

**INSTITUTIONAL POLICY AND PLANNING COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
July 6, 2020**

PRESENT: Cerri Banks; Mary Lou Bates; Joerg Bibow, Vice Chair; Rachael Borthwick '21; Marta Brunner; Marc C. Conner, Chair; Michelle Hubbs; Carolyn Lundy; Martin Mbugua; Donna Ng; Melanie Nolan'23; Michael Orr; Joe Porter; Levi Rogers; Mark Rye; Casey Schofield; Dwane Sterling; Amy Tweedy; and Joshua C. Woodfork.

ABSENT: Sean Campbell; Feryaz Ocakli; Joseph Stankovich; and Kurt Smemo.

The meeting was held via Zoom and called to order at 10:34 a.m. by Chair President Conner.

1. Approval of Meeting Minutes from the June 18, 2020 Meeting.

With no proposed changes, the **minutes from the June 18, 2020 meeting were unanimously approved.**

2. President's Report

Recognizing this as his first meeting in his role as College president, President Conner commented about his enthusiasm to be formally part of the IPPC, and his eagerness to work with such a diverse and hard-working group. He thanked everyone for their flexibility to continue to meet over the summer months. The President stated his belief in the importance of the role that the IPPC plays in shared governance, recognizing it as true gathering space for input and ideas because of the distinct constituency membership.

The President stated that he is cognizant of the significance of IPPC, and the central role the committee plays in formulating and informing institutional-wide decision-making. He added that the work of IPPC has never been more necessary. He welcomes dissent, critique, and discussion —this will enable him to do his job even better. President Conner noted the particular moment we are experiencing with the pandemic and thanked the committee for all the related work it has accomplished and for the forthcoming necessary guidance.

President Conner discussed three pledges that will guide his presidency at Skidmore, including to: work extremely hard, work collectively, and tell the truth.

3. IPPC Vice Chair's Remarks

IPPC Vice Chair Joerg Bibow, Professor of Economics and faculty member, welcomed new committee members. He reemphasized the importance the IPPC plays in informing and assisting the President in decision-making. He restated the importance of ensuring that all of the diverse voices on campus are heard. Vice Chair Bibow stated that he is on the committee as a faculty representative, and that he will work to ensure that he brings faculty voice to the table. That being said, he stated that it is equally important that all constituents from across campus be heard as we are all dependent on one another.

Vice Chair Bibow stated the need to have open and frank discussions, and to put the well-being of the College at the forefront of our thinking. It is going to be a very challenging year, and we, as IPPC members, need to help steer the College the best that we can through this crisis.

4. Furlough Information

President Conner stated that he is aware of lingering questions regarding staff furloughs so he wanted to pause for some further discussion to increase transparency surrounding the process to date. He asked Vice President for Finance and Administration and Treasurer Donna Ng to provide some statistical information regarding furloughs. VP Ng stated that as the College considered furloughing employees, it was the intent from the very start to make any furloughed employee “whole.” She stated that there have been no losses in wages for any furloughed employee and the model indicates that the average employee gain is over \$300 per week. In response to an earlier communication IPPC received from a group of Academic Administrative Assistants, VP Ng provided non-identifying furlough wage information factoring in the loss of the retirement benefit, coupled with the elimination of the 7.65% FICA tax on unemployment wages. The model indicates that the average Academic Administrative Assistants gain is about \$200 per week. She stated that it is the intention of the President’s Cabinet at this time to bring all furloughed employees back on the Skidmore payroll on August 1. The CARES Act funds are slated to end on July 31, and we have not heard of any changes or extensions to this date.

Several IPPC members weighed in on their thoughts of the furlough process. Recognizing that furloughing any employees was seen as a necessity, IPPC members noted there was substantial uncertainty at the beginning of the process and a multitude of questions from those who were furloughed. Overall, IPPC members expressed a level of gratitude for the assistance from the administration in guiding employees through the process. IPPC members noted that this was a monumental task for the Human Resources staff to implement, and recognized that this was likely the first time many furloughed employees applied for unemployment. IPPC expressed its appreciation to everyone involved in the process who tried to ensure that it ran as smoothly as possible for our employees.

IPPC asked if there has been a formal response to the letter that was sent to the Administration from the Academic Administrative Assistants. President Conner replied that a response is being drafted. An IPPC member suggested that an exit interview of furloughed employees be conducted to ascertain feedback. President Conner and VP Ng agreed that this might be an important tool, and offered to consider creating a survey for the applicable employees.

5. Fall Plan

President Conner commented on the fall plan that was announced to the Skidmore community on July 2, 2020. He reminded the IPPC that the key principle of the Reopening Plan is to ensure the health and safety of the Skidmore community, while providing an intensive liberal arts education in a residential setting. The President emphasized that essential to this work is providing collaborative communication in a timely, clear, and consistent fashion to our students and their parents and families, and staff and faculty. To this extent—two community forums are being offered on July 7 and July 8.

Also essential to the fall plan is an awareness of the financial implications of the various scenarios. VP Ng presented three financial scenarios. The basis of each scenario is the number of students who will be residing in Skidmore housing, whether directly on-campus or in a local hotel, where a residential on-campus atmosphere will hopefully be achieved. VP Ng walked through the revenue and budget implications of each of the scenarios. All scenarios include a loss of net revenue with the driver being the number of students on campus and anticipated increases in financial aid. Factors affecting the number of students returning to campus include a larger incoming class, cancellation of the London First-Year Experience program, cancellation of fall study abroad programs, the uncertainty of some international students being unable to return to campus, and the number of students choosing to take classes remotely in the fall. In addition, the fall academic calendar calls for ten less days of on-campus instruction resulting in a loss of room and board revenue. With re-registration and the student housing process needing to be completed, several offices from across the campus—Office of the Registrar, Residential Life, and Financial Aid, are working collaboratively to get an accurate student number.

VP Ng reviewed the operating impacts of each of the scenarios. Operations this fall require additional dining locations, shuttle buses for off-campus provided housing, enhanced cleaning, and distribution and utilization of PPE, increased academic space (tents), as well as the additional staff associated with these measures. Central to students returning to campus is the implementation of testing protocols and contact tracing, which are anticipated to be large expenses. VP Ng added that summer savings from the supplies and services budget and the current employee furloughs were used to offset the summer revenue losses.

Ideally, we would know student numbers shortly, estimate our expenses accordingly, and then implement any cost saving levers to address the negative budget impact. Levers include use of the \$3.5M contingency, reductions to the supplies and services budgets, changes to the retirement contribution, healthcare cost share increases, use of restricted funds, continuation of the hiring freeze, salary cuts, and furloughs and layoffs. VP Ng emphasized that implementation of any of these cost savings measures would require full Board of Trustees approval. She also emphasized that the estimated financials provided are for fall semester only. Vice President for Strategic Planning and Institutional Diversity Joshua Woodfork added that the financial contingency fund is normally set at \$1M (or at least \$500K)—but that it was set at \$3.5M for FY21 in anticipation of the COVID-19 fall financial impact.

President Conner opened up the floor to discussion. An IPPC member asked about the availability of a separate session for IPPC members to review budget figures, terminology, and increase financial literacy, particularly to gain a broader understanding. VP Ng replied positively to this request.

Student Government Association (SGA) President Rachael Borthwick '21 asked several questions pertaining to student housing. Dean of Students & Vice President for Student Affairs Cerri Banks responded that the student housing selection process will remain relatively intact, and that students can expect to hear about housing selections next week. International students will also be hearing next week about the role out of plans for assisting them in returning to campus. There will be students who want to be on campus, but unfortunately because of the fall circumstances, housing preference forms will not have the usual flexibility. She emphasized for

students to please reach out to Residential Life with any questions. SGA President Borthwick also inquired about the status of student employment for the fall. Dean Banks replied that there will be upcoming information disseminated to students regarding student employment via email and student forums.

IPPC discussed the fall plan and engagement with constituent groups, such as the Faculty Executive Committee (FEC) on behalf of the faculty. Associate Professor and FEC Chair Casey Schofield noted that FEC is grateful for the opportunity to engage with the President in a transparent process, and that FEC is willing and eager to continue this work. FEC recently gathered over 200 questions for the upcoming forum on July 7. FEC is working to group and summarize the questions. President Conner stated his appreciation of FEC's engagement, and noted that IPPC, FEC, and other shared governance groups are important for discussion and collaboration, which can expand to broader strokes with faculty meetings, forums, and emails. Dean Banks noted that the importance of IPPC members sharing information with various constituents. VP Woodfork added that this particular semester will require an increase in mindful and meaningful communication to the broader community, as well as education regarding institutional structures, including shared governance structures, and the role of the Board of Trustees.

President Conner invited suggestions regarding the upcoming forums and asked what IPPC believes is relevant to the fall 2020 planning. IPPC members stated that there is a lot of uncertainty and concern regarding safety protocols, teaching modalities, and violations of safety requirements to each constituency (students, staff, and faculty). President Conner and Dean Banks responded that these protocols are currently being drafted. IPPC members suggested that the structure of the sessions be designed to allow for a quick recap of information since the last gathering, statement of action items, and review of next steps prior to opening up the Q&A portion of the sessions. In addition, IPPC suggested to hit the "big" issues during the information sharing portion of the session, and to leave plenty of time for Q&A. An IPPC member suggested that prior to future forums, bullet points of information updates be disseminated to the IPPC and other committees in order for the committees to formulate forum questions. President Conner thanked IPPC members for their ideas.

6. Other Business

No other business was brought forth.

Meeting adjourned at 11:33 a.m.

Please inform the President's Office of any changes to these minutes.