

INSTITUTIONAL POLICY AND PLANNING COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
August 19, 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; Feryaz Ocakli; Michael Orr; Joe Porter; Levi Rogers; Mark Rye; Casey Schofield; Kurt Smemo; Joseph Stankovich; Dwane Sterling; Amy Tweedy; and Joshua C. Woodfork.

ABSENT: Melanie Nolan'23.

GUESTS: Title IX Coordinator Joel Aure; Interim Human Resources Director Sarah Delaney Vero; and Director of Financial Aid Beth Post.

The meeting was held via Zoom and called to order at 2:02 p.m. by Chair President Conner.

1. Approval of Meeting Minutes from the July 6, 2020 Meeting.

A request for a qualifying word correction and a request to include Melanie Nolan as being present were made to the draft meeting minutes of July 6. With no other proposed changes, the **minutes from the July 6, 2020 meeting were unanimously approved.**

2. President's Report

President Conner provided an update regarding his first weeks in his role as President. He stated that the last seven weeks have been filled with numerous meetings with all constituents from across campus. The President thanked everyone for the time, energy, and thought that has been brought forth toward the reopening of the College. He is grateful for the way that the Skidmore community has pulled together to accomplish this enormous task, while ensuring the health and safety of students, staff, and faculty.

Another major focus has involved the development of the Racial Justice Initiative. The events that occurred in downtown Saratoga Springs exemplified the need for change and dialogue. We need to collaborate within the campus community, and with the greater Saratoga community to engage in open dialogue and trust building. President Conner stated that a protest organized by some members of the student body is scheduled to be held on August 24, the first day of classes. He stated that students have been urged to be safe and to follow the guidelines set forth in the [Skidmore College Policy on Political Activity](#). The President thanked Dean of Students and Vice President for Student Affairs Cerri Banks and Vice President for Strategic Planning and Institutional Diversity Joshua Woodfork for their hard work with the student groups regarding racial justice efforts. President Conner stated that a detailed set of initiatives with specific action steps will be forthcoming September 1.

3. Title IX Policy Updates

Title IX Coordinator Joel Aure provided an update regarding the new [Title IX policies](#). Groups worked over the summer to implement the new federal government guidelines incorporating them into three separate College (students, staff, and faculty). Title IX Coordinator Aure stated that the feedback received from various constituency members led to some of the differences.

There will be an external provider for adjudication and a cross-examining advisor, a flexible panel for faculty and students, a single adjudicator for Human Resources, an alternative resolution process for students, the continuation of the informal resolution processes for Anti-Harassment policies for faculty and staff, and differing points for appeals— Dean of Students, Dean of Faculty, and VP of Finance and Administration. These provisions can still be revised through the existing governance and policymaking structures throughout the academic year. Coordinator Aure reported that we now have a clear, constituency-focused 44-page policy document versus a 100+-page policy document. He informed IPPC that training and continued outreach are planned for the fall.

Interim Human Resources Director Sarah Delaney Vero added that the Anti-Harassment policies are being reviewed to ensure that we are compliant with all legal requirements. Online trainings for students and employees will be rolled out in early October and will be managed by Human Resources. The applicable handbooks will be updated as well. IPPC will be asked to review the policies prior to the roll out to the campus community. Director Vero also noted the Protection of Minors policy and accompanying training.

VP Woodfork commented that all of these policies fall under the larger diversity umbrella and call for proactive work to reduce incidents. President Conner thanked Title IX Coordinator Aure and Interim HR Director Vero for their collaborative efforts.

4. Fall Reopening Plan Update

President Conner presented information regarding the fall reopening plan. Skidmore's evolving reopening plan is now finalized to meet or exceed all New York State requirements. The plan contains many interdependent pieces that rely on an "all-in" commitment from our community to prevent the spread of COVID-19, and a quick and simple weekly testing process for students and on-campus employees. Alongside testing, we will be tracking a number of key NYS, local, and campus metrics to closely monitor and mitigate the risk of COVID-19 at the College. We will be sharing some of these key figures, including the number of tests conducted and the number of positive student and employee cases on campus, in a new [COVID-19 dashboard](#) that will be updated with daily and weekly statistics. Skidmore has established five alert levels related to the manageability of COVID-19 cases and campus operations.

At this point in time, approximately 50% of classes will have an in-person component, 1827 students will be residing on campus either in residential spaces or hotels, and 696 students will be off-campus either residing local or remotely for a total of 2,523 taking a full course load at Skidmore. President Conner emphasized that it is important that we have trust in the process and not in the rumor mill and social media. Furthermore, it is vital that the Skidmore community understand that the plan is an ever-evolving in response to ensuring health and safety.

An IPPC member asked if any medical accommodations have been provided to those community members who are not wearing face masks. Interim HR Director Vero responded few employees have requested this accommodation and that College has supplied these individuals with face shields. Dean Banks explained that no students have made this request, that face shields would also be provided to students who needed an accommodation, but that if this occurred employees should feel comfortable asking the student to see accommodation letters.

An IPPC member inquired about restroom occupancy levels. Director Vero responded that they aware that there is some confusion regarding occupancy rates. HR is working with facilities to supply specific signage to alleviate any confusion.

There was discussion around the vagueness of the verbiage for the five established alert levels. President Conner replied that case level totality is fluid, and that working with set numbers does not allow for an evolving and rapidly changing intersection of decision points. Dean Banks added that advice received from the health consultants was to exclude percentages in the alert levels. IPPC members were impressed with the newly created COVID-19 dashboard and the level of transparency conveyed. They thanked President Conner and administrators for the completing the work to reopen the College, and the care and concern shown for well-being.

The President noted the media coverage of some higher ed institutions struggling to manage COVID-19 cases. We are fortunate to have a small residential campus setting in upstate New York where case counts have been very low. We have some similarities with our peer institutions and their reopening plans, but the difference is in our testing, where we are utilizing the Broad Institute and their testing protocols, which include more frequency with enhanced turnaround times. President Conner added that he has been amazed with all the work that has been accomplished and is grateful for all the support. He thanked Interim Director Vero and the HR team for their part in drafting the Reopening Safety Action plan.

Vice President for Finance and Administration and Treasurer Donna Ng presented a Financial Projection update. At this point, based on an enrollment assumption of 1,786 students in on-campus housing, a regular tuition enrollment of 2,543 students, and above the line expenses of \$2.7M, the revenue impact is a loss of just under \$4M. The options planned to address this negative budget shortfall are the use of approximately \$1M from a \$3.5M contingency fund, \$1M from a surplus in the supplies and services budgets due to the curtailing of event and travel expenses, \$400,000 from accrued time due to the shortening of the semester, \$200,000 from restricted funds, \$300,000 from the continuation of the hiring freeze, and \$800,000 from a surplus in the summer budget adjustments. Options considered, but not currently planned, include adjustments to the retirement contribution, healthcare cost-share changes, salary cuts, furloughs, and layoff/inventive programs.

VP Woodfork reminded IPPC that these are financial projections and that the next few weeks are critical so that an accurate revenue stream be calculated.

An IPPC member inquired about the savings from accrued time. VP Ng replied that the administration is currently in discussion with union representatives regarding employees taking their banked time in December due to the shortening of the semester. It was also asked if we are hearing from families regarding tuition discounts. President Conner replied that we are working on drafting a set of talking points to respond to parents. The current decision to not reduce tuition costs is in line with our peer institutions. The expense of quarantining, testing to ensure the health and safety of the campus, and the new technologies employed to ensure that we deliver the best remote learning experience possible have been unforeseen expenses that Skidmore has had to incur.

An IPPC member followed up on the summer adjustments savings that included savings from furloughs. Specifically, it was asked if there had been a response to the Academic Affairs Administrative Assistant letter that was written by a group of furloughed employees to the administration. President Conner replied that a response is being drafted, and that although it has been already stated and verified that furloughed employees were made whole or better than whole, he understands the employee morale impact that the furlough caused.

5. Student Employment Working Group Update

Vice President and Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid Mary Lou Bates and Director of Financial Aid Beth Post presented an update from the Student Employment Working Group. In the fall 2019, a number of students expressed concerns about the student wage paid through Skidmore's student employment program. Following two open forums, where students asked the College to pay New York state minimum wage, a working group was formed to evaluate Skidmore's Student Employment program.

Last semester, the working group reviewed various aspects of student employment with a view to address minimum wage concerns for student workers in the context of budget constraints. The working group recommended to President's Cabinet that the minimum wage for campus jobs be raised to \$11.80 per hour. In addition, the group also recommended an annual earning cap of \$2,400 per student, which is consistent with the amount awarded as the work-study component of financial aid awards.

VP Bates and Director Post brought forth a revised proposal that has been recently reviewed and supported by President's Cabinet. The original proposal has been amended due to COVID-19. The revised proposal includes raising of the minimum wage for campus jobs to \$11.80 per hour and delaying earning cap until academic year 2021-2022. This shifted timeline will give student workers and supervisors a year to plan for the earnings cap change. The reasoning for the delay related to the pandemic was reviewed.

IPPC Vice Chair Joerg Bibow questioned the impact on departments (and other areas of the College) with fewer students working. VP Bates replied that it is hard to predict what is going to happen this year. Director Post added that in any given year we normally have more jobs available than students working. If the cap is put in place, we may have to face decreasing service levels and different service hours. It was then noted by an IPPC member that we need to keep in mind our five-year plan to reduce faculty and staff numbers and the impact this will have in addition to students working less hours and/or less jobs. Student Government Association (SGA) Rachel Borthwick '21 commented that the College needs to think about assisting student supervisors in the coming year with job structure and hours in regards to earning cap implications. With the broader questions related to work and coverage, IPPC agreed that the wage cap needs to be readdressed at a future IPPC meeting.

A motion was made to increase the student wage to the NYS minimum of \$11.80 per hour for the academic year 2020-2021. **IPPC unanimously approved the motion to approve the student wage to \$11.80 for the academic year 2020-2021.**

The wage cap item will return to the committee.

6. (Employee) Community Meeting

President Conner reminded IPPC that in the last few years we have held a Community Meeting every August to provide updates and thank employees for preparing for the academic year. As we cannot gather, there will be a virtual Community Meeting for employees on Wednesday, August 20 from 3:30-4:30 p.m.

7. Call for Agenda Items

Activating IPPC Subcommittees for 2020-2021
Healthcare Update
Sustainability Building Policy
Student Employment Wage Cap

8. Other Business

No other business was brought forth.

Meeting adjourned at 2:43 p.m.

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