

**INSTITUTIONAL POLICY AND PLANNING COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
April 6, 2007**

PRESENT: President Philip Glotzbach, Chair; Professor Mark Huibregtse, Vice Chair; Susan Kress, Muriel Poston, Michael West, Mary Lou Bates, Pat Oles, Ann Henderson, Dan Moran, Beau Breslin, Mehmet Odekon, William Lewis, John Chaplin, Barbara McDonough; Justin Sipher and Sue Van Hook (regular guests); and Barbara Krause (Secretary).

ABSENT: Jeff Segrave, Michael Casey, and Kelly Carr.

1. Review of minutes.

Minutes of the March 23, 2007 meeting were **approved** as distributed, with the following amendments:

Under item number five, **07-08 budget**, the first paragraph under Academic Affairs should read as follows:

- Academic Affairs: Vice President Kress noted that the document reflects discussions among the entire VPAA Senior Staff. The decision to rank the items under one heading, “Academic Affairs,” rather than three (ODSP, ODOF, OVPAA) as in the past, reflects the consensus reached by the whole group about priorities in Academic Affairs. Academic Affairs has added 0.5 of a tenure-track line; has converted one temporary full-time position to a tenure-track line, and has converted one temporary lecturer to an Artist-in-Residence position.

Item number seven, **SGA Report**, second sentence, should be amended to read as follows: “The process would include the SGA and the Dean of **Student Affairs** [replacing ‘Studies Office’] in a review of any proposed changes.”

2. Diversity Forum and Follow-Up Conversations.

Dean Pat Oles reported on conversations he has had with students, colleagues in Student Affairs, the Intercultural and Global Understanding Task Force, and student leaders following the student-sponsored diversity forum held on March 30, 2007. In addition to comments directed at the six points described in the students’ memorandum to Dean Oles and Associate Dean Steigerwald, comments he has heard include the following:

- Questions about the appropriate reporting relationship for the Director of Student Diversity Programs and/or the administrative structure supporting the three diversity programs.
- The sense that for newcomers to Skidmore in particular, discussions related to diversity may seem politicized and/or personal so that newcomers (perhaps administrative staff more so than faculty members) find it difficult to engage in the conversation.
- While there is general support for Goal Two of the *Strategic Plan*, we must identify more concrete action items to implement the vision for intercultural and global understanding.
- We need to improve our mentoring of new employees.
- What should be the work of students and what should be the work of the administration and faculty members?

Dean Oles then reviewed the outline of his response to students. He stated that his current intention is to name an Interim Director of Student Diversity Programs as soon as possible and to conduct the search expeditiously with the goal of having a new person in place at or near the start of the fall 2007 semester. In order to accomplish that goal, he would involve students who are on campus over the summer and consider other ways of ensuring appropriate community involvement.

IPPC members offered the following comments in response to Dean Oles' summary:

- The forum was successful in drawing together the community to discuss a difficult issue. This success argues for renewed consideration of a "common hour."
- The difficulty of joining into campus conversations related to diversity reflects many aspects of privilege, even within the faculty ranks.
- Institutionalizing the commitment to diversity would be served by appointing a Cabinet level position with direct participation in decision making. On the other hand, the approach currently in place requires every member of the Cabinet to accept responsibility for diversity her or his own area.
- The College should consider whether it (as opposed to student groups) should take greater ownership of large-scale events such as Black History Month or Asian Awareness Month. Would it be possible for students to develop ideas for these events, but to have college administrators execute the logistical pieces?

- A request was made to discuss at IPPC the process by which Strategic Action Agenda items are identified. This discussion will occur later in the semester when IPPC, as indicated earlier in the semester, will identify possible Strategic Action Agenda items for the Cabinet's consideration.

In concluding the diversity discussion, one member asked the question: What legacy do we all want to leave at Skidmore? Where should we spend our time and energy? SGA President Dan Moran noted, in closing, that Project Unity meets every Friday afternoon at 3:30, and that anyone from the community is welcome.

3. SGA Report.

SGA President Dan Moran reported that elections concluded this morning. Election reports will be available in the near future.

The SGA passed several constitutional amendments, including a revision to its Willingness-to-Serve process, creation of a Vice President for Diversity Affairs, and an amendment to the Integrity Board, creating a new Honor Code Commissioner. This last amendment will require IPPC approval.

The Student Affairs Subcommittee of IPPC continues to work on its recommendations regarding Case Center and on a report related to the Integrity Board. Those items will be brought forward at a future IPPC meeting.

Finally, the SGA approved a resolution to support a double-sided printing policy for all faculty, staff, and students.

4. Report from the Campus Environment Committee.

Professor Sue Van Hook reported that CEC has been working on a poster policy for five years, with no consensus of support from students. A question was raised as to whether there should be a policy promulgated by the higher levels of the administration. Mr. Moran expressed his strong desire that CEC continue to work through a more organic process.

Following discussion of what aspect(s) of a paper reduction proposal might be most immediately effective, Professor Van Hook identified the double-sided printing proposal, mail distribution protocol, and poster policy as most immediately important. She will bring forward specific proposals to IPPC at the next meeting.

5. Background on Retiree Health Care.

Vice President Mike West began this report by noting that external accounting standards applicable to all organizations will require Skidmore to reflect its obligations under its defined benefit plans differently as of May 31, 2007. The preliminary impact of these changes would be an approximate \$18 million increase in liabilities (and a corresponding reduction in unrestricted net assets) on the College's balance sheet. While this change, technically speaking, will not have a current effect on the College's operating budget, the change does require the College to acknowledge in a formal way that our liability for health-care costs (and retiree-health-care costs in particular) is a liability that is growing much faster than inflation. Mr. West then explained that Skidmore's post-retirement health-care-benefit cost measured as a percentage of the endowment registers at 14.4%. That total far exceeds the same calculation for our peer institutions; the next closest peer percentage is 5.9%.

Vice President West acknowledged that historically, Skidmore offered comparatively generously benefits in part to offset comparatively lesser compensation. He also acknowledged that certain representations were made in prior years to employees with respect to their post-retirement benefits. All of these factors will be taken into account as the College considers how to address this looming problem.

Finally, Vice President West noted that this problem is not unique to Skidmore, but that other colleges have moved more quickly to address it. He noted concern expressed by members of the College's Board of Trustees that the College's fringe-benefits rate not accelerate disproportionately. He will continue to develop options with his staff; he will discuss those options with IPPC's subcommittee on Budget and Finance and, subsequently, with the full IPPC.

6. Accepted Candidates Days.

President Glotzbach reminded all members of IPPC that we are in the midst of Accepted Candidates Days, with 30% of the spring-admitted students self-identified as students of color. The visits by accepted candidates present an opportunity for every member of the committee to help attract the most diverse class in the College's history.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:10 P.M.

Minutes prepared by Barbara Krause, Secretary. Please notify of any changes.