

Committee on Academic Priorities

Kate Thomas, Literatures in English, 2021-22 – 2024-25, Chair 2023-24

Astrid Lindenlauf, Classical and Near Eastern Archaeology, 2022-23 – 2025-26

Michael Noel, Physics, 2022-23 – 2025-26

Adrienne Prettyman, Philosophy, 2023-24 – 2026-27 (On Leave Semester II)

Maja Šešelj, Anthropology, 2021-22 – 2024-25

Cindy Sousa, Social Work and Social Research, 2023-24 – 2026-27 (On Leave Semester II)

Arlo Weil, Geology 2023-2024, (Substitute, Semester II)



April 16, 2024

Annual Report to the Faculty 2023-2024

The Committee on Academic Priorities (CAP) membership for 2023-24 consisted of Astrid Lindenlauf (Classical and Near Eastern Archaeology), Michael Noel (Physics), Adrienne Prettyman (Philosophy; on leave Spring 2024), Maja Šešelj (Anthropology), Cindy Sousa (Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research, on leave Spring 2024), and Kate Thomas (Literatures in English, Chair). Arlo Weil (Geology) served as a substitute during the Spring 2024 semester. The Provost, Tim Harte, attended CAP meetings by invitation. CAP is grateful for the administrative and clerical support provided by the Provost's Office, especially Tina Bockius, for setting up meetings with departments, curating our Moodle website, and keeping us on track.

CAP met once a week during the Fall semester and twice a week in the Spring, with additional meetings in the Fall to accommodate work on the two new tenure track hires. We also held meetings with Haverford's Strategic Curriculum and Personnel Committee (SCPC). The Provost and the Chair met weekly to prepare CAP agendas. As Chair of CAP, Kate Thomas served on the Advisory Council of the Faculty, was our representative to the Board of Trustees, and represented CAP on the outside review for the Chemistry department. Maja Šešelj continued to serve as CAP's representative to the College Budget Committee and was CAP's representative on the Institutional Assessment Committee, and Astrid Lindenlauf served as CAP's representative to the Strategic Advisory Group.

Although most of CAP's work entailed meeting with departments and programs and making recommendations about their position requests, CAP also engaged other issues during the 2023-2024 academic year. Below, as a preamble to our recommendations, we report on some of the issues we addressed.

Reflections on CAP's Mission and Role

CAP's mission remains the recommendation of institutional priorities, in the context of balancing College resources. Our first question must therefore always be: what is the current size of the College? The Institutional Research team provided us with the following answers. In the

graduating class of 2022/2023, there were 36 majors and 325 students: 266 completed 1 major, 58 completed 2 majors, and 1 completed 3 majors for a total of 385 majors in all. Of those, 16 were completed by Bryn Mawr students at Haverford. In addition, 42 Haverford students graduated with a Bryn Mawr major. The asymmetry in students not majoring at their home campus is worth noting and should be reviewed in future years. There was an average of approximately 11 graduating students per major, distributed unevenly. As of Fall 2023, the College is offering 32 majors (including the Independent Major) that are exclusive to Bryn Mawr, and an additional 5 Bri-Co majors. The College currently has 317 graduate students: 68 from the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences a total of 182 from the Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research (GSSWSR), and 67 in the Postbac program.

Incoming student enrollment increased from 351 students in 2015 to a peak of 422 in 2021. Our two most recent classes enrolled 396 (in 2022) and 361 (in 2023). The recruitment and enrollment environment in higher education has been extremely volatile; given such unpredictability, we are certainly encouraged that so many prospectives and applicants choose Bryn Mawr. Our popularity comes with challenges, though: heavier workloads for faculty, increased class sizes, limited availability for students and – in some cases – roadblocks to majors of their choice.

For the last several years, CAP worked in accordance with the College's commitment to remain at a "steady state" with respect to the number of continuing faculty. This was largely informed by the faculty-student ratio, which currently sits at 8:1, and which has fluctuated between 8/9:1 in the last few years. This ratio is based on student FTE and faculty FTE, including faculty on leave (unless on unpaid leave) and interim faculty who are curricular additions (though not those who are replacements for faculty on leave), but does not include the faculty of the GSSWSR. This metric contributes approximately 4% to the College's ranking in the US News and World Report, though the weight of that factor has increased over time. Because most of our peer institutions fall in the same ratio range, changes in either direction would have a measurable effect on our rankings, though likely not a dramatic one. At the present time we have 182 continuing faculty at the College, including 10 faculty and the Dean in the GSSWSR, and 11 athletics faculty. Excluding course sections in Dance (which cross lists many courses with Physical Education), the Writing Center, the Quantitative Center, and the GSSWSR, 280 out of 903 courses, or 31% of course sections, were taught by interim faculty in AY 2023-24. (Note also excluded from the count of courses were sections in the B403, B701, and B800 designations.)

In contrast with recent years' commitment to maintaining the "steady state," our work this year was shaped around the addition of two lines expressly designed to reduce the most severe enrollment pressures. These pressures were described in some detail in CAP's report of AY 2022-23. CAP has been keenly aware that students were, in some instances, being lotteried out of the classes they needed to enter or complete a major. We were also aware that in some fields, class sizes were climbing beyond what is expected in an elite liberal arts institution. CAP was tasked with receiving applications for these two lines and evaluating them on an accelerated timeline, in a different form and separately from other applications. This process required deft footwork from petitioning departments, and we are grateful for their efforts.

For these two new lines, we requested letters of intent by May 26th, full proposals by September 22nd, and then, after meeting with each department, we submitted our recommendations to the President on October 13, 2023. Notifying the departments of our recommendations before Fall break meant that departments who were not awarded one of the two new lines could elect to submit an application,

with modifications as needed, for consideration during CAP's regular cycle. Some departments chose

With respect to converting interim staffing to continuing faculty lines, whether CNTT or tenure track (TT), CAP has, over the years, recognized multiple benefits of doing so despite such changes not being cost neutral. In the 2007-report, CAP took the position that such conversions do not increase the overall size of the faculty, and are “cost saving and quality enhancers,” particularly with an eye towards reducing the need for leave replacements. “Having more tenure track faculty consistent with the College’s teacher/scholar model of staffing, it increases the stability of the curriculum and the overall quality of faculty engagement with students, it saves existing faculty the time and the energy of having to hire and manage interim faculty, and it increases the number of faculty providing services to the students (such as thesis supervision and major advising).” Indeed, these advantages were highlighted by all departments requesting a conversion this year. The 2007-08 CAP report added, “In CAP conversions with the CFO it was established that such conversions increase the total costs per faculty member to the College, over the long term. The CFO advised CAP to consider one TT position the equivalent of 1.2 interim positions. To remain cost neutral in this context, departments would need to provide for a 1.2 FTE reduction in interim needs in return for one TT replacement. To remain staffing neutral a department would need to accommodate both the reduction of a course load to a .5 course load and the corresponding increase in leaves —without the addition of replacements to cover those course losses” (emphasis in the original). They further note that “CAP will require proposals to consider what it would mean to reduce long term staffing resources by 1.2 FTE to achieve a one swap scenario.” The above guidelines were created over 15 years ago, and thus, CAP has been working with the Provost’s Office to better understand the full range of implications, from curricular to budgetary, of such conversions at the present time. While it is still the case that a long term commitment to continuing faculty lines (TT or CNTT) represents a substantial investment by the College, and may be seen as limiting flexibility, CAP is encouraged by the Board’s desire for the College to rely less on interim faculty labor, and we will continue to explore this issue in the coming academic year.

CAP Processes

A primary objective for this year’s CAP has been to reduce the time required from departments and programs to prepare a position request. There are many factors in today’s higher education landscape that we cannot control. We can, however, tailor the demands of our own bureaucratic processes and streamline what we ask of departments in their interactions with CAP. We had for a while found that the preliminary “listening meetings” held in the Fall duplicated the formal meetings all petitioning departments/programs must have with CAP in the Spring. We were also keen to move away from a model in which only two CAP members were present for these meetings, feeling that it produced redundancy in our conversations. We therefore now offer to meet with any department or program that asks for a meeting in the Fall, but it is neither expected nor required. In her response to the CAP report of 2020-21, President Cassidy expressed support of changes in protocol that “streamline work while preserving transparency”; we are increasingly motivated by that goal, and we will continue to work to ensure that our protocols are more focused than they are mercurious.

The most dramatic of our changes this year has been the inauguration of a questionnaire to streamline the application process and make applications more consistent across departments. This replaces the open ended, narrative style proposals we used to request CAP felt that although we distributed guidelines and expectations, the genre was too unstructured and often resulted in petitioning departments and programs producing very long, and perhaps anxious, documents. We therefore piloted a questionnaire that we hoped provided more clarity and a shared structure, but

also left plenty of room for a narrative component. We wanted to allow for some overlap with the old system and provide space for any additional contexts that departments and programs wanted to convey. We will seek feedback on this pilot questionnaire ~~this~~ semester as we seek to refine our protocols for future years. Our goal is to make the application process as straightforward and time efficient as possible for the petitioning departments, by making the application documents intuitive and easy to use. There is no change to the Letters of Intent format ~~but~~ we do want to remind faculty that these are public documents, shared with the community

next year: Political Science; Peace, Justice, and Human Rights; Visual Studies; and Linguistics
They also shared that in the coming year ~~at~~ ~~the~~ ~~University~~ ~~of~~ ~~Delaware~~ will expand its faculty by two tenure positions, each housed within extant departments/programs but bringing focus on entrepreneurship and praxis into the curriculum

Faculty Positions at the College

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 directionsits contributions to departmental and disciplinary directions; its impact on overall faculty resources at Bryn Mawr and in the College

CAP recommended that the request from the Department of History and the Program in Gender and Sexuality Studies for a tenure-track position be approved at the Associate Professor level for the following reasons:

CAP was in enthusiastic support of the reflective process and creativity through which the History department arrived at the proposed position. We agreed that it fills an important curricular need in both US History and Gender and Sexuality studies. This position was recommended by CAP and approved by the President earlier this year and has now been filled using the new opportunity hire process. This new process was jointly developed by CA, CAP, and the Provost's Office and was announced at the February 28th faculty meeting.

Department of History of Art, Conversion of Interim to Continuing Non-Tenure Track Request

The request was for a continuing, non-tenure track position dedicated solely to undergraduate teaching and service, in the field of Modern and Contemporary Art, Film and Media Studies, Museum Studies, Visual Culture, and Latinx Art.

CAP recommends that the request from the Department of History of Art for a conversion for a continuing non-tenure track line not be approved at this time for the following reasons:

CAP very much appreciated the breadth of coverage in this position request. We recognize the popularity of courses in these areas and their importance to both the field and the College's goals of increasing the study of BIPOC, non-western and global visual cultures. We would also like to salute the excellence of the current interim teaching in these areas and service to the College. CAP feels, however, that the way this line and its duties are conceived is not congruent with how the College defines the scope and character of CNTT positions. The College expects, for example, that CNTT responsibilities include entry level courses with "a lot of skill building and/or drill work [. . .] the coordination of placement exams, the supervision of teaching assistants and the proposed position does not fit the College's definition of the CNTT track

Department of Literatures in English, Tenure-Track Request

The Department of Literatures in English submitted a proposal for a tenure-track line for a scholar of Asian American and/or Pacific Islander (AAPI) literatures, with a potential expertise in postcolonial studies. The proposed line would support the department's global focus on Anglophone diasporic literatures, as well as the minor in Asian American Studies. The methodological expertise in postcolonial studies, should it materialize, would also in part address a reduction of this coverage in the department due to a recent retirement and a departure of faculty at Haverford and Swarthmore, respectively. Additionally, the proposed line would close the 3 FTE deficit that had resulted from a departure, a retirement, and a passing of continuing faculty in the department over the past few years. During this time, the department has had to rely heavily on interim faculty to maintain their course offerings, including their commitment to the ESem program.

becoming the department of Transnational Italian Studies in AY 2020. CAP recommends that the department review their scheduling and coordination of courses between campuses and the frequency of team teaching to maximize efficiency. A resubmitted proposal should explore how a roster of 2 TT plus 1 CNTT and no interim contracts might adequately staff their classes. In developing this plan, the department should consider the CNTT guidelines that require tenure line faculty to teach at all curriculum levels.