

## **Faculty-only Meeting (04/11/2025)**

### **notes recorded by Faculty Executive Committee**

#### **Opening remarks**

The CEPP Chair welcomed everyone, expressed appreciation for their attendance, and acknowledged the co-hosts, including FEC and representatives from both the Curriculum Committee and the IPPC Budget and Finance Subcommittee, who is also serving on the Steering Committee for the Huron Consultancy. All four individuals serve as faculty representatives on the Academic Portfolio Leadership Group (The Group afterwards), which is specifically tasked with reviewing proposals related to academic affairs.

#### **1. Information Sharing**

**The CEPP Chair** introduced the session by noting that the Group would provide updates on the current stage of the process, particularly focusing on input received from Huron. While confidentiality was important, they believed they could share a fair amount and were open to taking questions, especially on topics that are most pressing or concerning to attendees. The CEPP Chair emphasized a key point from the last faculty-only meeting: it's essential to ensure the process is effective both now and in the long term. Since Huron's time on campus is limited, much of the ongoing work will involve not only implementing their recommendations but also making thoughtful, strategic decisions about the institution's future. The Group has been actively encouraging the administration to clarify how this collaboration will take place and to identify specific budget reduction targets. Although those numbers haven't been provided yet, the CEPP Chair emphasized the need for transparency and continued partnership. While the Group cannot make firm promises about outcomes, they are committed to influencing the process to ensure a clear and effective system is in place moving forward.

**The FEC Chair** stated that core message centered on the group's decision not to share specific data from Huron's analysis at this stage. The rationale is that the available data, especially post-pandemic, is too limited and potentially misleading for drawing reliable conclusions. However, the FEC Chair emphasized that Huron's involvement has still been valuable, as it has encouraged deeper self-reflection and raised important questions about institutional priorities and resource allocation. The FEC Chair highlighted the importance of interpreting data cautiously, recognizing that numbers alone should not drive decisions. Still, the process has helped the group identify useful metrics to inform future conversations, such as understanding how instructional resources are distributed, what initiatives are cost-effective, and where faculty capacity could be expanded or adjusted. Finally, the FEC Chair stressed the importance of maintaining shared governance, building a transparent and accessible data system, and continuing to focus on financial efficiency in light of long-term demographic and economic challenges.

**The CC Chair** added to the earlier discussion about data and the Huron consultancy, emphasizing that while there is often a strong trust in data, the actual numerical results in this case may not be especially informative on their own. However, understanding the flow of resources and budget dynamics is valuable. The Group addressed concerns raised about Huron, noting that the experience working with the consultants has felt collaborative. The CC Chair suggested that concerns about the consultants might be better directed at the broader institutional decision to bring them in, which reflects Skidmore's acknowledgment of serious upcoming budget challenges. The process with Huron has helped clarify long-standing issues, such as the need for long-term adjustments in faculty size and spending. While Huron has proposed cost-saving ideas, none have been alarming, and many have already been considered internally. The consultants have been receptive to context and input, making the process more productive and informed. The CC Chair also emphasized that there will not be a single, dramatic solution to Skidmore's financial issues. Instead, the process will require ongoing adaptation and incremental changes over time, guided by better visibility into how resources are allocated.

**The IPPC Budget and Finance Subcommittee Co-Chair** raised two main concerns and provided broader reflections on the budget process and its implications:

**Concern 1: Definition of Revenue Generation**

Initially, the Group had a broader, more innovative view of what revenue generation might entail, such as new programs or creative initiatives. However, it has since become clear that "revenue generation" is being narrowly defined as either tuition income or fundraising. The Co-Chair expressed disappointment with this limited definition and argued that what is currently being framed as revenue generation is, in reality, primarily a cost-cutting effort.

**Concern 2: Transparency of Data Reporting**

The Co-Chair also voiced concern about comments made in an earlier meeting indicating that a distilled version of the report would be shared, with the administration deciding what information to present. The Group emphasized the importance of full transparency and access to all the data used in decision-making, asserting that the faculty must ensure the complete report is made available to avoid selective reporting.

**The Co-Chair's Broader Reflections on the Process:**

- The process involves a cross-functional group, which is valuable because it brings together a variety of voices. However, this diversity also introduces complexity and potential tension, particularly when decisions need to be made.
- Tension will likely arise not from the data or reports themselves, but from the decisions that follow. Each department or office will naturally advocate for its own importance, potentially leading to conflicts when resources are reallocated.
- The Co-Chair warned that this is ultimately a budget-cutting exercise, and while the administration has committed to minimizing harm through attrition and humane

methods, these plans rely on variables such as enrollment trends, which are not guaranteed.

- The Group emphasized the need for each department to prepare strong rationales for their current operations, demonstrating value in terms of budget efficiency and institutional effectiveness.
- Importantly, the Co-Chair noted that trade-offs will be unavoidable, and decisions made may benefit some departments at the expense of others. Therefore, it's essential that faculty are involved not just in the decisions, but in shaping the criteria that guide those decisions, as these criteria will ultimately determine outcomes.
- Finally, the Co-Chair stressed that who is at the decision-making table—and who has influence—will be crucial. They urged the group to remain realistic, prepared, and actively engaged throughout the process.

## **2. Faculty Discussion**

The Group opened the floor to questions, noting that their comments were not meant to be overly pessimistic but rather a realistic assessment of the difficult decisions ahead.

- Faculty from Art asked for clarification about the term "levers" that had been mentioned earlier in the discussion. They wanted to understand whether these "levers" refer to actions or strategies considered before the conversation shifted to faculty lines and attrition, and requested a more detailed explanation of what was meant by that term.
- The CC Chair clarified that when they referred to "levers," they meant any possible actions or policy changes that could impact the institution's budget or operations. Examples include raising course caps or increasing teaching loads, though the latter may not currently be a serious consideration. They explained that changes like increasing minimum enrollment thresholds can indirectly lead to reductions in faculty lines, as courses with low enrollment may be cut. This, in turn, may require remaining faculty to take on more teaching responsibilities. They emphasized that these decisions are interconnected and not as straightforward as assigning a specific dollar amount to each change.
- Faculty from Religious Studies asked for clarity on how decision-making power flows within the steering committee, expressed concern that relying on consensus may not be effective when disagreements arise and asked whether leaders can be outvoted, or if they ultimately control the final decisions.
- The FEC Chair clarified that while Huron has its own idea of deliverables, their personal role as a faculty representative is to ensure clear communication between the

committee and the broader faculty, and to speak up when proposals are unacceptable. The FEC Chair acknowledged that ultimate decision-making lies with Vice President for Finance and Administration on the operational side and Dean of Faculty on the academic side, but emphasized the importance of holding leadership accountable to shared governance. The FEC Chair stressed the need for ongoing faculty engagement, transparency, and solidarity, warning that future resource cuts will require departments to be flexible and self-reflective. Rather than defending only their own interests, faculty should recognize their collective responsibility and be willing to make sacrifices to support the institution as a whole.

- The IPPC Budget and Finance Subcommittee Co-Chair encouraged departments to conduct a self-assessment, identifying strengths and weaknesses and developing a clear rationale for their work. The Co-Chair emphasized the importance of being prepared to justify departmental activities before decisions are made, rather than reacting afterward.
- The CEPP Chair clarified that the steering group is not making formal decisions or voting in a way that carries authority. Instead, they are providing feedback on the feasibility or preferability of different proposals, but not determining outcomes. The CEPP Chair emphasized that no one in the group feels empowered to make final decisions, and they are cautious in communicating that. For example, when a proposal like raising faculty teaching loads comes up and the potential savings are minimal, the group may push back, but their role is advisory, not decisive.
- The CC Chair expressed doubt about the usefulness of isolated solutions, noting that some proposals do not make sense within Skidmore's specific context. They emphasized that everything is interconnected-adjusting one element affects many others-so having a system that treats decisions as independent doesn't seem practical or effective at this point.
- Faculty from English asked for reassurance that administrative positions are being reviewed with the same level of scrutiny as faculty roles in the downsizing process. They emphasized that faculty are closest to the institution's core educational mission and product, and questioned whether the recent growth in administrative positions is also under evaluation. They requested transparency around whether these conversations are actively taking place or being discussed behind closed doors.
- The IPPC Budget and Finance Subcommittee Co-Chair clarified that it's important to define what is meant by "administration," whether it refers to all administrative offices or just senior leadership. They noted that administrators may argue that other divisions have already absorbed significant cuts. While it appears that all areas of campus are being reviewed, the Co-Chair acknowledged the faculty member's concern and admitted that it is unclear whether the President's Cabinet is specifically being evaluated.

- The FEC Chair raised concerns about recent administrative growth during a time when faculty reductions are under discussion. The FEC Chair suggested that actions such as high-level salary adjustments or reconsidering recent administrative promotions could potentially preserve faculty positions, and emphasized the importance of presenting well-researched, data-driven proposals to the administration, demonstrating faculty efforts to identify efficiencies. The FEC Chair also stressed that any efforts made by faculty should be matched by similar commitments from the administration, advocating for a balanced and collaborative approach to addressing institutional challenges.
- Faculty from Chemistry noted that Academic Affairs has developed a strong, data-driven model to guide decision-making and expressed appreciation for the clarity it provides. The faculty member then asked whether similar robust quantitative modeling is being conducted in other divisions across campus. The question aimed to understand how colleagues in non-academic areas, who may feel more vulnerable, can gain the same level of assurance and transparency in their respective areas.
- The IPPC Budget and Finance Subcommittee Co-Chair responded by stating that the same type of quantitative analysis conducted for Academic Affairs has also been applied to all divisions and offices across campus. They noted that representatives from various areas, such as Office of Institutional Research and others, are involved in the process and working closely with Huron. While all areas are currently included in the analysis phase, the Co-Chair acknowledged an open question remains about whether all divisions will be equally included in the final decision-making process. The analysis focuses on assessing each department's value relative to its return, as part of Huron's broader evaluation.
- The CC Chair added that while having a precise quantitative model can be beneficial, it also comes with downsides.
- Faculty from English asked for clarification regarding the evaluation of departmental value. Specifically, the faculty member inquired whether faculty delegates on the steering committee have a clear understanding of the methods being used to assess the "value proposition" of each department. The faculty member also asked whether the process of determining value is being conducted transparently and whether the delegates themselves feel adequately informed and included in that transparency.
- The IPPC Budget and Finance Subcommittee Co-Chair responded by noting that while the data is being made transparent, interpretation will vary. The Co-Chair emphasized that the final report should be shared with everyone, not just the steering committee, so all faculty members can assess the fairness of the analysis themselves. The Co-Chair supported the idea, previously mentioned by the FEC Chair, that broad faculty involvement is crucial for informed judgment. The Co-Chair also noted that while the numbers present one version of reality, individual departments may experience a

different reality, and the challenge will be bridging the gap between quantitative data and lived experience.

- The CEPP Chair reflected on the challenges of working with unequal access to information, noting that steering committee members are seeing parts of the larger picture while others are not, making communication and summary difficult. The CEPP Chair emphasized the importance of ensuring that everyone sees the final report before any decisions are made, reinforcing the need for transparency. The CEPP Chair clarified that the process is not about evaluating individual departments in isolation, but rather asking college-wide questions that require context-specific answers. Throughout, discussions are also grounded in values and mission, not just data. The CEPP Chair stressed that numbers are only one part of the picture, citing an example where incorrect data about another institution was used, illustrating how misinterpretation or lack of context can lead to misleading conclusions. The CEPP Chair concluded by reiterating that transparent information and a clear process are essential for fair and informed decision-making.
- Faculty from Art expressed support for the idea of “sharing the pain” across departments and raised the importance of considering the historical context of faculty attrition. The faculty member noted that attrition has already been occurring over the past five to six years due to hiring freezes and limited replacement of faculty lines. The faculty member suggested that a holistic, long-term view, such as looking back over the past ten years, could help identify which departments have already experienced significant reductions and which have remained stable or grown. This broader perspective, the faculty member argued, would provide a more equitable and informed basis for future decisions, especially since attrition is often influenced by timing of retirements rather than actual instructional need. The faculty member emphasized that understanding departmental changes over time could help ensure fairness in how future cuts or reallocations are approached.
- Faculty from Arts Administration raised a concern about the current capacity of the faculty member governance system, noting that it has been significantly reduced in recent years. They questioned how the system will be able to manage the increased workload and responsibilities expected to arise from the ongoing decision-making process.
- The CEPP Chair acknowledged the need to prepare the faculty governance system for the increased workload ahead, and noted that several faculty members are rotating off committees, so a smooth transition and knowledge transfer will be essential. While there have been general assurances that shared governance will play a role in decision-making, no concrete details have been provided, and the CEPP Chair stressed the need for clarity soon to allow for proper planning. The CEPP Chair emphasized the importance of identifying what work may need to be set aside and referenced past examples, like the Middle States process, as proof that the governance system can

absorb additional responsibilities. However, the CEPP Chair expressed that advanced preparation will be critical for managing the process effectively.

- The IPPC Budget and Finance Subcommittee Co-Chair emphasized the need for the Group to determine whether it is committed to working in the collective interest. The Co-Chair stressed that doing so would require a high level of mutual trust among faculty members. If that trust exists, the Co-Chair suggested the Group should establish formal structures that support shared analysis and decision-making, ultimately promoting collective outcomes. The Co-Chair highlighted that building trust and collaborative systems will be essential for navigating the challenges ahead together.
- The FEC Chair emphasized the importance of faculty taking an active role in building and maintaining a robust data infrastructure that remains under faculty oversight. The FEC Chair noted that while this work may be tedious, it is essential for ensuring accurate understanding of faculty contributions and teaching loads. The FEC Chair shared an anecdote from the Associate Dean of the Faculty, who found that faculty-reported teaching releases in Digital Measures had almost no correlation with the master schedule data, highlighting a lack of consistency and reliability. This discrepancy resulted in wasted administrative time trying to reconcile data manually. The FEC Chair stressed that when faculty collectively dismiss reporting systems, it undermines the ability to understand and advocate for themselves with accurate data. The FEC Chair called for a greater sense of responsibility and engagement from faculty in maintaining accurate records and emphasized the need to push for institutional resources to support better data systems, and encouraged faculty to pay attention to and engage with the work of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, which is actively addressing these challenges.
- Faculty from Education Studies raised the issue of department chairs' lack of involvement in the current decision-making process. The faculty member noted that, to their knowledge, chairs have not played a role so far and expressed concern that no chairs' meetings have been held this semester, nor are any expected. The faculty member described chairs as a knowledgeable and generous group and asked for input on how chairs could advocate for inclusion in the process. The group of chairs has begun meeting independently, but the faculty member emphasized the need for more formal integration and sought suggestions on how to effectively push for that involvement.
- The CEPP Chair agreed that the department chairs' role should be incorporated into ongoing conversations about resource allocation and governance structures moving forward. The CEPP Chair acknowledged that department chairs and program directors already play a key role in the existing shared governance system and emphasized the importance of including them in broader discussions. The CEPP Chair committed to bringing this point into future conversations and encouraging more structured involvement from chairs as part of the larger governance process.

- Faculty from Sociology and Asian Studies asked for clarification about who Huron consultants spoke with during their data collection and campus conversations. The faculty member referenced a previous faculty meeting where it was mentioned that Huron's discussions on campus had concluded but noted that they themselves were not contacted or consulted, raising the possibility that only certain departments or programs were involved. The faculty member asked whether this information is confidential or if it can be publicly disclosed, expressing interest in understanding who was at the table during those conversations.
- The CEPP Chair acknowledged that they did not have a clear or concise answer. The Group admitted that they themselves were not consulted and asked if anyone else could provide insight.
- Faculty from Library shared their experience participating in a small group discussion with Huron representatives, describing the group as a seemingly random selection of middle management from various units, including the library and Office of Institutional Research. The faculty member noted that the conversation followed a pre-set list of questions, with little to no follow-up, which limited the depth and usefulness of the discussion. For example, when asked who their unit collaborates with on campus, the faculty member responded that the library collaborates with many groups, but Huron representatives did not probe further for examples or details. As a result, the faculty member felt that the discussions were not particularly informative or reflective of the actual work being done. The faculty member invited others to share their experiences as well.
- Faculty from Library raised an important point about the inclusion of staff perspectives in the ongoing discussions, particularly since the library includes both faculty and staff roles. The faculty member expressed curiosity about how staff positions and responsibilities are being addressed in the process, noting that during periods of attrition, it appears staff may have been more significantly affected than faculty. While acknowledging that faculty represent a larger share of the budget, the faculty member emphasized the need to understand how staff will be integrated into governance and decision-making, or whether they risk being left out. The faculty member also acknowledged the sensitivity of the topic and expressed concern about asking questions that may be considered confidential, but underscored the importance of inclusive dialogue moving forward.
- The IPPC Budget and Finance Subcommittee Co-Chair addressed the question about staff inclusion by emphasizing that all departments and offices, including those with staff roles, will be reflected in the data and evaluations. The Co-Chair noted that when the data is released, it will be important for each unit to be prepared to justify its operations, effectiveness, and contributions, such as database management, library services, and other functions. The Co-Chair encouraged all departments to engage in



introspective review, assessing their own efficiency and readiness to answer difficult questions, and also suggested that each unit should consider a hypothetical scenario: if cuts were necessary, where could they be made with the least harm to core operations. Lastly, the Co-Chair proposed that this exercise could be approached collectively at the college level, asking whether there are ways to realign departments to save money while still maintaining curricular effectiveness and operational efficiency.

- The CEPP Chair responded to an earlier comment about interviews conducted by Huron, clarifying that in addition to initial group discussions, key individuals and department heads have also been consulted about potential opportunities under consideration. The Group observed that Huron's understanding of the institution is what one might expect from a group of smart consultants working over a short period, approximately a medium-level grasp of Skidmore's structure and culture. As an example, they pointed out apparent gaps in understanding, such as how the tenure and promotion system works. The CEPP Chair emphasized that while Huron is working diligently, there are limits to what they can fully grasp in just a few months, and that the real work will fall to the campus community after their involvement ends. The CEPP Chair reinforced that neither Huron nor its report will be a solution in itself; rather, the institution will need to engage in significant follow-up work to interpret the findings and act on them appropriately, aligning outcomes with Skidmore's values and realities.
- The CC Chair reflected on their experience in meetings with Huron, noting that the canned questions they received were likely similar across groups. While they were advised not to engage directly with Huron, they expressed appreciation for how the administration has responded to faculty feedback about Huron's outputs. The CC Chair noted that much of Huron's work reflects a medium-level understanding of the institution, which often leads to surface-level observations that anyone familiar with academic structures could explain. The CC Chair emphasized that the focus should be less on the consultants themselves and more on the administration's response and decision-making power. They likened hiring consultants to getting a personal trainer, a necessary push to do something the institution already knows it needs, such as improving data systems and transparency. The CC Chair also mentioned that, despite limitations, the process might uncover useful insights or oversights, such as outdated initiatives or inefficiencies, which could be addressed moving forward. The Group saw value in the process itself, rather than in Huron specifically.
- Faculty from Music asked for clarification on what activities or developments are expected to occur over the summer.
- The CEPP Chair recalled that at a recent meeting, Dorothy acknowledged the difficulty of conducting meaningful shared governance work over the summer, given that most faculty are not on campus. She seemed to suggest that deliberation would pause until fall, although no specific schedule has been finalized. The CEPP Chair emphasized that

this uncertainty is partly tied to broader planning for the next phase of the process, which has not yet been defined. The CEPP Chair stressed the need for ongoing accountability and transparency, warning that if actions are taken over the summer that were not communicated in advance, faculty must hold the administration accountable. The CEPP Chair concluded by affirming that faculty are not just supporters of the process but active participants, and that distinction is important moving forward.

- Faculty from WLL reflected on an earlier point about the need to justify one's role or work and expressed uncertainty about what that specifically entails. The faculty member referenced a past email requesting detailed weekly activity reports and noted it felt similar in tone. The faculty member asked for clarification: Does "justifying ourselves" refer to our roles as individual faculty members, our academic disciplines, our departments, or our teaching responsibilities? The faculty requested further explanation to better understand what is being asked of them in this process.
- The IPPC Budget and Finance Subcommittee Co-Chair responded to a question about what it means to "justify ourselves," suggesting that faculty should take a proactive rather than reactive approach. The Co-Chair emphasized the importance of departmental self-assessment and record-keeping, recommending that departments be prepared to explain and support the rationale behind their course offerings, faculty lines, and major requirements. The Co-Chair used the example of defending a specific faculty position with supporting data and stressed the need to be ready for such questions, especially given the current uncertain enrollment trends and budget assumptions. The Co-Chair noted that if anticipated improvements in student numbers do not materialize, the institution could face significant financial challenges.
- The FEC Chair clarified and reframed a previous comment about faculty needing to "justify their existence." The FEC Chair emphasized that the current process is not about evaluating individual faculty members for elimination, but rather about understanding resource use and effectiveness across the curriculum. The FEC Chair explained that Huron's modeling includes metrics like cost per credit hour at the course level, which can help identify patterns and raise questions, for example, variations in cost among general education requirements or the impact of course offerings on enrollment distribution. These analyses aim to inform decisions about curricular structure, course capacity, and resource allocation, not to target individuals. The FEC Chair noted that some programs may appear small in size but contribute significantly to general education and interdisciplinary teaching, which should be recognized in the analysis. The FEC Chair encouraged departments to think proactively about how their structures affect broader campus resource flows, and suggested that thoughtful planning now can help inform long-term strategies for managing attrition and reallocation in a way that benefits the institution as a whole. The FEC Chair concluded by encouraging faculty to engage with the process in a constructive way, as there is potential for the data to support smarter, more strategic planning, if the process is approached thoughtfully.

- Faculty from History followed up on a previous comment regarding the idea of combining departments or programs, a topic that has been discussed at Skidmore in the past. The faculty member asked for clarification on the rationale and potential cost savings behind such structural changes. Specifically, the faculty member inquired whether consolidating departments into larger divisions would result in financial benefits and requested an explanation of why or how such savings might be achieved.
- The IPPC Budget and Finance Subcommittee Co-Chair explained that cost savings from combining departments typically come from reducing administrative roles and shared resources, for example, going from multiple chairs and administrative assistants to a single set of shared positions. While emphasizing they were not advocating for this specific change, the Co-Chair noted that from a financial perspective, such consolidations are seen as a way to reduce expenses. The Co-Chair also acknowledged that while the language around “cost savings” may vary, the reality is that cost cutting will be necessary. The Co-Chair urged the Group to be mindful that, regardless of how the process is framed, some reductions will need to happen to meet financial goals.
- The CC Chair emphasized that the process of institutional change will likely be organic and complex, rather than a straightforward implementation of a fixed plan. Much of what happens will depend on when and where faculty retirements occur, making the situation fluid and continuously evolving rather than something resolved by a few decisions in the fall. The CC Chair clarified that the current modeling does not include scenarios like cutting or combining specific departments, though such outcomes could still occur. Instead, the focus seems to be on overall faculty lines and resource allocation, which may have varied consequences that will develop differently over time.
- The CEPP Chair pointed out that Huron has been tasked with identifying 5-10% in budget savings within Academic Affairs, which translates to a range of approximately \$3 to \$7 million. The CEPP Chair noted discomfort with the broad range of this target and emphasized the need for greater clarity and precision in the process. The CEPP Chair also distinguished Huron’s current charge from longer-term scenarios, such as a continued decline in enrollment, which would involve different considerations. While future planning could be informed by Huron’s data, the CEPP Chair clarified that such scenarios are not part of Huron’s current focus.
- Faculty from Tang Museum supported the library faculty’s earlier comments but also added a clarification based on their own experience. The faculty member noted having seen a slide that included dollar amounts, indicating that some financial modeling is being attached to specific units, in this case the museum. The faculty member shared that they were invited to review three slides related to the museum, which they found to be based on a deeply flawed understanding and inaccurate data. While they appreciated the opportunity to respond, they strongly urged others to carefully

scrutinize the data they are given, emphasizing that some of the information being circulated should not be relied upon and, in their view, should not be shared further.

- The FEC Chair acknowledged that slides do include dollar figures, but emphasized that the data is flawed and incomplete, making it unreliable for decision-making. While the numbers themselves may be inaccurate, the FEC Chair found value in the methodology developed to track resource flows within Academic Affairs. The FEC Chair urged the group to focus on preserving the constructive aspects of the process, rather than relying on specific numerical outputs that are not yet trustworthy.
- The CC Chair highlighted issues with the accuracy of the data being used, noting that both the Dean's Office and others have acknowledged the numbers are not fully reliable for decision-making. While charts and graphs can help illustrate general resource flows, the CC Chair emphasized that the underlying figures are flawed and should not be the basis for major decisions. The CC Chair expressed appreciation that the slides have not been widely shared, as doing so could lead to misinterpretation or unnecessary alarm. The CC Chair stressed the importance of using data thoughtfully and critically.
- Faculty from English (also the former member of NTT negotiation) raised a question about whether the cost differences associated with faculty employment types (part-time, full-time non-tenure-track (NTT), and tenure-track/tenured) are being directly acknowledged in the ongoing discussions. The faculty member pointed out that the most significant cost variation in instructional spending is not related to course-specific factors like buses or community engagement, but rather to the employment status and rank of faculty. The faculty member questioned whether the current conversation is assuming neutrality in maintaining the existing balance between tenure-track, NTT, and part-time faculty, despite the clear cost implications. The faculty member emphasized the importance of addressing this issue transparently, as ignoring it would make the broader cost-saving conversation less meaningful.
- The CEPP Chair acknowledged that discussions have taken place around the cost differences associated with faculty rank and time in service, noting that full professors cost significantly more to the institution than assistant professors. The CEPP Chair emphasized that this is one of many complex issues involved in evaluating the cost to educate, describing the process as one where pulling on one thread often reveals deeper complications. The CEPP Chair pointed out that while turf defense is a natural reaction when areas are scrutinized, a collective denial of the need for cost-cutting would be an untenable position for a tuition-dependent institution. At the same time, the CEPP Chair cautioned against making unjust or overly harsh cuts. The CEPP Chair stressed the importance of finding a balanced, thoughtful approach that avoids extremes and uses the moment-and the significant investment being made-as an opportunity to engage faculty influence in a meaningful and constructive way.

- Faculty from Art reflected on the crisis-driven nature of the current process, noting that much of the burden now appears to fall on faculty to identify inefficiencies or misuses of resources. The faculty member questioned whether the process will include any assessment of how the institution arrived at this point, beyond well-known external factors like demographic shifts or enrollment trends. The faculty member raised concerns about administrative accountability, asking whether earlier decisions, such as costly hires, might have contributed to the current situation. The faculty member emphasized the need for transparency and reflection on past decision-making and asked how the college plans to ensure that similar financial issues are not repeated in the future.
- The IPPC Budget and Finance Subcommittee Co-Chair responded to the idea of the institution being in crisis, explaining that administrators have framed the current moment as proactive rather than reactive. According to them, the college is not currently in a deficit, but is instead anticipating future financial challenges and working now to avoid a true crisis later by making difficult decisions in advance. The Co-Chair emphasized the importance of understanding the underlying assumptions driving the current planning, noting that while the process is described as "strategic," the definition of what is strategic depends on institutional values and priorities. The Co-Chair supported the idea that the faculty must determine their collective priorities and referenced a helpful distinction made by a colleague between "need to have" and "nice to have" resources. This framework, the Co-Chair suggested, could help guide discussions and decisions about where to make adjustments in a way that preserves the most essential elements of the college's mission.
- The CC Chair noted that while there may not be a formal assessment of how the college arrived at its current financial position, there is an informal consensus forming. According to this view, the college over-relied on a temporary enrollment surge, mistaking it for a new normal, and made hiring and budgeting decisions based on that inflated figure. Now, with enrollment stabilizing or declining, the institution is facing the consequences. The CC Chair reiterated the earlier metaphor of Huron as a "personal trainer"-brought in to push the college to make necessary but delayed adjustments. The CC Chair indicated that the current approach involves restructuring the faculty and exploring different options for doing so, with a range of potential outcomes being considered.
- Faculty from Chemistry noted that a prior consultancy-led model guided the college to increase net enrollment based on projections that have not held up, suggesting that an assessment of that decision would be valuable. The faculty member shared a recent experience serving on a Middle States accreditation team at Carlow University, a financially weaker institution. Despite its challenges, Carlow's administration was praised for being highly transparent, allowing faculty and staff to fully understand the institution's budget and thereby fostering genuine buy-in and shared responsibility. The faculty member concluded by asking how Skidmore's administration can move toward

a similar level of transparency, which they believe is crucial for productive collaboration and trust.

- The CEPP Chair encouraged faculty to pressure actively and consistently the administration for greater transparency and involvement in decision-making. The CEPP Chair emphasized that while it's important for the administration to provide information, faculty must also be willing to engage, review materials, and participate meaningfully in the process. The CEPP Chair cautioned against passively waiting for the administration to solve institutional challenges, stressing that change requires faculty initiative and investment. The CEPP Chair viewed the current extended discussion as a positive sign of engagement and urged colleagues to maintain momentum moving forward.
- Faculty Parliamentarian shared plans to lead a workshop in September focused on how faculty meetings function and how to effectively use Robert's Rules of Order. The faculty member observed that over time, there has been a decline in active faculty governance during meetings, with much of the time now dominated by announcements rather than substantive decision-making. The faculty member stressed the importance of revitalizing faculty engagement and becoming more active participants in governance through the formal meeting process. The goal of the workshop is to empower faculty to be more vocal, procedural, and effective in asserting their role in institutional decision-making.
- Faculty from Biology questioned whether additional fundraising efforts could be pursued as an alternative or supplement to cost-cutting measures. The faculty member asked if the institution has truly exhausted all opportunities to increase revenue.
- The IPPC Budget and Finance Subcommittee Co-Chair responded by confirming that fundraising remains an active goal, noting that the college aims to grow its endowment from its current level. The Co-Chair also mentioned that a new fundraising campaign is on the horizon, which is expected to be one of the college's most ambitious efforts to date. The intention is to significantly increase revenue through philanthropic support.
- The FEC Chair remarked that the community has endured the strategic planning process with the expectation that it will serve as a key tool for the president to use in securing external funding. The FEC Chair expressed hope that by September, the strategic plan will actively be used for fundraising and generating financial support for the college.
- Faculty from Library followed up on an earlier question by asking about the level of budget transparency the administration intends to provide during upcoming meetings. The faculty member questioned whether faculty will be given access to detailed budget information-both their own and that of other units-in order to make informed decisions about resource allocation.

- The IPPC Budget and Finance Subcommittee Co-Chair stated that they will look into the authorization required to report on the work of the Budget and Finance Subcommittee, suggesting a potential follow-up on whether and how updates can be formally shared with the broader group.
- The FEC Chair noted that if there is no Budget and Finance Subcommittee update at the next faculty meeting, the faculty should consider formally asking why, as there has been a request for such an update that has yet to be fulfilled. The FEC Chair emphasized that time remains to address this, encouraging the group to remain attentive and proactive in seeking financial transparency.
- Faculty from History raised a broader, more serious question about how the current tumultuous political climate might be influencing the college's planning and outlook. The faculty member specifically asked how issues such as threats to academic freedom, challenges to fundraising, and the uncertainty of future funding are being factored into administrative assessments and long-term decision-making.
- The CC Chair responded by stating that the political climate and related concerns are not currently being considered as part of the Huron consulting process. They indicated that such issues would represent a separate conversation entirely and are effectively bracketed from the current scope of analysis and planning.

### **3. Closing Remarks**

The FEC Chair expressed sincere thanks to everyone for their time and thoughtful engagement, especially on a Friday afternoon. The FEC Chair emphasized the importance of continued faculty involvement and questioning, both through the current channels and more broadly. The FEC Chair closed by wishing everyone the best for the remainder of the day, acknowledging the challenging circumstances the college community is navigating.