

Office of the President
Bryn Mawr College
101 N. Merion Avenue
Bryn Mawr, PA 19010-2899
(610) 526-5156

B R Y N M A W R

October 5, 2007

Dear Jim and other members of the Committee on Academic Priorities,

I write to respond formally to your “Annual Report to the General Faculty: 2006-2007.” Let me begin by thanking the members of the Committee (and especially 2006-’07 Convener, Kim Cassidy) for another deeply thoughtful and groundbreaking report. I am most grateful for your collective willingness to give of your time and your intellectual energy.

Last year members of CAP served again as the faculty representatives on the Board’s Task Force on Balancing the College’s Mission and Resources and on its Subcommittees to Review the Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research and the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. I want to acknowledge the extraordinary amount of work these roles have demanded, and the high degree of responsibility and insight CAP has contributed to our deliberations. Members of CAP are playing a leadership role in discussions regarding the institutional planning process that will replace the Task Force. Proposals emerging from these discussions will be brought to the faculty for further conversation in the coming months.

I am pleased that CAP’s participation on the Task Force has heightened the committee’s awareness of the need to make each long-term faculty position work not only for the requesting department but also for the College as a whole, and has prompted consideration of issues like potential collaborations, synergies, fit within a Bi- and Tri-College context, and the ability to staff against leave. I appreciate CAP’s emphasis on the importance of long-term planning. I also commend both CAP and the Departments who requested positions last year for their hard work to clarify criteria by which requests will be assessed and to speak directly to those criteria. These efforts have moved the College forward in strategic and constructive directions.

The addendum to CAP’s report took up the question of the spanning positions recommended in 2000-01 and 2001-02. The goals for these positions as they were originally proposed were (at least) threefold: a) to provide flexible leave replacement coverage supporting the enhanced sabbatical plan, b) to drive curricular innovation, and c) to enhance interdisciplinarity. Eleven spanning positions were recommended; of these eleven, five were approved for search, and three of the five are currently occupied. The

College has an ongoing commitment to the occupied positions, and to the contributions they make to our academic program. My approval this year of the Biology Department's position in Computational Ecology (see below) constitutes the reauthorization of another appointment originally conceived of as a spanning position. As CAP notes, there is no funding available to pursue the remaining positions as an expansion of the faculty. The critical issue for me, however, is a broader one, namely whether expanding the faculty any further is wise, given our 8:1 student/faculty ratio. I return to this question below. I share CAP's assessment that any added positions would need to become very focused on sabbatical replacement, effectively enhancing the proportion of full-time faculty without adding to overall FTE.

I want to confirm for the record the CAP position recommendations that I authorized earlier by email. On May 18, 2007, I approved the following replacement positions for searches in the 2007-'08 academic year:

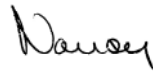
- A. Tenure-track (at the Assistant Professor level, unless otherwise noted):
 - Classical and Near Eastern Archaeology
 - Biology—Developmental/Evolutionary
 - East Asian Studies (Advanced Assistant or Associate)
 - English/Film
 - History
 - Philosophy
- B. Continuing Non-tenure Track
 - Geology—Lab Coordinator
 - Physics— Lab Coordinator (conversion of existing contract position)
 - Spanish— Language Pedagogue

I deeply appreciate the work done both by the departments and by CAP to assure that these redefined positions both reduce expenses and enhance quality. I have noted with interest the assurances from the departments regarding "leave-proofing," and I understand these to be agreements. In addition, I hereby authorize the recommended search in Biology (Computational Ecology) to be deferred until the 2008-'09 academic year. The filling of a second position in Biology is an important step not only in leave-proofing the Department but also in alleviating the significant enrollment pressures Biology has faced in the past several years. This approval further comes with the understanding that the Department will continue to contribute actively to the College Seminar Program, to interdisciplinary programs such as Environmental Studies, and to the Post-Baccalaureate Premedical Program. This position is now fully authorized for search. The Department need not re-submit to either CAP or the President.

As I see it, CAP has two major tasks to pursue this academic year in addition to the committee's usual business and its continuing involvement with the work of the Task Force on Balancing the College's Mission and Resources. The first of these, to which I alluded earlier, is to consider the question of the optimal size of the faculty. Bryn Mawr's current student/faculty ratio of 8:1 is tied for the most generous among our COFHE peers. I have asked CAP, in tandem with the deliberations of the Balancing

Task Force, to look at models for determining and managing faculty size in relation to such issues as the breadth of the curriculum, faculty teaching loads, student access to courses, and financial resources. I also see important work for CAP in thinking through issues arising in relation to the redefinition of the CNTT category. I commend CAP's and the Committee on Appointments' excellent criteria for new and replacement CNTT positions. I encourage the committee to discuss the possibility of alternative continuing categories and the achievement of greater clarity in shaping interim appointments.

Thank you once again for your dedicated work and thoughtful advice. With my very best wishes and abiding gratitude,



Nancy J. Vickers
President

Jim Martin, Convener 2007-2008
Pim Higginson
Christine Koggel
Liz McCormack
Michael Noel
Steve Salkever
Anjali Thapar
Sharon Ullman
cc. Kim Cassidy, Convener 2006-2007