

**FACULTY MEETING MINUTES**  
**Wednesday, October 14, 2020**  
**4:00 p.m.**

I. Report of the Secretary

The minutes from the September faculty meeting were accepted as submitted.

II. Reports from College Officers

A. President Greene

Thank you for all of your hard work! We couldn't have expected the strong shape we're in at this time, and you're all responsible for that. Thank you for making it possible that we can even talk about January and Spring in person!

We've learned a lot over the past eight weeks about safety, so we're confident that we can move forward safely in January and Spring.

For safety reasons, we're going to delay the start of the January term, which will compress the Spring semester as well. We're prepared to change at a moment's notice, but so far it looks like we can be back in person.

When Colby students look at peers and siblings, they recognize more than ever the importance of in-person learning.

An executive order recently came from President regarding anti-racism education. The text of the order itself is somewhat confusing, is more political than policy, and leaves a lot of room for interpretation. I understand it to mean that you cannot use funds from a federal grant for "anti-racism training." It doesn't mean that Colby can't do this or that individual faculty can't do it. The College will continue to do this work and will protect you in your anti-racism scholarship and teaching. The order runs afoul of freedom of speech and other issues and will likely not survive court challenges.

The Secretary of Education communicated to colleges and universities about academic freedom issues related to China. The purpose of the communication was somewhat unclear, especially in relation to anti-racism statement. We're working with peer institutions to continue to exercise our academic freedom. Let us know if you have specific questions or concerns.

We can anticipate additional statements of this nature as the election approaches and perhaps beyond.

With the pending election, we're looking at whatever issues might arise on campus, especially incidents of violence. There is no reason to believe that Colby will be the

target of violence, but we are going to make sure that we're all safe. We are in conversation with all appropriate partners to ensure security.

## B. Provost McFadden

Thank you! You have made extraordinary efforts to get us to this point. Students are continuing their education in the best way possible. I know that many of you appreciate being back in the classroom as well.

I want to acknowledge the challenges of teaching in masks, the additional time it takes to accomplish basic tasks, and the balancing of work with care for family members. We've heard about these challenges from many of you and are working to address them. And, of course, there are political, race-related, and climate challenges that we face at this moment.

I know that these challenges are very real and I am so impressed and grateful for your work to provide an incredible education where everyone can do their best work. You're the big, beating, generous heart of this institution. Staff, too, have done remarkable work. It's an honor to work with all of you.

A team of scientists led by Bess Koffman in Geology has won a \$209,000 grant from the NSF's Division of Polar Programs to develop a new approach to fingerprinting atmospheric dust in ice cores using geochemical processes. This work will allow the team to understand the causes and impacts of abrupt climate changes, the stability of ice sheets, and their potential to contribute to sea level rise. The team's focus will be on the West Antarctic Ice Sheet in the last interglacial period, about 130,000 years ago. Congratulations, Bess!

Today is Russ Johnson's birthday! Thank you for all of your work.

The academic calendar for January and Spring will be coming out very soon. The current plan is that Jan Plan will start on Jan. 11 to ease travel to campus. Jan Plan will run to Feb. 3. Spring classes will start Feb. 10. There will be two short spring breaks (long weekends), one in March and one in April. Classes will end on May 12, with finals May 14-19. There will be some sort of senior week, with Baccalaureate and Commencement on schedule (whatever that means).

Jan Plan registration will take place from Oct. 19-23 and Spring semester registration will be from Nov. 16-Dec. 1.

## III. New Business (Judy Stone, moderator)

### **Motions from the Academic Affairs Committee**

Russ Johnson: The AAC is introducing four motions, one on Jan Plan and three on S/U grading policies. All are time-sensitive, so we will ask to suspend the rule that motions lie over. If anyone objects to suspending the rules, we need a 2/3 vote to suspend.

No one indicated an objection, so the rules were suspended for the four AAC motions.

Motion 1 would provide more flexibility in Jan Plan selection. There will be fewer classes available this year because we can't offer off-campus courses and some of our visiting instructors are not available. We expect fewer internship options as well despite everyone's best efforts. Some students may prefer not to spend January through May with no long break, so they may prefer to take January off. The SGA and the student members of AAC strongly endorse these motions.

Julie Millard: How does this affect transfer students?

Russ: It isn't specifically addressed in the motion.

A friendly amendment was proposed to fix this.

Motion 1, as amended:

- a) For all currently enrolled students (the classes of 2021, '22, '23, and '24) the number of January programs required for graduation shall be reduced by one.
- b) Students in the class of 2024 will not be required to complete a January program in their first year.

Martha Arterberry (AAC member): This friendly amendment is consistent with our discussions.

Natalie Zelensky: Does the motion reduce the number of credits required for graduation? No, and many Jan Plan courses are not credit-bearing anyway.

Véronique Plesch: Does this apply in future years?

It applies to all currently enrolled students, but would not affect students who start next fall.

Judy Stone: Are students able to stay on campus between January and Spring semesters?

Yes.

A vote taken on Motion 1:

140 yes, 0 no.

The motion passed.

Motion 2 would extend the of S/U declaration deadline until Oct. 30. This would allow students to make a more informed decision.

David Freidenreich: Why Oct. 30?

The AAC was concerned that faculty might not support extension to end of semester, so it proposed an earlier deadline.

Laura Saltz: Could we extend until after Nov. 3?

Jen Coane: Second.

Secretary: A motion needs to include a precise date.

Martha Arterberry: The AAC felt that extension to end of semester was warranted in the spring, but this year we assume all will stay steady in the fall and students can make an informed decision by the end of October. Changing to end of semester would affect the spirit of the current S/U system.

Lindsay Mayka: I support the idea of after the election. I don't think students have a good idea of where they'll be at the end of November. I hear what Martha says about original idea of S/U, but I believe that there are more continuities with the spring than with a normal semester. Students don't really know what to expect in November.

Jen Coane: A number of my students, both remote and in person, are struggling a lot. I don't see why we can't extend more compassion to students while upholding our standards. Lots could happen to derail students' physical and mental health.

Scott Taylor: Do students realize that it's harder to get an S than it is to pass?

David Freidenreich: I move that we amend Motion 2 to make the deadline Nov. 24, the last day of scheduled classes.

The motion to amend Motion 2 was seconded.

Raffael Scheck: I'm concerned about extending the deadline. Last semester, many students became much less involved in their coursework. I would support the original motion.

Michael Burke: Agreed.

Chris Walker: Extending the deadline makes sense given the shifting political landscape and resulting stress.

Valerie Dionne: Agreed.

Ankeney Weitz: It's possible that students will be more engaged if they know they can make the decision at the end of the semester. A deadline extension will enable them not to opt for S/U early.

Lindsay Mayka: Agreed.

A vote was taken on the amendment to Motion 2:

104 yes, 33 no.

The amendment passed.

Stacey Sheriff: Has the issue of S/U anonymity come up?

That is not addressed in the four motions brought today by the AAC.

Stacey Sheriff: Could we discuss it? This could be new business.

A vote was taken on Motion 2:

109 yes, 19 no, 8 abstain

The amendment passed.

A discussion occurred on whether we could take up the question of S/U anonymity. It would require changing the order of business from what is on the published agenda.

A vote was taken on a proposal to change the order of business to immediately consider the question of S/U anonymity.

82 yes, 36 no. (x abstain)

The motion carried with a 2/3 majority.

A motion was proposed and seconded:

For the Fall 2020 semester, faculty shall be made aware of S/U designations.

Tamar Friedman: Can't students change their mind?

Yes.

Dan Cohen: I am opposed to this motion. We would need to apply it retroactively to students who have already selected S/U. Students who select S/U deserve the same attention as everyone else, so we should not have that information during the semester.

Carol Hurney: This conversation is about the fundamental nature of feedback and learning. Students who designate S/U are no less committed to learning.

Chris Walker: Grading criteria for passing under S/U and otherwise differ, and faculty should be able to guide students accordingly.

Laura Saltz: Tamar's concern is important: students will go back and forth. We need to comment equally on all student work, but I might adapt my expectations for S/U students in order to lessen the pressure without decreasing my level of engagement with them.

Annie Kloppenberg: It hurts students to receive poor grades and it would be kinder to give them an "S" rather than the letter grade that they earned if we know they aren't pursuing it.

Lindsay Mayka: We might give different kinds of assignments/feedback to S/U students to better meet their needs. Also: faculty are also in a difficult place this semester, and allowing faculty to prioritize their efforts would be wise.

Scott Taylor: This is something that AAC should consider. Many of the arguments in favor imply a different standard for S/U than stated in our current guidelines, and this is not the context for making such a substantive decision.

Russ Johnson: The AAC did talk about this issue and chose not to suggest removing the anonymity of S/U declarations. One concern is that the process is manual and would require substantial effort from registrar's office. It would be very difficult for them to notify faculty every time a designation was made.

Secretary: As a matter of clarification, has the rule about laying over been suspended for this new motion?

No. The suspension of the rules for lying over was just for the four AAC motions.

Stacey Sheriff: I support referring this matter to AAC.

Parliamentarian (Joe Reisert): We could vote to refer, or this vote could lie over, or we could take a 2/3 vote to suspend the rules.

A motion was made to refer the anonymity of S/U designation motion to the AAC.  
The motion was approved.

Motion 3 would allow courses taken with S/U to count toward distribution requirements. This would allow broader use of the S/U option.

Kevin Rice: Would S/U count toward major requirements?  
That's a departmental policy, not a college policy for the faculty as a whole to change.

A vote was taken on Motion 3.  
81 yes, 24 no, 13 abstain.  
The motion passed.

Motion 4 states that S/U courses taken this fall would not count toward 16-credit maximum. This would allow broader use of the S/U option.

Samara Gunter: Does this mean that a student could take all courses this fall S/U? I'm not comfortable with that possibility.  
Yes, it would allow that.

A vote was taken on Motion 4.  
61 yes, 41 no, 13 abstain.  
The motion passed.

### **Motion from the Course Evaluation Committee**

Bill Sullivan:

In March 2020, the faculty passed a sense of the faculty motion endorsing a set of 12 questions to replace the existing evaluation instrument. The committee was tasked with revising the instrument and bringing it back to the faculty for a vote. We are now bringing you the language of the questions. We haven't added or removed questions, we have simply tried to improve the language and the response options.

Our process included a student focus group, and the students interpreted the questions in the way the committee hoped. Students also proposed additional questions, but we didn't pursue that in order to keep to the originally approved (in March 2020) list.

The existing instrument dates to 1997, and we've learned a lot since then about student evaluations. Best practices have changed. Our existing instrument contains lots of compound questions, its answers are not always clear, and it assigns numerical values to categorical responses so as to report averages — that's poor practice in survey design. We have fixed these issues. We also no longer ask questions that students are not qualified to answer.

This motion will lie over until the next faculty meeting.

Judy Stone: Why is this not old business?

The previous motion was a sense of the faculty, not a motion to change policy.

Mary Ellis Gibson: There are issues of implicit bias that remain notwithstanding this laudable change. Is there a way we can address those issues in the context of the present motion? Should we use data from these evaluations to assess faculty performance at all?

Bill: These matters are not the purview of the Course Evaluation Committee. I believe that the faculty should have this conversation, perhaps in the faculty retreat, but that conversation shouldn't side-track discussion of the present motion.

Kim Besio: One question uses "my learning" while others speak of "learning": could these be made consistent prior to the vote, preferably to "my learning"?

New business from the floor? None.

#### IV. Announcements

Jerzy Wieczorek: Reminder about library survey on textbook/coursebook materials. Thank you to all who have responded; if you haven't, please do so by Oct. 26. Please be in touch with any questions.

Motion to adjourn, 5:34.

Respectfully submitted,  
David Freidenreich, faculty secretary