

FEC Open Forum on Faculty Communication (4/17/2026)

Meeting Notes

Facilitated by: FEC

Purpose: To gather faculty input on faculty communication channels and the structure of faculty meetings.

1. Welcome and Background

FEC Chair Ting Li welcomed attendees and thanked them for participating in the open forum.

FEC member Jeremy Day-O'Connell provided background on the current faculty communication system. He explained that the primary email channel, the faculty listserv, is currently limited mainly to the approved announcements. Messages must be reviewed and forwarded by a small group of administrators. Some faculty have expressed concern that this system limits broader faculty communication, creates a sense of gatekeeping, and sometimes causes confusion because the sender of the message is not always the original author.

Jeremy also noted that before 2021, faculty had more open access to faculty-wide email lists. While this allowed greater freedom of communication, it also created challenges, including high email volume, unclear message relevance, and the potential for harmful or inappropriate messages. The current system was adopted after concerns arose about the use of the listserv during the COVID period.

2. Email Communication

Faculty discussed the advantages and disadvantages of reopening or revising faculty-wide email communication. Several possible models were raised, including:

- A moderated faculty email list
- A system in which several faculty leaders approve messages
- Separate email lists for different purposes, such as announcements, events, discussion, or community matters
- Opt-in or opt-out options for different communication channels
- A code of conduct for faculty-wide messages
- Alternative platforms outside of email, such as a discussion forum

Participants noted that any moderation system could create additional work for those responsible for approval. Others expressed concern that moderation could have a chilling effect on communication. There was also interest in exploring whether IT could support more flexible listserv options or alternative platforms.

3. Faculty Meeting Structure

The discussion then turned to faculty meetings. Several participants expressed concern that current faculty meetings often feel more like information-sharing sessions than opportunities for substantive faculty discussion. Some faculty noted that administrative reports could often be

shared in writing before meetings, leaving meeting time for questions, discussion, and faculty business.

There was discussion of whether faculty meetings should be chaired by faculty rather than by administrators. Some participants suggested that this could help create a more open environment for faculty discussion. Others noted that such a change might require revising the Faculty Handbook.

Participants also discussed the hybrid meeting format. Some noted that Zoom access improves accessibility, while others raised concerns that hybrid meetings may reduce in-person engagement and participation.

4. Faculty Discussion and Campus Culture

Several participants reflected on changes in faculty meeting culture over time. Some recalled earlier periods when faculty meetings included more robust discussion and debate. Others, especially newer faculty, noted that they had not experienced that type of faculty meeting culture at Skidmore.

Concerns were raised that reduced opportunities for faculty discussion may contribute to lower participation, less institutional memory, and a sense of disengagement. Some participants emphasized the value of creating spaces where faculty can share concerns, ask questions, and better understand issues across departments and programs.

5. Possible Next Steps Discussed

Several possible next steps emerged from the discussion:

- Explore options with IT for revised faculty communication systems
- Consider multiple email lists or alternative communication platforms
- Develop a code of conduct for faculty-wide communication
- Consider whether administrative reports could be shared in writing before faculty meetings
- Explore changes to faculty meeting structure, including whether faculty should chair or have greater control over meetings
- Consider faculty-only discussion spaces or open forums when major issues arise
- Gather broader faculty input on communication needs and concerns

6. Closing

FEC encouraged attendees to continue sharing thoughts and suggestions. Participants were invited to encourage interested colleagues to contact FEC with additional ideas.

The meeting concluded with thanks to all who attended and contributed to the discussion.