

INSTITUTIONAL POLICY AND PLANNING COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
February 25, 2022

PRESENT: Mary Lou Bates; Adrian Bautista; Joerg Bibow, Vice Chair; Marc Conner, Chair; Michelle Hubbs; Jina Mao; Donna Ng; Jason Ohlberg; Michael Orr; Lori Parks; Joe Porter; Geraldine Santoso '22; Rik Scarce; Kurt Smemo; Dwane Sterling; Smriti Tiwari; Amy Tweedy; Joshua Woodfork; and Carey Anne Zucca.

ABSENT: Marta Brunner; Joseph Stankovich; and Claire Wang '23.

GUESTS: Assistant VP for Student Affairs and Director of Athletics and COVID-19 Logistics Working Group Co-Chair Gail Cummings-Danson.

Because of inclement weather, classes and operations were canceled on February 25; however, the meeting was still held for those who were able to participate so that we could discuss COVID-19 related items. **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 4, 2022 Meeting.

A motion was made to approve the meeting minutes of February 4, 2022. With no proposed changes, **the minutes from the February 4, 2022 meeting were unanimously approved.**

2. COVID-19 Discussion

Vice President for Finance and Administration and Treasurer Donna Ng and Assistant VP for Student Affairs and Director of Athletics and COVID-19 Logistics Working Group Co-Chair Gail Cummings-Danson sought feedback regarding surveillance testing and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) masking guidelines as we move forward. VP Ng stated that Skidmore's current COVID-19 protocols require that all students test every seven days using PCR tests that are processed by the Broad Institute. The College also offers in-house rapid antigen testing on a regular basis to students who are symptomatic or to those students who are concerned about a close contact. Testing results have been closely monitored since inception and data outcomes indicate that approximately 50% of our positive cases are currently coming from PCR testing and 50% from rapid antigen testing.

Based on these data points and a declining case rate, the COVID-19 Logistics Working Group has tentatively proposed a change to the testing schedule whereby weekly PCR required surveillance testing would continue until March 9 and then, following Spring Break, PCR tests would be optional and made available for all students, faculty, and staff. Rapid antigen testing would also continue to be offered to all students at any time. Assistant VP for Student Affairs and Director of Athletics and COVID-19 Logistics Working Group Co-Chair Gail Cummings-Danson stated that students would be asked to pick up a box of two free antigen tests prior to leaving campus for the Spring Break, one for use before returning to campus and one for use at their discretion. Those students who test positive would be required to isolate for five days or longer based on their vaccination status. She stated that in conjunction with the proposed changes to surveillance testing protocols, students would be allowed to have visitors in the

residence halls and apartments across campus with masking required while not in their private space. President Conner added that Skidmore has consistently been at the forefront of testing frequency and requirements since the onset of the pandemic in comparison to our peer institutions. Dean of Students and Vice President for Student Affairs Adrian Bautista asked that the Working Group clearly communicate any new testing options and ensure the availability of masks for everyone.

Discussion ensued regarding the updated testing proposal, including comments or questions on the specifics of reporting student rapid antigen test results, the isolation period for students who test positive before returning to campus from Spring Break, and the extension of required PCR testing past March 9. Assistant VP Cummings-Danson remarked that student athletes have sought rapid antigen tests from health services if they are not feeling well, and reporting of any positive rapid antigen test results has occurred in a timely manner. That being said, it was suggested that the College may want to create additional guidance for reporting positive results for students taking optional rapid antigen tests. Student Government Association President Geraldine Santoso '22 indicated that students may have concerns with the new testing protocols given the numbers of students who will be traveling over the Break and the potential impact their return to campus may have on our community, especially for those who are immunocompromised. It was asked if Skidmore's contractual testing agreement with the Broad Institute would be in jeopardy if the current testing schedule was changed. VP Ng replied that our agreement with the Broad Institute would remain intact and only the amount of contracted testing would change. Conversely, if we needed to return to more frequent testing in the future this could be accommodated as well. President Conner stated that achieving a balance between CDC recommendations, Saratoga County Department of Health guidelines, and what is best for well-being of our campus community is at the heart of establishing revised testing protocols.

Discussion continued regarding the anticipated announcement by the CDC of changes in masking guidance, in which it was expected that the criteria for requiring masking indoors will shift from measuring transmission rates to focusing on hospitalization and death rates. Concern was raised over loosening masking guidance at the same time as reducing PCR testing and the resulting potential impacts on the campus, specifically class attendance. The optional requiring of masks in the classroom versus not requiring masks in other indoor places on campus was discussed. Continuing to require indoor masking was weighed against the desire to move forward with returning to more normal campus life, including holding events. The importance of being led by science was stressed. VP for Strategic Planning and Institutional Diversity Joshua Woodfork reminded the group to be mindful of potential cultural divides within our campus community. President Conner thanked IPPC for everyone's sharing of perspectives and noted the level of care that has carried us through this challenging time.

Meeting adjourned at 11:25 a.m.

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