

INSTITUTIONAL POLICY AND PLANNING COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
November 5, 2021

PRESENT: Mary Lou Bates; Adrian Bautista; Joerg Bibow, Vice Chair; Marta Brunner; Marc Conner, Chair; Michelle Hubbs; Jina Mao; Donna Ng; Diane O'Connor; Jason Ohlberg; Lori Parks; Joe Porter; Rik Scarce; Kurt Smemo; Joseph Stankovich; Dwane Sterling; Smriti Tiwari; Amy Tweedy; Claire Wang '24; Joshua Woodfork; and Carey Anne Zucca.

ABSENT: Michael Orr.

GUESTS: Interim Human Resources Director Sarah Delaney Vero; Title IX Coordinator Joel Aure; Student Government Association (SGA) Executive Vice President Nathaniel Lowell '24.

The meeting was held via Zoom and called to order at 10:32 a.m. by Chair President Conner. Please note that the College experienced two power outages during this meeting so some members were disconnected for parts of the meeting.

1. Approval of Meeting Minutes from the October 22, 2021 Meeting.

A motion was made to approve the meeting minutes of October 22, 2021. With no proposed changes, **the minutes from the October 22, 2021 meeting were unanimously approved.**

2. Flexible Work for Staff

Interim Human Resources Director Sarah Delaney Vero spoke to the inquiries being received across campus from staff seeking more flexibility with work arrangements. She stated that as a residential community we are committed to in-person learning and the foundation of that is having faculty and staff present to create a vibrant education community. Still, the world has shifted as a result of the pandemic and we are being called on to consider more flexibility in the work environment without compromising our educational mission.

Director Vero stated that this a challenging situation and addressed the inherent inequities of adding flexibility work arrangements coupled with the resulting potential impacts that adjusting work schedules could have on the student experience. She reminded IPPC that the College currently offers [summer flexible hours](#) and that one thought is to expand this benefit to cover the winter break, potentially pairing this with a limited remote work option on a trial basis.

IPPC members weighed in on the incorporation of a flexible work arrangement, noting the inequities among staff in various units, particularly front facing offices and union staff members. At the same time, members addressed the work-life balance and quality of the experience that some staff are seeking. Members noted that remote work might add to sustainability efforts, build upon lessons learned from working remotely last year, and might be used as a recruitment and retention tool. It was suggested that the College could offer a bank of set remote work days as an option. Director Vero thanked IPPC for their feedback and their consensus in support of exploring flexible work arrangements. Human Resources will continue to gather feedback from supervisors, identify potential challenges and roadblocks, provide the support tools needed as a flexible work model moves forward for consideration.

3. Staff Compensation Assessment Update

Director Vero presented an update on the compensation assessment for non-union staff. All compensation information has been provided to the consultants including job descriptions and salary bands. The College has recently approved a list of comparable institutions submitted by the consultants. The next phase in staff compensation assessment is to bring staff into these conversations. An informational meeting for staff will be held on November 16. Faculty are working with the Dean's Office and have created a faculty advisory committee.

4. COVID-19 Update

Director Vero stated that to ensure that the safety of the College community for the upcoming Thanksgiving break the College will be instituting additional COVID-19 testing protocols. Students will test within 72 hours prior to leaving campus and leave with a recent negative PCR test result in hand, perform an at-home antigen self-test on the day of their planned arrival back to campus, test within 24 hours of arriving back on campus, and test again 72 hours after their first test. Faculty and staff will test during the week following the Thanksgiving break.

Given our recent success in mitigating COVID-19 cases on campus, in-person academics will resume after the break and remain in person until the end of the semester. To help ensure the well-being of families, friends, and the Skidmore community, Director Vero asked that everyone please take any symptoms you experience seriously. She thanked everyone for their patience and care this semester.

5. Update on Title IX/Sexual and Gender-Based Misconduct (SGBM)

President Conner commented on the recent student concerns over Skidmore's handling of Title IX matters. He stated that Skidmore is taking a hard look at challenges students are facing and how the College is responding to both the Title IX processes and the interactions when one experiences sexual and gender-based misconduct (SGBM).

Title IX Coordinator Joel Aure reviewed Title IX reporting processes and obligations. All non-confidential on-campus resources are required to report any disclosures of sexual and gender-based misconduct to the Title IX Office whereas confidential on-campus resources (Counseling Center, and Health Services) can maintain confidentiality. Anonymous on campus resources, specifically the Victim Advocates, must provide non-identifying statistical information for compliance purposes. He asked faculty and staff members to remember to remind students of the disclosure requirement, yet be compassionate and hear what student are saying, and then report that sensitive information to the Title IX Office as quickly as possible. The Title IX Office works to ensure that all parties involved are provided support and available resources.

Dean of Students and Vice President for Student Affairs Adrian Bautista apprised IPPC on the current progress being made in addressing student concerns over Title IX processes and SGBM. Dean Bautista noted that these issues are being felt on college campuses across the nation. He stated that to date eight listening sessions with students have been conducted. These conversations were sometimes tough, but they were also illuminating and productive. It's clear we all have work to do, and we will do it together. The sessions were led by Dean Bautista and [Leslie Gomez](#), a former sexual violence prosecutor and nationally recognized expert in higher

education and SGBM. Dean Bautista spoke to hearing from students regarding the education and prevention side of Title IX/SGBM issues and stated that this is an opportunity for Skidmore to work with all students in meaningful ways when they first arrive on campus each year. Dean Bautista commented that he is eager to engage with students, create pathways of communication, and work in collaboration together.

SGA Executive Vice President Nathaniel Lowell '24 inquired about the potential reviving of the SGBM Student Advisory Council and what the council could potentially look like in the current environment. Dean Bautista replied that he is keen to see the council restarted, ensuring that all voices are heard, and to see how the group might evolve and function in this current world where social media interconnects with multiple facets of campus life. An IPPC member commented on an unease on campus regarding safety for some students and asked how this is being addressed. Dean Bautista replied that he is aware of this issue and there is a need to review our protocols and develop ways in which Student Affairs, the Title IX Office, and Campus Safety can partner together to develop specific processes within the context of Title IX confidentiality guidelines.

An additional [Title IX/SGBM](#) website has been developed to serve all community members concerned about SGBM. President Conner added that Skidmore is committed to ensuring that our Title IX processes are some of the strongest in the nation. We will continue to support all of our students and indeed our community in these very challenging times. The College previously signed on to [a communication with other New York Six Institutions](#) in opposition to the shift in the federal government's Title IX regulations. We are now waiting to see if the current administration might enact any changes. Skidmore is obligated to conform with federal law—but how we hear and respond to students is of vital importance. Skidmore can and will do better.

6. Skidmore's Financial Context Information Session of 11.1.21 Debrief

President Conner spoke to the November 1st Skidmore's Financial Context Information Session during which he and members of the President's Cabinet briefed employees on the state of the College's finances, including ongoing efforts to reduce the College workforce by 10% over the next five years. The President noted that the meeting was well attended and included a question-and-answer period in which over 40 questions were covered.

Some key points of the presentation included: Skidmore is heavily dependent on tuition revenue to cover operating expenses; staff and faculty levels are higher than at most of our peer and aspirant institutions and indeed have grown disproportionately with regard to our financial resources over the last seven or eight years; student to faculty ratios are very low relative to the size of the endowment; and student financial aid continues to outpace our endowment levels. Tackling these issues now will enable Skidmore to think strategically regarding position replacements or eliminations over the next several years and to approach these reductions through attrition as the College seeks to return to the staffing and faculty levels of several years ago. Adjustments will be felt across the board. The lived student experience will continue to be the focal point for decision making.

IPPC stated their gratitude to the administration for keeping these issues at the forefront of staff and faculty communications and asked that ongoing transparent communication continue to be a priority. Vice President for Strategic Planning and Institutional Diversity Joshua Woodfork

added that it is important that community members know how to question and register disagreement in healthy ways as we approach these issues with collective responsibility. IPPC reflects our shared governance. An IPPC member commented that working together to build a community of trust and allowing for work flexibility is vital to achieve the mission of the College and to aid in the support of the caring for students. They continued stating that working together to dismantle misinformation, recognizing that some departments and units are already stretched, and providing clear communications will assist in creating a collaborative and transparent community.

President Conner thanked IPPC for their feedback. It is a time of transition as we move forward with new initiatives while at the same time adjusting staffing. While faculty and staff remain our strongest asset, understanding and communicating our strategic planning will help to ensure that we work together to safeguard the future financial stability of the College.

7. Call for Agenda Items

No new agenda items were raised.

8. Other Business

Director Vero reminded IPPC that Open Benefits Enrollment begins on Monday, November 8 and must be completed by midnight on Friday, November 19.

Meeting adjourned at 12:04 p.m.

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