

Committee on Educational Policies and Planning

Annual Report 2022-2023

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: Date listed is the last year of service on the committee.

- Adrian Bautista, Dean of Students and Vice President for Student Affairs
- Michael Orr, Dean of Faculty and Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Kelly Sheppard, Chemistry, Faculty Director of Assessment, ex officio
- 2023 Mahesh Shankar, International Affairs
- 2023 Bob Turner, Political Science (one-year replacement)
- 2023 Leigh Wilton, Psychology (Chair)
- 2024 Emilka Jansen (SGA student representative)
- 2025 Lisa Jackson-Schebetta, Theater
- 2025 Nick Junkerman, English

Overview: CEPP met weekly for a total of 26 times during the 2022-2023 academic year. The meeting agendas and minutes for these meetings have been posted on CEPP's website. CEPP also held a transition and planning meeting with outgoing, returning, and incoming members during the Spring final examination period. CEPP representatives attended the Institutional Policy and Planning Committee (IPPC) meetings (Mahesh Shankar, Fall; Leigh Wilton, Spring) and Committee of Committee meetings (Leigh Wilton, Fall; Nick Junkerman, Spring). The CEPP Chair also served as a moderator of the faculty listserv, together with the Chair of the Faculty Executive Committee (FEC) and the Vice Chair of IPPC. Nick Junkerman will chair CEPP in 2023-2024.

Committee Work: The major agenda items that CEPP worked on in this year are described below.

Syllabus Motion

- CEPP passed a motion to require distribution of syllabi to students in classes. The committee drafted the motion and revised Faculty Handbook Language beginning in November 2022. The Committee sent drafts of the motion to CAFR and CC in December 2022, and revised the documents with the committees' collective feedback in January and February 2023. The CEPP Chair brought the motion to the faculty floor in the March 31, 2023 faculty meeting, and the motion passed in the April 20, 2023 faculty meeting. Please see <https://www.skidmore.edu/dof-vpaa/meetings/faculty/2022-2023/index.php> for further details, including the final motion and Faculty Handbook Revisions.

Academic calendar

- **Academic Calendar Review and Approval.** CEPP reviewed and approved the academic calendars for 2024-2025, 2025-2026, and 2026-2027.
- **Long-term Academic Calendar Planning.** Last year, a suggestion was raised about CEPP approving academic calendars three years ahead to ensure maximum flexibility in planning. As noted above, this year CEPP approved the next three academic calendars (the 2023-2024 Academic Calendar was approved last year). CEPP also worked with Registrar Dave DeConno to discuss the possibility of a systematic, seven-year academic cycle. Registrar DeConno explained the academic calendar requirements to the committee, and clarified that each calendar needs to be counted out day by day—there's no formula. Though DeConno was willing to provide calendars

seven years out, concerns were expressed about potential issues arising with this process. Ultimately, CEPP decided it made most sense to plan three years out.

- **U.S. Thanksgiving Week Issues.** There are long-standing challenges associated with teaching and learning on the Monday and Tuesday before the Thanksgiving break (e.g., low student attendance; variation in whether classes are held online, in person, or at all; variation in faculty perceptions of their autonomy to make decisions about class format on those days). CEPP explored the following two main options to address these issues:
 1. **Providing a full-week break on or around the Thanksgiving period.** Registrar DeConno reported on some of the challenges associated with start and end dates (which are constrained the racing track season, due to factors such as higher costs and fewer options for student, staff, faculty, and family housing/hotels, and end-of-year travel), and minimum contact hours required for NYS accreditation (see February 1 minutes for more details). Without moving the start or end dates, the full week break would not be possible in all years. Additionally, the academic calendar is currently at the minimum number of contact hours required; there is no “fat” to cut. The committee recognized alternate options (e.g., trimesters, January Fall final examination period) could provide flexibility to allow for consistent Thanksgiving week breaks, but decided not to pursue those options.
 2. **Instituting a remote learning mandate for the Monday-Tuesday preceding the Thanksgiving break.** CEPP collected feedback from Chairs and Program Directors, who expressed a range of opinions on this option. However, the majority of the responses expressed either strong opposition, moderate opposition, or neutrality towards this option, raising serious concerns about curriculum delivery. CEPP also received input from the Office of the Dean of Students and Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Student Government Association, the Information Technology Department, and the Registrar’s Office. This review highlighted both potential pros (e.g., mitigating travel costs, which disproportionately impact low-income students), and remaining questions (e.g., lack of information of the implication for the board and lodging fees, the impact on international students and Residential Life). After a thorough review, the committee decided that the important questions raised would need to be understood before further pursuing this option.

CEPP understands that these – and other – questions about the Academic Calendar are raised continually over the years. Therefore, CEPP seeks to communicate information about the Academic Calendar with the broader Skidmore community. To this end, CEPP and the Registrar discussed the possibility of posting an FAQ on the Registrar’s website about the academic calendar and how scheduling decision are made; CEPP developed an initial draft for further review and development.

Off-Campus Programs

- **Advisory Committee on Off-Campus Programs (ACOP) Termination.** The Office of Off-Campus Study & Exchanges (OCSE) sent CEPP a proposal to terminate the ACOP in May 2022. ACOP was founded in 2004 to help OCSE develop and implement procedures to 1) integrate off-campus study into the on-campus curriculum, and 2) broaden student participation and inclusion in study-abroad programs. Since then, different committees and offices began collaborating more directly with OCSE, and various roles outlined in ACOP’s initial charge no longer fell under the committee’s purview; in fact, the ACOP was inactive all 2022-2023. CEPP voted to terminate the ACOP, specifying that its official dissolution will take place at the end of the 2022-2023 academic year. The CEPP chair and the OCSE director worked to adjust relevant documents to reflect this change. The CEPP Chair and OCSE director Cori Filson notified Students, Staff and Faculty, of the ACOP termination decision in an email on March 27, 2023.

- **London First Year Experience (LFYE) Program.** The OCSE Director Cori Filson and the First Year Experience (FYE) Director Rachel Roe-Dale sent CEPP two proposals: 1) to terminate Skidmore's LFYE relationship with long-term partner IES London, and 2) to partner with CEA CAPA London to deliver Skidmore's LFYE, effective Fall 2023. CEPP discussed the institutional decision to change providers; the impact of this change for Skidmore staff, students, and faculty; and CEA CAPA's resources and offerings. In consultation with leadership in the Office of the Dean of the Faculty and the Office of Admissions, CEPP voted to terminate Skidmore's relationship with IES and to establish an affiliation with CEA CAPA. The CEPP chair, the OCSE Director and the FYE Director communicated this decision in an email on March 22, 2023.
- **IFSA Tech Career Accelerator Plus Program Approval (Prague).** The CEPP Chair reviewed and approved the addition of the IFSA Tech Career Accelerator program in Prague to the OCSE Approved Programs list; the program is supported by the Computer Science (CS) department.

Consultation from/with other committees, groups

- **Inclusion and Accessibility Teaching and Learning (IATL) Working Group.** CEPP collaborated with the Inclusion and Accessibility Teaching and Learning (IATL) Working Group on three occasions throughout the year. The goal of this working group is to identify inclusive teaching best principles and how to embed them into our systems. In the fall, the committee provided feedback on the IATL Working Group's Willingness to Serve Announcement, which was sent out by FEC at the request of the DOF/VPAA. Also in the Fall, the CEPP Chair attended a meeting to help select the members of the working group, along with the chairs of ATC, PC, and CAFR, the DOF/VPAA, and the project director for the HHMI Grant (Kim Frederick). In the Spring, CEPP met with members of the working group to discuss 1) CEPP initiatives that align with the working group goals, 2) strengths and weaknesses of our current system for evaluating teaching, and 3) the future CEPP/HHMI working relationship. CEPP looks forward to a productive working relationship with HHMI.
- **Student Concerns.** Student Government Vice President for Academic Affairs and CEPP member Emilka Jansen reported two student concerns to CEPP: 1) registration barriers, particularly with regard to difficulty some students have in getting into the 300-level classes they need to complete their majors, and 2) delayed or absent faculty feedback to students. For the registration barrier issue, CEPP proposed gathering enrollment data to see where this issue is particularly acute. For the feedback issue, the committee recommended an email from the dean's office to chairs and program directors reminding them that faculty are required to provide timely feedback. It also endorsed the idea of a conversation at the chairs and program directors meeting about faculty feedback on student assignments.
- **Student Rating and Feedback (qSET) reporting updates.** Director of Institutional Research Joe Stankovich notified CEPP of some anticipated, provider-driven changes in the qSET reports that are sent to faculty. Stankovich explained the cause of these changes, and outlined the expected changes and some of the options for moving forward. After a thorough discussion, CEPP elected to discuss the changes with the wider faculty next semester, when there is certainty about what the changes will be, and when the modified reports would be rolled out.
- **Curriculum Committee consultation on Major Terminations, Minor Approval.** CEPP discussed and provided Curriculum Committee (CC) with feedback on three motions: 1) elimination of the French Area Studies major, 2) elimination of the MB-PL interdepartmental major, and 3) approval of a MB-AA entrepreneurship minor. Where a range of opinions were expressed by CEPP members, the CEPP Chair provided the CC Chair with a summary of the opinions expressed by committee members.
- **Conscientious Religious Observance Policy – Syllabus Language.** Incoming Associate Dean of the Faculty for Student Affairs Corey Freeman-Gallant asked CEPP to endorse revised syllabus language for the Conscientious Religious Observance Policy (CROP). The new language aims to

be less legalistic and more inclusive, and is not associated with any change in policy. CEPP discussed and endorsed the new language.

New General Education Curriculum

- **New QR Placement Policy.** The QR Team consulted CEPP when formalizing a new process for QR placement: students who score at the thresholds between MA100 and FQR will be given another opportunity to take another, different test to place at FQR level. CEPP discussed and had no reservations about this policy change.
- **GE Credits Per Course.** Registrar Dave DeConno and Associate Dean of the Faculty for Student Academic Affairs Michael Arnush asked CEPP to clarify the number of General Education requirements that a single course can fulfill. CEPP affirmed that courses should be permitted to satisfy a maximum of 2 General Education requirements, in line with the 2017 faculty vote (a number of courses had been approved by both departments/programs and the Curriculum Committee to fulfill three requirements). CEPP also suggested that instructors and/or departments should choose which two GE requirements each course satisfies.
- **General Education Curriculum Webpage Revision.** Communications and Marketing asked for CEPP input on the new General Education webpage. CEPP discussed the target audience for this information, and suggested additional information and links that could be added. CEPP also discussed that the historical information about the previous curriculum should be archived on the CEPP website ("Documents and Links").

Institutional and Curricular Review

- **Current and Future Assessment Activities.** The New General Education Curriculum includes a provision for review after full implementation and then every five years after the first review. The first review is due in 2024-2025. In the Fall, Faculty Director of Assessment (FDA) and CEPP member Kelly Sheppard lead CEPP in a discussion of General Education Assessment planning for 2022-2023 and beyond. FDA Sheppard shared that the Bridge Experience, First Year Experience (FYE), Quantitative Reasoning Placement Diagnostic, and Information Literacy have already undergone some assessment, and solicited ideas of next priorities, including FYE (goals and 4th hour), Writing, Senior Coda, Global Cultural Perspectives, and Language. FDA Sheppard developed a comprehensive assessment plan based on the committee's input and input from the relevant program directors (e.g., for QR, Bridge Experience, FYE, and Writing), and updated CEPP on assessment plans. In the Spring, FDA Sheppard reported on ongoing assessments projects, including the Bridge Experience survey results and plans for project two of the HHMI IE3 grant centered on building a culture of using disaggregated data. The committee discussed the challenges of teaching Bridge Experience courses, and especially of implementing "high impact practices."
- **Middle States Accreditation.** Middle States Reaccreditation will occur in 2025-2026. FDA Sheppard updated CEPP on Middle States accreditation planning, including upcoming deadlines with regard to reaccreditation (self-study and external review), newer standards, and expectations about the kind of data (disaggregated) that need to be used. From CEPP's perspective, it will be particularly important to focus on assessing the match between Middle States curriculum expectations and Skidmore's new curriculum.
- **National Survey Student Engagement (NSSE) data.** Institutional Effectiveness Specialist Amy Tweedy and Faculty Director of Assessment (FDA) and CEPP member Kelly Shepard reported on the NSSE Spring 2022 data, which surveys first year and senior college academic and social experiences. The discussion centered on the areas of Skidmore's strengths and weakness identified by the survey.

Other/Ongoing Items

- **Guide for students on teaching evaluation.** In 2019, CEPP reached a resolution to ask the FYE office to consider providing training to FYE students about filling out teaching evaluation forms. CEPP revised previously-developed materials, and resolved to return to this matter in upcoming semesters.
- **Student rating form (all college form) for teaching.** CEPP discussed faculty concerns about the Bias Statement that is now read before the administration of the student ratings and feedback forms (qSET). The Committee discussed the merits and phrasing of the statement, and reviewed the relevant scientific literature supporting this practice. CEPP also had a broader discussion on the value of the bias statement at large, and how and where (and whether) the statement fits in the broader goal of addressing the systemic problem. The committee adjusted the language in the statement, and supported the idea of a training to help students understand the evaluation process (see “Guide for students on teaching evaluation,” above).
- **Summer Courses:** CEPP discussed the impact of offering online summer courses (in addition to in person). CEPP endorsed a two-year pilot program of online summer courses. CEPP requests Special Programs report back to CEPP, at the end of the two years, with findings on changes and/or impacts on student accessibility; summer faculty composition; enrollments; budgetary implications; and summer student body composition.

Respectfully submitted,
Leigh Wilton, 2022-2023 CEPP chair