

Committee for Educational Policies and Planning  
Annual Report 2019-2020

**Function:** To recommend to the faculty and administration short and long-range educational plans for the College and thus be instrumental in clarifying, improving and changing major policies and educational procedures; to evaluate Skidmore's present practices and goals.

**Membership**

2020 Steve Ives, Health and Human Physiological Sciences, tenured (Chair '19-'20)  
2020 Patricia Hilleren, Biology, tenured  
2021 Andrew Bozio, English, untenured  
2021 Feryaz Ocakli, Political Science, tenured (Chair '20-'21)  
2022 Jina Mao, Management and Business, untenured  
2021 Riley Filister, '21, SGA student representative  
2020 Noa Mills, '21 (Fall Only), SGA Student Representative  
2021 Rachael Borthwick, '21 (Spring only), SGA Student Representative  
Cerri Banks, Vice President for Student Affairs  
Michael Orr, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dean of Faculty  
Peter von Allmen, Faculty Director of Assessment

CEPP met 26 times during the 2019-'20 academic year. The chair of CEPP is also a member of the Institutional Policy and Planning Committee and the Advisory Committee on Off-Campus Programs. It should be noted that P. von Allmen served on IPPC in the Spring semester only, due to a scheduling conflict.

**General Education Curriculum Implementation**

- CEPP sought to finalize any remaining concerns around the new general education curriculum and its implementation.
  - The new general education curriculum course guidelines were posted to multiple web locations (CEPP, gen ed, CC) to facilitate faculty generation of new or modification of existing courses to fulfill these criteria.
  - Bridge Experience: CEPP received some questions regarding the BE that were re-directed to the BE director (Eric Morser). Namely, that students be encouraged, but not required, to take the BE in their second year; and that departments could offer BE courses at the 200 or 300 level.
  - Language Study: a working group of stakeholders led by Associate Dean Ron Seyb met with CEPP Chair to attempt to resolve questions related to the mechanisms by which English-language learner students could fulfill the Language Study requirement in English (stipulated in new GE curriculum). The committee came to an impasse.
  - CEPP then worked with Curriculum Committee (CC), the language study working group, and relevant stakeholders (WLL and Classics), to finalize whether exemptions be made for students who might be considered ELL, or possess advanced/comprehensive foreign language skill. In the end, any such exemption was struck from the language study requirement. All parties agreed that supporting students who may need language support was critically important but that, such efforts would be better supported as a separate issue. CEPP agreed that further review of existing ELL support and/or practices at Skidmore be reviewed and assessed to determine if they are meeting the needs of our students. The language study working group, CEPP, and members of the faculty at large, will need to finalize this review in '20-'21.

## **Academic Calendar and Religious Holidays**

- CEPP continued its work to consider the current College policy around religious holiday observances. CEPP had been considering creating a more inclusive list of holidays on the academic calendar and thus a more comprehensive and inclusive acknowledgment of holidays. However, existing NY State law mentioned in the college catalog already recognized students' rights regarding religious freedom and legal protection for observances. Thus, CEPP, in collaboration with the Dean of Students, sought to clarify this policy and improve communication around this policy. CEPP drafted language for CC to consider for inclusion on faculty syllabi.
- CEPP, prompted by the SGA representatives, was encouraged to consider of the date of the study day traditionally included in the fall calendar. Typically, the date was too late to be very useful for midterms, and a Friday made the day less likely to be used for studying, thus it was moved earlier and to a Monday for AY '21-'22. Future calendars should honor this change.
- CEPP explored the possibility to have a fall break or full week for thanksgiving. CEPP invited the registrar to talk through the issues, essentially an earlier start or later end date would be required to make a fall break or full week on thanksgiving feasible. The study day, as it is dedicated to academic pursuit, counts as contact hours and thus cannot be reallocated towards a "break". A creative solution was floated to elongate each class period by a few minutes to ensure adequate contact hours and allow more days off in the fall semester. This would be a major change to scheduling and the academic calendar, requiring broad further faculty input and campus wide discussion. The item was tabled.

## **All-College Student Rating of Courses and Teaching Form Review**

- CEPP sought to follow on its report that was shared with the campus at large in Spring '19. The Chair of CEPP met with FEC to discuss a path forward. As a result, a meeting was scheduled between representatives from FEC, CEPP, ATC, and PC on student evaluations and methods for assessing teaching effectiveness. A committee of the whole (COW) was scheduled for the October 4<sup>th</sup> faculty meeting.
- Following the COW, CEPP deliberated on potential steps forward, based upon information gleaned from the previous years work and the faculty discussion.
- CEPP sought input from the director of the Center for Leadership in Teaching and Learning, the director of the First Year Experience, and the director of the Bridge Experience on how we might include education of our students about the importance of providing faculty with feedback and the decorum that should be employed when doing so.
- CEPP finalized its recommendations, including changes to faculty handbook language, which were shared with the faculty as a whole on April 24<sup>th</sup> 2020.
- CEPP hopes to continue conversation around this, and related issues in the upcoming year, with the faculty and pertinent committees.

## **Other Business**

- Steve Ives worked with Communications and Marketing to finalize migration of CEPP website content to a newly designed website: [www.skidmore.edu/cepp](http://www.skidmore.edu/cepp). The former CEPP web pages were decommissioned.
- CEPP reviewed its operating code in September, though no changes were recommended at this time.
- CEPP was asked by a faculty member to consider reviewing, or creating policy about reviewing, our teaching spaces on campus. Specifically, the potential relationship between pedagogy and our physical classrooms and whether there might be a disconnect, but also practical or logistical challenges (e.g. missing chalk/dry-erase markers, broken seating, missing or non-functioning

clocks, etc.). This was brought to IPPC for further consideration by the Space Planning Working Group (L. Greenholtz and D. Rodecker, Committee Co-Chairs).

- CEPP was consulted and informed by the Learning Experience Design & Digital Scholarship Support (LEDS) team regarding switching to a new learning management software. Skidmore currently uses Blackboard and is exploring alternatives (i.e. Brightspace).
- CEPP revisited recent discussion of certificate programs. The faculty director of assessment (P. von Allmen), explored the option, consulting with the registrar and institutional effectiveness team. Any certificate program would require NY State education application and approval, might require tracking employment data of certificate holders. There would also be additional steps necessary for Middle States Accreditation. No further action was taken at his time.
- Members of the IdeaLab (IL) sought CEPP's endorsement to suspend the all-college student rating of courses and teaching (Deans Cards) or use for development purposes only. CEPP invited B. Breslin (IL steering committee member) to discuss the issue with the committee. CEPP endorsed a more localized review of the student feedback, where the student ratings forms would not be shared beyond the IL instructor and another faculty in the IL, which sought to balance valuing student input but also the unique nature of IL courses and the desire to innovate without being penalized. The IL proposal was to be discussed with other relevant college constituencies.
- CEPP endorsed the 2021-2022 Academic Calendar. The DOF/VPAA expressed desire to have calendars approved more in advance, insofar as being scheduled 3 to 5 years out.
- CEPP was asked by a faculty member to review the policy on the creation and elimination of interdisciplinary minors. CEPP briefly touched upon this, as the Faculty Handbook has existing language regarding processes related to creating, overseeing, evaluating, and dissolving such minors. Perhaps the language needs clarification and CEPP may collaborate with CC on this item next year.
- Assessment: Peter von Allmen, the Faculty Director for Assessment brought to the committee plans for assessment this academic year. Following the onset of the novel coronavirus SAR CoV-2 (COVID19), the FDA expressed a desire to learn as much as possible from this pandemic, and how we might better position ourselves if such an event were ever to occur again. A survey was developed and reviewed by CEPP.
- The CEPP chair participated in the Grading Policy Working group to consider further changes to the grading policy in a semester rocked by the global pandemic, which were voted in by the faculty.

Respectfully submitted,  
Steve Ives, CEPP chair