

INSTITUTIONAL POLICY AND PLANNING COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
February 18, 2011

PRESENT: Acting President Susan Kress, Chair; Hugh Foley, Vice Chair; Mary Lou Bates, Rochelle Calhoun, Michael Casey, Winston Grady-Willis, Mark Huibregtse, Bob Turner, Muriel Poston, Paty Rubio, Jeff Segrave, Justin Sipher, Michael West, Adrienne Zuerner, Gail Cummings-Danson, Denise Smith, Joseph Stankovich, Jonathan Zeidan, and Barbara Krause (Secretary).

ABSENT: Alexandra Stark, Anne Petruzzelli.

1. Approval of Minutes

Minutes of the February 4, 2011 meeting were approved with the following amendments:

- Item 2 (Budget Planning FY12) – first bullet should read as follows: “The Consumer Price Index as of December 2010 was 1.5%, somewhat lower than expected. Current budget modeling assumes that the CPI as of June 2011 will be 2.0% due in part to increasing fuel prices.”
- Item 2 (Budget Planning FY12) – page 3, first bullet that page should read as follows: “Notwithstanding these arguments, a faculty member noted that the failure to add faculty lines when student enrollment has increased has a negative impact on students’ educational experience.”
- Item 2 (Budget Planning FY12) – page 3, third complete bullet should read as follows: “One member noted that we have planned for the replacement of retiring faculty over the coming years, and that each of those hires will represent an opportunity to advance our diversity efforts.”

2. CIGU Update

Professor Winston Grady-Willis, who co-chairs CIGU along with Cori Filson, reported that CIGU met last week for the first time this semester. The group discussed the events surrounding the Compton’s incident and the issues that have surfaced following that incident. He noted that several CIGU members have been closely associated in varying capacities with discussions related to the incident, although about half of the membership has had little involvement.

Professor Grady-Willis indicated that the fundamental outcome of the meeting is that CIGU, as a committee, hopes to be involved in a sustained dialogue on campus; among the issues to be considered are campus climate in general; the admission, recruitment and retention of students of color; the recruitment and retention of faculty and staff; and the question of how the aspirational language of Goal Two of the *Strategic Plan* is to be implemented on campus on an ongoing basis.

Professor Grady-Willis reported that CIGU co-chair Cori Filson had noted that even for CIGU, a group whose membership has been established for some time, the conversation around these issues was more difficult than expected. He suggested that dialogue is absolutely necessary to address issues of perception and to make progress on the campus climate issues.

With respect to his own position, Professor Grady-Willis noted that he had been asked whether he would support the Discovery program hosted by Admissions. He reported that despite some current concerns that would preclude him from participating actively, he would talk with prospective students, if they approached him, regarding Skidmore. He also noted that in response to questions about whether he would support white students who were accused of attacking a black individual, he reported that anytime he believed justice was not being served, he would speak out.

Comments and questions from IPPC members included the following:

- In response to a question about the likely ongoing work of CIGU, Professor Grady-Willis noted that several items already on CIGU's agenda would continue to receive attention.
 - An Assessment sub-group will look at data obtained through NSSE, CHAS and exit interviews to consider campus climate.
 - The Bias Response Group, chaired by Dean of Student Affairs Rochelle Calhoun, will continue its educational and programming work.
 - CIGU will work with CEPP to review the cultural diversity requirement - in particular, guidelines for what criteria should be required for the cultural diversity designation.
 - Inclusive hiring practices for faculty and staff.
- Professor Grady-Willis noted that CIGU will focus with more intentionality on how the College actualizes the language of Goal Two.
- It was noted that in the fall, Dean Calhoun and the Bias Response Group called a "Local Leadership Summit" with College and City officials to discuss safety issues raised following an assault on a gay Skidmore student in downtown Saratoga Springs.
- A member asked whether there was a sense that CIGU should serve as an "umbrella" under which all diversity and inclusion efforts should occur. Should there be another structure? Is it important for the community to see CIGU as that umbrella organization? It was noted that the current charge may support CIGU's role as having umbrella authority, but the perception on campus may not reflect that role.
- Dean Calhoun suggested that one way to institutionalize support of CIGU would be to establish a budget for it. She acknowledged the very generous support from the Presidential Discretionary Fund but suggested that CIGU's effectiveness would be enhanced if it were able to make decisions on its own about which initiatives to fund. Professor Grady-Willis later affirmed this position.

- Another member also supported the notion that resources for diversity initiatives have been distributed and that consolidation may be necessary to sustain and re-energize various initiatives.
- Following up on Professor Grady-Willis' acknowledgement that the conversation at CIGU was a difficult one, an IPPC member reported a conversation with a person who would be reluctant to comment at today's community meeting based on fear that the speaker's comment would be misperceived. Acting President Kress emphasized that it will be important for the community to hear all voices, and that without peoples' willingness to take a risk, it will be difficult for the College to move forward. It was noted that speaking in such a forum may be more challenging for non-faculty employees than for faculty and students.
- A question was raised regarding the "diversity triumvirate" and how that structure relates to the President and Cabinet, other offices on campus, and CIGU. The members of the three-person diversity group have begun to review that structure and may make recommendations for possible changes.
- CIGU was encouraged to find ways to tap into student concerns – in particular, to capture the ideas of students on how to reach out to individuals who do not attend diversity and inclusion events. Dean Calhoun noted that the Student Affairs Subcommittee has embraced the notion of students educating each other as a powerful model; she also noted that SGA has taken up this call of "meeting students where they are" to understand the student experience and to understand the role of all students in creating an inclusive community.
- Professor Grady-Willis noted that Sulin Ngo, the SGA Vice President for Diversity and a member of CIGU, has done a wonderful job not just with SGA, but with other student groups as well. He further noted that students of color have commented in various contexts on the extent to which they must "mute themselves" in order to fit in at Skidmore, i.e., to not be seen as disruptive or otherwise reinforcing inappropriate stereotypes. Professor Grady-Willis suggested that the level of such "self-silencing" at Skidmore is different than he has experienced on other campuses.
- A member expressed the view that complicated questions have been raised in relation to the Compton's incident. For example, it has been suggested that if the races were reversed, it would have been a different situation, but why? What elements? It was the opinion of one person that the overwhelming factor in the Compton's incident was the students' socio-economic situation and their inability to support themselves financially. This person expressed the hope that we not run away from the hard questions, but that we grapple with those questions and ask why we are asking them.

Other comments related to the concerns about the community meeting were as follows:

- It is important to understand the sentiment of the person concerned about speaking and to understand that speaking the difficult comments demands practice.

- Another member noted that a large group conversation may not always be the most conducive to moving the conversation forward and that many rich and productive conversations may take place in private.
- One member suggested that he could not think of an issue that was *not* related to CIGU, and that CIGU must assert itself in all conversations. The member suggested that financial resources may not be necessary to make progress in that regard.
- Another member expressed the view that it is important to involve CIGU with intentionality and with the expectation that CIGU has expertise and is responsible for voicing expectations in matters of diversity and inclusion.
- One member noted the segmenting of students within the campus community (e.g., athletes, international students, students of color, etc.) He expressed his hope that these conversations will eventually bridge among the various groups.

Acting President Kress thanked Professor Grady-Willis for his report and others for their comments. She noted that the conversation on this topic will continue.

3. Budget Planning FY12

Vice President for Finance and Administration Mike West reported that the bond issue for Scribner Village replacement has closed. As previously reported, the terms of the bond issue are very favorable to the College.

Mr. West then provided updates on various matters including updated Consumer Price Index figures and the comprehensive fee increases known at other institutions. It was noted that the University of the South (Sewanee) has announced a 10% decrease in its comprehensive fee. Mr. West noted that certain Skidmore's Trustees have expressed concern about our projected tuition increases in the out years and that Sewanee's decision may resonate with them.

Mr. West then reviewed the key budget assumptions that will be presented to the Board for consideration at the February meetings. Mr. West provided other updates, including the following:

- The current budget model for the current fiscal year (FY11) shows an excess of revenues over expenditures of approximately \$0.6 million, or 0.5% of operating expenses. The current year estimate for net over-enrollment revenues is \$5.7 million. He reviewed projections of those figures for FY12 based on current budget modeling.
- Mr. West reviewed a preliminary budget model for FY12 with an alternative comprehensive fee increase somewhat lower than the primary proposed budget.
- Mr. West reviewed the College's operating budget history for FY01 – FY10.

- Mr. West reviewed preliminary budget assumptions for FY12 through FY16. He expressed optimism that the Board will approve the proposed comprehensive fee increase and other key budget parameters for FY12 at the February meetings; he expects that there may be some pushback regarding budget assumptions projected for the out years. He noted that the College would experience deficits in the out years if the College were to limit comprehensive fee increases to the rate of inflation. Such a decision would have a significantly negative effect on projected tuition revenue.
- Mr. West reviewed the operating budget for FY11 and future scenarios. He noted that the key pressure points continue to be the comprehensive fee, financial aid, compensation, and the capital budget. He suggested that a decision to limit future comprehensive fee increases would likely affect the capital budget first and most significantly.
- Mr. West reviewed other key documents including a sensitivity analysis for the College's proposed comprehensive fee increase, faculty salaries from our peer comparison group, and the endowment comparison for our peer comparison group.
- Mr. West reported that the College is in a strong position financially and expressed his opinion that the College has faced recent economic challenges well. There is concern regarding local and state economy and budgets.

IPPC member comments and questions included the following:

- In response to a question, Mr. West noted that the Board of Trustees has legal and fiduciary responsibilities with respect to the College and, accordingly, does have the final authority to approve (or reject) the budget as proposed by the administration.
- Regarding the endowment value, Mr. West clarified a number of points. These included:
 - The endowment per student figures are driven primarily by institution size.
 - The endowment figures indicated in the chart are as of June 30, 2010.
 - The College's endowment has fared very well on a performance basis in comparison to other institutions. Two years ago, when the endowment had declined to approximately \$228 million, many would have viewed it as unreasonably optimistic to predict the value that was achieved as of December 31, 2010.
- One member queried whether the ripple effect from the University of the South tuition cut will suggest a breaking point at which some colleges will fundamentally change their offerings.
- Another member suggested that the size of the endowment is less relevant than when the College would pass the \$60,000 comprehensive fee mark.
- Another member suggested that the University of the South cut is interesting, but that net cost is what really matters. The publicity around this decision implies that the reduction

in tuition will be covered with gifts, but in fact, the University of the South awards both merit and need based aid and will likely compensate for its lower comprehensive fee by further reductions in financial aid.

Acting President Kress closed the conversation by noting that the question introduced earlier – where do we spend our limited resources on? – will continue to be a very difficult question.

4. Transition and Transformation

Given the limited time left in this meeting, Dean of Student Affairs Rochelle Calhoun agreed to simply set the context for the Transition and Transformation discussion. She noted that the *Strategic Plan* identifies a role for Skidmore in the post-Skidmore lives of our students. The issues raised in the Transition and Transformation conversation reflect conversations in prior years between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs – in particular, a question posed by Dean of the Faculty Muriel Poston regarding the desire to collaborate on post-baccalaureate experiences of our students. Dean Calhoun noted that the Town Hall Meetings last year also were consistent (both on and off campus) in asking how a liberal arts education can be leveraged for students once they graduate.

The Transition and Transformation work is rooted in Skidmore's historic notion of "mind and hand." The essential question posed by this work is: What is the role of a Skidmore education, broadly defined, in helping students define intentional pathways toward their aspirational goals? It is especially important to look at the role of the College during the first two years of our students' experiences.

Dean Calhoun indicated that the spring of 2011 will be devoted to conversation and seeking feedback from appropriate groups and individuals across campus.

This report will be rescheduled for discussion at a future IPPC meeting.

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