

Committee on Academic Priorities

Dianna Xu, *Computer Science, 2017-18 – 2020-21, Chair 2020-21*

Jamie Taylor, *Literatures in English, 2017-18 – 2020-21 (on Leave 2020-21)*

Michael Allen, *International Studies and Political Science, 2018-19 – 2021-22*

Penny Armstrong, *French and Francophone Studies, 2019-20 – 2022-23*

Don Barber, *Environmental Studies and Geology, 2019-20 – 2022-23*

Radcliffe Edmonds, *Greek, Latin, and Classical Studies, 2019-20 – 2022-23*

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2020-21

tee on Academic Priorities (CAP) membership for 2020-21 consisted of Dianna Xu
cience, CAP Chair), Michael Allen (Political Science and International Studies),
strong (French and Francophone Studies), Don Barber (Environmental Studies and
adcliffe Edmonds (Greek, Latin, and Classical Studies), and Jamie Taylor (Literatures
Jamie Taylor was on sabbatical leave in AY 20-21.

(in her role as special advisor to the Provost) attended most CAP meetings by
AP is grateful for the administrative and clerical support provided by the Provost's
he committee especially thanks Tina Bockius, in her first year after taking over from
Livesay, for setting up meetings with departments, curating our Moodle website, and
n track.

ce a week during the fall semester and twice a week in the spring. Extra meetings were
oughout the winter break and spring pause due to the demands of our unusual schedule
Chair of CAP, Dianna Xu served on the Advisory Council of the Faculty and was our
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CAP's role is to balance institutional priorities in an environment of limited resources. In this year of global pandemic and unprecedented revenue shortfall, CAP became even more acutely aware of the concept of resource constraints. We are fortunate that, due to years of prudent financial planning, the College was able to support its faculty and staff with no lay-offs or even furloughs, and we have still been in a position to hire. In contrast, other institutions were forced to eliminate programs and cut staff and faculty positions; overall, higher-ed job postings suffered a 30%-40% reduction nationwide in 2020-21 as a result of complete or partial hiring freezes by many institutions (including Haverford, Swarthmore, and the University of Pennsylvania). At the same time, however, the College is adjusting its budget model to lower the amount it holds in contingency funding in order to increase faculty and staff salaries during these difficult times. One potential implication for CAP is that our ability to provide funding for a new line in anticipation of a future retirement (during the interval before that retirement takes place) has become more severely limited than in past years.

Our faculty is at a steady state in terms of number of positions. The primary reasons are the relative inflexibility of the size of our student body and of our very low student/faculty ratio. Occasionally, through donor gifts, we have been able to add faculty positions. While Bryn Mawr has been fortunate to receive bequests and gifts from various sources,¹ these are always the result of years of negotiations and time-

Last year, CAP began exploring the possibility of limiting the number of searches conducted in any given year in an effort to distribute time and financial commitments. In AY 20-21, out of the 13 approved positions, four departments deferred searches voluntarily. It is unclear, however, how many of the deferred searches were due to the pandemic and the resulting inability to conduct traditional on-campus interviews. Together with two failed searches in AY 20-21, this means that AY 20-21 will start with a significant backlog of six deferred searches (Chemistry, Computer Science, Economics, English, Physics, and Political Science). This also means that some of the positions CAP now recommends will inevitably have to entail deferred searches, as the six can hardly be expected to defer again.

This year, as in the past, CAP's chief business was to review each position request in the context of several factors, including the request's relation to the College's mission, academic priorities, and strategic directions; its contributions to departmental and disciplinary directions; its impact on overall faculty resources at Bryn Mawr and in the Bi-Co; the flexibility of position requests and adaptive curricular designs (especially as they relate to our capacity to accommodate sabbatical leaves without additional staffing); the history of previous requests; and the College's commitment to increasing faculty diversity. All position requests were evaluated according to these parameters. Below, we describe each position request, address its implications for the long-term academic priorities of the College, and state our recommendations to the President concerning its implementation.

- – This year, the Provost's Office

received four requests from departments and programs for pre- and post-doctorstm fordoc6 599.768nnj6

Program, and the actual time of the search. The complexities of this process illustrate the delay

In the meantime, it is CAP's sincere hope that the new Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow will bring staffing support to the Africana Studies Program while the College seeks opportunities to create a permanent line.

The Biology Department submitted a request for a tenure-track position at the level of Assistant Professor, for a scholar in neuroscience, broadly defined. The subdisciplinary focus of the biological neuroscientist who holds this position could include, but would not be limited to, molecular and cellular neuroscience, neurophysiology, sensory neuroscience, or developmental neuroscience. Teaching responsibilities would include an introductory neuroscience course, upper-level courses in cellular and molecular neuroscience, and contributions to the Neuroscience major capstone and the introductory biology curriculum. Supervision of undergraduate research in interdisciplinary neuroscience research also will be important. In making the request, the Biology Department noted that with the 2020 retirements of Professors Brodfuehrer and Greif, the department no longer has any faculty members whose primary expertise is in neuroscience. This gap is particularly problematic given burgeoning student interest in the field that has led to a new Bi-Co Neuroscience major. The request also noted continued heavy enrollment pressure in Biology courses from both majors and non-majors, as well as the involvement of department faculty in programming across the College curriculum.

CAP recognizes the need for staffing in the field of biological neuroscience, both for Biology majors and for the newly approved Bi-Co Neuroscience major. The position also may further support students interested in Health Studies, Data Science, Biochemistry, and Psychology. CAP also recognizes that supervision of undergraduate research in biology labs or in the field, for which student demand continues to increase, imposes additional time burdens on department faculty. CAP hopes that successful hires in genomics and neuroscience will provide some stability, thereby alleviating the department's need for interim support.

The Arts Program in Dance (Dance) submitted a request to convert a CNTT position held by a retiring colleague into a tenure-

The conversion of a CNTT position to a tenure-track position does not expand the faculty in terms of the number of permanent faculty lines. The resource implications, while not negligible, are minor and outweighed by curricular needs. In this case, CAP was persuaded that the conversion is justified. An External Review in 2018 recommended that two tenure-track faculty would be the normal staffing for programs of similar size in comparable liberal arts colleges. The numbers of students enrolled in Dance classes since 2015 have risen steadily, and there is a healthy number of independent majors and minors in Dance. CAP does note that it would be important to coordinate the timing of this hire with the sabbatical plans of the current tenure-track faculty member and that it may be necessary to hire a graduate assistant in the first couple of years to assist in managing the professional performance artists. CAP further notes that the planned decolonizing of the curriculum should make the position attractive to candidates representing many diverse backgrounds.

The Department of Greek, Latin, and Classical Studies requested a tenure-track position for a Classicist who would focus on the multi-cultural interactions of the ancient Mediterranean world and the ways in which these cultures have been received and interpreted in later centuries. The scholar could come from any of a wide range of specializations, such as ancient medicine and science, environmental humanities, critical race and ethnicity studies, and postcolonial studies. The PhD scholar would teach in both the Latin and Greek curricula at the graduate and undergraduate levels. This would include conducting graduate seminars and supervising candidates for MA theses and PhD dissertations. The proposal argues that the needs of the Department are greater than current faculty time can meet. In particular, citing the most recent External Review, Classics argues that the great strength of this department, and its best contribution to the reputation of Bryn Mawr College, lies in the graduate program, which Classics struggles to serve adequately with its current staffing.

This is an expansion position beyond Classic's current four FTEs. CAP agrees that while there is need at the graduate level, it does not justify the reallocation of a tenured faculty line from elsewhere in the college. Resource constraints will not allow the addition of a new line to a department on any other basis. Figures submitted with the proposal suggest an average of nine students per undergraduate class. This fact, along with the numbers of majors and minors served by 4 TT FTE (and interim hires), suggests gains could be made in reducing faculty resources involved in undergraduate teaching by closer coordination with colleagues at Haverford College. This would allow shifts of faculty time to graduate studies at Bryn Mawr. Meanwhile, CAP was pleased to be able to offer a CFD position to Classics for the 2021-2022 academic year to replace a member on leave.

The Department of History submitted a request for a tenure-track line in Medieval History, after the resignation of a tenured colleague. The scholar would have expertise within the time period 700 CE – 1500 CE and focus on issues of race, religion, migration, labor, and cultural exchange, not

just in Europe but in the broader Medieval world. The proposal stressed the fact that the department has had strong coverage of medieval history in the past, that interest in the period remains strong, and that the recent horrific appropriations of an imagined Eurocentric Medieval period make scholarly coverage of this period a timely need. The absence of any coverage of this period in the counterpart department at Haverford also means that there is no other resource in the Bi-Co community to cover this need; there is in fact no faculty member in either department whose expertise reaches earlier than the Early Modern Period. The proposal received letters of support from colleagues in the counterpart department at Haverford and History of Art.

It has been more than 15 years since the department has undergone an external review, and, as the proposal itself points out, the discipline has been re-imagined in important ways in the intervening time period. The Haverford History Department is scheduled to have an external review next year,

No vacancies in tenure lines currently exist in Mathematics, and the College is not at present in a financial position to carry an extra line until the next vacancy. CAP, however, recognizes the need for a statistician and appreciates the creative and bold step taken by the department. CAP also welcomes and affirms this reconfiguration of the faculty expertise in Mathematics. Members of the Department of Mathematics meeting with CAP agreed that recruitment of a statistician will take time, and that it would be better to get the right person later, rather than to make a suboptimal choice in haste. Given that consideration and given that this would be a reallocation among existing faculty lines rather than the creation of a new line, CAP approves the proposal in principle, subject to the next vacancy in a tenured line within that department.

The Program in Middle Eastern Studies (MEST) and the Arabic Language Program submitted a request for a tenure-track line in the Humanities, housed in the Middle Eastern Studies Program, to anchor the Middle Eastern Studies curriculum. These two programs also submitted a proposal in response to CAP's call for a tenure-track line in international studies, with a focus on Middle

realize that level of staffing. With this hire, Sociology will be fully staffed, and it is expected that the Sociology Department will be leave-proof with 6 FTE.

The Department of Sociology also submitted a proposal to the call for the second international studies line for a globally oriented position specializing in terrorism/counter-terrorism, policing, and intelligence. This sociologist is envisioned to offer courses for both the International Studies Program, Sociology, and Political Science, and the proposal outlined a number of exciting examples.