strongly encouraged to join a research lab – to good effect! These may be exceptional students, but exceptional students should be more common and they should get more such encouragement. Laurie Osborne expressed reservations about relying on the appeals process to ameliorate matters. Would students have to appeal in the summer, before they might even be aware of that option? How quickly would such petitions be resolved? Plesch pointed out that we are speaking about very different circumstances: Presidential Scholars are special cases; independent work in some fields in the Humanities requires coursework in advance to serve as the foundation on which to build, while research in the sciences can often be fruitfully integrated into the curriculum from the beginning. Kletzer admitted that the model for the discussions in AAC was students initiating independent work to pursue their own interests rather than more directed research, as in the sciences. Reisert moved that the second recommendation be referred back to the committee for further consideration, a motion that easily PASSED.

V. Committee Reports

The Task Force on Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity (D.I.E.), consisted of co-chairs Betty Sasaki and Dan Lugo, Lisa Arellano, Chandra Bhimull, Tashia Bradley, Lyn Mikel Brown, Daphne Hernandez, Lori Kletzer, Allan LaPan-Tillson, Margaret McFadden, Barbara Moore, Chris Shorey, Jay Sibara, Jim Terhune, and Tim Wheaton, along with Tam Huyhn, administrative assistant, and Mark Tappan, consultant for the final draft. Co-chairs Sasaki and Lugo presented their report. The Task Force’s charge was to examine our current practices and policies with respect to issues connected to diversity and inclusivity in order to identify changes that would help us to effect a deep cultural change at Colby so that we could become the most fully inclusive, equitable, and vibrant intellectual community that we could be.

The Task Force met throughout the fall, dividing into four working subgroups dedicated to address issues concerning: (i) faculty and staff; (ii) the curriculum; (iii) the student experience; and (iv) campus culture. The Report includes, in an appendix, data that were collected from various offices and sources on campus. Because the Task Force was particularly concerned with community feedback, a website was set up which proved to be very helpful, garnering over 200 suggestions, recommendations, and comments. The Report includes 6 sections, a summary at the end, and a separate list of the recommendations that occur
throughout the report, for easy access, but the whole report is informed by the questions of what diversity, inclusion, and equity do and should mean to us.

Karlene Burrell-McRae emphasized that the DIE Task Force Report has been a multi-party collaborative effort, and that to succeed going forward it will have to continue in that vein. Meetings with Department Chairs, meetings with faculty, staff and students, and a survey on campus climate are all on the table in order to maximize input and participation. The work is far from complete, but perhaps with the presentation of this report things will be set in motion.

In deference to the late hour, Scott Taylor deferred the report from the Committee on Academic Honesty.

VI. Announcements

Isaacs reminded the faculty that the High Holidays are nearly upon us and that they may create issues for Jewish students with respect to missed classes or work. Some students might simply assume classes would be cancelled. She asked that we be understanding, and she offered to become involved in mediating or resolving any problems that might arise.

Lydia Moland mentioned the reception sponsored by the Center for the Arts Humanities immediately following the faculty meeting. It is part of the Center’s advance planning, specifically in seeking a theme and sponsors (at least one of whom must be in the Humanities) for the 2019-2020 academic year. Valerie Dionne and Jim Fleming were thanked for their efforts in sponsoring this year’s theme, “Revolutions.” All faculty are welcome to attend the reception, “even if it’s only because you need a drink” after this meeting.

Cheryl Townsend Gilkes invited everyone to a lecture by the historian Robin D. G. Kelley. He will speak in Ostrove Auditorium on Monday, Sept. 26 at 7:00 p.m. as part of the kick-off celebrations of the 20th Anniversary of the Pugh Center (NOT at 5:00, as it appears on the Events Calendar on the Colby web page).

Maiselmovedweadjourn.

Submitted with perhaps unpardonable but nonetheless unapologetic prolixity,

Dan Cohen
Faculty Secretary
September 23, 2016