

Faculty-Only Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, 22 March 2006, 4:00-5:30 p.m.

Tim Burns, Chair of FEC, called the meeting to order and welcomed those attending. He explained the purposes of faculty-only meetings, and noted that any resolutions adopted would not be binding on the faculty. He introduced the three members of the administration invited to attend the meeting: Mike West, VP for Finance and Administration and Treasurer; Chuck Joseph, VP for Academic Affairs; and Muriel Poston, Dean of the Faculty. After announcing that the main agenda item was a discussion of the allocation of the additional revenue that might be realized through optimization of the college's net fiscal enrollment, Tim opened the floor to comments and questions.

Associate Professor #1 in the Social Sciences asked what Board of Trustees thought [about optimization, etc.]. A FEC member described the full Board meeting he had observed, at which Sara Schupf requested that the academic rationale for optimization be spelled out more fully. President Glotzbach had then stated that the students to be recognized by optimization are already enrolled, but the Board still desired the academic rationale to be articulated.

A member of the Optimization Subcommittee noted that the final report of the Optimization Subcommittee should be distributed to the community on Monday the 27th of March, and that IPPC would discuss this report at its meeting on Friday the 31st.

A member of the administration stated that the Board recognized that optimization would yield additional dollars in the short term, but was concerned about long-term issues such as the endowment/student ratio.

Associate Professor in the Social Sciences #2 observed that the community has identified several major goals (e.g., the Sciences, Diversity, new Music building, and Compensation). When will these priorities be discussed and ranked? Tim Burns suggested that the faculty-only meeting was one appropriate forum for such a discussion, and this Associate Professor in the Social Sciences said s/he was happy to have introduced these issues.

Full Professor in the Humanities #1 asked: Optimization can be viewed purely academically... but will the optimization report address the financial rationale? In response, a member of the administration stated that the preliminary report of the Optimization Committee addressed the budgetary rationale, but insufficiently addressed the academic rationale. The revised optimization report would address a couple of goals (compensation and new lines), but not the Music building or Sciences enhancement. An Associate Professor in the Social Sciences noted that the preliminary report had addressed a variety of financial needs; a member of the administration responded that several of these were long-standing non-big-ticket items.

Full Professor in the Humanities #1 asked: Will the Strategic Plan dictate the priorities? An Associate Professor in the Social Sciences recalled a faculty meeting discussion of whether compensation was or was not a priority in the Strategic Plan; on that occasion the Administration

had said that the place of the mention of compensation in the plan was not meant to be indicative of its priority or rank in priority – that compensation was, in fact, a top priority. A member of the administration agreed that this was correct.

Associate Professor in the Social Sciences #3, referring to his/her handout [see Attachment A], recalled the last year of the FPPC (Financial Policy and Planning Committee), when cost sharing for health care was added. S/he had heard at the time that savings realized by cost sharing would be directed to GSA. (S/he asked that everyone keep in mind that the staff is worse off than the faculty, and that “faculty-staff” be heard if he said “faculty.”) Referring to the “Real GSA” (GSA – inflation) column of his handout, S/he noted that cost sharing had not been deducted from this column. S/he estimated the net loss, due to inflation and cost sharing, of the average Skidmore salary to be approximately \$2000 for 2005. S/he then referred to the comparison group rankings, and noted that we have lost ground. How are we going to make up the lost ground and re-attain the 9th out of 17 ranking target? Optimization [in effect a workload increase] amounts to a decrease in our hourly wage rate. When are we going to accomplish our targets? The situation is demoralizing – some faculty members are [financially] OK for various reasons, some families are totally dependent on Skidmore salary.

A member of the administration noted that last year the college had allocated \$500,000 on top of GSA primarily to enhance the Assistant Professor rank (some of this was used for equity adjustments). Next year \$400,000 is in the budget for similar enhancements elsewhere. In addition, two scheduled increases in cost sharing percentages have been deferred. The ranking of 9th out of 17 was not a reality three years ago; perhaps it was a reality much longer ago. Finally, the 3% GSA for next year [without optimization] has been set, but this may not be the final figure, as various items (e.g., new initiatives) remain unsettled.

A Professor in the Social Sciences observed that the decrease of 1% of salary in annual contributions to retirement represented a significant loss to young faculty.

An Associate Professor in the Sciences observed that the Full Professor rank has been badly managed for 20 years. Some faculty have been in the Associate rank for 25+ years. We are out of whack on the Associate/Full ratio. We’re almost at the bottom of our new cohort. Overall compensation is falling as well; in the past, overall compensation used to be a plus for us. Lip service has been paid to these problems for years. S/he said s/he wasn’t blaming Mike West – he’s new.

A Professor in the Arts returned to the question of optimization by asking: What are the impacts? Additional students cost money in additional beds, food, computers, etc. S/he requested that these incremental costs be broken out, along with the additional work on the backs of the faculty. S/he expressed his hope that the additional dollars be allocated to salaries, after the incremental costs are covered. How many students *can* we handle? Why are these numbers not available?

A member of the administration stated that the cost of 130 additional students “is a step function.” One additional student generates little additional cost other than financial aid and food. There were 100 students housed in triples last year. The discussion [of incremental costs versus (largely) faculty compensation?] has not yet occurred.

Associate Professor in the Social Sciences #4 returned to Associate Professor in the Social Sciences #1's question, and asked a member of the administration [I believe] about the Strategic Plan and its independence (or not) from the incremental funds raised by optimization. In response to a question, A member of the administration stated that Skidmore's target (financial aid) discount rate is 30%.

Full Professor in the Humanities #1 asked: What is to become of the \$2.8 million in additional funds? S/he stated that he would be disappointed if these dollars were not allocated to the academic program, and that academics needed to lay claim to these funds. There are different academic targets for these monies; S/he stated that he thought they should be dedicated to compensation.

Associate Professor in the Social Sciences #3 asked about the issue of tradeoffs. S/e suggested that we revisit course releases: 90 releases = 15 FTE. Some releases are necessary, but... We should critically examine existing structures and practices, and not simply live with them.

Full Professor in the Humanities #2 observed that the same conversation [about constraints on salary and tradeoffs] occurs every year. We need to use the additional funds for salaries. We need some different way to get through to the trustees. Some trustees have no concept of faculty workload. There are at present only [2] academics on the Board, Lee Tidball and ??? S/he suggested that more academics be appointed to the Board, and that the faculty consider wearing yellow armbands at graduation.

Associate Professor in the Social Sciences #4 stated that the FEC observer [Dan Hurwitz?] of the Board's Budget and Finance subcommittee meeting had reported informally that the Board is not happy with a GSA of 3%. Associate Professor in the Social Sciences #4 then asked a member of the administration if he had taken this as a direction from the Board to go back and rework the budget so that there would be a higher increase in compensation. He noted that the Faculty thinks there should be, and that the Administration thinks there should be, and that the Board thinks there should be, and wondered why it was not happening. A member of the administration noted that the tuition increase for next year is quite high, and could move us to as high as #2 on the comparison list of tuition charges.

An Associate Professor in the Arts made two points: 1) At a dinner including trustees, s/he had heard the statement that tenure should be eliminated. 2) The benefits enrollment forms used to include the Skidmore dollars contributed, but this information is no longer included. S/he asked that these figures be provided in the future.

An Assistant Professor in the Humanities asked: Should the faculty use time sheets [to record hours on the job]?

Full Professor in the Humanities #3 agreed that the discussion does go on year after year, and that his/her morale is low once again. New hires are coming in much better than in the past. What about theses and other extra work [which "reconfiguration" didn't lessen]? We should make a stand to boost morale. S/he commended Tim Burns for his [emailed] statement [on the crisis in compensation].

In response to the Associate Professor in the Arts' query, Full Professor in the Sciences #1 noted that one can find benefits information [such as Skidmore dollars and personal cost sharing percentage] on the Web, but that an access code was needed for it, and that the information was limited to salaries of \$100,000 or less.

A Full Professor in the Arts stated her/his preference for green armbands rather than yellow. S/he recalled the first phase of Strategic Plan development, when compensation was not a priority because it was not raised as a priority by the faculty. We should express the priority of compensation in a resolution.

Associate Professor in the Humanities #1 expressed her dislike of armbands, but felt that we need to push back. S/he doubted that our pain is really being felt. A morale issue has developed; for example, it is very hard to get faculty to run for committees – no time, no incentive. S/he stated that we are not as tuition-driven as before, and called for a broader focus than just the incremental dollars afforded by optimization.

Associate Professor in the Humanities #2 hoped that the energy in the room would not dissipate. S/he recalled a motion made by Tom Denny [on compensation?], at the time of the 0% GSA a few years ago, that failed. S/he estimated that there were about 50 (there were 55) faculty in the room: where is the bulk of the faculty on this issue? S/he urged FEC to develop a motion for the next Faculty Meeting. Tim Burns asked if Associate Professor in the Humanities #2 had a motion to offer. The Associate Professor in the Humanities #2 suggested something like “The Skidmore Faculty are dissatisfied with overall compensation and the [currently projected] GSA for all employees, are disappointed with the long-term trend, and are [prepared to take some action].”

The Associate Professor in the Sciences began by comparing Skidmore to a farm that has too much house and too little food. S/he supported Associate Professor in the Humanities #2's call for a sense-of-the-faculty resolution. S/he recalled a Board meeting she observed during the 0% GSA year, at which Oscar Tang said that he regretted the 0% increase, but “that is what they asked for.” S/he also recalled another occasion when the Board questioned the tuition benefit on the basis of an egregious magazine article. S/he stated her doubt that the Board understands our situation. What can we do? This Associate Professor in the Sciences had three or four independent studies this year. S/he suggested that many of us could say no to these in the future; we're in the “nice person” syndrome.

Associate Professor in the Humanities #2 observed that junior faculty feel that they can't say no. S/he then displayed and talked through a document [see Attachment B] that contained many points, including a call for a compensation task force “committed to making compensation a priority,” and suggesting that market adjustments to salaries may be better than GSAs in the short term.

Associate Professor #1 in the Social Sciences rose to state his/her opposition to any motion calling for all incremental dollars to be allocated to compensation, rather than to academic needs. Associate Professor #2 in the Social Sciences responded that s/he would prefer compensation to academic needs [in the motion]. Someone asked at this point why there was no motion at the time of the 0% GSA (2004); it was noted that Chuck Joseph had just been

appointed interim VPAA-DOF and it was a turbulent time. Later in the meeting Chuck spoke directly to this question.

The Full Professor in the Arts expressed support for a resolution, for a task force, and for an action if we're not satisfied.

Associate Professor in the Social Sciences #4 returned to her/his question to a member of the administration: Full Professor in the Humanities #2 and the Associate Professor in the Sciences had suggested that the Board is unaware of our needs, but a member of the administration had stated that the Board *is* aware. Is the Board asking us to change next year's budget? A member of the administration responded by saying that discussions regarding the relative priorities of new positions, new initiatives, and salaries had not yet occurred, and that there are tensions among these competing goals on IPPC.

A member of the administration noted that departmental operating budget increases were capped at 2% this year. Supplies and services represent a major portion of the budget. One must recall these needs in the discussion.

Full Professor in the Sciences #2 (who had only recently entered the meeting) asked if anyone had mentioned the Faculty Salary Committee of yore, on which s/he had served early in his career. The late 1970s were a time of double-digit inflation and (at Skidmore) merit increases. The salary committee had proposed that no merit increases be awarded until cost-of-living had been covered, and the college accepted this proposal. Full Professor in the Sciences #2 stated that one's level of compensation directly affects one's efforts (for example, he teaches at XXX in the summers in part because the pay is better).

Chuck Joseph recalled that he had asked the faculty to "back off" [of a motion/protest] at the time of the 0% GSA, and that he hadn't forgotten. He stated that in his view the Board has "moved" over the past three years, partly due to their trust in the current administration. He urged the faculty to look at the final optimization report before drafting motions, and to think carefully about the purpose of a resolution.

Associate Professor in the Social Sciences #5 seconded the call for a task force, and asked the appropriate committees to consider its creation. S/e could use help in weighing what is fair.

The announced ending time of 5:30 having been reached, Tim Burns thanked those present for attending and adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Huibregtse

Attachment A: Handout from Associate Professor in the Social Sciences #3

Year	Comprehensive fee incr.	GSA	Inflation	Real GSA
2002	4.55	3.5	2.4	1.1
2003	4.75	3.0	1.9	1.1
2004	5.95	0 (+1% no base)	3.3	-2.3
2005	4.95	4.0	3.4	.6

In 2002-2005, net real av. GSA: .5

Average Skidmore salary in 2005	:	\$63,791
Cost share for MVP family plan for \$63,791	:	\$2,328
4% GSA in 2005 on \$63,791	:	\$2,551

Net loss to inflation and cost sharing: \$1,946

The difference between actual and budgeted net fiscal enrollment:

2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
12	2	7	80	132 (projected)

Projected GSA into 2011: 3%

Rankings in our new comparative group:

Full	14/17
Assoc	14/17
Asst	15/17
Target	9/17

Current tuition/fee ranking: 5/17

Attachment B: Document presented by Associate Professor in the Humanities #2

I think the overall point is that compensation has lagged too far behind other college goals and that this is the time to say that it needs to be a priority. As you can see below, compensation is a part of the Strategic Plan, but at this point I think we could say that it must be the priority – that none of the other initiatives will work without a fairly compensated staff.

"Goal IV – Independence and Resources

We will preserve Skidmore's independence by developing the resources required to realize our aspirations.

Priority Initiatives

- Ø Develop and enhance our key financial resources and our capacity to manage them.
- Ø Achieve and maintain competitive compensation for Skidmore faculty, staff, and administrators; enhance our ability to support their professional development.
- Ø Develop and enhance our capacity to manage our physical resources.
- Ø Develop and enhance those relationships essential to the Skidmore community.
- Ø Develop and enhance the "equity" in the Skidmore name."

(Executive Summary, Strategic Plan)

We might say that fair compensation should be one of the first goals, rather than the 4th out of 4.

I would like to see a task force (perhaps, made up of 2 administrators (1 of whom would be Mike West), 2 staff, and 2 faculty), committed to making compensation a priority, examine how all compensation is distributed. This task force would be empowered to get information about some compensation questions and issues I will provide near the end of this document, if they so decide, and of course others.

What would be fair immediately?

Rather than funding a GSA adjustment, it would make more sense to institute a market adjustment to salaries – this would take into account the very real burden of living in such a desirable community – one that functions as a recruitment tool, but that is nearly out of reach of most new hires.

While a market adjustment may make the most sense to alleviate employees' immediate financial crisis, I suggest the taskforce look at the "big picture," and examine the way the budget "works" or does not, and at the long-standing budgetary practices that have perennially resulted in chronically low salaries.

The task force will have to consider how to redistribute funds – which programs, initiatives, and even positions should be curtailed or cut in order to fund compensation?

If we agree to a short-term goal of a market adjustment, then by when do we want to implement the results of the task force? How do we ensure that the task force report and recommendations are heeded, in the short- and long-term? Does the faculty wish to discuss strategies that might encourage administration to respond effectively? (I have heard ideas that range from a one-day strike to boycotting graduation.)

Compensation issues (1)

Staff Salary

- comparison with peers

Faculty Salary

- comparison with peers
- ratio to staff salaries
- disciplinary differences
 - ethical considerations
- external vs. internal market forces
- pay scale for former administrators?

Administrators' salary

- comparison with peers
- ratio to staff salaries
- ratio to faculty salaries

Benefits

Distribution of research monies

- Ad hoc grants – to whom, by discipline, and how much?
- FDG – ditto

Course Release

- course releases function as compensation – are they equitably distributed? (I realize that FEC is looking into this)

Compensation issues (2)

Benefits

Distribution of research monies

- Ad hoc grants – to whom, by discipline, and how much?
- FDG – ditto

Course Release

- course releases function as compensation – are they equitably distributed? (I realize that FEC is looking into this)

Equity

Fair compensation includes equity issues. The Fall 2003 “Total Compensation Framework” relied upon by the Strategic Plan addresses these issues. While it does acknowledge external market forces, the opening paragraph, quoted below, suggests that those are secondary.

"Skidmore College affirms the importance of each employee's contribution to its educational mission and accordingly is committed to providing appropriate compensation – the combination of direct pay and benefits – to everyone who works at the College. This commitment is grounded in two principles: First, Skidmore College adheres to basic values of fairness and equity (both internal and external) in the workplace." (TCF 1).

Further down in the document, it loses the priority of internal equity by focusing first on “Goals for External Positioning” and “Market Comparisons.” When the document does address “Internal Equity” it stresses equitable pay:

"In order to recognize the contributions of individual employees while treating everyone with fairness and respect, the College will

- Establish ranges of compensation for different positions based first of all upon a systematic analysis of factors such as responsibilities and the levels of education, skills, and experience required to perform a given function, with the goal of providing equitable compensation for comparable work" (TCF 2).

However, I believe that equal pay for equal work would be even more equitable. Radical disparities in pay create low morale and can contribute to a chronic feeling of frustration in the work environment. The TCF itself prioritizes “community spirit” (TCF 1), yet the current unequal distribution of salaries seems to structurally ensure a sour community spirit. Rather than place “Internal Equity” below “External Positioning,” it seems fairer to those within the community to make Internal Equity a priority.