

Committee on Educational Policies and Planning Annual Report, 2023-2024

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
- Dorothy Mosby, Dean of Faculty and Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Corey Freeman-Gallant, Associate Dean of the Faculty for Student Academic Affairs
[representing the Dean of the Faculty's Office in spring 2024]
- Kelly Sheppard, Chemistry, Faculty Director of Assessment, ex officio
- 2024 Emilka Jansen (SGA student representative)
- 2024 Tess Malloy (SGA student representative)
- 2025 Lisa Jackson-Schebetta, Theater
- 2025 Nick Junkerman, English (Chair)
- 2026 Amy Frappier, Geosciences
- 2026 Heather Hurst, Anthropology
- 2026 Robert ParkeHarrison, Art

Overview: CEPP met weekly for a total of 23 times during the 2023-2024 academic year. The meeting agendas and minutes for these meetings have been posted on CEPP's website. CEPP representatives attended the Institutional Policy and Planning Committee (IPPC) meetings (Nick Junkerman, Fall; Lisa Jackson-Schebetta, Spring), Committee of Committee meetings (Nick Junkerman, Fall and Spring), and Shared Governance meetings (Nick Junkerman, Fall; Lisa Jackson-Schebetta, 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 again in 2024-2025.

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

Environmental Studies and Sciences Department Transition

- CEPP made a successful motion to transition the Environmental Studies and Sciences Program into a Department. The transition was initially proposed by the faculty of the ESS program, with the support of the Dean of the Faculty. In accordance with the faculty handbook requirements for the creation of new departments, CEPP notified the faculty of the existence of the proposal at the November 3, 2023 meeting. Subsequently, CEPP submitted a motion to the faculty at the March 1, 2024 meeting, and held an open forum to discuss the motion on March 22, 2024. The proposal was approved by the faculty at the April 5, 2024 meeting.

Recording Policy Motion

- At the instigation of the Dean of the Faculty, CEPP drafted a policy to govern the use of recordings of class sessions. CEPP introduced a motion to approve the policy at the April 5, 2024 meeting. After receiving extensive feedback before, during, and after the meeting, CEPP elected to withdraw the motion, with the intention of reintroducing it at the October 2024 meeting. This pause will permit thoughtful redrafting to address a range of faculty questions and concerns.
- The policy was initially focused on unauthorized sharing of classroom recordings, both within and outside of the Skidmore community. As the DoF noted, Skidmore lacks an adjudicatory

- pathway when inappropriate sharing occurs. CEPP sought to remedy this by requiring faculty consent for sharing any recordings, and by establishing consequences for unauthorized sharing.
- As CEPP considered the issue, and as it consulted with other committees and stakeholders, it became clear that the policy would need to govern the creation of recordings, and not just their use. This policy effort required the committee to balance the rights of faculty to govern recordings made of their courses with the fact that many students have legally-mandated disability accommodations that permit them to make audio recordings for note-taking purposes. Faculty concerns that were communicated to CEPP largely focused on the topic of accommodations, and the degree to which they could be modified or limited in situations where faculty objected to recording.
 - Work to date on the policy has been supported by extensive and generous contributions of time and feedback from the DoF's office, CAFR, FEC, student government, and the Office of Student Academic Services.

Student Rating and Feedback (qSET) Reporting Changes

- Early in the fall semester, CEPP was briefed by Director of Institutional Research Joe Stankovich on impending changes in the reporting of qSET data. A decision made by our provider (Scantron) to move to the cloud resulted in the loss of our custom reports beginning in the fall semester of 2023. Most significantly, the new reports are missing certain data comparisons that were previously available.
- CEPP held discussions with representative of ATC, PC, and the NTT unionization bargaining committee to discuss how these changes might impact Skidmore's review and promotion processes, and to explore possible concerns. CEPP then communicated the details of the change via email to the faculty on October 30, 2023. The chair of CEPP and the Director of Institutional Research held an open forum to discuss the changes with any interested parties on November 3, 2023. Implementation of the changes took place at the end of the fall semester.

FYE Evaluation Training

- CEPP completed revisions to student evaluation training materials that had been prepared by previous CEPP committees. These PowerPoint slides, entitled "A Student's Guide to Providing Feedback on Teaching and Learning" are designed as an aid in teaching first-year students how to navigate the course evaluation process. In November of 2023, FYE director Rachel Roe Dale shared the materials with her class of peer mentors, and encouraged their use as training materials in FYE seminar fourth credit hour sessions.

Bridge Experience Modification

- CEPP eliminated the option for students to satisfy the Bridge Experience General Education requirement by successfully completing two separate courses. Now that this change has been made, the Bridge Experience requirement will always be fulfilled by a single course that incorporates both a Content/Theory/Reflection component and a Practice/Application element.
- The change originated with a recommendation from Bridge Experience Director Ron Seyb, who reported that many students have found the two-course option to be confusing. Further, he noted that because there are few stand-alone Practice/Application courses, the small number of students who do pursue the two-course option have had considerable difficulty enrolling in a Practice/Application course.
- Because the two-course option was created by a CEPP subcommittee (rather than through a motion and a vote by the faculty), CEPP decided it could delete this added option and revert to faculty-approved language. Following consultations with the Registrar and the Curriculum Committee, CEPP notified the faculty via email on April 17, 2024, and solicited feedback on both the substance and the process of the proposed change. Faculty comments received by

CEPP overwhelmingly supported the elimination of the two-course option. Accordingly, CEPP eliminated the requirement, and will work with the BE director and the registrar on making changes to the relevant documents.

Institutional and Curricular Review

- CEPP reviewed three [general education assessments](#) from last year: QR Placement Diagnostic, Information Literacy Review, and the Bridge Experience Student Survey Report. CEPP left unchanged the [General Education Assessment Plan](#) that was approved by the committee last year.

Online Summer Courses

- CEPP has agreed to extend the online summer course pilot program it approved last year by one year. The original plan was to pilot these courses in summer 2023 and summer 2024 and then to assess the program to determine if online courses should become a permanent addition to our summer lineup. The Office of Special Programs reported to the committee that it will not have time to gather results from this summer and generate the report before they begin the process of planning for 2025. CEPP also did not have time before the end of the year to help shape the Office's plan for assessment.
- Under the new plan, CEPP extended authorization for Special Programs to offer online courses to summer 2025. Summer 2025 courses would not be part of the assessment project. Special Programs will send a report to CEPP by the end of the Fall 2024 semester and CEPP, in consultation with the faculty, will decide on the fate of online summer courses then (or, if necessary, in Spring 2025). CEPP's final decision would impact the presence/absence of online courses in summer 2026 and beyond.

Academic Calendar FAQ

- CEPP completed revisions to an [FAQ document](#) about the academic calendar. This document emerged from discussions in the previous year's committee, particularly around ongoing issues with the Thanksgiving break (see [2022-2023 annual report](#) for details). The [FAQ document](#), which is now posted on the registrar's website, explains the process and logic that lies behind Skidmore's current academic calendar. In particular, it focuses on the constraints which make a full-week Thanksgiving break impractical. It also details a variety of proposals that have been made to CEPP in the past in an effort to avoid those constraints, and explains the reason(s) why each of those proposals was not adopted.

Collaboration with HHMI Working Group

- Over the course of the year, CEPP had several opportunities to collaborate with the HHMI Working Group on Inclusive and Accessible Teaching and Learning. At our October 23, 2023 meeting, we welcomed representatives from the HHMI group to discuss a draft version of their "Guiding Principles." Representatives from CEPP asked questions and offered suggestions for improvement.
- In February 2024, at the request of the HHMI Working Group, CEPP agreed to review the final version of the group's "Guiding Principles." After completing its review, CEPP offered its support and endorsement for the principles as written. The committee affirmed that the principles reflect our understanding of what Skidmore values in effective learning environments.
- In collaboration with the HHMI group, CEPP sent a message to chairs and program directors on April 23 requesting copies of their departmental evaluations. As the text of the email puts it, "CEPP is always interested in understanding the current instruments used to assess teaching effectiveness and the HHMI Working Group is hoping to understand that ways that our guiding principles might manifest themselves in these instruments."

Off-Campus Study & Exchange (OCSE) Oversight

- CEPP reviewed and approved a proposal from OCSE to move the “Skidmore in France” program from a pilot program to a permanent Skidmore program. This approval was based on an extensive and well-documented review of the Montpelier-based program, which Skidmore has partnered with since 2021.
- The chair of CEPP, following a review process instituted last year, gave the committee’s endorsement to Skidmore-approved programs in Cambodia; Chile; Kenya; Florence, Italy; Mexico; Portugal; the Galapagos; and Woods Hole, Mass.

Other/Ongoing Items

- Middle States: CEPP will send two representatives to MSCHE self-study working groups. One CEPP faculty representative will serve on Working Group 1 Mission: & Goals and Planning & Resources. The other faculty representative will serve on Working Group 3: Student Learning Experience & Assessment. This represents a considerable extra workload for these two members of the committee. CEPP has agreed as a body that we will reduce the meeting requirements for these two members, and will collectively reduce our commitments to other committee business as we support this major all-college initiative.
- The problems related to administering paper-based student evaluations continue to be a subject of faculty concern. CEPP is monitoring the issue, particularly in light of the reporting changes that occurred this past year. We remain committed to working with the Dean of the Faculty and the Office of Institutional Research to explore possibilities for moving to the kind of online system that the vast majority of our peer and aspirant institutions already use.

Respectfully submitted,
Nick Junkerman, 2023-2024 CEPP chair