

INSTITUTIONAL POLICY AND PLANNING COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
February 5, 2021

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; 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: None.

The meeting was held via Zoom and called to order at 10:02 a.m. by Chair President Conner.

1. Approval of Meeting Minutes from the November 20, 2020 and December 4, 2020 Meeting.

A motion was made to approve both the draft meeting minutes of November 20, 2020 and the draft meeting minutes of December 4, 2020. With no proposed changes, **the minutes from the November 20, 2020 meeting and the minutes from the December 4, 2020 were unanimously approved.**

2. President's Report

President Conner reported that the College's initial student return-to-campus process has been very successful, including testing every student upon arrival in addition to the pre-arrival testing students conducted. He outlined the figures that are indicated on the College's COVID-19 dashboard and noted the "safe shelter" mode in which we have begun the semester. President Conner applauded our students for their care and attention to safe process, and our staff and faculty for their diligence and careful planning, which needs to continue. Week two of the spring semester will entail more in-person teaching while we wait on relaxing social gathering restrictions. The President will alert the community promptly if anything changes in planning.

President Conner provided an update on the departure of Vice President for Communications and Marketing Martin Mbugua, who has accepted the position of associate vice chancellor for external relations at New York University-Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates. His last day at Skidmore will be March 12. A national search to fill this role will begin in the late summer/early fall, after the formation of a representative committee. In the meantime, President Conner stated he has appointed Senior Director of Communications and Marketing Diane O'Connor as Interim Vice President, effective March 12 until the next vice president is named and takes office. President Conner stressed how grateful he is to VP Mbugua for his excellent contributions to Skidmore College. He noted that Vice President for Finance and Administration and Treasurer Donna Ng will replace VP Mbugua on the Collyer Vice President for Advancement search committee whose work is progressing according to the established timeline.

The President called IPPC attention to [the important schedule of programming](#) in recognition of Black History Month and encouraged participation.

Admissions and Financial Aid Update

Vice President and Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid Mary Lou Bates provided an update on the progress of the Class of 2025 recruitment. VP Bates reported we've passed our January 15 regular decision deadline and that this year we have received a record number of applications. Applications are up 7% with over 11,000 applications. Domestic applications are up slightly, but the bulk of the additional 700 applications are from international students, and most of them have significant financial needs. The percentage of the total applicant pool seeking financial aid, after 10 years of steady and significant growth, has for three years now held steady at 78-79%.

VP Bates stated the class target is 708 students, which is consistent with our recent targets. Pending the pandemic, the target includes 35 to 40 students in our London program. Admissions is in the process of completing Early Decision II (ED). While Skidmore was down 9% in EDI applications, EDII decisions were up considerably compared to last year largely due to the uptick in international student applications. This has resulted in a record ED pool. Admissions is working hard to hold on to the record number of students admitted last year who have deferred to this year due to pandemic concerns. They have folded these students into the EDI pool. VP Bates stated Admissions is hoping to enroll 45-50% of the class through early decision.

In terms of racial diversity, while Skidmore has received a record number of international student applications, the percentage of the pool represented by domestic students of color is 26% down from 32% last year. This is a nation-wide trend in the wake of COVID and not unique to Skidmore. She stated Admissions is concerned about this decrease and plans are in place to work very hard to recruit these students through robust personalized outreach.

This year's admissions picture is closely tied to the collaboration work with the Office of Communications and Marketing and faculty support with an abundance of virtual offerings that have included regular virtual open houses with live student panels, faculty academic dialogues, an academic showcase with over 500 students, a virtual fireside chat with President Conner, and an information session with a student panel that was totally in Spanish. President Conner thanked VP Bates and her team for the extraordinary efforts undertaken. The President noted that the decline of student of color applicants is yet another one of the markers of COVID-19 disproportionately striking communities of color and he reaffirmed our recruitment plans.

3. Spring/Summer/Fall Planning

President Conner provided an update on spring/summer/fall planning. He stated that many external groups have cancelled for the summer resulting in an anticipated decline of our summer revenue. Summer academic planning calls for some in-person teaching and faculty/student research. There remains the possibility that other programs may be in person as well, including the Opportunity Program's Summer Academic Institute. All programming will be guided by health and safety advice. The President stated it is both his personal hope and his hope for the College that we can have a very active campus in the summer. We know that even though revenue will be down, we will still have expenses, and we will be working to have students, faculty, and staff on campus, and to fully employ staff.

Dean of the Faculty and Vice President for Academic Affairs Michael Orr added that we are anticipating having a mix of courses offered in the summer with in-person and remote

instruction. The focus will be to try and maximize the opportunities for on-campus activities for Skidmore students. Summer classes will be offered with a range of teaching modes, using the same range that has been offered this spring – in-person, online, and hybrid. He stated that the pre-college summer program and the typical institutes and workshops— New York State Writers Institute, the Jazz Institute, SITI Theatre program, and the Storytellers Institute—will all be online. Dean Orr remarked that decisions will be forthcoming regarding summer programs such as Camp Northwoods and sports camps and reiterated that all program decisions will be driven by health and safety guidelines.

President Conner addressed the need to begin the process of building the class schedule for the fall. Decisions will be made on the working assumptions that by August/September vaccines will be widely available for the entire population and that COVID-19 will be present in some form, but in a dramatically reduced nature. Some mitigation measures—masking, a level of social distancing, and limited restrictions on large social gatherings will most likely still need to be in place. The President stated there are a lot of unknowns, but we will get there together with clear and timely communication, and by following all public health guidance at the federal, state, and local levels. Skidmore is planning to return in the fall with the normal approved academic calendar, including a September start and ending after the Thanksgiving break. This semester timeframe is similar to what our peer schools are planning at this time. We will return to the normal in-person teaching schedule and we will have a process in place for any individuals for whom returning to campus would still present a continued health risk.

The College supports the greater community in securing the Saratoga City Center as a designated mass vaccination site and we have been exploring the College as a vaccination site for our college community. An IPPC member asked if there have been any discussions surrounding the possibility of faculty who have created innovative on-line platforms for their courses to retain these modules next fall and beyond. President Conner responded that virtual technologies could be of use to other parts of the College and that some of these technologies would possibly be able to be continued, but that Skidmore classes will be in person. In-class instruction is fundamental to our mission, it is what our students and parents expect and what our accreditation depends upon. It was asked if all staff would be working on campus this summer given the reduction in on-campus classes and programming. President Conner replied that this is yet to be determined, as we may not be in the position to welcome back all staff in the summer. We may need to keep staffing numbers on the low side and only have those on campus that are needed to deliver summer programming. Decisions will largely depend on health guidance and vaccine distribution.

4. FY'21 and FY'22 Budget Timeline and Process

VP Ng addressed the FY'21 and FY'22 budget timeline and processes. The IPPC Subcommittee on Budget and Finance will be meeting shortly to review financials and the budgetary impacts for FY'21 and FY'22. Based upon spring planning models the financial outlook for the remainder of FY'21 is relatively strong. A large part of this strength is due to the fiscal responsibility of the Skidmore community and the reductions in expenditures to the supplies and services budgets. VP Ng stated the hold on capital spending for FY'21 is expected be released in March based on the census that will confirm that current enrollment and housing projections for the spring remain steady. Due to the abbreviated planning and spending timeframe left in the

remainder of FY'21, any capital budget items from FY'21 that remain unspent will automatically roll over into FY'22.

VP Ng commented that FY'22 appears to be challenging because of the loss of revenue from summer operations because of COVID-19 impacts. Departments will be asked to reduce their supplies and services budgets by 1% for FY'22 with the anticipation that these reductions will be restored in FY'23. There are other budget parameters that will be coming under review with the hope that we can implement a general salary adjustment (GSA) for FY'22.

President Conner remarked on the Skidmore's solid financial outlook and stated that very few of our peers have this optimistic of a financial footing. He thanked the Skidmore community for their support through these tough financial times. The President stated the *Creating Our Future: The Campaign for Skidmore*, which had previously been extended by six months and concluded December 31, surpassed its fundraising goal. The original goal was \$200M which was later revised to \$220M. In those six months, over \$17M was raised bringing the total to \$229.4M. President Conner remarked that this speaks to the extraordinary support for Skidmore from everyone. He stated how overwhelmingly grateful he is as a new President to come in and have this success occur in this moment of transition and turbulence.

5. IPPC Healthcare Working Group Updates

VP Ng referenced the IPPC Healthcare Working Group (HWG) community meeting that was held on February 4, 2021. The group provided a general overview of the reasoning for implementing modifications to the current plan, potential changes, and the processes that will be implemented to gather input from the community that will include upcoming focus groups and the administration of an employee survey. HWG Co-Chair Ng stated that a summary and recording of the meeting will be shared shortly with the community.

She encouraged all employees to attend to one of the four focus groups that will be held next week and to participate in the survey. She stressed that participating in the survey is critical as this is the foundation for gathering data and information. The HWG will compile all the information gathered and provide recommendations to IPPC and President's Cabinet in early April. President Conner added that the HWG gave a superb presentation with the emphasis on community input and involvement at its core.

6. Call for Agenda Items

No new agenda items were raised.

7. Other Business

No other business was brought forth.

Meeting adjourned at 10:50 a.m.

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