Minutes of the Faculty Meeting  
February 8, 2017

I. Report of the Secretary.

The minutes were submitted, posted, and accepted without objection.

II. Reports from College Officers

A. The President’s Report – President Greene prefaced his remarks with a reference to the recent executive decisions, court rulings, appeals, and ongoing developments concerning immigration and travel restrictions, noting that an opportunity for further discussion is on the agenda [but not, in the event, actualized] later in the meeting.

Greene then gave his impressions and take-aways from the just concluded meeting of the Board of Trustees. First of all, congratulations go out to Samara Gunter (Economics), Tim Hubbard (Economics), Jonathan McCoy (Physics), Mouhamedoul Niang (French), and Erin Sheets (Psychology) who were awarded promotion and tenure. The announcement was met with genuine and heartfelt applause. Greene then expressed deep appreciation and gratitude to the members of the Promotion and Tenure Committee for their efforts and diligence in fulfilling the responsibilities leading up to their recommendations.

Greene also reported on impressive presentations from, among others, Tanya Sheehan from the Art Department. There were also presentations from the directors of the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities, Jane Chu and Colby President emeritus Bro Adams, respectively. Greene commented on feeling an added sense of poignancy during their stimulating conversations on Art and civic life because of how politically embattled those agencies are right now. The national political situation may be difficult for those agencies – and for the Arts and Humanities they champion – but the announcement of the latest Lunder gift to the museum makes it impossible not to be bullish about the Arts and Humanities at Colby. The new gift of over 1100 works of art, in conjunction with the establishment of the Lunder Institute for American Art, cements Colby’s place as a leading center for the Arts and Humanities.

What followed was an overview of the major priorities and agenda items for 2016-2017, including 1) academic initiatives; 2) the size of the college; 3) diversity, equity, and inclusion; 4) global strategies; 5) institutional arts strategies; 6) civic engagement and community partnership plans; 7) the student experience; 8) athletic programs and facilities; 9) Waterville initiatives; and 10) fundraising.

Several of the academic initiatives are already well under way, including the program in Computational Biology. The presentation to the Board from Bruce Maxwell, Andrea Tilden, and David Angelini demonstrated that we are establishing a leadership role for Colby among liberal arts colleges. Two new hires have already been made: Suegene Noh will join the Biology Department, doing work in genomics,
and Caitrin Eaton will join the Computer Science Department, bringing expertise in computational physiology, embedded systems, and complex systems modelling. The work of filling the third position, in Statistics, is in progress.

Similar progress has already been made in the initiatives on the Environment and Climate Change. Two hires have been made in Chemistry: Greg Drozd in physical chemistry and Karena McKinney in atmospheric chemistry. Justin Becknell has been added to the Environmental Studies program in terrestrial ecology. An additional search in Geology is in process. Further enhancing Colby’s initiatives here are Colby’s partnerships with Allen Island, Bigelow Labs, the Maine Lakes Resource Center, the incipient Buck Environment and Climate Change Lab, and, potentially, the 200 acres of Sky Lodge in Jackman.

An Arts and Innovation Center will pair with the Lunder Institute for American Art to be the twin pillars of our institutional arts strategy.

There is a lot to report on Waterville redevelopment projects. The Downtown Arts Center is still in its very early planning stages; the planning on the mixed residential and commercial project for Main Street is more advanced; the student apartments and civic engagement center is scheduled to be ready in 2018; so is the boutique hotel at the southern end of Main Street; the resurrection of 173 Main Street (“renovation” would drastically understate it) for CGI should be completed this year.

Where are we on fundraising? The working goal for a capital campaign is $750 million; the goal for the Annual Fund is to raise the annual total from around $6.5m to $10m, with a target participation rate of 50%, in order to build a sustainable culture of philanthropy. Strides forward have been made, with 14 annual commitments of over $50,000 (up from 6) and 6 over $100,000 (up from 2). New cash and cash pledges are at $77m (up from $26.7m last year); the YTD cash total is $30.1m (compared to $18.5m at this point last year). The year one goal for rolling out the capital campaign was $300m, and we are now at $268m, so despite the unprecedented size of the projected total, we are on pace to reach it.

Greene opened the floor to questions, answering Laurie Osborne’s inquiry about the parking for the new student residence planned for the northwest corner of the Concourse by referring to the new sites on Appleton Street. Bob Gastaldo asked about the recent report in The Economist and the New York Times placing Colby very near the top of the list of schools with skewed distributions of wealthy students. Greene noted that the data all antedated 2013. Comparing the class of 2013 to the class of 2020 reveals significant changes. The percentage of students receiving financial aid has increased in the interim; and where 10% of the class of 2013 were Pell Grant-eligible, that figure is 14% for the class of 2020. (Since the ranking was by the ratio of students from families in the top 1% of income to those from the lower 60%, not simply by the percent in the top category, even a small increase in the denominator will have a dramatic, outsized effect on the relative rankings. This assumes that Pell Grant eligibility figures, which are available, are a reasonable stand-in for the more precise but less accessible figures used by the Equality of Opportunity Project.) Our partnership with Questbridge has made a difference in this area. For example, it can be credited with identifying and putting
us into contact with thirty students who have already been accepted in this year’s ED pools (average family income: $35,000).

B. The Provost’s Report – Lori Kletzer opened the Provost’s report by echoing the President’s congratulations to those receiving tenure, and expressed respect, admiration, and gratitude for the dedication displayed by all the members of the Promotion and Tenure Committee.

The fruits of the governance restructuring will be in effect for the upcoming faculty elections. The new format calls for three rounds of voting over the next several months: elections for P&T, the Steering Committee, and the Humanities Division Chair will comprise the first stage; Mission and Priorities, Academic Affairs, and College Affairs come next; and all other faculty committees follow in the third round. Elections will be managed by the Provost’s office, so all nominations should be sent to Mandy Grant (sgrant@colby.edu). Nominations of colleagues need to include statements of their willingness to serve; self-nominations do not.

The new rules for P&T reflect the sense this is a shared responsibility so that all who are eligible to serve will serve, if elected. One may, with reason, still remove oneself from the ballot and excuse oneself from serving, but the Steering Committee will now review those reasons. Three categories of faculty will have *prima facie* grounds for excusal: (1) Faculty within three years of receiving tenure; (2) Faculty within two years of rotating off P&T; and (3) Faculty who have already served six or more years on the committee. Written requests for excusal must be received by the Faculty Steering committee by 5:30 on March 1. In response to Mary Beth Mills’ inquiry, the clarification was added that people in the aforementioned categories do need to request that they be excused; the presumption, however, is that all such requests will be honored whenever possible.

The revamped campus Faculty in Residence program is now accepting applications. The deadline for applications is Monday, Feb. 13.

The Library Planning Group has produced three documents: a final committee report, a dissenting report, and the slides from the Gensler Group. They are available on the Provost’s webpage. Two open sessions are scheduled for discussion: 2/13 at 4:00 p.m. (“weather permitting” should have been added; it wasn’t; the weather didn’t) and 2/15 for lunch in Diamond 122 (RSVP required). In addition, the reports will be a topic for discussion at the next faculty meeting. Thanks to the Planning Group (Minakshi Amundsen, Susan Cole, Tasha Dunn, Clem Guthro, Bob Heath, Paul Josephson, Jake Lester ’18, Lisa McDaniels, Adrianna Paliyenko, Liz Paulino ’18, Doug Terp, Indiana Thompson ’18, Rob Weisbrot, Lori Kletzer, Kelly Doran, and Jim Sloat) for their hard and respectful work, and for the honest and open process.

The practice schedules for athletics teams are posted – the winter sports teams. Regardless of whether spring ever does in fact arrive, the schedules for the spring teams will be posted on Feb. 15.

The promised child-care survey is almost ready. Working with an advisory committee, the Provost’s new ETA is soon after the end of the month.
Karlene Burrell-McRae and Michael Donihue took to the podium to provide an update on Civic Engagement. Although there is a lot happening both on and off the campus, there is neither lot of coordination nor a lot of overall direction to the various efforts. Bringing them all within the purview of the Dean of the College should help with the first; inquiries into what other colleges are doing, along with discussions with our own faculty, should help bring clarity to the second.

III. Old Business.

The Academic Affairs Committee presented the proposal for an English minor. Having been introduced previously and been held over, it was now actionable. Arne Koch respectfully objected to the language of the proposal that specifically excluded counting elective courses in foreign languages. He offered replacement wording as a friendly amendment. Mary Ellis Gibson said that the English Department was certainly not trying to communicate any negative attitudes towards other languages or their literatures. Rather, the language of the proposal was designed for advising purposes. The first paragraph lists the requirements. The original proposal called for 7 courses, and when the discussions led to reducing the number to 6, the idea was that they should all be within the department. The offending language at the bottom of the page was de trop. Kim Besio pointed out that since one of the categories for electives is “world literatures,” that limitation puts the proposal at odds with itself. Valerie Dionne noted that a course on Dante in English would be of benefit to the English Department and its majors. Elizabeth Sagaser reminded us that the English major does both allow and encourage work in other literatures. Adrianna Paliyenko added that it would be particularly unfortunate, both symbolically, when we are thinking globally, and practically, as we promote interdisciplinary perspectives, to segregate or embargo some of the full range of resources of the college. Sandy Maisel moved to defer discussion to the next meeting to allow time for a full discussion. The motion was seconded, and passed with but two abstentions.

IV. Committee Reports

Jen Yoder and Arne Koch, Faculty Representatives to the Board of Trustees, explained that they met with Andy McGadney, as well as with members of all the divisions before the recent board meeting, which they attended. They were present at two sessions of the Committee of the Whole, including a session on the Capital Campaign and Sharon Corwin’s presentation on the Museum (“amazing”). Their reports to the Board emphasized the ongoing discussions to diversify the faculty and student body, Jan Plan opportunities and costs, and some concerns about the timing of the winter Board meeting, particularly as it relates to the start of classes and the announcement of tenure decisions. Opportunities for connecting academic programs with the capital campaign, concerns about infrastructure, discussions about the size of the College, and continued efforts on diversity, equity, and inclusion were also on the agenda.
V. Discussion

The discussion portion of the meeting was deferred.

VI. Announcements

Stacey Sheriff called for proposals for Writing Enriched Curriculum grants. The deadline for proposals is March 13.

Faculty Moderator Martha Arterberry called attention to the schedule of the Noontime Faculty Forum on the reverse side of the printed agenda.

Maisel moved we adjourn.

Hibernally submitted,
Dan Cohen
Faculty Secretary
February 13, 2017