

Committee on Educational Policies and Planning Annual Report 2021-2022

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

- Michael Orr, Dean of Faculty and Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Adrian Bautista, Dean of Students and Vice President for Student Affairs
- Peter von Allmen, Economics, Faculty Director of Assessment, ex officio
- 2022 Jina Mao, Management and Business (Chair)
- 2023 Mahesh Shankar, International Affairs
- 2023 Leigh Wilton, Psychology
- Madushi Raththagala, Chemistry (fall 2021 replacement for Leigh Wilton)
- 2024 Wendy Lee, English (on leave 2021-2022)
- Andrew Bozio, English (one year replacement for Wendy Lee)
- 2024 Bradley Onishi, Religious Studies (on leave 2021-2022)
- Kirsten Hogenson, Mathematics & Statistics (one year replacement for Bradley Onishi)
- 2022 Emilka Jansen (SGA student representative)

CEPP met weekly for a total of 25 times during the 2021-2022 academic year. All of the meetings were conducted remotely on zoom. The chair of CEPP also attended the Institutional Policy and Planning Committee meetings and served on the Advisory Committee on Off-Campus Programs. As a former chair of CEPP, Erica Bastress-Dukehart worked with the Advisory Committee on Off-Campus Programs. Meeting agenda and minutes have been posted on CEPP's website.

Unlike the previous year where CEPP focused on urgent decisions related to the extraordinary conditions of the pandemic, the 2021-2022 academic year has been more of a typical year for CEPP as it returned to many of the agenda items that were started before the pandemic. Here are the agenda items that CEPP worked on during the academic year.

Academic calendar

- CEPP reviewed and approved the academic calendars for 2022-2023 and 2023-2024.
- CEPP raised a concern about the deadline for senior grades being too close to final exam time. Dave DeConno from the registrar's office explained that such deadline is necessary to ensure that all subsequent deadlines are met. The registrar's office works with faculty who have an exam scheduled close to the deadline to provide extensions.
- During the planning session at the end of the year, a suggestion was raised about CEPP approving academic calendars three years ahead to ensure maximum flexibility in planning.

Guide for students on teaching evaluation

- CEPP reached a resolution in 2019 to ask the FYE office to consider providing training to FYE students about filling out teaching evaluation forms.
- This year, CEPP worked on developing training material in the form of a set of PowerPoint slides. The training material includes an explanation of the purpose and goal for teaching

evaluation, examples of informative/constructive feedback, existence of bias in the teaching evaluation process, and best practices for students filling out these forms.

- CEPP has sent the training material to the FYE director for trial in fall 2022.

New general education curriculum requirements

- CEPP worked on a few issues that were brought forward regarding the New General Education Curriculum.
- The director of Bridge experience (BE) consulted with CEPP regarding the possibility of allowing the bridge experience requirement to be fulfilled outside of Skidmore (e.g., while studying abroad). Questions were raised about possible scenarios where such transfers would be allowed and approved, how courses would be approved, the risks of setting a precedent for Senior Coda, how advisors should approach the option of taking BE requirement abroad with advisees, and the logistics of approval between department chairs and the BE director.
- CEPP received a request to clarify the maturity requirement for seniors as part of the New General Education Curriculum. While the new curriculum was approved in 2017, the elimination of the rule that “*at least 12 of the 24 credits at 300-level must be earned during a student’s senior year with at least 6 of the 12 credits earned in their major*” was implied but not made explicit. After some discussion, CEPP decided to go ahead and communicate this elimination to the faculty without a faculty vote.
- 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.

Assessment activities

- Faculty Director of Assessment Peter von Allmen is also a member of CEPP. Peter co-chairs the Subcommittee on Institutional Effectiveness (SIE) and communicates frequently with CEPP about the various assessment projects ongoing.
- Peter presented to CEPP the FYE program assessment report (by FYE director Amon Emeka) which includes results of student survey about first year experience.
- Peter also provided to CEPP an overview of the QR assessment report. He explained how college switched from a two-tier QR requirement to a three-tiered AQR under our new general curriculum. Peter updated the committee on the results of student performance on the quantitative reasoning placement diagnostic test and their subsequent successes in AQR and FQR courses. He also explained some of the main goals of the survey and its main findings. While the majority of students who placed into an AQR course based on their QR placement diagnostic scores completed the AQR course successfully, Peter pointed out that this survey will be carried out again given the potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the results.
- Peter shared a draft of a survey which will be sent out later this year to students who have taken a Bridge Experience course. CEPP provided feedback on both the questions and planned delivery of the survey to the survey designers.

Student rating form (all college form) for teaching

- CEPP discussed and agreed to revert to administering student ratings form (all college form) and feedback form (departmental long form) in person for 2021-2022. Online forms were reserved for the very few faculty who have exemptions to teach online.

- This is also the first year that the instructions for teaching evaluation included a bias statement that is read out loud to students to remind students about the potential for bias.
- After the fall semester, CEPP received a letter from the Art History department expressing concerns about the use of such statement during teaching evaluation. CEPP revisited the decision made in 2019-2020 and the research that guided the decision. CEPP decided to keep the statement for now, pending a review of this practice in the next academic year.

Institutional effectiveness

- CEPP invited Institutional Effectiveness specialist Amy Tweedy to talk to CEPP about her role in the college and ongoing assessment work. Amy joined a CEPP meeting and updated the committee on some of the current assessment efforts centering on student experiences. The committee discussed how the results of various surveys can be communicated with the Skidmore community and the importance of doing so. The committee then discussed whether there are any institutional-wide assessment efforts on hiring and retaining BIPOC faculty and the importance of having such efforts.
- A CEPP committee member presented two assessment proposals recommending that CEPP partner with the Subcommittee on Institutional Effectiveness to undertake assessment projects regarding faculty hiring and retention. The first assessment proposal was concerning the retention of BIPOC faculty at Skidmore. The second proposal was about increasing reliance on non-tenure-track (NTT) faculty. The committee discussed at length the unique nature of these assessment projects, appropriate subcommittees to work in partnership with CEPP, and the complexities of undertaking such assessments. The committee also discussed proposed questions in each proposal and how to best utilize some available data to assess Skidmore's success in achieving inclusive excellence. Issues were raised about the scope of CEPP's responsibilities and privacy. The proposals will need to connect more to educational mission of the college before being considered again in future CEPP meetings.
- CEPP invited Amy Tweedy, Joshua Woodfork, and Joseph Stankovich to share findings from the NACCC student survey. CEPP offered some initial reactions to the results and began to brainstorm ways that these results can inform CEPP's agenda for the next academic year. CEPP also discussed who else in the college this data should be shared with and the need for specific action to address some of the concerns this dataset raises.

Motion on evidence for teaching evaluation

- In the spring of 2021, CEPP worked extensively on a proposal that could potentially transform how the college conceptualizes and measures "teaching excellence." CEPP developed the preliminary draft of a motion that would make significant changes to the Faculty Handbook, redefining what it means to achieve teaching excellence. CEPP's overall goal is to achieve a more holistic model for how the college understands and measures teaching effectiveness.
- This year, CEPP continued revising the language of the motion, with the aim of addressing the concerns of ATC, PC, and the HHMI group. Particular attention was devoted to defining what constitutes a peer (in the context of peer evaluation). Other issues considered were the assessment of a candidate's submitted materials, the measurement of student learning, and the role of student feedback forms.

- The committee debated moving forward with a more robust rationale (pointing to the research that undergirds the motion) as opposed to delaying the motion to allow for further study and the development of a campus-wide consensus.
- Some members of CEPP raised concerns about the proposed changes of the faculty handbook in this motion, especially around the idea of peer evaluation. CEPP decided to table this motion until further discussion.

Inclusive teaching

- A part of the motion that was worked on in 2020-2021 has to do with establishing a new criteria of “inclusive teaching” as part of teaching excellence. The goal is to incorporate inclusive teaching into the conceptualization of teaching effectiveness which will lead to changes in how teaching is evaluated.
- CEPP spent much of the fall semester working on revising the language of this motion. Once CEPP was happy with the draft, it worked to connect with ATC, PC, and the HHMI group to solicit feedback. Comments and concerns from ATC and PC were considered and discussed in CEPP meetings.
- A HHMI subcommittee raised serious concerns about the motion, pointing to lack of clarity of definition, issues around measurement and assessment, and the potential for unintended harm. They suggested that we delay this motion and work with them to improve it before bringing it to the floor at a faculty meeting. The HHMI subcommittee members joined a CEPP meeting and engaged in in-depth conversation about the concerns raised and the future of this motion. The potential for future collaboration was also discussed.
- CEPP spend more time discussing the status of the motion and reflected on the conversation with the HHMI subcommittee. CEPP decided that it would not put the motion forward this academic year, and discussed the possibility of forming a subcommittee to take on this important work. CEPP worked on a draft of a call for volunteers to serve on the CEPP Subcommittee on inclusive teaching. CEPP discussed the timeline for circulating this call, the possible composition of the subcommittee, and the proposed length of service.

CEPP ended the 2021-2022 year with a planning session for the next academic year. DEI issues continue to occupy an important position in CEPP’s agenda. Suggestions were raised about more coordinated efforts with other committees (e.g., ATC, PC, CIGU, and FEC) to address DEI issues at the college level. The next large agenda item coming up is the assessment work for the New General Education Curriculum. Various issues related to teaching evaluation are also highly visible.

Respectfully submitted,
Jina Mao, CEPP chair