

**INSTITUTIONAL POLICY AND PLANNING COMMITTEE**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
**March 4, 2022**

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

**ABSENT:** Michelle Hubbs; Dwane Sterling; 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.

**The meeting was held via Zoom** and called to order at 10:33 a.m. by Chair President Conner.

**1. Approval of Meeting Minutes from the February 25, 2022 Meeting.**

A revision to the draft meeting minutes of **February 25, 2022** was suggested by Professor of Sociology Rik Scarce. It was accepted. Subsequently, the **February 25, 2022 meeting minutes were unanimously approved.**

**2. February Board of Trustees Meeting Updates**

President Conner reported on a productive February 16-18, 2022 Board of Trustees Meeting with significant focus on Campus Master Planning. The Board reviewed student residential life and common spaces, renovation of teaching and learning spaces with cutting edge classroom facilities and meeting space, and health, wellness and fitness, which incorporates the whole community in terms of facility expansion and services. President Conner emphasized the importance of the strategic and collaborative aspects of the planning process. He shared the receipt of a terrific gift to fund first floor renovations of Scribner Library, stating that this a prime example of forthcoming efforts embodying cross institutional creativity.

President Conner referenced the important and substantial work of Board committees. The year and half-year-old ad hoc committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) engaged the full Board in a two-hour DEI facilitated training, the third of such Board trainings that has occurred within the past four years. The President stated that these Board trainings are indicative of DEI as a core institutional value adding that important future efforts will be forthcoming from this DEI Board Committee. The Student Life and Admissions and Financial Aid Committee heard from a panel of students who referenced the impacts of COVID-19 on the student experience. The Budget, Finance, and Infrastructure committee's discussion centered on the progress toward a balanced budget. The Advancement Committee reported on the status of new gifts to Skidmore and updates on the Skidmore Fund, noting that the College has been invited to apply for the Schuler Education Foundation Access Initiative Grant. If awarded, the grant would require the College to fundraise a matching amount. All grant funds would be targeted specifically to Pell grant eligible and undocumented students. The President thanked IPPC for its shared governance role in shaping leadership at the College and thus contributing to Board discussions.

### 3. Strategic Action Agenda (SAA) 2021-2022

The President remarked that the Board of Trustees Strategic Planning Committee reviewed and endorsed the [\*Strategic Action Agenda \(SAA\) 2021-2022 Emerging Into the Future\*](#). From earlier IPPC discussion on February 4 and Board members' feedback, President Conner referenced the addition of language emphasizing sustainability, along with language reflecting our deep commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Campus Master Planning is a process that is indeed informed and shaped by our dual commitments to sustainability and DEI within all of our planning efforts. He reminded IPPC of the importance of the SAA document in guiding our work at the College, particularly during this pandemic.

A motion was made to endorse the *Strategic Action Agenda (SAA) 2021-2022 Emerging into the Future*. **IPPC unanimously approved the motion to endorse the Strategic Action Agenda (SAA) 2021-2022 Emerging Into the Future.** It will now be distributed to the campus community.

### 4. Admissions and Financial Aid updates

Vice President and Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid Mary Lou Bates provided an update on the recruitment of the Class of 2026. She reported that Skidmore had another strong applicant year with a record number of applications—over 13,000 applications received compared to 11,000 applications last year. A majority of the recent growth has been with international applications. This year, however, Skidmore expanded its outreach and subsequently domestic applications increased by 13% or 1100 additional applications. Early decision (ED) applications also reached a record high, with a corresponding increase in ED applications from domestic students. Dean Bates explained that the percentage of students seeking financial aid in 2008 was 58%, climbing to 79% in 2019. This rate, however, has held steady for the past three years. Admissions decisions are anticipated to be completed the week of March 7 and the College looks forward to welcoming another terrific class.

Dean Bates stated that programming for accepted students is planned with a number of both on campus and virtual options scheduled, including campus accepted candidate days, a virtual academic showcase, a virtual Discovery Program, and a prerecorded student panel.

At President Conner's request, Admissions is also engaged in an Enrollment Projection Project. This project will assist with consideration of the optimal class size as the College continues examining residential space as part of Campus Master Planning. The project also assists with consideration of long-range budget planning, financial aid allocations, and net tuition revenue projections. The College has partnered with the enrollment consulting firm [Maguire Associates](#) to assist with the collection of enrollment data, including national demographic and Census changes. The Enrollment Projection Project is anticipated to be completed by May 2022.

### 5. Human Resources (HR) Planning

Vice President for Finance and Administration and Treasurer Donna Ng led a presentation on the future of Human Resources (HR) at the College. She discussed some factors that we are facing, including pre-pandemic nationwide workforce trends, a changing workforce demographic, an aging workforce, and low unemployment. She noted how the continued post-pandemic workforce trends impact the College, including a nationwide labor shortage, accelerated retirements, and a decline in the number of women in the workforce. These trends are predicted to continue into the next decade.

VP Ng commented on the low applicant numbers HR is seeing for current open positions. HR is developing ways to increase employment applications as well as serving as a resource to those areas that have vacancies. In order to ensure a competitive advantage in recruiting and retaining staff and faculty, and effectively address growing workforce needs, Skidmore will need a modern, efficient, and high-performing HR unit that leads and supports strategic and value-added services to the campus. The College is working with Segal Consulting to address several key areas in order to meet our need, which fall into these categories: culture and engagement; workforce planning and succession planning; organizational design; HR information systems; training and development; employee relations; performance management; total compensation framework; and strategic recruitment. We need a proactive strategic approach across all areas.

VP Ng spoke to the work currently being done on Skidmore's employee compensation study. The compensation assessment is basically completed in terms of the matching of our particular positions with market and industry data. The College will then be in a position to implement any necessary individual changes by the beginning of the next fiscal year. An IPPC member flagged a concern over faculty salaries and asked if wages are keeping up with inflation. The concern was also raised if we are keeping up with our peer institutions. VP Ng reminded IPPC that market and General Salary Adjustment (GSA) are closely tied together without inflation.

VP Ng outlined four steps needed to address the focus areas:

- 1) creating a new HR organizational structure that aligns with the best practices and needs;
- 2) developing an HR Plan and expanding strategic HR services;
- 3) launching an effort to improve service levels and rebrand HR; and
- 4) developing a comprehensive culture, climate, and employee engagement initiatives.

She added that the overall HR organizational structure would be one that entails positions that are strategic versus positions that are transactional. The work of rebranding of HR will be an ongoing process. Developing a communication plan and providing opportunities for feedback will be forthcoming. An IPPC member asked that the reductions planned for faculty and staff as outlined in the *SAA 2021-2022* be taken into account and to ensure adequate staffing levels for the HR to do the important work that is being imagined.

## **6. NACCC Staff Survey Information**

Vice President for Strategic Planning and Institutional Diversity Joshua Woodfork spoke to the upcoming National Assessment of Collegiate Campus Climate (NACCC) staff survey that is part of the [Racial Justice Initiative](#) and Skidmore's participation in the [Liberal Arts College Racial Equity Leadership Alliance](#) (LACRELA), which Skidmore joined in 2021 along with 65+ other institutions with President Conner as founding member. We are participating in a three-year survey cycle (students last year, staff this spring, and faculty next spring) focused on our racial campus climate.

For all regular and union staff, the staff survey window will begin Tuesday, March 22 and conclude Thursday, April 21. The survey will take approximately 20-minutes to complete. It will cover six content areas: 1) workplace mattering; 2) racial learning and literacy; 3) encounters with racial stress; 4) workplace equity; 5) appraisals of institutional commitment; and 6) impact of external environments. We are mindful of the depth of the topics and are asking supervisors to provide support as we consider encouragement of participation. As we hope to continue

improving the staff experience, we are seeking robust participation. A member noted the interconnectedness of the NACCC staff survey with the Human Resources planning and the SAA. VP Woodfork noted that the survey is one of many tools and that we will need to continue to take action steps around recruitment and retention.

## **7. Covid-19 Communication Check-In**

President Conner reflected on the COVID-19 [communication of March 3](#). He referenced the [IPPC meeting of February 25](#) and the significance of the meeting in shaping his own thinking. He noted that our peer institutions have instituted similar policies. The COVID-19 Working Group will continue to monitor the ever-changing pandemic landscape and will recommend policy changes as needed. He referenced the importance of hearing different community perspectives and noted the email address established for that purpose: [covidfeedback@skidmore.edu](mailto:covidfeedback@skidmore.edu), and stated that any feedback gleaned will be shared with IPPC.

IPPC members shared their thoughts regarding the new COVID-19 guidance. A member raised the challenge with long-detailed communications that many will not read versus the need to share important information. Some members raised consideration of additional lead time when instituting policy changes to allow departments/areas to have conversations and make physical accommodations if needed. Student Government Association (SGA) President Geraldine Santoso '22 remarked on the challenges of the masking and testing guidance with the timing of potential spring break travel, particularly for students of color, low-income students, or those students who may be immunocompromised. VP Ng replied that from a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance perspective if an individual wears a KN95 mask they are protecting themselves and that Skidmore has chosen to provide free KN95 masks to all community members if they choose to continue to mask. Masks can be picked up at Campus Safety or Facilities Services. Assistant VP for Student Affairs and Director of Athletics and COVID-19 Logistics Working Group Co-Chair Gail Cummings-Danson noted that Skidmore remains mask friendly and mask supportive and that the Working Group will continue to work to ensure that the community stays respectful.

## **8. Call for Agenda Items**

No new agenda items were raised.

## **9. Other Business**

VP Woodfork announced that *In It 6* will take place Monday, April 4 through Friday, April 8 after being postponed from fall 2021. Programming will include a hybrid of in-person and virtual workshops, speakers, and films. He encouraged and welcomed collaboration. He commented that *In It 7* planning is already underway and is tentatively scheduled for the first or second week of October 2022. Past *In It* series programming [may be viewed here](#). We will continue with other DEI and Racial Justice Initiative efforts as well, including following up on the transphobia training, which we discussed at our [December 10 meeting](#), as we are lining up some facilitators.

Meeting adjourned at 12:06 p.m.

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