

INSTITUTIONAL POLICY AND PLANNING COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
February 12, 2021

PRESENT: Cerri Banks; Mary Lou Bates; Joerg Bibow; Rachael Borthwick '21; Vice Chair; 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.

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 February 5, 2021 Meeting.

A motion was made to approve the meeting minutes of February 5, 2021. With no proposed changes, **the minutes from the February 5, 2021 meeting were unanimously approved.**

2. President's Report

President Conner called for a moment of silence in honor of the recent passing of one of our students, Samantha Sasanarine '21. Following a medical emergency on the evening of February 5, Samantha was taken from campus to Saratoga Hospital, where sadly she later died. The Division of Student Affairs, including Religious and Spiritual Life, Student Diversity Programs, and the Counseling Center, held virtual drop-in hours February 6-7 to provide students with space to connect for reflection and support. A brief vigil was held on February 8, and a student sponsored virtual sharing session occurred on February 11. For the careful response to this very sad loss, the President thanked the Communications and Marketing, Dean of Students and Vice President for Student Affairs Cerri Banks, and the Emergency Management Team.

Vice President for Strategic Planning and Institutional Diversity Joshua Woodfork commented that Samantha was clearly a beloved member of our community. President Conner added this is an extremely challenging moment for our College, especially for our students and even more so for Samantha's family. He encouraged the campus community to support each other and to feel free to reach out to college staff, faculty and administrators. Staff at our Counseling Center continue to be available for any students who may need support.

3. Midpoint Strategic Plan Review Document

President Conner reminded IPPC of the [*2015-2020 Strategic Plan Midpoint Review*](#) document. He stated that it is essential that we continue the work of the *Strategic Plan, [*Creating Pathways to Excellence: The Plan for Skidmore College 2015-2025*](#)*. In the context of financial challenges, COVID-19, and racial justice, it is imperative that we maintain the health, safety and wellness of the Skidmore community. The President will present a brief overview to the Board of Trustees at the February 17-19 meeting. Based on the goals of the current *Strategic Plan*, the following four key areas will be the focus of that discussion:

- 1) **Integrated learning** that includes the achievement of the Center for Integrated Sciences (CIS), the attainment of a new General Education curriculum, the success of the

substantial growth of the Tang Teaching Museum and for the Arts, and the reassessment of the faculty/staff student ratios in tandem with faculty/staff support.

- 2) **Access** to financial aid—the only goal of the *Creating Our Future: The Campaign for Skidmore* that was not reached, along with student experience support especially in the areas of health and wellness and student career preparation.
- 3) **Well Being** of the Skidmore community to foster a creative campus community that is inclusive, addressing the expectations around safety, as well as the assessment of our athletic facilities as a key component of wellness.
- 4) **Sustainability** both financially and the physical campus—of which updating the *2007 Campus Master Plan* is critical.

The President stated it is vital the strategic planning process remains of top importance and that the entire community is engaged in helping to shape the future Skidmore community and campus. He called for a focus on our campus community in bringing forth diversity and an emphasis on what constitutes a lived experience of learning and working at Skidmore—these are the parts that will drive our on-going strategic efforts.

4. Strategic Action Agenda (SAA)

President Conner reviewed the five key points that constitute our guiding [*Strategic Action Agenda \(SAA\) 2020-2021*](#):

- 1) **COVID adaptation and execution** to deliver the full Skidmore education of an in-person, engaged and formational learning experience while ensuring the health and safety of the entire community.
- 2) **Racial Justice Initiative work** to inform and strengthen our overarching Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) work.
- 3) **Campaign planning** for the future while realizing the success of *Creating Our Future: The Campaign for Skidmore* that raised just shy of \$230M in funding for Skidmore.
- 4) Addressing **Financial Health** to focus on projected budget deficits and the determination of a sustainable staff and faculty base.
- 5) **Campus Master Plan** processes and planning to involve our entire community in guided discussions of near- and long-term future capital projects that will shape and define the Skidmore campus for the coming decade and more.

The President added that part of the Racial Justice Initiative includes partnering with the University of Southern California's Race and Equity Center, which launched the Liberal Arts Colleges Racial Equity Leadership Alliance (LACRELA). Skidmore is one of six founding colleges for the program, which now has a membership of 68 liberal arts institutions. LACRELA membership provides racial campus climate surveys with subsequent resources and programming to support the survey findings. The first constituency group participating in the survey is students with the survey running for four weeks beginning mid-March. President Conner reflected on the importance of the survey in understanding student experiences.

An IPPC member asked what processes might be implemented in developing the next strategic action agenda. The President responded that the implementation process for next year could hopefully start in summer/early fall and lean toward a more concise expression of the year's

goals with planning developed now in the late spring in collaboration with IPPC and other key constituents. It was suggested that we consider strategic work coordinated at a divisional-level versus a college-level, and to provide the strategic planning final documents in PDF formats.

An IPPC member inquired about the shifting demographics of college age students and the potential negative impacts on Skidmore admissions. President Conner echoed these concerns and mentioned some upcoming work with the Board of Trustees in this area. Vice President and Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid Mary Lou Bates added that Skidmore has a wide demographic range and that we have been able to meet our enrollment goals up to this point. However, the challenges are real and it is something that Admissions watches. An IPPC member expressed concern over the reduction in faculty as part addressing financial health. President Conner reminded IPPC that the faculty/student ratio is out of line with many of our peer institutions, and our staff and faculty numbers are not in line with our endowment capacity and operating budgets. We will need to work together over the next five years to prioritize our key strategic goals in order to provide the high level of support that is critical to our mission, to ensure an excellent lived experience for students, faculty, and staff, and to deliver quality programming while at the same time maintaining fiscal responsibility. Dean Banks added that Skidmore has been extremely fortunate thanks to the hard work of the whole community. Many of our peer institutions have had to reduce programming and the size of their faculty and staff.

5. Campus Master Planning Updates

President Conner explained that we are in the process of narrowing down finalists for the professional planning firm that Skidmore will engage over the next 12-18 months to develop a detailed, prioritized, and rationally planned understanding and projection of the present and future campus. We hope to have the firm in place by early March. Vice President for Finance and Administration and Treasurer Donna Ng stated that the Campus Master Plan Task Force has been formed with the exception of student and diversity representatives. Director of Facilities Dan Rodecker and Associate Dean of the Faculty for Infrastructure and Faculty Affairs Pat Fehling will co-chair the Task Force. VP Ng reported that the professional campus planning firm finalists are slated to be interviewed by Steering Committee and Task Force members in late February. VP Woodfork added 7 firms were invited to participate in our Request for Proposal process, 6 were interviewed, and 2 finalists remain. He stated the last time we engaged in this process led to the adoption of the *2007 Campus Master Plan*. He called for assistance from IPPC to solicit engagement from the whole community. President Conner echoed these comments.

Student Government Association (SGA) President Rachael Borthwick '21 asked if the student representative on the Task Force should be drawn from the Space Planning Working Group student representation. VP Woodfork responded in the affirmative, but that it would be important to find a student who is able to participate this Spring and all of next academic year.

6. Fiscal Year '21 and '22 Budget Updates

VP Ng stated the IPPC Subcommittee on Budget and Finance recently met to review the financials and the current forecasts for FY'21 and FY'22. Spending for COVID-19 related expenses for this spring semester is estimated at \$2.5M. The majority of this expense is for testing. The contingency fund stands at \$1.5M, down from a high of \$3.5M at the beginning of FY '21. This is a higher amount than normal at this time of year due to continued uncertainty

with COVID-19 for the remainder of the spring. We are anticipating that we will receive \$1.5M in CARES ACT funding. This will be used to offset COVID-19 related expenses. VP Ng noted that Skidmore is also expected to receive \$800,000 in funding from CARES ACT II that will be used directly for COVID-19 related student support and has no budget impact.

VP Ng noted that we have been able to achieve a \$3.3M savings for FY'21 in our services and supplies budget. She thanked the community their efforts to help realize substantial savings. Additional savings were realized through the salary freeze and the model currently shows some over enrollment. She reported that the endowment performed very well and was able rebound in September-December 2020 and have a positive impact on the budget, despite a significant drop in March 2020 due to COVID-19. VP Ng noted that we will be able to transfer \$1M of capital funding in FY'21 for use in FY'22. The current forecast for FY'21 is almost at breakeven.

FY'22 operating budget assumes a comprehensive fee increase of 3.5% and above the line enrollment. The Skidmore Fund is forecasted to increase by 1%, no change to the endowment take out, and a general salary adjustment (GSA) of 2.5% with a 2% GSA for union staff per their contract. Healthcare costs are modeled to increase by 10%. Due to challenges in the drop of summer revenue from COVID-19, it is forecasted that we will need to continue the implementation of a hiring freeze, but not at the FY'21 level. To balance the FY'22 budget we will need to have a reduction of 1% to the services and supplies departmental budgets. The subcommittee reviewed both a preliminary base budget and a revised base budget for FY'21 due to the COVID-19 impact on summer operations. With the additional transfer \$1M of capital funding from the FY'21 surplus, the FY'22 planned capital funding budget can be reduced to help offset the loss of summer revenue as part of our efforts to address financial health. She noted that all assumptions to revenue and expenses for FY'22 are based on a return to normal operations for students, faculty, and staff for AY21-22. She added that FY'22 planning includes full staffing salaries despite the cancellation of external summer programming on campus and a drop in summer revenue. This model could potentially change if government funding were to become available, as it did last year, supplementing unemployment and supporting a work share program in order to make employees whole. The current budget model with these assumptions is close to breakeven.

Faculty Executive Committee (FEC) Chair and Associate Professor of Psychology Casey Schofield asked about the types of expenses the \$1M surplus in capital funding could be used. VP Ng replied that these funds can only be used for one-time capital related expenses. FEC Chair Casey also asked if due to the pause on GSA increases was there a possibility of a one-time lump sum bonus for employees at the end of FY'21. VP Ng replied that this could potentially be addressed as we progress further into the spring semester. President Conner agreed and expressed hesitancy to the idea of allocating funding at this point with uncertainties still existing due to COVID-19. He stated the focus right now is on restoring the GSA for FY'22. He added that many peer institutions are not predicting any GSA for their employees next year and he thanked VP Ng and her team for structuring the budget to allow for this increase, as well the fiscal responsibility of all staff and faculty.

An IPPC member inquired about the sustainability of the increases to the comprehensive fee and discount tuition rate. VP Ng responded that there is a balance between our decisions and the

decisions made by our peer institutions regarding rate increases. This is a topic that higher education is grappling with in general. President Conner commented that finding ways to grow our endowment for financial aid is going to continue to be of extraordinary importance as the pressure to maintain and increase our ability to give financial aid scholarships increases. VP Woodfork thanked the whole community for helping to balance the budget for FY'21 and stretching in extraordinary ways. Cost containment for healthcare and tuition will be paramount as we plan for the future and make space for new initiatives while examining the validity of existing initiatives.

7. Spring/Summer/Fall Planning

President Conner stated that assuming positive test levels remain low, effective February 15, the College will operate at an [Alert level 2](#). The President again reminded everyone to stay vigilant and exercise caution and care. He expressed his gratitude to students, faculty, and staff for taking all health and safety precautions seriously. He encouraged everyone to visit the [Campus Planning website](#) to review detailed information about alert levels and each level's impact on key services, operations, activities and expectations.

8. Call for Agenda Items

Subcommittee on Institutional Effectiveness (SIE) Co-Chair Amy Tweedy called for the revised Assessment Plan for the College to be added as an agenda item for presentation by the SIE later in the semester.

Dean of the Faculty and Vice President for Academic Affairs Michael Orr made note of Skidmore's Sustainable Construction and Renovation Policy, which has been drafted following last year's discussions related to construction projects and sustainability goals. He remarked on the importance of bringing forth this future agenda item for discussion prior to the start of the review of the *2007 Campus Master Plan* and subsequent planning process.

9. Other Business

President Conner reminded IPPC of [the important schedule of programming](#) in recognition of Black History Month and encouraged involvement. He urged participation in the virtual community forum on February 12 hosted by the Saratoga Spring Police Reform Task Force. VP Woodfork noted that if you are unable to attend to the forum, to please complete the accompanying [survey](#). An IPPC member commented on national racial climate tensions and the need to monitor these events against the potential impacts on campus as to ensure student, faculty, and staff safety.

IPPC Healthcare Working Group (HWG) member Carolyn Lundy reminded everyone to please remember to complete the HWG survey, noting that it is vital that we have input from everyone. The survey will be available to all employees from February 15-22.

Meeting adjourned at 12:05 p.m.

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