

**FACULTY MEETING MINUTES**  
**Wednesday, February 10, 2021**  
**4:00 p.m.**

I. Report of the Secretary

Minutes from the January faculty meeting were accepted with no corrections.

II. Reports from College Officers  
A. President Greene

The Lockwood Hotel will be open as a hotel in Fall 2021. The hotel's restaurant (Front & Main) will be ready to open in March, if it is safe to do so. This will be an important addition to downtown Waterville.

The Child Care Center will probably be located in Millett House, and is expected to be available for Fall 2021. The center will serve 35-40 children, ages 0-3. We are negotiating with potential outside operators, and there is strong interest so far. Architects are conducting feasibility studies, including possibilities for Millett House renovation. It can be done, but it will require a lot of work. The goal is to begin construction in May, and then open in August/September. If the Millett building won't work, we'll find another option. More information about program content and enrollment will be available in a few months. Thank you to Margaret McFadden, Brian Clark, and to all who have helped with the process so far.

Gordon Center for Creative and Performing Arts.

We've hit a key milestone, locking down all design elements and moving toward construction documents. This is an \$80 million project. We have raised just over \$40 million so far toward a goal of roughly \$60 million in dedicated fundraising. We announced a gift yesterday and hope to announce more soon. The building will be constructed on the current Mary Low parking lot site. Thank you to all the faculty who have worked on this project. [Slide presentation depicting building and studio spaces] Site preparation and roadwork is already underway and will be completed by July. We are planning for a May groundbreaking, with completion by August 2023. We've been waiting for this for a very long time. The Gordon Center will have tremendous impact on the College, on arts-oriented departments, and on arts in Waterville.

Allen and Benner Islands.

The Wyeth family worked on these islands for a number of years. Betsy Wyeth designed the buildings. Colby faculty have used the islands for projects in many diverse fields, including genomics, ocean chemistry, creative writing, and environmental humanities. We are currently in discussion with Wyeth family and Wyeth Foundation about taking permanent control of both islands this summer, which would increase our freedom of use. This amounts to a total of 500 acres of islands off of Port Clyde. They are magical places with extraordinary structures, offering an exciting opportunity for Colby. Thank you to Whitney King for all of his work with the Wyeth Foundation and faculty users.

Update on Winter Board of Trustees meeting:

- Three new board members have been appointed: Brenda Allen, president of Lincoln University (an HBCU) brings extraordinary perspective, intelligence, and courage; Amy Walter, alumna and reporter (PBS NewsHour, Cook Political Report), was always insightful when she served on the board previously; Eric DeCosta, alumnus and GM of Baltimore Ravens, has been outspoken on issues of racial justice and brings lots of experience in leadership and organizations.
- A new ad-hoc committee on racial justice is hard at work grappling with issues of white supremacy, and racial diversity on the board. Colby's board is rare and exemplary in thinking through these issues about itself seriously.
- College's finances are strong and stable. Our endowment has passed the \$1 billion mark and stayed there. That helps support all of our programs and people. We are currently looking for a new chief investment officer. In the budget for the coming year we will have a strong merit pool, while trying to keep operating expenses flat. The highest priorities are faculty & staff salaries, childcare, and faculty recruitment.
- Summer projects: Some infrastructure projects deferred from last summer (underground steam tunnels, roofs, etc.) will be completed in summer 2021. There will also be classroom upgrades in Lovejoy and renovation work in student residences. Work will take place on the Schupf Arts Center downtown (fully funded), Streetscape project downtown (fully funded), hotel conversion, landscape projects, and conversion of Bixler Drive to a pedestrian walkway.

Annie Kloppenberg and Ankeney Weitz (faculty reps to Board of Trustees).

At its winter meeting the board discussed longer term changes to residence life, child care for faculty and staff (strong board support), and faculty and student experiences during COVID. We were struck by the genuine interest and investment of board members in the faculty experience and perspectives. Please let us know before April if you have concerns of a general nature that you would like us to bring to the board.

Planning for the Davis Institute for Artificial Intelligence.

Thank you to all faculty who worked on this proposal and engaged with Andrew Davis. Those efforts were critical to building support. We are not creating an AI department, but rather a multidisciplinary approach to machine learning open to all faculty and students. Faculty and staff with AI expertise will work with anyone interested in learning skills or conducting research. The institute will focus both on making and applying AI tools. We expect to hire six new faculty over the next year or so, to be housed in diverse departments, after we hire a director. A faculty search committee for the founding director will be established soon. There is a lot of interest in this initiative from faculty, alums, and the media. Currently, AI is housed in tech companies, defense industries, and major universities. We need a place like Colby to be in these circles to diversify control of AI and engage ethical issues. An AI summer program will bring folks from across the country to participate in the institute, work on collaborative projects, and bring this back to their campuses. If you'd like to get involved, please reach out to me. We hope to have new director and preliminary funding available next year.

Spring semester planning.

Our students are back. Since August 2020, we have conducted over 100,000 on-campus COVID tests and counting. We've learned a lot from the process. In early January there were 300,000 cases/day nationally; that is now down to 90,000/day. We brought students back for Jan Plan during the peak. Maine peaked at over 1,000/day, and that is now down to 200/day. A key lesson is that the opening week is critical. For the Spring semester student arrival, we will have a longer quarantine period post-travel. Everyone has been tested repeatedly. We received a couple of positive tests today. Antigen testing helps us test more frequently and provides a 24-hour head start on identifying someone with a communicable infection and getting them and close contacts isolated. Please remind students to maintain compliance. Our students want to stay on campus and be in the classroom. They are highly motivated.

Commencement and reunion planning.

There is essentially no chance for full in-person reunions, so we are working on alternatives of various sorts. There is no decision on Commencement yet, but our goal is to have a ceremony for seniors on campus. It is hard to imagine that we could invite families to attend in person.

Doug Terp (VP for Administration and CFO) plans to retire in June 2022. Has been a stalwart at Colby for decades. As a student, he served on the committee that banned Greek organizations and he has shown similar courage throughout his entire career. He never had a budget that wasn't balanced. People don't notice everything he does behind the scenes. This year he has done amazing work as the COVID czar.

Damon Mayrl: Do you have an update on a vaccination schedule for faculty?

There is no decision about that yet. We are in conversation with the leadership of the Maine CDC. Unless there's a major uptick in rollout, vaccination of students is unlikely until summer. Dr. Nirav Shah would love to have Colby be a site to vaccinate the community at large.

B. Provost McFadden

In the interest of time, no report.

III. New Business

Martha Aterberry, moderator

A. Motion from the Academic Affairs Committee:  
S/U Dates and Policies for Spring 2021

Russ Johnson: The AAC proposes extending the S/U deadline and relaxing restrictions on the use of S/U for required courses. We propose the same policy that was adopted

for the fall, but now applied to the spring as well. We also request to suspend the lie-over rule so that we can vote on the motion today.

There were no objections to suspending the lie-over rule for the AAC motion on Spring S/U policies.

Julie Millard: in the fall, students requested precise grades toward end of semester, and some made the mistake of going S/U and ended up with a U. Students are hurting themselves because they are acting without the input of advisors. Allowing students to make this decision themselves does them a disservice.

Raffael Scheck: I have had similar experiences, mostly with B-range students who opted for S/U rather than pursuing an A. That had significant impact on class dynamics, as students shifted their efforts toward classes where they thought they could get an A.

Annie Kloppenberg: I am strongly opposed to the motion. The fact that some departments allow S/U for major requirements but others don't skews student decision-making. Many students opted to wait and see how they were doing rather than putting in their best effort throughout. Students who are struggling, however, should get the support they need.

Mary Beth Mills: This will be a challenging semester for all of us. Russ, what is the rationale for extending the date to the end of the semester given that we're making a decision now?

Russ: For fall 2020, AAC proposed a later than normal S/U deadline, but not as late as the end-of-semester. At the October faculty meeting, the faculty amended the motion to make the deadline be the last day of classes. So AAC stuck with the same for this proposal. The current motion could be amended in the other direction now.

Mary Beth: I would happily propose such an amendment.

Martha: We can come back to that.

Charlie Orzech: Despite multiple warnings, one of my first-year advisees managed to get a U instead of a D. Students don't understand the difference between S/U and pass/fail.

Elizabeth McGrath: Student chose S/U without realizing that our department doesn't accept those courses. The situation is problematic.

Lindsay Mayka: The logic for late declaration is that situations could change late in the semester. Lots of students are going through things that we don't know, so we need to give them options. We need to adjust our expectations and extend grace. This is an equity issue.

David Freidenreich (as faculty member): These are all important issues that require further consideration. I'd like the AAC to deliberate on these matters further and bring the motion back for a vote next month.

Gwyneth Shanks (member of AAC): Student members of the AAC helped to shape the proposed policy. This is an imperfect mechanism that ensures students can navigate the current traumatic and grief-filled time.

Motion to send back to AAC (David Freidenreich, seconded by John Turner)

Veronique Plesch: We need better information. Students need better information.

Russ: In a typical (pre-pandemic) semester, there are about 150 S/U declarations. In spring 2020 there were 1800 S/U declarations. In Fall 2020 there were 554 S/U declarations.

Chris Walker: Those figures support the comments in favor of relaxing the S/U policy. There's anecdotal evidence regarding students who suffered, but most students who took this option probably benefited.

Veronique Plesch: Do we know how many students feel that they made the right choice?

Dan Cohen: The Administrative Committee is now dealing with some students who regret their S/U decision, although we can handle it. In most cases, we've allowed students to revoke S/U.

Megan Cook: In most cases, we have limited information to assess whether the decisions were good or bad. Some may have made the best choice of available options.

Josh Martin: Petitions (to the Administrative Committee) for changing S/U came from students who had a late-semester collapse because of external events. That supports a later decision deadline.

Vote on the motion to return the S/U matter to AAC.

Vote: 76 yes, 27 no. The motion carried.

B. Motion from the English Department:  
Concentration in Literature and the Environment

Mary Ellis Gibson: If you have questions about this proposal, please send them to me. I'll make sure you get an answer. The proposal reflects the success of our Environmental Humanities Mellon-funded project, tremendous student interest, independent majors, honor projects, etc. The current curriculum doesn't provide sufficient scaffolded structure

to support advanced student research in this area. The proposal creates that structure. It will establish a unique program nationwide that provides coherent shape to a burgeoning field, based on consultation across the college.

No questions at the present time (5:19 pm)

#### IV. Announcements

Ghada Gherwash, Writing Committee: Call for W1 course grants (\$3,000 for new courses), new deadline is March 10. Reach out to Stacey or myself for more info.

Sonja Thomas: Work is ongoing to establish caste as protected category in nondiscrimination policies. Colby would be the fourth institution in the nation to recognize caste, which would put us at the forefront. This is a collaborative effort. The WGSS program has organized teach-ins on caste (videos are available), and will continue to do so this spring.

Joe Reisert: The Integrated Studies Program (team-taught multi-course seminars, typically for first-years) offers fabulous teaching experiences, and is looking for contributors. There is some funding available to support adjunct teachers to replace a lost course in your home department/program. Please think about this as you plan for next year.

Motion to adjourn, 5:25 pm

Respectfully submitted,  
David Freidenreich, faculty secretary