

INSTITUTIONAL POLICY AND PLANNING COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
November 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; Michael Orr; Joe Porter; Levi Rogers; Mark Rye; Casey Schofield; Kurt Smemo; Joseph Stankovich; Dwane Sterling; Amy Tweedy; Peter von Allmen; and Joshua C. Woodfork.

ABSENT: Melanie Nolan'23.

GUESTS: Interim Human Resources Director Sarah Delaney Vero; Associate Dean of Student Affairs for Health and Wellness Julia Routbort; Director of Health Services Patricia Bosen; Professor of Management and Business & Director of Sustainability for Academic Affairs Mark Youndt; Director of Facilities Services Daniel Rodecker; and Professor of Sociology Rik Scarce.

The meeting was held via Zoom and called to order at 10:32 a.m. by Chair President Conner.

1. Approval of Meeting Minutes from the October 23, 2020 Meeting.

A motion was made to approve the meeting minutes of October 23, 2020. With no proposed changes, **the minutes from the October 23, 2020 meeting were unanimously approved.**

2. President's Report

President Conner referenced Halloween weekend events and the resulting safety and bias concerns. He stated that these are such fraught times with unprecedented stresses. The President held a planned virtual student forum on November 2, where he had initially intended to address key issues, gain a sense of vision and values, and engage in conversation with students, but the weekend events shifted focus. President Conner commented that it is immensely helpful to him to have heard from so many members of the community and that it is his intention to reply personally to every student email he has received regarding the weekend events, which will enable him to better serve the students and the College.

The President stated that he has been receiving feedback from the community and he appreciates all of the responses, both positive and negative ones. He called on himself to be a better listener to the stories and experiences from our students of color, committing to then act upon what he has learned. He noted that it is not only about the Racial Justice Initiative action steps but about improving the experiences of everyone. The President stated that we can and will do better.

The President indicated that there have been challenges with internal campus communications, specifically informing faculty and staff about student events and activism, while ensuring confidentiality, the reporting of facts, and timely communication. He reflected that he is grateful for any student engagement opportunities, regretting that they had not occurred earlier, but that outreach will be ongoing. He emphasized that it is important that we move forward collectively. Several small and large group student of color meetings are being planned to listen emphatically and gain perspective centering on experiences, challenges, and concerns, a total focus for the remainder of fall semester with positive steps to follow.

The President paused for questions, thoughts and perspectives from IPPC members. There was considerable discussion regarding the Halloween weekend events. The Committee on Intercultural and Global Understanding (CIGU) Co-Chair and College Librarian Marta Brunner brought forth several thoughts from the committee. CIGU invited key stakeholders to its recent meeting and is surfacing ideas and identifying responses, while gleaning a sense of engagement from across campus, especially from students of color. CIGU Co-Chair Brunner stated that the committee is hearing that there is a sense of mistrust among students that has been building for some time and that recent events have exacerbated this widening breach. She noted that CIGU members discussed harm experienced by Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) students on campus, recognizing that this accumulation of harm lingers with students. She cited that there are currently no therapists of color in the counseling center and that the role of campus safety in recent events needs appears to be problematic. Student Government Association (SGA) President Rachael Borthwick '21 added that there is a feeling from some students that there is a lack of cultural awareness among some student athletes and that coaches need support and training to address the issues that we are facing on our campus.

CIGU Co-Chair and Vice President for Strategic Planning and Institutional Diversity Joshua Woodfork noted that many of our students identify in intersectional ways so that our continued challenges around preferred name usage and misuse of pronouns is causing student harm and complaints. He noted that recent incidents and concerns of Asian and Asian American identified students need to be seen and recognized. VP Woodfork reaffirmed that the cumulative impact of the weekend events is being felt campus-wide and recommended consideration of bystander intervention training, allyship, and mediation as we seek to move toward racial healing and transformation efforts. He asked IPPC to think about what that healing work looks like, how we can step up in different ways to be in the moment, and to think creatively for ways to have healthy conversations and interactions. VP Woodfork encouraged everyone to try their best to remember that people want to be heard, and that they want to know that you care. CIGU Co-Chair Brunner added that CIGU is eager to help identify and improve communication structures and ways forward, and that the committee echoes the President's challenges regarding internal communications and balancing the need to know within the context of confidentiality. The committee is keen to help ensure that all student voices are heard, grappled with, and engaged with in meaningful ways.

IPPC members acknowledged the communication challenges and the capacity to be transparent and communicative while affirming our ability to support students. Members stated that faculty and staff are being placed in vulnerable positions and their emotional capacity to respond is limited without timely and factual communication; for example, students go to faculty for answers and support and sometimes faculty are unsure what is happening and feel ineffective and frustrated. SGA President Rachael Borthwick '21 commented that it is important the faculty and staff be able to show up for these students and to remember that self-identifying with students and supporting them are two different things.

IPPC members agreed that there is a need to formulate ideas on how to improve communications and disseminate information across campus with faculty and staff when important decisions are made. It is particularly important now when we are not operating under normal on-campus operations. President Conner explained that his meeting with students is a starting point. He will

also meet with the Black Faculty and Staff Group and plans ongoing communication to the Skidmore community. He stated that the approach to effective communication must be collective, but that it is a challenge when you are messaging on behalf of the entire campus community. He reminded IPPC of the great work of the entire community that has been accomplished up until this point. Dean of Students and Vice President for Student Affairs Cerri Banks added that specific information on ways that the community can support BIPOC students will be sent out shortly. IPPC members suggested that the role of student department representatives be looked at more closely and that language in all campus communications that generalizes peoples' experiences be challenged. President Conner stated that he continues to welcome feedback, suggestions, questions and concerns from faculty, staff and students. He is heartened by the knowledge that the good of our students is always our primary focus.

3. Winter/Spring/Summer Planning

Interim Human Resources (HR) Director Sarah Delaney Vero, Associate Dean of Student Affairs for Health and Wellness Julia Routbort, and Director of Health Services Patricia Bosen shared with IPPC Covid-19 testing protocols to be implemented over winter break and the spring semester. Skidmore will be offering COVID-19 tests for students who have permission to stay on campus after we transition to remote learning for the final weeks of the semester and over break, and for a limited number of employees whose job description requires being on campus and interacting with others. At this time, the College anticipates approximately 35 students on campus over the winter break. The group has recommended that the scope for students who must get tested be relaxed over the break as density on campus will be reduced and personal infection prevention measures (social distancing and masks) will prevent close contact with those who may become infected. For employees, without students on campus, the risk of exposure to COVID-19 at the College is significantly reduced. When combined with further de-densification of onsite employees over the break, the risk of exposure is even less. Therefore, the group has recommended to reduce the scope of testing for employees as well. The recommendation for the change in scope for the College's testing program is to exempt the following employees over the winter break:

- Individuals who come on campus sporadically and work alone in an office, even if for more than 30 minutes. This would allow individuals who are not regularly scheduled to work to come on campus for periodic work in their office without getting tested first.
- Individuals who are regularly scheduled but who do not work in a setting with proximate contact (defined consistent with Department of Health guidelines as being in the same enclosed environment such as an office or other workspace).

Under this approach, the only employees who would get tested are those who come into regular contact with others. HR will encourage supervisors to develop staffing levels and schedules that promote remote work arrangements wherever possible. Over the winter break, testing days will be reduced to Monday and a half day on Tuesday to accommodate the students who will remain on campus and those employees whose job responsibilities require them to work on campus over the break and who are not exempt from the new testing scope. Those employees who cannot or do not want to come on campus on those particular days will be provided with a list of alternative testing sites to obtain their test. This reduced scope will be in place starting after November 20 and continue until employees begin returning to campus in the weeks prior to the

start of the spring semester. All employees who are working on campus will be tested prior to the start of classes. At which time, the College will return to the fall semester's scope of testing. We are currently testing approximately 670 employees and 2100 students each week.

Our relationship with the Broad Institute will continue for the spring semester. We have contracted with Broad to test all students and employees weekly until the end of the semester. The schedule for the spring semester will be Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. The Broad Institute has built-in extra test processing capacity for campuses experiencing outbreaks so in the event of an outbreak, we could potentially add additional test capacity if recommended by our Public Health. The College is actively monitoring developments in testing technology since the landscape of what is available is changing rapidly in potentially positive ways.

An IPPC member asked is it possible for an employee to be tested by Broad at their own expense, if they have not been asked to come to campus as part of their work schedule. Interim HR Director Vero replied that unfortunately our testing capacities are limited per our contract and have already been set. Vice President for Finance and Administration and Treasurer Donna Ng added that employees that need to come to campus as part of their work schedule, but who do not fall within the testing scope should reach out to HR if they have any testing concerns. President Conner and IPPC thanked the guests for all of their work to date.

4. Employee Appreciation

President Conner stated that he reached out to President's Cabinet members and Human Resources for advice and input on ways for the administration to show appreciation to staff and faculty for all the significant and tremendous work that has been done this semester. The President announced that Wednesday, November 25 will be included as part of the Thanksgiving break. This extension to the Thanksgiving break will be announced at the November 6 staff and faculty meetings. Interim HR Director Vero added that Human Resources will be communicating with Department Heads shortly and providing a menu of ideas to be implemented on November 23, November 24, or an alternate date, to further support these appreciation efforts and to say "thank you" to the staff and faculty within their unit.

5. HEDS Fall 2020 Employee COVID-19 Survey

Institutional Effectiveness (IE) Specialist Amy Tweedy reflected on the impact the pandemic has presented to college employees across the nation. Employees have experienced significant changes to their work life. As a result, several national organizations have developed a variety of surveys to gather information from students, faculty, and staff. Gathering information from our constituents constitutes best practice and is helpful to inform institutional responses to the continued pandemic. IE Specialist Tweedy cited several examples of ongoing survey work. The Faculty Director of Assessment partnered with the Fall Academic Planning working group and surveyed faculty and students on their experiences switching to remote learning and recommendations for the fall. The Division of Student Affairs recently completed a student survey to gather information concerning their experiences with student affairs and the testing services in the fall. The Subcommittee on Institutional Effectiveness (SIE) recently reviewed a draft of the HEDS Fall 2020 Employee Covid-19 survey for possible implementation. Ultimately, it was decided that the survey is not the right instrument for the needs of Skidmore employees at this time. Instead, we will continue to explore other methodologies for gathering

feedback. VP Ng stated that moving forward the other forms of outreach that uses some of the questions of the survey will be considered. Interim Human Resources Director Vero added that HR will be implementing a suite of opportunities to support staff in meaningful and fulfilling ways, and to garner a broader sense of staff concerns. VP Woodfork added that it is important that we continue to reach out to staff in our community and provide significant and effective support. President Conner thanked everyone for work in engaging and supporting staff.

6. NY Higher Education Large-Scale Renewable Energy Project

Director of Sustainability Programs and Assessment Levi Rogers, Professor of Management and Business & Director of Sustainability for Academic Affairs Mark Youndt, Director of Facilities Services Daniel Rodecker, and Professor of Sociology Rik Scarce presented an overview of the Large-Scale Renewable Energy Project (LSRE). The project was previously presented in its initial stages to IPPC at the December 16, 2019 meeting. The goal of the project is to seek and potentially purchase renewable energy on a very large scale. This project aggregates the electric load of participating campuses thereby allowing a large scale purchase of renewable electricity from developers with renewable production greater than an individual campus load.

The LSRE project is both a buy and a sell of electricity. The purchase is at a fixed price and subsequent Power Purchase Agreement (PPA), while the sale of that same power is at the going market rate in the zone where the project is located. The difference is the expense or revenue of the project, typically settled on a monthly basis. Ideally the project will bring in revenue during times of high electricity prices, offsetting the high prices the campus will incur in the ordinary purchase of electricity. This will help stabilize campus energy budgets by smoothing those peaks. In the future, potential agreements will include energy credits.

We currently spend approximately \$2 million on electricity. The LSRE project team presented cost analysis data and outlined the numerous potential benefits. They have conducted a market to market analysis and have determined that the project is market competitive and feasible. This would be a long term ten to fifteen-year commitment. The project is a win-win across the board, foremost and most importantly environmentally. An IPPC member pointed out that we are seeing a keen interest of both potential and current Skidmore students in the areas of sustainability and carbon neutrality. As an added bonus, the project is financially sound.

VP Woodfork applauded the group, noting that we have been looking for another significant project, recognizing that sustainability remains among our top institutional priorities. President Conner echoed these thoughts and added how thankful he is for all the work accomplished.

7. Call for Agenda Items

No new agenda items were raised.

8. Other Business

No other business was brought forth.

Meeting adjourned at 12:13 p.m.

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