

INSTITUTIONAL POLICY AND PLANNING COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
May 14, 2021

PRESENT: Mary Lou Bates; Joerg Bibow, Vice Chair; Rachael Borthwick '21; Marta Brunner; Marc C. Conner, Chair; Michelle Hubbs; Donna Ng; Diane O' Connor; Michael Orr; Feryaz Ocakli; Joe Porter; Mark Rye; Casey Schofield; Kurt Smemo; Joseph Stankovich; Dwane Sterling; Amy Tweedy; and Joshua C. Woodfork.

ABSENT: Cerri Banks; Carolyn Lundy; Melanie Nolan '23; and Mark Youndt.

GUESTS: Ayers Saint Gross (ASG) Design Firm: Kevin Peterson; Amber Wendland; and Eli Shanklin; Interim Human Resources Director Sarah Delaney Vero; Associate Professor of Management and Business Jina Mao.

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 April 30, 2021 Meeting.

A motion was made to approve the meeting minutes of April 30, 2021. With no proposed changes, **the minutes from the April 30, 2021 meeting were unanimously approved.**

2. Campus Master Planning Update

Members of the firm Ayers Saint Gross (ASG) joined for a presentation of their progress in creating the next *Campus Master Plan*. Over the past month, ASG has been virtually engaging with the campus community, the Campus Master Planning Steering Committee, and the Campus Master Planning Task Force. They have hosted a series of focus groups and open forums to gain insights as to the campus's existing conditions. The firm is reviewing the strengths and weaknesses of the campus, identifying recurring themes, reviewing challenging programmatic uses including campus mobility, facilities, infrastructure, and real estate, and the cross-cutting drivers that are tied directly to *Skidmore's Strategic Plan*.

ASG reported that the engagement from the community has been significant and diverse in assisting to generate a roadmap for sustainable campus development that advances the strategic priorities of the College. This roadmap will be used to guide the decision making on future projects, evaluate long term facility needs, and ensure an inclusive process that educates and builds trust and support across the campus and the Saratoga Springs community. ASG is using the focus group data to develop a working framework around the common campus themes. They recognize campus natural beauty, sense of community, and inclusivity and seek to address daylight, access to and from buildings into outdoor living spaces, campus wellness, recreation space, stewardship, student-oriented spaces, and collaborative outdoor learning. ASG will provide a website for campus community members to share their ideas on the planning. Moving forward, ASG plans a robust assessment of the data, a summer visit, and a tour of campus facilities. ASG will then begin envisioning, testing ideas, and synthesizing the draft plan. President Conner stated that ASG will be presenting an update at the upcoming May Board of Trustees meeting. He thanked the ASG team for all of their very collaborative work to date.

3. Return to Campus

Interim Human Resources Director Sarah Delaney Vero presented a draft of the Return to Work Policy. She stated that the draft policy comes from the COVID-19 Logistics Working Group. The development of the draft plan centers on the foundation of Skidmore as a residential liberal arts campus whose mission is best achieved with all faculty, staff, and students on campus living, working, and learning together as a community. The draft plan calls for a return to pre-COVID-19 academic offerings with remote courses only offered with respect to those faculty members who cannot return back to campus due to a medical accommodation. A “phased” approach to return to work is being set forth beginning no later than August 2 with some presence in each office, and steadily increasing to full coverage of each division’s core hours by September 2 with the understanding that some offices may need employees back in the office in June or July.

At this time, these guidelines may be limited by social distancing requirements. It is anticipated that the distancing guidelines will be reduced in the coming weeks for both offices and classroom settings. The draft plan begins with specific details being communicated to the community on May 24. Unit and Division Heads will be responsible for developing and submitting return to work plans to their Division’s Vice Presidents and Human Resources (HR) by July 1. Templates will be provided to ensure that all the major decision points are being adhered to and that any office modifications that are needed are identified.

Interim Director Vero stated that this is a major shift for those individuals who have been working remotely for over a year. She acknowledged that this a difficult adjustment and that HR recognizes this challenge. Programming and support services are being developed to assist employees. The plan calls for a collaborative and transparent process with supervisors empowering their employees to be part of the return to work decision making process. Supervisors will be encouraged to be as flexible as possible with the gradual increase of employees returning to work between Aug. 2 and Sept. 2. Operations will be of high priority while taking into account employee health and safety and accommodation requests. An IPPC member commented that remote working could potentially be a tool that supervisors could use to think creatively about work flexibility moving forward.

The plan will work as a guidepost with built in flexibility to react to evolving federal, New York State, and local guidance changes in response to vaccination rates and the pandemic’s trajectory over the coming months. Interim Director Vero stressed that all reasonable accommodations will be provided to employees. HR has aligned the accommodation process with our anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policies. Interim Director Vero reminded IPPC about the sensitivity around these issues, explaining that from a legal and privacy perspective asking an individual why they are not receiving the vaccine is inappropriate.

The COVID-19 Logistics Working Group is closely following guidelines surrounding operational capacity limits and access issues. Travel guidance, gathering capacity limits, testing protocols, and masking guidelines will be addressed shortly in separate guidance. The College is still requiring daily health monitoring. Quarantine isolation requirements will remain in place with some flexibility to those individuals who are fully vaccinated.

4. Admissions and Financial Aid Update Class of 2025

Vice President and Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid Mary Lou Bates reported that May 1 was the deposit deadline for the Class of 2025. Dean Bates was happy to report that Skidmore has slightly exceeded our enrollment goal by approximately 15 students. For incoming first-year students, the target is 708 students to begin September 2021. Although this is terrific news, Dean Bates cautioned that we must still deal with the uncertainties ahead—including “summer melt,” estimated at 90 students. Melt will occur through wait-list activity at other colleges, deferrals to fall of 2022, whether our enrolled international students (first-year and returning) will be able to get here and students requesting a gap year.

At this point, the class composition self-identifies as 43% men, 57% women, which compares with last year’s 41% men and 59% women; 26% domestic students of color, up from 24%: 10% first generation students down from 13% last year; and 9% international students down from 10%. Dean Bates reported that we have 38 students enrolled in the Opportunity Program, just shy our goal of 40 students. Admissions anticipates that 52% of the class will be receiving financial aid. We project that our net tuition revenue will be on track. The acceptance rate was 31% which is consistent with last year, with a deferral request rate running ahead of last year with 26 students who have deferred compared to 15 students this time last year. For the first time, Skidmore has asked students to submit requests for deferral by June 1, quite possibly accounting for the increase in the deferral rate at this time.

Our admission achievements are directly tied to our collaborative efforts between Admissions and Financial Aid and our Communications and Marketing team with focus on virtually recreating the tours, messages, information sessions, and connecting admitted students with current faculty and students. VP Bates once again highlighted the agility and deep commitment of the various departments on campus to adapt to the new virtual world. This technology will continue to play a pivotal role in future recruitment efforts in reaching out to students all over the world. She stated that our admissions numbers are the direct result of many people stepping up, and VP Bates thanked people for their assistance. President Conner acknowledged these heroic efforts to admit the Class of 2025 and thanked everyone for their great collaboration.

5. FY ’22 Operating and Capital Budgets and the Five-Year Financial Plan

Vice President for Finance and Administration and Treasurer Donna Ng provided a summary of the FY ’22 operating budget. She reported that revenue assumptions call for a comprehensive fee increase of 3.5%, an incoming class size of 708, an overall discount rate of 44.2%, and a gift return rate of 7% with a take-out rate of 5%. VP Ng reminded IPPC of the detailed modeling that supports these figures and the benchmarking and monitoring of the discount rate that occurs with our peer institutions.

VP Ng stated that expenses for FY ’22 include an increase of 2.5 % in general salary adjustment (GSA) for faculty and non-union staff and 2% for union staff. Compensation is our largest budget item and includes \$300k for market equity adjustments. VP Ng remarked that we will continue to look at the validity of refilling vacated positions, but at a much smaller scale compared to the FY’21 hiring freeze. She noted that departments have been asked to scale down their supplies and services budgets by 1% for FY’ 22.

Given the revenue and expenditure parameters, the base budget for FY’22 is balanced. It is anticipated that we will have a slight deficit after factoring in the impact in the loss of summer

revenue, but we will have an overall operating surplus of \$2.8M that includes below-the-line revenue. The capital budget is set at \$11M with no plans of withholding a portion of the funding as was done in FY'21. Capital projects for FY '22 include new locks for the Northwoods buildings, annual computer deployment, and completion of Phase 3 of the Jonsson Tower project.

VP Ng briefly reviewed the Skidmore's Five-Year Financial Plan. The forecast calls for conservative revenue assumptions of increases in the comprehensive fee of 3.5% including \$500K for market equity adjustments in FY'23, a 1% growth in the Skidmore fund, and a continuation of the discount rate at or around 44%. VP noted that the market equity adjustment will be subject to a comprehensive salary study in helping to determine where Skidmore stands in the market and in determining future adjustment plans. Expenditures have been estimated with a general salary adjustment (GSA) of 3.5% and 3% in the out years to address the impact of lack of a GSA in FY'21, and a return of the 1% reduction to the supplies and services budgets for FY'23. A balanced budget is projected for FY'23 and FY'24 with slight deficits in FY'25 and FY'26. These projections assume that we will meet the 10% staffing reductions by FY'26. VP Ng stressed that all of these figures are for modeling purposes only and are subject to change. A presentation to the community on the financial plan will be held soon.

6. President's Report

President Conner stated that he will be providing an update on Skidmore's *Strategic Action Agenda* (SAA) to the Board of Trustees at the upcoming May meeting. Skidmore will be entering the seventh year of the ten-year plan. The President commented on the challenges this past academic year has brought in regards to free speech and expression. He stated that many college campuses across the county are grappling with these challenges and called for future discussion and examination of our current free speech and expression policies.

President Conner remarked that the current searches for the Dean of Students and Vice President for Student Affairs and the Collyer Vice President for Advancement are on track and are in the final stages. Announcements to the community will be forthcoming shortly.

7. Other Business

At the April 30 Faculty Meeting discussion was held regarding the general salary adjustment (GSA). Following that meeting, President Conner and IPPC Vice Chair Joerg Bibow received an email requesting that related issues be brought to the attention of IPPC for discussion purposes. The faculty email focused on two main proposals: one concerning how GSA affects all employees, and the second directed at part-time non-tenure track faculty who are remunerated by the hour or credit hour per their contract. Faculty Executive Committee (FEC) Chair and Associate Professor of Psychology Casey Schofield supported the efforts by faculty in addressing concerns surrounding salary equity and encouraged feedback from IPPC.

Dean of the Faculty and Vice President for Academic Affairs Michael Orr commented that the College has had a long-standing total compensation framework that has maintained all of the various ranks and categories of employee market equity and benchmarking. Moving toward a single fixed amount compensation package with an annual GSA would result in the market equity of the traditional framework impossible to maintain. Retention of those individuals with

seniority could potentially become an issue. A conscious decision would need to be made of foregoing our market position for associates and full professors.

An IPPC member suggested that a mixed constituency committee be formed to ensure that all voices from across campus are heard with the committee seeking to examine the pros and cons of the proposal, as well as merits of other proposals. Institutions with similar compensation structures could be examined and data collected. An IPPC member remarked on the importance of viewing our current total compensation as a whole and not just the salary component and that the issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion would need to be closely examined in any salary structure modification discussions and proposals. President Conner remarked on the complexities of salary structures and the important role the slated compensation studies will play in these conversations.

8. Call for Agenda Items

No new agenda items were raised.

9. Gratitude

President Conner acknowledged his gratitude for outgoing IPPC members Carolyn Lundy, Casey Schofield, Rachael Borthwick '21, and Melanie Nolan '23. He thanked departing Dean Cerri Banks for her leadership and the many contributions that she has made to the committee and the Skidmore community. The President welcomed new IPPC member Associate Professor of Management and Business Jina Mao. He expressed his gratitude to all IPPC members for their willingness and flexibility in committing to the IPPC meetings. He stated he is very thankful for all their input, creative ideas, and thoughts brought to the table this academic year. He reminded everyone of the importance of the conversations within the group – the conversions have not always been easy, but they have been extraordinarily helpful.

Meeting adjourned at 12:23 p.m.

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