

To: All Faculty
From: Alison Cook-Sather, Chair of Committee on Academic Priorities, AY 2011-2012
Subject: Communication from Chair of CAP -- Some responses to questions from faculty
Date: November 29, 2011

Dear Colleagues,

Several faculty members have asked for clarification and further information about a number of issues related to CAP's work last year and CAP's perspective on several more general, and forward-looking, issues concerning the nature of consultation. These communications, and the conversations we have had on the floor of the faculty over the last weeks, have made it increasingly clear that there is a profound disconnect between how CAP members and some colleagues perceive the process of the last year and how some other colleagues perceive it. This is a genuine disconnect and not a matter of bad faith on anyone's part.

So, I want to frame the following responses with an acknowledgment of my belief in the sincerity of the various, discrepant perspectives that people bring to the particular question of CAP's work last year and to the larger questions of faculty governance we have been exploring. One of our tasks is to try to figure out how it is possible that reasonable people of good faith have these different experiences and what we might do to bring the discrepant perspectives into constructive dialogue with one another.

I hope that the following attempt to address questions and concerns, which I offer from my position as Chair of CAP, will contribute to that effort. I have heard from several colleagues a desire that we not take up more time in faculty meetings on these conversations, so although I think there needs to be a bit more discussion on the faculty floor, I am sending these responses in this (rather long) e-mail communication. This message will also be in the packet for the December 7th faculty meeting.

I want to begin where we left off at the last faculty meeting — by responding to what Jeremy characterized as a refusal, and that some members of CAP would have called a hesitation, to participate in the discussions we have had this fall about last year's process. He and I have talked about this and, through that conversation, have come to understand better why CAP has not felt comfortable participating. I thought it would be useful to explain here the several, related sources of CAP's reticence.

Last year in a faculty meeting, there were a number of comments that conveyed the basic sense that when people are elected to CAP, they are immediately seen to go over to the "dark side," and that's just the way it is. Other colleagues question this inevitability, and while I think we need to talk together about why this distrust emerges in some people's minds, for now, I evoke that conversation

to help explain why CAP members hesitate to speak in meetings. When a CAP member speaks on the faculty floor, we worry -- and have heard -- that many people experience and interpret what is said as defensive, self-serving, silencing, and impositional. Also, because any individual CAP member who speaks is heard as representing the whole committee, we hesitate to speak for more personal reasons: we worry that we will misspeak, get angry, and thereby jeopardize our work together as a faculty. CAP in no way wants to create any of these effects, and so we often remain silent. In tl

hose cases when faculty colleagues have made the points that we would have made, we have felt that is much better than our speaking up.

Another reason we have not spoken much is a specific request that came from the faculty floor. Helen Grundman suggested last year that committees should present their reports and then step back and let the faculty discuss them, rather than further explain and defend. This recommendation, which was enthusiastically affirmed by the faculty, came in the response, I believe, to the meetings the previous year where the faculty felt we couldn't discuss the proposed curricular changes because every comment was defended or argued against. So another reason CAP hasn't engaged much in these discussions is because the faculty asked committees not to.

Finally, while CAP hasn't spoken much on the faculty floor, we did present our view of the events that happened last year at the October meeting — in a written document in response to requests from faculty colleagues made to the Chair of the Faculty. Mindful of other business and the amount of time that we had already spent on this issue, David Karen and I thought it would be best that I not speak too long on the floor of the faculty, so I made a few points by way of overview and directed faculty to the full letter and timeline in the packet. There were no questions or discussion at that time.

The other members of CAP and I are willing to acknowledge that we need to revisit this choice not to speak in discussions on the faculty floor. If we can change the dynamic, if we can create an environment in which CAP members can speak and be heard as colleagues and not as adversaries, then I, and I believe other CAP members, will be more willing to speak.

We also have been exploring the ways in which these particular instances are framed by a larger sense of discomfort that all faculty experience when they meet with CAP (and that all of us currently on CAP have experienced, over the years, when we have met with CAP). As part of the ongoing analysis of shared governance in which we have all been engaged, CAP has been reflecting on how to continue to improve interactions between CAP and departments, programs, and individuals. We have developed some new approaches this year and hope to be in conversation with colleagues about how to facilitate more collegial interactions even while continuing the work of making difficult decisions about institutional priorities and resource allocations.

Next, I want to address the useful question Helen Grundman brought up at the end of the last

faculty meeting, about which I received subsequent communications from other colleagues. One colleague rephrased the question this way: “Are cuts in departments understood to freeze the affected departments’ FTE for decades to come or, if all open positions are, in one though not every sense, everyone’s positions, can such departments submit new proposals for positions, be they either departmental or bridge appointments (e.g., between departments or a department and a program), with the prospect of potential approval?”

The answer is the latter: All of the recommendations made by CAP last year were made given the current state of the departments involved. However, any department or program can make a proposal to CAP at any time, and the proposal will be considered in relation to the criteria according to which CAP makes decisions about resources (those are laid out in both the Report to the Faculty on CAP’s Charge 2010-2011 and in the letter CAP wrote to the faculty that was included in the October faculty meeting packet).

I am grateful to another colleague, who suggested that we talk about this process not as eliminating lines but rather as lines not being put back into the “pool” for reallocation. When a line is not returned to the pool, the salary associated with the line is repurposed towards added salary increases for everyone else. This policy can be found on the Provost’s Office CAP web page that addresses requests for positions (<http://www.brynmawr.edu/cap/requests.html>)

Related to this question is the reasoning behind the recommendations CAP made for specific future faculty lines not being returned to the pool for reallocation. CAP chose to list general criteria used across decisions rather than include that level of detail, as we have said, out of consideration for our colleagues. These were, after all, recommendations CAP reached proactively, not situations in which the departments had mounted an argument and approached CAP. Further complicating matters are the challenges and complexities that some of these colleagues are experiencing within their departments that they specifically requested not be shared but that have contributed to their current circumstances and thus are part of the reasoning behind CAP’s recommendations.

In response to the call for greater detail, we have prepared short explanations for you. Those are included at the end of this message and will be an Addendum to the Report on CAP’s Charge 2010-2011. In composing these explanations, we not only drew on notes and Minutes from meetings last year but also conferred with the affected departments and revised the paragraphs, in some cases considerably, before sharing them with the wider faculty. That process of consultation is important to me, and to all of CAP, because we want to be able to continue to be a body in which colleagues can place their confidence and confidences.

This point is connected to another question that has been raised and that I want to address, namely, What is CAP’s notion of confidentiality? One answer, my answer, is that when colleagues come to us and ask that we keep what they tell us in confidence, requesting that we not even take notes on the discussion because the details would make multiple people on campus feel vulnerable, that we

respect and honor that request. Colleagues share these details because they inform the situation that person and his or her colleagues are experiencing in their departments and so that we can understand that situation in all its complexity.

This happened in previous years and it happened last year. To include that information as part of CAP's rationale for making a decision would be, to my mind, a deep violation of confidentiality and trust and would seriously hinder that person's capacities on campus. And yet some people might feel that they cannot understand the decision without that information. If we went too far in the direction of not sharing enough specific information, we apologize for that and offer the explanations in the Addendum as an effort to provide sufficient information without causing everyone involved further or additional pain.

Another question, one that now serves as the premise for Rad Edmond's recent motion, is whether the recommendations CAP made last year were made as a group or rather within the frame of individual reviews of positions. At the last meeting, Peter Beckmann usefully outlined how many of the recommendations were made prior to last year, on a department-by-department basis. A list of those recommendations and where they have been mentioned in previous CAP documents as well as relevant excerpts from the POG and By-Laws that guided CAP last year are also at the end of this message.

I think it is important that we be honest and acknowledge there is not a single department or program on campus that, if consulted, would have said or would say now, "Yes, you can cut a line. We don't really need it." As Michael Rock has pointed out, we all feel under-resourced and any department or program would fight fiercely for its resources. CAP felt and continues to feel that it would be extremely damaging to have dragged out the process by talking with the full faculty about recommending reductions in particular departments — a process the POG and By-Laws state is not required, likely for that reason.

During the course of its deliberations, CAP did consider the possibility of cutting whole departments, but we heard from individual faculty members and in faculty meetings that there is a strong desire to preserve our core — fields that are not robustly subscribed but that are essential to the liberal arts. So instead CAP identified places where, given the criteria we use to make decisions about resources, we felt that, without eliminating whole programs, departments, or majors, we could recommend that a line not be returned to the pool for reallocation. Then we approached departments — either as part of the Phase III of Balancing Mission and Resources or as the separate but related part of CAP's charge for last year — and asked them to think with us about how they might imagine moving forward with one fewer faculty lines. In every case, CAP had in mind or proposed a particular reduction but then re-conceptualized that idea, in consultation with the affected department so that it could sustain its programming in the way it thought best, not necessarily the way CAP had imagined.

In the motion that Rad has brought to the faculty, he is, I believe, conflating two interrelated but distinct processes: the first part of CAP's charge for last year — “set longer-term academic priorities for the College that transcended the nearer term exigencies of open positions” — and the second part — “use that strategic vision of academic priorities to decide how to continue the process of reducing the faculty by 5-8 lines knowing that resources from these cuts would be reinvested in faculty compensation and would help us achieve as many of our goals as possible while working with limited resources” (Report on CAP Charge, 2010-2011, p. and CAP Annual Report to the Faculty, 2009-2010, pp. 14-15).

According to the POG and By-Laws, and to our own sense of appropriate process, the first part of the charge required and entailed extensive consultation with the faculty. As outlined in our letter to the faculty and timeline, CAP invited all faculty members to participate in one-on-one meetings (in which 95% of the faculty participated) and in open forums and small- and large-group discussions. CAP shared the notes from all these forums (they were emailed to the faculty after each session and can be found on Blackboard under FACULTY GOVERNANCE > ANNUAL REPORTS > COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC PRIORITIES MATERIALS FOR SPECIAL MEETINGS). We are aware that some people are concerned that ideas are lost when they work in small groups because those ideas get missed in the note-taking or condensing. This was the reason that CAP posted the notes right after the meetings, and indeed some people raised issues from notes that were left out and CAP added them in.

As outlined in the timeline, CAP brought the Working Model as it was emerging to the floor of the faculty on several different occasions for reflection and comment. We weighed, discussed, and tried to incorporate any and all comments we received, we included specific ideas in the Appendices (which are also on Blackboard under FACULTY GOVERNANCE > ANNUAL REPORTS > COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC PRIORITIES - OTHER DOCUMENTS), and we issued repeated invitations for further comment. Given the infinite possibilities for disagreement (unlike the process of the By-Laws where we are talking about a finite set of choices), we didn't think it feasible to bring every set of differing ideas to the floor of the faculty for discussion as we made the plan. We used the one-on-one meetings and special faculty meeting notes to identify what felt like the ideas that had most support and worked within the emerging framework that became the final version of the Working Model.

As CAP restated in the letter to the faculty in October, CAP understood these processes as constituting consultation regarding both innovation and areas for future reduction, and while input from the faculty regarding the former was shared back with the faculty throughout the year as detailed above, input regarding the latter was kept confidential but nonetheless informed CAP's deliberations. This process was in keeping with the POG and By-Laws.

I want to return to one other point related to this question of consultation: Could there have been more consultation with Curriculum Committee? Certainly. We have explained our reasons for not

seeking further consultation, but as David Ross and I have discussed, we recognize in hindsight how we missed moments to work more closely, and we are working to put guidelines in place to ensure more consistent collaboration in future. As David pointed out at the last faculty meeting, the level of consultation was similar to what it had been in the past since the revision of the By-Laws, but we are all in agreement that it can and should be more extensive.

I have focused in this message on responding to questions and concerns, as I think was appropriate at this moment. But I also want to express gratitude to those colleagues who have been willing to offer affirmation as well as respectful and productive critique. Since the last faculty meeting I have received numerous messages from people with a range of feelings and perspectives on these issues, many of which I have referenced here, and all have offered information, insight, or suggestions to help move us forward as a faculty engaged in a process of self-governance that is and must be open to ongoing revision. I have to admit that there have been times this fall when I didn't feel that I could keep doing this work. Michael Rock's warning about faculty not wanting to serve on CAP seemed about to be realized, in my case anyway. But those kinds of collegial communications reminded me of why I agreed to serve on CAP in the first place and renewed my energy for persevering with the hard work.

I ask that faculty see CAP's efforts last year, imperfect as they may have been, as processes conducted in good faith, with outcomes acknowledged as appropriate by many faculty colleagues, including several members of the affected departments, as well as by the President and the Board. We on CAP feel that we engaged in a process with integrity and provided an explanation of that process. Because some of you felt that you wanted more information, we have tried to find a balance between remaining true to the process in which we have already engaged, and responding to those requests. We have heard the concerns of some faculty about reaching a better balance between consultation and transparency, and we will, taking up the useful suggestions of faculty colleagues as well as our own ideas about productive changes, continue to work on that balance. I ask the faculty to view the kinds of changes we are working to implement as we move forward as evidence of our ongoing efforts to continue to evolve our system of shared governance — not as indications of failure, but as evidence of a commitment to ongoing revision.

Sincerely,

Alison

Alison Cook-Sather
Chair, Committee on Academic Priorities

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ADDENDUM TO REPORT ON CAP'S CHARGE, 2010-2011

The following recommendations were made not to return to the pool four lines vacated by future retirements or departures:

Archeology

This recommendation came in the context of Phase III of Balancing Mission and Resources. It was recommended within the structure of the Graduate Group (GG) as a whole, given the following considerations. From the perspective of the College, these graduate programs are supported by a large number of faculty in three departments; these total 17 FTE. The number of FTEs in Classics and Archaeology is particularly large given the relatively low number of undergraduate students the two departments serve. CAP concluded that an FTE of 15 would be more appropriate for the Departments that serve the GG. The two positions CAP identified that would not be returned to the faculty pool include one in Classics already announced (in the 2008-2009 CAP report) and a position in Archaeology. While CAP identified these two particular positions, we conceived of them as coming from the GG as a whole and any future staffing plan needs to deal with these positions within the larger context of the GG, not as a situation these departments need to handle on their own. CAP offered some ideas about possible ways to conceptualize this revision, but we indicated that we felt that reconceptualization should be undertaken by the GG itself — a process in which they are now engaged.

German

While the enrollments in many German courses have been equal to national trends, and there is a good distribution of enrollments between lower- and upper-level courses, the number of students served have historically been low with respect to comparable departments at the College. In her report to CAP on the current numbers of the minors and majors at Bryn Mawr and Haverford, the Chair of the German Department indicated that these numbers are expected to increase with the stabilization of the Haverford German Department tenure-track new hire. In addition to stabilizing enrollment numbers, the recent hire in the German Department at Haverford will, we understood from our meeting with the Chair of the German Department at Bryn Mawr, provide balance in the Bi-Co offerings in German. In our conversation with the Chair, she affirmed that two FTE at Bryn Mawr and two at Haverford for the bi-college German Department would be an appropriate number to support an innovative and intellectually exciting curriculum, which that department has been developing in recent years not only internally but also in collaboration with many departments and programs. Based on its own assessment and informed by its conversation with the Chair, CAP concluded that one FTE from the German Department would not be returned to the pool at the time of the next tenure-track faculty departure or retirement, thus leaving the German Department with two FTE at Bryn Mawr. At the time of the next tenure-track faculty departure or retirement, CAP and the Chair of the Department agreed that, to maintain the scholarship profile of the

department, the two positions (the tenure-track and interim position) would be folded together to create a tenure-track position. CAP and the Administration conveyed their enthusiasm for ensuring a critical mass of resources and an ongoing presence of German studies. CAP indicated our expectation that when the tenure-track faculty departure or retirement announcement occurs, there would be a three-year transition timeline.

Italian

Concerns about the balance of enrollments in the Italian Department have been discussed over a long period, in meetings with CAP and with the Provost, with both the current and the previous chairs of the Department. Enrollments at the upper level in Italian and in intensive Italian have been small. In last spring's meeting, CAP and the Chair of Italian agreed that the Italian Department will eliminate intensive language courses, and with that elimination, and the accompanying elimination of the need to coordinate those, the CNTT position requested in the past would no longer be the priority that it has been. Going forward, the department will move toward an Italian Studies major with emphasis on cultural and interdisciplinary studies and extra-literary subjects, opening to collaboration with affiliated faculty and allied related courses in various disciplines throughout the college that present Italian components. These changes would allow the Department to shift its emphasis toward Italian Studies and a more transdisciplinary model. When CAP met with the Chair of the Italian Department, we agreed that the Department will move toward proposing an FTE of two, one of those through a process that is still under discussion with the Chair of Italian, the Provost, and CAP. The Department will pilot this new vision of the Italian curriculum in order to gauge the level of interest. When the second faculty member currently in Italian retires or departs, the line currently held by that faculty member will not be returned to the faculty pool.

Russian

Concerns about the Russian Department have been discussed over a long period, beginning with conversations about the future of the graduate program and in meetings with CAP and with the Provost. CAP recognizes that the Russian Department's Flagship program is a celebrated model for pre-professionals, that Russo-phone studies has an important place in a liberal arts college, and that Bryn Mawr is the principal option for the study of Russian language and culture in the tri-co. However, the number of students served by the Russian Department has been relatively low, when one looks across all students served by all departments. CAP recognizes the fact that many students in the Department complete a portion of their studies in Russia and sees this as a model dimension of the program, but there remains the issue of students served while here. Weighing all these considerations, CAP brought to the Russian Department the recommendation that one FTE in Russian vacated by the next retirement or departure not be returned to the faculty pool. At the same time, CAP encouraged Russian to propose the conversion of an interim position to a CNTT position to continue to support Russian language instruction. In conversation with CAP, Russian made clear that the decisions by CAP will help them streamline the program and revise the major.

As Russia becomes more multicultural, they hope to shift toward an emphasis on Russo-phone studies, which would open up options for majors to take courses in other departments.

RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY CAP IN YEARS PRIOR TO 2010-2011 FOR LINES THAT WOULD NOT BE RETURNED TO THE FACULTY POOL:

- One position in Classics in 2008-2009 as stated in CAP's Annual Report of that year, p. 2-3, p. 5
- Two positions in Social Work in 2008-2009 as noted in CAP's Annual Report of that year, p. 9
- One position in English in 2009-2010, as part of an agreement when English proposed a new line in 2009-2010, [this agreement included the commitment not to request a replacement when Anne Dalke retires]
- One position in Biology in 2009-2010 as stated in CAP's Annual Report of that year, p. 14
- One position in Peace & Conflict Studies in 2009-2010 as noted in CAP's Annual Report of that year, p. 12

CAP'S RESPONSIBILITIES

POG Article III, Section 3(a):

“The Faculty shall establish a committee with responsibility for recommending academic priorities (including priorities concerning staffing allocations, department and program facilities and resources, and restructuring or terminating existing departments and programs) in accordance with Article III, Section 1(a)(ii) and Article IV, Section 1, and with the authority to advise the President on institutional priorities and on the College budget, to the extent that it affects institutional priorities. The Faculty may, to the extent that it deems it appropriate, assign additional responsibilities within the jurisdiction of the Faculty to this committee.”

CAP'S CHARGE 2010-2011

CAP's charge for 2010-2011 was clearly laid out in CAP's 2009-2010 Annual Report. This charge was discussed with the faculty in the Spring 2010. Then and now, the By-Laws state, as Bob Dostal pointed out in our last meeting, in Section V (E) (2) (b) on the Committee on Academic Priorities, state: “With respect to resources for specific departments and programs, the committee shall establish academic priorities on behalf of the Faculty, without the requirement of consultation with the Faculty as a body, and, as part of the budgetary process, shall submit its recommendations to the President or other appropriate administrative officer.”