

## **Committee on Academic Priorities (CAP) Report, 2006 – 2007**

The Committee on Academic Priorities membership for 2006-2007 remained the same as 2005-2006, with the exception of the new Faculty Council representative to CAP, Janie Vanpée (replacing Susan Etheredge) and the new Interim Associate Dean of the Faculty Susan Etheredge (replacing Debbie Cottrell):

Susan C. Bourque, Provost and Dean of the Faculty and Chair of CAP  
Ernest Benz, History  
Richard Briggs, Biological Sciences  
Alice Hearst, Government  
Jefferson Hunter, English Language and Literature  
Maureen Mahoney, Dean of the College  
Charles Staelin, Associate Provost and Dean for Academic Development  
Janie Vanpée, French Studies, Faculty Council Representative  
Doreen Weinberger, Physics

Susan Etheredge, Interim Associate Dean of the Faculty, Staff Support to CAP

Jefferson Hunter assisted the provost/chair of CAP in setting the meeting agendas for fall semester 2006 and Alice Hearst did the same for spring semester 2007.

CAP's work for 2006-2007 centered primarily on the strategic planning process. CAP also continued its work on priority items in the academic program, as defined by CAP during the 2005-2006 academic year, such as writing and quantitative skills. CAP reviewed academic staffing requests and made recommendations on these matters, participated in departmental and program reviews, and acted on a variety of policy issues. All of these activities are consistent with the mandate CAP has had since 1998: to provide both systematic and institution-wide curricular planning, to engage in the periodic review of departments and programs, and to review proposals for tenure-track and long-term faculty positions. In addition, the Committee has the responsibility to consider curricular initiatives, either the Committee's or those submitted by faculty and student groups.

### **Strategic Planning Process and the NEASC Re-Accreditation Review**

During 2006-07, CAP met regularly and often with CMP to work on substantive issues in conjunction with the strategic planning process and the NEASC re-accreditation review. The goal for the year's work was to have a draft of a strategic plan in place by spring 2007. This process was intended to fulfill the self-study requirements for the NEASC re-accreditation process, with the team visit for re-accreditation scheduled for fall 2007.

### **The Planning Process:**

CAP's fall semester 2006 planning work began with a series of roundtable discussions (convened by President Christ), organized around the 8 strategic planning directions that were identified last year and outlined in the May 2006 planning document, "Re-imagining a Liberal Arts Education" (report posted at <http://www.smith.edu/planning/background.php>):

- Strengthening essential student capacities. This is the first and overarching theme of the planning process and includes both identifying these capacities and determining how we make the curriculum accountable for them.
- Promoting a culture of research, inquiry and discovery. This includes identifying opportunities for independent work.
- Encouraging purposeful engagement with society's challenges.
- Deepening students' awareness and appreciation of other cultures and global issues. This is part of Smith's distinct identity, and we should think hard about how to maintain this strength.
- Preparing women for rewarding lives in a rapidly changing world.
- Supporting and promoting environmental sustainability.
- Opening doors to women of promise. This includes making sure our financial underpinnings enable us to sustain these efforts and also making sure students succeed when they come.
- Extending Smith's impact on the world.

Three principles informed the planning process for all the above directions:

- Specific and measurable commitments to diversity.
- Connections between the curriculum and the co-curriculum.
- Identification of the resources and staffing necessary to achieve goals.

The goal of the roundtables was to explore each area in greater detail, with an aim toward developing specific proposals and initiatives to advance our progress in each of these critical areas. CMP and CAP sought input from individual faculty, students, staff, and alumnae on each area. The President issued a call for proposals, requesting concept papers to be submitted by October 16, 2007. Over 100 proposals were submitted. (See <http://www.smith.edu/planning/background.php> for a copy of the report, "Summary of Ideas and Proposals" November 2006.)

CMP and CAP members then divided into sub-committees to give detailed attention to these proposals and to suggestions that came out of the roundtables. The proposals submitted were of widely varying scope: Some were operational, and CMP and CAP considered them in the normal course of College business, and addressed those that had potential to be implemented immediately. The majority of the proposals were more strategic in nature. CAP and CMP evaluated the proposals with the goal of connecting faculty members to further shape the best ideas, through a combination of working groups and standing committees.

CMP established working groups (in which CAP members participated) to develop proposals in the most promising areas, resulting in proposals for 3 centers: one focused on community-based research and learning, one focused on environmental research and sustainability issues, and one focused on international/cross-cultural study and global citizenship. Those who submitted these proposals were contacted to set up a series of initial meetings for discussions about goals, objectives, and organization of these centers. The center proposals were posted for faculty review and many committee- and faculty-wide discussions ensued. (See <http://www.smith.edu/planning/background.php> for a copy of the report, “The Context: Smith and Beyond” (January 2006). This report includes the proposals for the centers: The Smith Institutes for Leadership and Civic Engagement.)

In the spring, CAP and CMP identified the most promising ideas that had emerged during the 2006-2007 planning process (including expected outcomes, resources needed, and action plans) under each strategic direction in order to develop the final planning document in April 2007: Strategic Planning Draft: The Smith Design for Learning. (See <http://www.smith.edu/planning/background.php> for the report.)

CAP members then participated in three open meetings held in the late spring 2007 for faculty to discuss the draft of the strategic plan, the center proposals, and the draft of the NEASC re-accreditation report.

The NEASC document was drafted by members of the administrative staff (organized into standards committees). The provost asked CAP members to read and comment on chapter drafts as they were written, with special attention given to the governance, academic, and faculty standards as well as the special emphasis chapter. CAP also participated in discussions related to a new mission statement for the College. In April, CAP and CMP met with Judith Shapiro, President of Barnard College and Chair of the NEASC re-accreditation team for Smith, to discuss the NEASC self-study process, the structure of the report, and the September 2007 review team visit to Smith.

### **“Identifying the Capacities”**

The focus of the strategic planning process was student learning, including the capacity to do original and independent work. President Christ began the strategic planning process by asking the question: What are the capacities we should develop in all of our students in their time here, and how do we achieve that goal? A follow-up question became: Are students navigating the open curriculum in a way that provides them with the experience we want for them? The open curriculum makes more urgent the question of what we want all students to learn in their time at Smith. It is clear that there is not a strong faculty consensus that a set of distribution requirements are the best way to achieve that goal, but there is consensus that Smith needs a more directed and integrated sense of the open curriculum. The president asked CAP to draft a document that identifies the basic intellectual skills all students should acquire, with a specific commitment to developing those skills across the curriculum.

Throughout the fall 2006, CAP worked vigorously to draft a document entitled “Identifying the Capacities.” CAP members took a series of drafts to the faculty for review and discussion at faculty meetings throughout the fall and early into the spring semester. Subsequent drafts of the capacities document reflected faculty suggestions, questions, and concerns voiced at the meetings. CAP’s progress reports to the faculty emphasized that the capacities document was not a list of skills or capacities that would morph into a set of distribution requirements. Rather, it was meant to address the issues inherent in an open curriculum and to articulate an intentional curriculum in which students can develop these capacities not in isolation, but in stimulating and meaningful contexts.

During the strategic planning process, a consensus emerged that students need better guidance for the open curriculum to be successful at providing the education we aim to offer at Smith. The capacities list is a document that students and advisers can refer to from time to time, to use as a tool to provide more help in navigating the open curriculum. The list is meant both to help departments plan their curricula and to help students navigate them.

The final draft, “Identifying the Capacities” (see Attachment I) received approval through a sense of the faculty at its February 2007 faculty meeting.

### **Other Curriculum and Pedagogy Issues**

#### **Writing Assessment:**

In the summer of 2006, Provost Bourque convened a group of faculty and administrators to discuss systematic writing assessment at Smith. In previous years, the Committee on College Writing had broken ground in the area of writing assessment at Smith with a series of exploratory studies which raised critical questions:

1. How can we assess more effectively how well Smith students write by the end of their writing-intensive (WI) course? (Grades are one indicator, but they often encompass much more than the students’ writing ability.)

2. How can we determine over the years whether the quality of first-year student writing is declining, improving, or holding steady?
3. How can we better advise students about their writing needs after the first semester and in the sophomore year?
4. What data do we need to help us plan course offerings in writing in the spring semester and beyond?
5. Where are our students' strengths and weaknesses as writers, and what pedagogical implications do they have?

The working group for this project consisted of Provost Bourque, Susan Etheredge (Associate Professor of Education/Child Study and Interim Associate Dean of the Faculty), Doreen Weinberger (Associate Professor of Physics and current member of CAP), Jane Stangl (Lecturer in Exercise and Sports Studies and Interim Dean of the First-Year Class), Cate Rowen (Director of Institutional Research and Educational Assessment), Bob Hosmer (Senior Lecturer in English), and Julio Alves (Director of the Jacobson Center).

Over the summer, the working group met to decide on a plan of action. After some discussion, the committee designed two pilot studies for 2006-2007:

**1. Assessment rubric for WI course assignments:** Instructors of WI courses (who volunteered to participate in this pilot) were asked to select each first-year student's best piece of writing and assess it according to criteria described in an explanatory rubric. The criteria reflect basic aspects of academic writing, the mastery of which is essential for academic success at Smith. The criteria are based on the goals of a WI course established by the Committee on College Writing:

- Statement of the thesis (or main goal)
- The development of the thesis through supporting arguments
- The assembly and presentation of evidence
- Paragraph development
- The overall complexity of thought
- The overall command of written English

We asked the instructors to rate the overall quality of students' writing in their WI course and provide a qualitative comment if they thought it useful. The instructors were asked to judge the writing as exemplary, adequate, or needing work in each of the aspects of academic writing listed above.

In early September, the provost wrote to the instructors of WI courses, asking them to participate in the project so we could "maintain momentum in developing our students' critical capacities," obtain "a snapshot of our entering students by assessing how well their writing abilities meet faculty expectations during their first term," and create "a baseline for later, more detailed assessments." The results would "further serve to identify particularly weak writers early in their college careers."

A total of 200 students in a variety of WI courses participated.

Instructors were given copies of the scoring sheet and rubric early in the semester, asked to talk to their students about the project, and encouraged to integrate the scoring sheet and rubric into their teaching. In her September letter, the provost wrote:

“We also invite you to use these materials and indeed the whole process as an opportunity to re-think elements of how you teach students to write. You might consider several questions: How do I let my students know what constitutes good writing? What are the specific writing goals in my course? What assignments most help students achieve these goals? What kind of reader-response is most helpful to students?”

During the month of December, participating instructors gathered for lunch with the project working group to review the scoring sheet and rubric in an effort to make the scoring as consistent as possible. Instructors provided feedback on the process and asked questions about applying the rubric in a variety of situations.

Results: We obtained 200 ratings of first-year student writing from 17 instructors of writing intensive courses. The instructor ratings of student writing were combined with data about the individual students from Smith’s student information system, including admission data like SAT scores and admission ratings. These data were then used to compare groups of students to determine demographic and admission profile differences in writing performance after the WI course.

For a full discussion of the methodology and results of the WI assessment pilot, see the report “WI Assessment Study, Fall 2006,” written by Julio Alves, Director of the Jacobson Center for Writing, Teaching, and Learning, and Cate Rowen, Director of Institutional Research and Educational Assessment, issued on August 15, 2007.

## **2. Sophomore portfolio pilot project:**

This project offered the opportunity to explore a portfolio system of writing assessment similar to that used at many peer colleges, most notably Carleton College. During the spring semester of 2007, we piloted this process with a randomly selected sample of Smith sophomores. The data collected from this pilot project will allow us to assess the following:

- 1) Whether requiring a writing portfolio assessment of all students at the end of the sophomore year will
  - a. provide valuable information on student competencies;
  - b. allow for identification of students entering majors in need of additional help with writing skills;
  - c. serve as an opportunity for self-reflection about the student’s own writing;
  - d. provide feedback and guidance on the process of teaching writing at Smith.
- 2) The extent to which students at Smith enter their majors well-prepared as writers for future academic work.
- 3) Whether the logistical and operational challenges of a large-scale writing portfolio evaluation process are practical and affordable at Smith.

- 4) Whether students have positive experiences with the process of developing and receiving feedback on their writing portfolios.

We recruited approximately 10% of the sophomore class, or roughly 65 student participants, for this pilot project, and 40 students submitted portfolios. The group was randomly selected from the list of sophomores studying at Smith during 2006-07. Students were directed to Julio Alves, director of the Jacobson Center, to answer any questions they might have about the study. Participants assembled a writing portfolio and submitted it to a counselor at the Jacobson Center for review.

Specifically, we asked each participant to commit to doing the following:

- obtain clean copies of 3 or 4 of her best papers (approximately 15 pages of text) written during her first two years
- complete a brief cover sheet for each paper
- submit her portfolio for review

Participation in this project allowed students to reflect on their growth as writers during their first two years of college, and to obtain feedback and guidance about further writing development.

On June 28, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., 16 faculty and staff volunteers representing all 3 divisions gathered together for a portfolio reading and scoring workshop. The faculty members used a rubric developed by the Jacobson Center based on the evaluation process used by Carleton College in their writing portfolio program. The results of the portfolio pilot (report forthcoming) will help CAP determine whether writing portfolios should become a permanent part of the sophomore year curriculum, required of all students.

Provost Bourque will appoint a new committee on college writing in 2007-2008, chaired by CAP member Doreen Weinberger. The newly reconstituted writing committee will, under CAP's leadership, review the results from both writing pilot studies to continue a discussion about best practices in writing assessment.

### **Quantitative Skills:**

The search for the founding director of the Quantitative Learning Center, launched during the summer of 2006 (committee chaired by Howard Gold, with members Julio Alves, Susan Etheredge, Nick Horton, and Doreen Weinberger) ended successfully with the appointment of Catherine McCune, a former visiting professor in the Department of Mathematics and Statistics at Smith. The Center will open at the start of the 2007-08 academic year.

In May, Howard Gold led a second faculty development workshop on integrating quantitative skills in social science courses. This set the stage for course development proposals from faculty who will work during summer 2007 on the design of quantitative

skill modules for their existing courses. Modules will be developed for courses in anthropology, geology, government, and sociology.

During 2006-07, CAP continued to discuss whether Smith should institute a “QI” requirement. The sense of the committee was to go forward with such a recommendation to the full faculty during 2007-08, with a proposed start date of fall 2008. The subject of a “QI” requirement will be a high priority agenda item for CAP’s work in 2007-2008.

### **Student Curriculum Committee:**

CAP met with representatives from the Student Curriculum Committee (SCC) twice during the academic year. The chair of the SCC participated in the monthly CAP Policy Subcommittee meetings, and several members of the SCC served on the planning committee for “Celebrating Collaborations.” The SCC, through its chair, brought the request for the “Liberal Arts Commendation” to CAP this past year. (See section entitled **CAP Subcommittees** for discussion of the “Liberal Arts Commendation.”)

### **Presidential Seminars:**

During the planning process, the Committee on Mission and Priorities received several proposals for the creation of a new category of interdisciplinary seminars for juniors and seniors. The following description of “Presidential Seminars” represents a synthesis of the separate proposals, based on discussions with the authors. CAP reviewed the initiative and, in May 2007, issued a call for course proposals to the faculty:

Members of the faculty are invited to submit proposals for the development of “Presidential Interdisciplinary Seminars” for additions to the course offerings for 2008-09. Seminars bearing this designation are intended for juniors and seniors. They should be designed to provide advanced students with an opportunity at an appropriate level for work on a topic of significance that requires the perspectives and approaches of several fields. They may be offered in either semester with a preference for the fall. Proposals may come from one member of the faculty or from several.

The proposed interdisciplinary seminars are grounded in research that suggests students learn most when grappling with complex, challenging problems which - whether they are contemporary or historical - require multiple disciplinary perspectives and methods to analyze. The interdisciplinary approach will highlight for the students the particular strengths of their disciplinary training and the necessity of multiple competencies and collaboration.

The seminars might be structured in a variety of forms: for example, they might be team taught by members of two different departments or taught by a single member of the faculty with a cross-disciplinary or interdisciplinary focus. Students in the class would come from a variety of disciplines and credit for the seminar would be granted either as an interdisciplinary course (IDP) or cross-listed for credit in a department(s) or program(s). A limited number of such seminars would be offered each year, offering a flexible array of topics that would be expected to change from year to year. The range of topics would be broad with examples such as: human longevity: philosophy and social implications; the cultural history of London [or Paris, New York, Rome]; Shakespeare in performance; mountains and mountaineering in art, literature and film; robotics and artificial intelligence: prospects and labor implications; scroll, book computer screen: ways of recording information; sustainability and development; borders, immigration and globalization; human rights and the digital divide.

The seminar might be organized to study a single problem as a group, with partition into subgroups to study different facets of a problem. The end product of the seminar might be a single “white paper” composed by teams of students in the class, or individual papers focused on aspects of the problem. Students should have the opportunity to conduct both independent research and collaborative research in the course of the seminar.

Alternative forms of organization for the seminar would be possible as well, and ultimately the instructor would propose the required assignments and the methods for completion. The “white papers,” whether produced by the entire seminar, a subgroup or by an individual student, would be judged by our usual standards of effective writing, including the quality of the questions posed, the quality and relevance of evidence gathered, and the cogency and economy of the argument. Posting the best products of the seminars on a course website would be another outcome of the seminar.

**Goals:**

One goal of such courses would be to offer seniors and juniors an opportunity to explore a new topic, outside their major, but not at an introductory level. Thus, advanced students could bring to bear their talents and apply their acquired knowledge to problems of significance.

A second goal would be to enhance the intellectual offerings of the junior year in Northampton. A number of slots in the seminars could be reserved for juniors who wish to do preliminary work on a topic in preparation for an honor’s thesis or simply to experience an intensive research experience at this point in their college career. Publishing a slate of offerings well in advance would allow sophomores an opportunity to plan their junior and senior choices.

The seminars might also be viewed as a culminating experience for majors and would be ideal venues for offering writing-intensive courses for advanced students.

Support and Development: Modeled on FYS, faculty members who would like to develop a junior senior seminar can apply for summer support for course development prior to submission to CAP for consideration. CAP will begin its review of submitted proposals in the fall semester, 2007.

## **CAP Subcommittee Work**

### **I. CAP Courses/Policy Subcommittee**

#### **Curricular Items:**

CAP acted on numerous curricular changes, permanent courses, experimental courses, new topics, changes to majors and minors, and changes to credits/course levels.

In 2006-2007, CAP (and subsequently the faculty) approved 37 new permanent courses; 37 experimental courses; 30 new topics; 13 credit/ level/title/description/etc. (1 title, 2 attributes, 1 level, 7 (E) to permanent, 1 credit, 1 enrollment); 1 dual prefix; 6 changes to major or minor requirements (EAS, BIO, MED, NSC, HST honors, PHY); 1 new major (JUD); and 1 new minor (MES).

#### **Honor Code Violations:**

CAP developed a proposed policy to address the impact of Honor Code violations on a student’s ability to earn Honors. In May 2006, two students who were found in violation of the Honor Code graduated with Honors. CAP took on this issue during the fall semester 2006, and SHIP met with the Honor Board to discuss a possible policy. Members were interested in the level of violation and sanction that might appropriately preclude departmental Honors. The Honor Board took some time to reflect on this

question, also keeping in mind whether violations of the Honor Code might affect Latin as well as departmental Honors. CAP reviewed the policy proposed by the Honor Board and then took it to the April 4, 2007, faculty meeting for faculty discussion and vote. The policy addresses only a student's eligibility for Latin Honors, with no impact on a student's ability to earn departmental Honors. The proposed policy, agreed to by consent of the faculty at the April 4 meeting, is as follows:

The Honor Board will take the following action with regard to honor code infractions and Latin Honors eligibility:

1. For violations occurring during the student's Sophomore, Junior, and Senior years:

Normally, any Honor Board infraction resulting in a sanction of a reduction in the final course grade (i.e., from a reduction in the final grade of 1/3 of a step through failure of the class) or suspension will disqualify the student from receiving Latin Honors. If the Board finds compelling extenuating circumstances, it may decide not to impose this sanction.

2. For violations occurring during the first year:

Normally, an Honor Board infraction will not result in disqualification from Latin Honors. If the violation of the honor code is particularly egregious, the Board may include disqualification as part of its sanction.

3. The process of disqualification for Latin Honors will begin in the fall of 2007 and apply to all cases before the Honor Board from September 2007 forward.

A major concern in crafting and adopting such a policy is the confidentiality of Honor Board proceedings (both decisions and sanctions). In the policy above, the decision of the Honor Board would be communicated only to the registrar, who would simply remove the affected student's name from eligibility for Latin Honors. There are two reasons this proposed policy has not yet been expanded to cover departmental Honors: first, SHIP has not yet discussed it, and second, the confidentiality issues are more complicated.

CAP was not comfortable extending the policy to cover other honors such as Phi Beta Kappa and Sigma Xi. The Honor Code is a Smith policy, and these honors are governed by societies outside Smith. CAP is in discussion with the Smith Phi Beta Kappa chapter about whether or not they wish to adopt a similar policy.

#### **Liberal Arts Commendation:**

During 2005-2006, CAP and President Christ were approached by the Student Curriculum Committee, whose members suggested that a significant number of students are not fulfilling the 7 Latin Honors distributions because they realize their GPA's would not qualify for Latin Honors, or they fear they will not do well in one of the areas. The Student Curriculum Committee wanted to encourage more students to complete the

distribution. (Currently, 58% of our students fulfill the Latin Honors distribution requirements, and about 20% of them earn Latin Honors.) Their proposal was to enter some sort of notation on the transcript when students fulfill the 7 fields that qualify them for Latin Honors.

The 2006-2007 CAP supported the recommendation of the CAP Policy Subcommittee to include such notation on the transcript, and decided on the words “Liberal Arts Commendation.” This commendation will be noted on a student’s academic transcript (accompanied by appropriate description on the back of the transcript). While CAP recognized concerns about over credentialing and questioned the necessity of a “Liberal Arts Commendation” for students graduating from a liberal arts college, it seemed a worthwhile policy in order to encourage more students to fulfill the Latin Honors distribution. At the April 4, 2007, faculty meeting, CAP informed the faculty of the decision to grant the “Liberal Arts Commendation.”

## **II. The Subcommittee on Honors and Independent Programs (SHIP)**

Three CAP members served on SHIP, which is chaired by the dean of the senior class. The Subcommittee on Honors and Independent Programs met seven times during the 2006-2007 academic year. See Appendix II for a summary of the actions of this subcommittee.

### **Departmental Honors:**

The Subcommittee on Honors and Independent Programs (SHIP) met during the spring semester 2006 with directors of Honors and found distinct differences in the ways different departments see the function of Honors. Some see it as a capstone experience for students who have excelled all along, while others see it as a way to engage more students more students in a culminating project. There was discussion about whether there ought to be a single, cumulative GPA requirement for entering into Honors (as opposed to the current system of a cutoff for GPA both inside and outside the major), followed by discussion about what that GPA should be.

During 2006-07, SHIP moved to discussion of a significant reshaping of the Honors program. The proposed change would essentially replace both Honors and Special Studies courses with a single, variable-credit course of independent research. That independent research project could be converted to an Honors project or thesis at the discretion of the department. Under the current system the senior class dean is typically faced with numerous requests to change theses to special studies and a few requests to change in the other direction. The new approach would shift the burden; instead of demoting students, the department or program would be able to recognize outstanding work by promoting it to Honors. This system would also give more flexibility to departments and programs to develop their own guidelines for evaluating whether or not students should be admitted to Honors.

The difference between the proposed and the current mechanism for converting to Honors is that the proposed approach would require departments and programs to come

up with standards for admission to Honors, instead of this decision resting with SHIP. On SHIP there is often not a lot of knowledge about specific projects, so it makes sense to give more authority to individual departments and programs. CAP recognizes that it will require some additional work for departments to come up with these standards, but it will also afford departments additional opportunities to restructure their Honors program.

If the faculty chooses this approach, there are several issues to be addressed, including the following:

- Should there be a cap on the percentage of students who can receive departmental Honors?
- Do we want consistency in expectations across departments and programs?
- Should the Honors designation rest only on the research project, or should it take grades into account as well?
- Is there a minimum number of credits that should be required for an Honors project?

Alice Hearst, on behalf of CAP, presented this discussion to the faculty at its April 4 meeting. Alice invited input from the assembled faculty on this proposed change. (See April 4, 2007, faculty meeting minutes for the specific questions, concerns, and suggestions raised by faculty re: the proposed change.) CAP will return to this discussion during 2007-08;

### **III. The Junior Year Experience Task Force**

In 2005-2006, CAP approved a motion from the Dean of the College to appoint a committee to study the junior year experience of Smith students. In the course of the curricular review and attendant discussions about international studies, questions emerged about the goals of study abroad, preparation for study abroad, the impact of study abroad on the major, and the experience of juniors who do not go abroad. The mandate of the Committee on the Junior Year Experience was to examine: 1.) the experience of juniors who stay on campus; 2.) the impact on our curriculum when a significant proportion of the student body is not on campus during their junior year; and, 3.) whether juniors studying elsewhere, either abroad or domestically, clearly and effectively articulate the effect of their experiences on their intellectual goals and life ambitions.

The Committee on the Junior Year Experience met several times throughout the spring semester of 2006 and the fall semester of 2007. The Committee was chaired by Margaret Bruzelius, the Dean of the Sophomore/Junior Class and Acting Associate Dean of the College (2006-07), and included Margaret Zelljadt (Senior Class Dean); a representative from CAP (Susan Etheredge); one faculty member from each division (Mlada Bukovansky, Shizuka Hsieh, and Barbara Kellum); representatives from Student Life (Julianne Ohotnicky, Dean of Students, and Rae Ann Butera, Assistant Dean of Students); and two students (junior Evan Sipe and senior Michaela LeBlanc).

(See the final report of the Junior Year Experience Task Force, issued to CAP on November 21, 2006.)

### **Decennial and Midterm Reviews**

CAP maintained its regular schedule of self-study and external decennial reviews of departments and programs, as well as a schedule of five-year midterm reviews. This year, Chemistry, Russian, and Theatre engaged in decennial reviews.

Midterm reviews were held for Economics, Exercise and Sport Studies, French, German, and Mathematics and Statistics.

All of the reviews provided helpful information and discussion regarding the specific program or department under consideration, and also addressed larger curricular issues connected to the comprehensive curricular review of 2003 – 2004.

### **Academic Events for the Community**

#### **Smith Elects the World:**

The inaugural “Smith Elects the World Conference” was held in the Campus Center on Tuesday, November 7, from 4:00 to 6:30 p.m. “Smith Elects the World” (sponsored by The Office Dean of the College, CAP/the Office of the Provost, and the Career Development Office) was established to explore the relationship between the formal education that takes place in the classroom and the learning that happens off-campus when students engage in Praxis internships, community service, and study abroad. This event addresses CAP’s desire to have students reflect on their JYA experiences and it brings Praxis and community service into closer alignment with the curriculum. It also addresses public speaking; staff at the Career Development Office and Jacobson Center Students coached students on their presentations in preparation for the conference.

The inaugural conference featured five concurrent student panels (twenty-two students in all, nominated by faculty members). During each panel, the students described how their studies shaped their off campus pursuits and, in turn, how insights gained off campus have enriched their academic programs. Their stories provided compelling evidence that these off campus learning experiences contribute significantly to a liberal arts education.

A faculty discussion followed at 5:10 p.m. in the Carroll Room with Professors Al Curran (Geology), Sam Intrator (Education and Child Study) and Leslie King (Sociology) highlighting the ways that internships, service learning, and study abroad connect to and enrich students’ academic courses of study.

#### **Celebrating Collaborations:**

CAP sponsored “Celebrating Collaborations,” an annual event designed to highlight the collaborative research exchanges between students and faculty at Smith. This year’s

event, held on April 21, 2007, included 122 sessions, involving a record high 209 students, and 83 faculty members. The schedule included presentations from all disciplines and divisions and incorporated formal papers, poster sessions, performances, and panel discussions. “Celebrating Collaborations” was again held in conjunction with “Discovery Weekend,” the Admission Office’s weekend to welcome admitted students of color.

### **Liberal Arts Lunches:**

CAP continued to sponsor the popular weekly lunch talk series Liberal Arts Luncheons, allowing the entire campus community to learn more about the specific research interests and work of faculty members. Faculty members from all three divisions presented their scholarly work at the Thursday lunch hours. Alice Hearst organized the series for fall semester 2006, and Doreen Weinberger organized the series for spring 2007.

### **Faculty Leadership Seminar Series:**

The Faculty Leadership Seminar Series 2006-2007 focused on teaching and learning, the central issue of the planning process. To continue the conversations begun during the planning process, and to complement the president’s September roundtables, the seminar series offered a sampling of topics for further faculty reading and discussion. The topics and structure of the Friday afternoon seminars provided an opportunity for sharing and discussing some of the best practices already in place at Smith and ways to expand on those ideas. Topics included the following:

Doing Independent Research in Learning Communities  
 Student-Centered Learning, Part I: What the Research Suggests  
 Student-Centered Learning, Part II: Sample Innovative Practices  
 Access and Privilege, Part I: Consequences in Higher Education  
 [The Ford Foundation research group for “Reaffirming Action”]  
 Access to Learning, Part II: Pedagogical Strategies  
 Building the College Budget

### **Staffing Review and Recommendations**

On the recommendation of the 2005-2006 Committee on Academic Priorities, the provost authorized nine searches for 2006-07. The tenure-track searches that took place during the 2006-07 academic year included: Afro-American Studies, Anthropology, Art and Technology (shared with Hampshire), Computer Science, Engineering, Geology, History (shared with Mount Holyoke), Mathematics and Statistics, and Psychology. There was also a search this past year for a lecturer position in Art.

In 2006-07, CAP decided to focus its staffing review and recommendations on the queue of position requests that had amassed over the last couple of years. The queue included position requests for which CAP had already recommended authorization when funding becomes available. While CAP recognizes that other departments are facing resource constraints, they were eager to address the needs of those in the queue and therefore

focused their efforts on those positions this past year. CAP asked all departments who were in the queue or who had asked for a search to prepare a short statement about their request. CAP was eager to make this process more transparent to the rest of the community and urged departments to think about their requirements in relation to overall curricular needs, to better facilitate cooperation and sharing. Emergency needs (e.g. resulting from a sudden resignation, retirement, or loss of a faculty member) were taken into account. In alphabetical order (by department/program), the positions in the final queue considered by CAP this past year included the following: Art/Architecture, Biological Sciences, Dance, Economics, Engineering, English, Exercise and Sport Studies, French, German, Government, History, Italian, Korean, Mathematics and Statistics, Music, Portuguese, Psychology, Sociology, and Theatre.

The Committee's recommendations and the Provost's responses are attached in Appendix III.

### **CAP Membership**

For the second time in a row, CAP would have lost all its members at once, at the end of 2007-2008. This complete turnover of members hampers the work of the committee and limits the carry over from one committee to the next. For this reason the Faculty Code specifies that the terms of CAP members should be staggered. The Code states that Faculty Council oversees the election, but it does not authorize Council to override other provisions to achieve this staggering.

At the February 2007 faculty meeting, Faculty Council Chair Nancy Bradbury outlined a possible one-time remedy to this current situation: A current member could be asked to serve a fourth year. In addition, the faculty could elect a sixth member to CAP for a standard three-year term. This newly elected member would serve in 2007-08 along with the returning five. The following year, two experienced members would continue: the heroic fourth-year member and the extra person elected in spring 2007. In spring 2008, the faculty would elect three new members, and the following fall the committee would return to its five mandated members after one anomalous year of six members. Both measures—the extension of one member's term and the election of a sixth member for one year—are deviations from the Faculty Code. The faculty would therefore need to approve legislation empowering Council to take these measures to provide for staggered terms.

President Christ asked for the sense of the faculty on the original solution Nancy outlined: an extension to a fourth year for one current CAP member and the election of a sixth member for one year. By a show of hands the assembled faculty expressed their approval of this one-time solution.

### **A Look Ahead to CAP's Work for 2007 - 2008**

**Priorities and agenda items generated by CAP Members for discussion during the 2007—2008:**

Strategic Planning Issues

1. Clarify status of the “identifying the capacities” discussion and finalize.
2. Discuss faculty leadership for the FYS program with responsibility for finding instructors, holding pedagogic meetings, determining FYS policies, running the academic-integrity event, etc.
3. Discuss quantitative skills requirement, both in general and especially to focus on generating a few First Year Seminars coded QI. Discuss the quantitative skills requirement in general, and fold a discussion of QI classes into our discussion of the FYS program
4. Discuss and/or develop an overall program for studying and improving teaching college-wide, beyond the Jacobson Center's Friday teaching arts lunches. Discussion should tie in plans for and results from past faculty reading and discussion groups.
5. Discuss “mapping the curriculum” in departments and programs--should CAP pull together and distribute ideas? Mellon plans and update should be included.

On-going CAP Concerns

1. Changes in the Honors system, i.e., setting the minimum GPA and devolving authority to departments & programs.
2. Discussion of policy on Honors Code violations and the impact on Departmental and other honors and distinctions.
3. Discussion of status of the Education and Child Studies "liberal studies" major.
4. Regularizing and improving the provision of data provided to CAP re: enrollments, majors, FTE's, etc.
5. Grade inflation concerns.
6. Preparing final staffing report.
7. Writing skills.

## **Appendix I: CAP Annual Report, 2006-2007**

### **Identifying the Capacities**

**Proposed statement for students and their advisers and for inclusion in the Catalog, to follow “Curricular Requirements and Expectations” (on page 8 of the current Catalog, 2006-2007):**

In the course of their educations, Smith students are expected to become acquainted with—to master, as far as they are able—certain bodies of knowledge, but they are also expected to learn the intellectual skills necessary for using and extending that knowledge. The list below summarizes those expectations. While acknowledging that education can never be defined by a listing of subjects or skills, the faculty believes that such a listing may usefully contribute to the *planning* of an education, and it offers the list below in that spirit, as an aid to students as they choose their courses and assess their individual progress, and to advisers as they assist in that process.

In order to put their knowledge to use, to lay a foundation for further study, and to make effective contributions to the work of their communities, students should, by the time they graduate:

#### **I. Develop the ability to think critically and analytically and to convey knowledge and understanding, which requires**

- writing clearly
- speaking articulately
- reading closely
- evaluating and presenting evidence accurately
- knowing and using quantitative skills
- applying scientific reasoning
- engaging with artistic creation and expression
- working both independently and collaboratively

#### **II. Develop a historical and comparative perspective, which requires**

- learning foreign languages
- studying the historical development of societies, cultures, and philosophies
- understanding multi- and inter-disciplinary approaches

#### **III. Become an informed global citizen, which requires**

- engaging with communities beyond Smith
- learning tolerance and understanding diversity
- applying moral reasoning to ethical problems
- understanding environmental challenges

**Appendix II: CAP Annual Report, 2006-2007**

**Report to  
The Committee on Academic Priorities  
from  
The Subcommittee on Honors and Independent Programs**

The Subcommittee on Honors and Independent Programs met seven times during the 2006-2007 academic year. The actions of the Subcommittee are listed below.

- a. **Departmental Honors Program, Class of 2007:** Seventy-two applications were considered, 70 were admitted, 10 withdrew during the course of the year (all but one of whom converted to a Special Studies). All of the 60 students completing the program were recommended for the degree with Departmental Honors. (6 Honors, 34 High Honors, 20 Highest Honors).
- b. **Departmental Honors Program, Class of 2008J:** Two applications were considered and approved.
- c. **Student-designed Interdepartmental Majors:** Ten student-designed major applications were considered and approved. The approved majors include: British Studies (1), Environmental Science and Public Policy (1 Revision), Exercise Science (1), Liberal Studies (7), and Romance Languages (1).
- d. **Student-designed Interdepartmental Minors:** Two student-designed minor applications were considered and approved. The approved minors include: Middle- East Studies (1) and Middle East Studies: Language and Thought (1).
- e. **Smith Scholars Program:** There was one application to enter the Smith Scholars Program. It was approved
- f. **Internships for Academic Credit:** There were no applications requesting academic credit for internships.
- g. **Research Assistance from the Tomlinson Fund:** A total of \$31,414.00 was awarded to 53 Departmental Honors students to help with research expenses.
- h. **Latin Honors Awards:** As of May 16, 2007 at 10:00 a.m. Ten students were recommended for *summa cum laude*, 31 students for *magna cum laude* and 89 students for *cum laude*.

May 24, 2007

### **Appendix III: CAP Annual Report, 2006-2007**

#### **Staffing Review and Recommendations**

CAP Recommendations for Staffing  
Preliminary Report  
May 21, 2005

Art/Architecture: CAP recommends converting the lecturer position to a tenure track position at the present time.

Biology: CAP recommends bridging the request to search for a botanist for at least one more year.

Economics: CAP recommends authorizing a search for an environmental economist with a defined teaching contribution to ESP at the present time. CAP also recommends that the second position requested be bridged for at least one year.

Engineering: CAP recommends moving ahead with the failed search immediately. CAP does not recommend searching for another new position, nor bridging this second position, until pressing needs in other departments are met.

English: CAP is currently undecided about whether to recommend authorization and/or bridging at this time, and will discuss this matter further

ESS: CAP recommends authorizing the lecturer position in ESS immediately.

French: CAP is currently undecided about whether to recommend authorization and/or bridging at this time, and will discuss this matter further.

German: CAP recommends bridging this position for at least one year while the Department engages in further discussions about the future of the Hamburg program.

Government: CAP recommends authorizing a search for a position in international relations with a defined teaching contribution in quantitative studies at the present time.

History: CAP recommends moving ahead with one of the two requests immediately. The Department may choose between the medieval and American History positions, but CAP sees a stronger need for the American History position. CAP recommends bridging the second position for at least one year.

#### **Appendix III (continued)**

Italian: CAP recommends authorizing a search at the present time.

Math/Statistics: CAP recommends bridging the position for at least one year, unless failure to authorize this position immediately will be seriously detrimental to the Department's planned initiative for women and mathematics, in which case CAP recommends proceeding with the search at the present time.

Music: CAP recommends approving the revolving three-year position at the present time.

Portuguese: CAP recommends approving the request to convert the non-TT position to a TT position at the present time, with the proviso that the person hired must be able to teach both Spanish and Portuguese.

Psychology: CAP recommends approving the search at the present time.

Sociology: CAP recommend approving one of the two searches at the present time, with the second position to be bridged for at least one year.

Theatre: CAP does not recommend authorizing a search for this position until the Department has had the opportunity to consider the report of its visiting committee with regard to curricular needs and issues of departmental leadership.

**Appendix III (continued)****Message from the provost to CAP re: recommendations for staffing:**

Dear Cap 2006-07:

I write to update you on the authorization for searches in 2007. The decisions were difficult and the conversations over the projected budget shortfall challenging. As I am sure you know I could not authorize all of the worthy requests before us, but we will have a total of 8 searches this year and possibly a 9th which I will discuss with you at our retreat. In the meantime--here's a quick summary. You will receive copies of my letters to the departments in the coming weeks.

Tenure Track searches will be authorized in the following departments--

Art--Architecture

Economics--environmental with participation of EVS&P

Engineering

History-19th century American (with coverage of earlier periods)

Korean Studies

Psychology

Spanish/Portuguese

Sociology

We have also agreed that the requested Mellon 5 College position in Latin American Archaeology (.5 to Smith Anthropology) will be authorized for a search in 08-09 with the position filled for 09-10. We should also expect a request from Anthropology for a tenure track search this September. If approved this would constitute a ninth search in 2007-08.

I trust you will be pleased that we've been able to make considerable progress on the renewal of the faculty. I know that many solid requests have been postponed, and as we finalize the budget for 09, we will be able to determine how many positions can be bridged. Right now the funding for 09 is very tight indeed, but we will be seeking relief from ACRA.

I am grateful to all of you for the excellent work that you completed this year. It was a genuine pleasure to work with all of you. The success of our efforts on student capacities is notable, as is all of the substantial work on the curriculum through the strategic planning and NEASC self-study processes. We've already received five proposals for Presidential seminars and we will want to think carefully about how to increase our first year seminars and give them greater coherence and direction. So, the year ahead looks to be interesting and challenging. I look forward to seeing you all at the end of the summer and to our work together...

With all good wishes,

Susie

August 2007.

