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June 10, 2021

Tiku Majumder, chair
Faculty Steering Committee

Dear Tiku:

At the suggestion of the Provost, CEAC spent this year on developing a proposal for a Climate Damage Charge (CDC) to be applied to all air travel paid for by the College. Until recently, the levels of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) from air travel were not fully accounted for; once they were, it became clear that Scope 3 emissions were a larger component of Williams' carbon emissions than had been suspected, and one that in recent years has increased.

After exploring paths taken by a number of other colleges and universities, the committee endorsed the creation of an emissions charge that would be uniformly applied to students, faculty and staff. CEAC did so both in the interests of fairness (a ton of GHG emissions is a ton of emissions, however it is generated), and to avoid the nightmare of creating some sort of panel responsible for adjudicating the merits of very different requests (yes to a historian's work in Japan? No to a recruitment trip to the West Coast?).

The wisdom of this approach was confirmed by the results of a survey of faculty, students and staff organized by CEAC (special thanks to Chris Winters!). As the results showed, people travel for an enormous range of reasons, and all – particularly all faculty – are jealous of their reasons for so doing. The committee decided that the best

path forward was to charge for emissions rather than merit or intentions abstractly considered. Our policy would require any person wanting to charge flights against Williams College first to use software tools to calculate the amount of emissions produced by a given flight, and then to pay a corresponding charge per ton of GHG emissions. (OIT is currently investigating the commercially available emissions calculators and will report back with a purchase recommendation in the fall.)

Given the complexity of instituting this policy, CEAC further proposes that the college conduct a year-long dry run of the system beginning in the Fall 2021. All people taking flights would be required to calculate the amount and cost of their emissions, but no actual climate damage charges would be levied. A dry run would allow users to familiarize themselves with the process while giving the administration a chance to correct any blind spots in the system without penalizing users.

CEAC submitted its proposals to the President and the Provost at the beginning of May. The chair also met with groups on campus including the Committee on Priorities and Resources, the Office for Information Technology, and the Carbon Action Planning Group to discuss campus concerns about the policy rollout, and served as an *ex officio* member of the Carbon Assets Working Group and the Carbon Action Plan Group.

The Chair would like to take this moment to recognize the need to revise the committee's charge, makeup, and numbers. Given the enormous growth in the complexity of tools used to measure and address sustainability, it no longer makes sense to imagine that CEAC in its current form can effectively address those questions. It's simply not possible for new committee members to enter into discussions of LEED versus Petal building certifications, carbon offsets, and the technical requirements of building solar fields over the course of an 8-month term.

One simple, significant fix would be to expand the numbers of students and faculty on the committee from three to four, and to change their term of service to two years. This

would mean that at any given time, two faculty and two students would be continuing members with ongoing institutional memory, and experience in the issues at hand. The same principle holds for chairs: it was no great service for the college to have appointed a chair in 2019-1020 who had never served on the committee. It was at least six months before I understood the basic issues before the committee, and could begin to gain traction.

Sincerely,

Shawn Rosenheim, Chair

2020-2021 CEAC Members

Michelle Apotsos, Department of Art

Temesgen Araya, Director of Dining Services, *ex officio*

Rita Coppola-Wallace, Director, Design and Construction, *ex officio*

Niku Darafshi, '21

Mike Evans, Associate Director, Zilkha Center, *ex officio*

Sarah Gardner, Associate Director of Center for Environmental Studies, *ex officio*

Matthew Gibson, Department of Economics

Nicolas Howe, Director, Environmental Studies Program, *ex officio*

Rose Kirk-Davidoff, '21

Shawn Rosenheim, Department of English

Christina Sanborn, Director for Facilities Operations, *ex officio*

Maya Spalding-Fecher, '21

Chris Winters Associate Provost, *ex officio*