

**INSTITUTIONAL POLICY AND PLANNING COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES  
February 19, 2010**

PRESENT: Mary Lou Bates, Rochelle Calhoun, Michael Casey, Winston Grady-Willis, Ann Henderson, Kim Marsella, Muriel Poston, Jeff Segrave, Michael West, Mary Cogan, Susan Bender, Raina Bretan, James Welsh, Hugh Foley, Anne Petruzzelli, and Barbara Krause (Secretary).

ABSENT: President Philip Glotzbach, Chair; Professor Adrienne Zuerner, Vice Chair; Erica Bastress-Dukehart, Susan Kress, Justin Sipher.

**1. Approval of Minutes**

Minutes of the January 29, 2010 special meeting and the February 5, 2010 regular meeting were approved as distributed.

**2. FY '11 Budget Planning**

Vice President for Finance and Administration Michael West reviewed FY '11 budget planning materials that were distributed in advance of the meetings. *These materials and the related IPPC discussions should remain confidential at this time.*

The Budget and Finance Subcommittee of IPPC has held three meetings to review the key budget parameters reflected in the Draft Preliminary Budget Model for Fiscal 2011 ("Attachment B" in the materials distributed for the meeting). Key elements of the budget planning parameters set forth in Attachment B and recommended by the subcommittee to the full IPPC at this time include maintaining an over-enrollment of approximately 80 NFE, controlling tuition and fee increases (perhaps to the College's lowest level in 25 years), limited growth in financial aid (with a tuition discount rate, however, of approximately 34%), no general salary increase, and transfers to the Capital Budget of approximately \$7 million (budget level used in FY '07).

Acting Chair Professor Sue Bender thanked Vice President West and the Budget and Finance Committee for their good work. She noted that the materials included a proposed preliminary budget model for FY '11 and an alternate model, and she asked members of the Budget and Finance Subcommittee to share with the full committee some of the key points in the discussion that led the subcommittee to recommend the model it did. Comments included the following:

- Developing the budget involves tradeoffs between a number of important objectives, including the needs of Skidmore families with respect to affordability, the need to support Skidmore faculty and staff with appropriate annual salary increases, the need to have additional money for new initiatives, etc.
- The model with the higher comprehensive fee increase and other projected revenue enhancements (including projected fees for special programs and summer income) would provide additional money for new initiatives, additional financial aid to recruit an

excellent student body, with diversity as a component of that excellence, or for other purposes. The model with the lower comprehensive fee increase, on the other hand, offers a more affordable comprehensive fee for a broader range of families and the opportunity to move down on the list of “most expensive” colleges – a result that the Admissions Office would welcome. (It was noted, however, that this result is not assured, since it depends on actions by other colleges that are not, and cannot be, known to Skidmore.)

- It was noted that some community members may question why we would have such a low increase in the comprehensive fee rather than including additional money for a general salary adjustment. Again, Admissions officers report anecdotally that Skidmore’s high cost has increasingly been mentioned as a concern among potential applicants, their families, and high school guidance counselors.
- A member of the Budget and Finance Subcommittee also expressed support for the lower comprehensive fee increase as a reasonable balance between providing the opportunity to attract more applicants and provide a reasonable financial aid budget. Vice President West noted that, in this model, the dollars allocated for financial aid and the financial aid discount rate are significantly higher than estimated for the current year.
- One member expressed support for providing new initiative money that would allow the conversion of non-tenure track to tenure track lines among the faculty.

One member asked how the College prioritizes various competing goals, noting that a higher comprehensive fee would provide a tangible resource for new initiatives, whereas a lower comprehensive fee increase would provide the more intangible benefit of possibly making the College more affordable to a broader range of applicants. Mr. West noted that the weighing of those priorities happens in discussions with the President and Cabinet, with IPPC (both the Budget and Finance Subcommittee and the full committee), and ultimately with the Board of Trustees.

Other points made during the discussion included the suggestion that we should consider additional research to determine why our application numbers are dropping. It was noted that Skidmore continues to require an application fee, generating approximately \$250,000 per year in revenue, and potentially ensuring that those students who do apply have a stronger interest in attending. It was further noted that the number of students seeking financial aid has increased, and that more families are requesting aid who do not qualify under Skidmore guidelines.

Mr. West asked for a sense of the group with respect to the key budget assumptions set forth in Attachment A of the materials. Two faculty members expressed concern that maintaining the over-enrollment numbers while limiting funds for new initiatives could undermine the strong faculty/student interactions that are a strength of the College. There was some discussion as to whether the budget planning would affect the overall faculty/student ratio and whether money for new initiatives would be available for new faculty lines (or whether the new initiative money was intended for certain administrative positions that are currently on “soft” money). Another member made the point that if the College is in a low-growth mode and wants money for new

initiatives, the College will either need to enroll more students or increase tuition. This suggests that at some point, the College will need to return to the final optimization question.

Finally, it was noted that students have heard concern among their classmates as to whether they can continue to afford Skidmore. In that regard, a lower comprehensive fee increase is preferable.

### **3. Scribner Village Replacement Update**

Dean of Student Affairs Rochelle Calhoun referred members to the materials that were distributed in advance of the meeting. She noted ongoing cost challenges to bring forward this important project. At this point, cost estimates regarding pre-design planning are estimated at approximately \$36 million for the core program (i.e., not including the Health and Wellness facility). Having provided IPPC with an update at the previous meeting, Dean Calhoun invited questions and comments. Feedback included the following:

- *Will there be a hidden cost of delaying the Health and Wellness facility?*  
Vice President West acknowledged that the new residence hall would be occupied and the staging would be more complicated if construction of the Health and Wellness Center is delayed, but he does not believe these additional costs would be insurmountable. (Whether the Health and Wellness Center goes forward is largely dependent upon fund raising.) Dean Calhoun and Vice President West both agree that ideally, the Health and Wellness Center would be constructed as part of the first phase.
- *Do the four-bedroom suites in the traditional residence hall add to the cost?*  
Yes, but there is a programmatic payoff. Skidmore currently provides very few opportunities for inter-class interactions and, according to the input from our architects and others, has fewer housing options than many of our peers. The existence of suites in the residence hall would encourage more upperclassmen to live in the same building occupied by underclass students in singles and doubles. Those residing in the new residence hall will be required to have at least a partial meal plan.

In response to a question regarding timelines, it was noted that the Board of Trustees will consider these materials in February with the administration recommending authorization to move to the full design phase. If approved, the current plan is to go back to the Board in May for approval of full construction documents. Once authorized, construction of Phase One is expected to require approximately two years. Funding for the project would come from a major gift previously identified, other gifts in the range of \$3 million or more, a bond issuance (with debt service to be paid for largely by revenue from an increased number of students housed and required meal-plan income), and additional transfers of approximately two years of over-enrollment funds.

### **4. Reduction in Services Memo**

In response to inquiries at community meetings and elsewhere, a draft memo has been prepared outlining reductions in services on campus. Members of IPPC were invited to share their feedback on the memo. Comments included the following:

- In general, it was suggested that the memo provide as much specific information as possible. In particular, the issue of Spa hours will be of great interest.
- Vice President West noted that the current plans call for the Spa hours to be reduced, effective fall 2010. Students expressed significant concerns about the proposed changes, expressing a strong belief that the reductions would create a significant deterrent for students who would otherwise attend late-night programming or other activities that enhance the vibrancy of Case Center. Dean Calhoun and Vice President West will continue to discuss options to respond to student concerns.
- It was noted that the faculty/staff club has already ceased its lunch hours and the text should be modified accordingly.
- It was suggested that additional text related to the fees for employee fitness classes would be appropriate.

The comments were taken under advisement and will be considered before the memo is finalized.

#### **5. January Degree Conferral**

Ann Henderson reported that the Committee on Academic Standing and the Committee for Educational Policies and Planning have endorsed a proposal to recommend that the Trustees approve a January degree conferral option. The College currently awards degrees dated in May and August. Adding the January date will benefit the increasing number of students who complete their studies in December.

Vice President for Academic Affairs Susan Kress will consult with the Trustee Committee on Academic Affairs in February to determine if they have any concerns and with the faculty at its meeting on March 5, 2010. Assuming support from both of those bodies, the recommendation would be made for the Trustees to approve the new degree date at the May Board meeting. It was noted that the College will continue to hold only one graduation ceremony in May.

#### **6. Update on Town Hall Meeting Synthesis Group**

The preliminary report of the Town Hall Meeting Synthesis Group has been posted on the website, along with a brief survey inviting feedback. An email was distributed to the community this morning notifying them that these materials are available and inviting feedback on or before March 8, 2010.

*Minutes prepared by Barbara Krause. Please notify of any changes.*