

**INSTITUTIONAL POLICY AND PLANNING COMMITTEE**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
**May 14, 2010**

PRESENT: Chair; Professor Adrienne Zuerner, Vice Chair; Rochelle Calhoun, Michael Casey, Winston Grady-Willis, Ann Henderson, Susan Kress, Kim Marsella, Muriel Poston, Jeff Segrave, Justin Sipher, Michael West, Mary Cogan, Raina Bretan, James Welsh, Hugh Foley, and Anne Petruzzelli.

ABSENT: President Philip Glotzbach, Mary Lou Bates, Erica Bastress-Dukehart, and Susan Bender.

**1. Approval of Minutes**

Approval of the minutes from the April 30, 2010 meeting was deferred.

**2. Admissions Update**

In the absence of Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid Mary Lou Bates, Vice President for Finance and Administration Michael West distributed copies of a memo from Dean Bates to the Board of Trustees dated May 7, 2010, presenting an overview of the Class of 2014. Mr. West pointed out that the current projection, including summer melt, is for a class of 70 over the target enrollment. Associated with this over-enrollment and despite offering fewer packages than last year, the financial aid budget also currently is \$1.5 million over budget; the revenue from over-enrollment will more than cover that cost. Mr. West also noted that both the quality (AQR) and the diversity of the class are stronger than expected. Mr. West acknowledged that this over enrollment will present challenges in teaching, academic space, first year seminars, course availability, and housing, but will generate a positive cash flow.

Dean of Student Affairs Rochelle Calhoun reported that if we opened today, there would be 185 students being “tripled” in residence halls. The Office of Residential Life has sent out letters to some juniors and seniors currently scheduled to be in residence halls offering permission to move off-campus, and that may be extended to even more students, if needed. Mr. West added that the incentives offered were significant (free board at a value of approximately \$5,000 or \$2,000 cash), and it is expected that many students will consider it.

Mr. West provided some comparative information regarding our peer institutions. At least one peer also is over-enrolled, while several had to go to their waitlist to get their class. He attributed part of Skidmore’s enrollment success to the Discovery Days held in April.

Dean Poston was asked about the impact of over-enrollment on the First-Year Seminars. Dean Poston indicated there will be an increase in the maximum from 15 to 16 students per seminar, and while in the past there have been some seminars with only 8 or 9 students, that will not be the case in the coming year. Director of the First-Year Experience Beau Breslin has

reported that students will be asked to indicate their top ten choices from 45 seminars, and he expects to accommodate one of their top five choices in most cases. Dean Poston mentioned that another area of pressure will be in the laboratory sciences, where the current cap of 15 to 16 students will need to become 16 to 18.

There was some discussion about the stress that over enrollment puts on all services of the College, tensions in the faculty, and historical data that indicates a drop in retention during periods of over-crowding. Also mentioned were the problems that will come when registration begins for the second semester and again when registering for the sophomore year. There will be even more cases of students being closed out of desired classes.

### **3. FY '11 Update**

Vice President West thanked IPPC members for coming to this special meeting, and pointed out that the Admissions over-enrollment had significantly changed the budget picture for FY '11. He also noted that the status of the New York State Budget and the fragility of the stock market activity in the past few days continue to make it very difficult to predict outcomes.

Mr. West distributed copies of a memo he sent to members of the Budget and Finance Committee on May 7, 2010, regarding the proposed budget for FY '11, and pointed out several key changes in budget projections on several attached reports. Mr. West reported that due to the positive changes in the College's financial outlook, the budget for FY '11 that will be presented to the Board of Trustees at their May meeting will now include a 2% GSA.

Following review of the financial reports, comments included the following:

- Over-enrollment revenue will cover the increase in financial aid costs for the coming year.
- It is clear that new approaches regarding the awarding of financial aid work, a low tuition increase, good weather for accepted candidates days, and the draw of the new Zankel Music Center were all instrumental in helping to get the class.
- Skidmore's downward movement on the list of the most expensive schools was a strategic priority, and it appears that we will make significant progress in that regard.
- This year's applicants chose Skidmore after already living through the fiscal crisis, unlike last year's class, who had applied to the College before the financial collapse.
- One member expressed concern about whether our criteria for projecting an incoming class needs re-evaluation and asked if, going forward, we should be more conservative knowing that our system for projecting numbers is not precise. Mr. West assured the group that Admissions seeks advice from several people when projecting outcomes. He noted that this was a particularly tough year, and that it was originally thought that we would need to go to the waitlist—which had students with high AQRs, but also with high

financial need. It was mentioned that there have been several years when this system has allowed Admissions to pinpoint class numbers with a high degree of accuracy. Mr. West also pointed out the financial risks of coming in under the desired number of students.

- Another member suggested that a complete analysis of the financial aid strategy used this year may be in order to see if changes may need to be made in our approach to decisions regarding aid.
- A member asked what we can do in the long- and short-term with regard to risk management in under/over enrollment. He stressed the need for balance, as going too far into the waitlist (re: student quality) would change the trajectory of the College for years to come and hurt our reputation with peer institutions and guidance counselors.
- In response to a question about whether the financial aid budget might be reduced over the summer, Mr. West indicated that in addition to summer melt, there will be a review during the summer verification process. For instance, if a family projected their income too low, upon verification, aid could be reduced.
- Vice President for Academic Affairs Susan Kress reminded members that external changes in the economy, as well as criticisms of the liberal arts sector in the media, have made people ask “is it worth it?” Applications were down, and a strong message was sent to Admissions that it would be better to “miss high” than to “miss low.” She noted that President Glotzbach has often stated, “We are running a different race now.” She also said she was grateful to have had the opportunity to participate in this discussion and wondered how we could have this depth of conversation with the community when community meetings are not well attended, and there is no time to address it at this level in faculty meetings.
- A member asked whether IPPC meetings could be structured differently to reduce unproductive time and increase the time available for substantive conversations.

#### **4. Boathouse Funding Proposal**

Dean of Student Affairs Rochelle Calhoun referred to a document distributed in advance of the meeting entitled *New Boathouse Expansion and Improvement Proposal*. She reminded IPPC members that over the course of the past year, she had brought them information regarding a proposed renovation to the College boathouse in the Athletics Facilities Plan. She told members that the next step is to take the project to the fundraising phase and asked if they had any questions or concerns about her taking this recommendation to the Board of Trustees next week. Comments included the following:

- One member urged that planning take into account not only the number of boats currently owned by the College, but also any future anticipated growth to the program.

- Members inquired about the possibility of using some of the space for academic programs – e.g., storage of boats or laboratory equipment used by the sciences in their field work. Rochelle agreed that this would be worth a conversation, and offered to ask Director of Athletics Gail Cummings-Danson if it would be possible to do so with a new configuration.
- A member asked if fundraising for the boathouse would negatively affect Advancement fundraising for other needs. Vice President for Advancement Michael Casey assured the group that there is a targeted group of potential donors for whom athletics would be their sole focus.

Vice Chair Zuerner thanked everyone for their time and attendance.

*Minutes prepared by Karen Ernst and Barbara Krause; please notify of any changes.*