INSTITUTIONAL POLICY AND PLANNING COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
April 25, 2025

Present: Marc Conner (Chair), Michelle Hubbs, Masako Inamoto, Nick Junkerman, Bradley Kadets'27, Dan Konstalid, Josh Maxwell '26, Dorothy Mosby, Amy Oh, Beth Post, Tarah Rowse, Rodrigo Schneider (Vice Chair), Joseph Stankovich, Dwane Sterling, Elizabeth Stauderman, Amy Tweedy, Sarah Vero, Domonique Vuvan, Carey Anne Zucca.

Absent: Adrian Bautista, Tim Harper, Jess Ricker, Joshua Woodfork.

Guests: Dan Nathan, A.J. Schneller, and Erika Bastress-Dukehart (CAFR members); Kelly Sheppard, Faculty Director of Assessment.

The meeting was called to order at 10:32 a.m.

1) **Approval of March 21 and April 4, 2025 Meeting Minutes**

With no proposed changes, **the minutes from the March 21 and April 4 meetings were unanimously approved.**

2) **Academic Freedom with the Committee on Academic Freedom and Rights (CAFR)**

President Conner shared that he and Dean Mosby held a meeting with CAFR to discuss academic freedom and freedom of expression. Three members of CAFR, Professors A.J. Schneller, Dan Nathan, and Erica Bastress-Dukehart, joined the IPPC to further consider these issues. To frame the agenda item, some key documents, policies, and handbooks (student and faculty) were shared in advance. President Conner suggested that it does not appear that recent infringements on academic freedom and freedom of expression from outside our campus are going to decrease in the near future. Do our current policies, outlined in the documents, adequately support our commitments?

A committee member noted that freedom of expression is being challenged with the current administration. General Counsel and VP of HR Sarah Vero shared that most actions and inquiries are coming with allegations that a higher education institution is allowing anti-Semitism with a broadening of what one would determine to be anti-Semitic behavior. She also explained that there has been increased scrutiny with respect to immigration and international community members. VP Vero shared that a number of international faculty members have voiced their concerns about their academic freedom with regard to what they are teaching in their classrooms and how the federal government may interpret as threats to the security of the United States. A member asked about recent executive orders around accreditation agencies that seek to limit focus on diversity, noting that this would inhibit our efforts to review inclusion and student success. VP Vero said there is a lot of interpretation and that some of these actions may be subject to judicial action. A member suggested that Skidmore might place our curriculum and course calendar behind some kind of internal cyber wall. VP of Communications and Marketing Elizabeth Stauderman shared that her office is working on a comprehensive audit of the

College's webpage. President Conner explained that we are taking a measured approach in response to the federal government's actions. He spoke about the message he signed on to with many other college leaders via the AAC&U, explaining that it is a stance on certain actions by the government that directly and negatively impact our mission. SGA President Josh Maxwell shared that the students were happy with the position Skidmore has taken.

The members of CAFR shared their perspective that they are not experiencing internal conflict or student and staff conflict nor do they feel censored or restricted in what they are allowed to teach. Dean Mosby shared that she and Associate Dean Oscar Perez Hernandez have led sessions for our international faculty and how we can support them, including setting up meetings with attorneys related to work visas and personal and research travel outside of the US. VP Vero put out a detailed memo outlining all the different outreaches that Skidmore has done for students, faculty, and staff. We will continue to monitor over the summer and revisit in the fall.

3) **Revised *Skidmore College Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness Plan (2025)***

Institutional Effectiveness Specialist Amy Tweedy shared that an institutional assessment plan is a requirement for our Middle States accreditation. The original plan is from 2014 and was focused on the academic side of the College and assessment of student learning. In our last accreditation in 2016, some of the feedback from the evaluation team included expanding assessment beyond student learning to include the administration and operational effectiveness. In response the Subcommittee on Institutional Effectiveness (SIE) was reshaped in 2018 to its current form. We revised the assessment plan in 2020 to establish the assessment expectations across offices and administrative units. "Assessment" is often associated with student learning assessment, while "institutional effectiveness" is about the operational efficiency, though we tend to use these terms interchangeably. As we prepare for Middle States reaccreditation next academic year, we are ensuring the document reflects our current efforts. Faculty Director of Assessment Kelly Sheppard shared that the updated plan summarizes what we have in multiple documents for academic assessment between committees, organizing bodies, and practices, including handbooks for the faculty and the chair and program directors. We recognize we need to find the best way to communicate this information to the community. We also added a new section that looks at student success across multiple dimensions. A motion was made to endorse the revised Institutional Effectiveness Plan. **With a unanimous vote, the Institutional Effectiveness Plan was endorsed.**

4) **Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Development Update**

VP of Finance and Administration Dan Konstalid shared that this update is an addendum to the February IPPC meeting update. We are making good progress on the proposed budget for fiscal 2026. At the same time, economic uncertainty has increased exponentially. VP Konstalid provided a wide overview of the many factors that are causing this external uncertainty and the potential ripples. Within our own industry, withdrawn research funding, and the threat of potentially broader and steeper endowment taxes as well as in the extreme threats of institutions' loss of their tax-exempt status are all concerning financially. The college certainly could feel the impacts of these uncertainties and threats in a number of ways, including enrollment impacts on future incoming classes and the ability of international students to return. Impacts to the market value of endowment and investment earnings are under pressure at the moment. Donor uncertainty is also at play. Inflationary pressures are impacting some of our vendors. Incorporating these new developments into our thinking has added an additional complexity to the development of next year's operating budget. We have reworked assumptions around net tuition revenue and assumptions related to study abroad. We are working with divisions to identify and agree upon reductions that we need to make to balance next year's budget. We have committed to the program and operations efficiency review that we have undertaken with Huron Consulting Group. All of these things have really taxed the budget development process across campus. Downside protection is on the minds of our governing board. Some members have asked for an overview of where and how the College has flexibility to make short-term adjustments in response to negative impacts. As a result of taking a second look at major assumptions as well as further fine-tuning estimates, we have realized some flexibility in our budget. These revisions have been a result both of hearing back from departments that typically report to us over the course of the year, as well as having another few months of actual experience to compare our assumptions against. That is the good news and at this point we have balanced the proposed budget for 2026. As part of that process, we have also increased the general contingency provision within the budget to $2 million, a doubling of the contingency. We have done this in order to make sure that the College has more flexibility.

We will be advising both the campus community and the Board of Trustees to be prepared for a higher level of uncertainty over the short and the near term. President Conner shared that we are doing well relative to most other colleges. In response to a question, VP Konstalid shared that part of our operating budget includes a provision for capital spending for reinvestment back into our facilities and technology, etc. The best practice or standard in the industry is to make sure that your provisions for capital spending are keeping pace with annual depreciation expense. Historically, depreciation expenses for the College has been around $16 million or so. With the addition of the BTCIS and McCaffrey-Wagman it has moved closer to $20 million. Last year, we set capital spending at $13 million in order to balance the budget and we are proposing to take it down to $12 million for Fiscal Year 2026. This contingency will be reinvested back into facilities if it is unspent. So, for next year we have a $12 million provision for capital outright, plus we have a $2 million contingency, if we are fortunate enough not to need the contingency for something else, we will have $14 million to invest back into our facilities.

5) IPPC Operating Code Review Continued

IPPC returned to this ongoing project that we have been discussing since November. There are six items that we have talked about, five of which we think we might be ready as a committee to bring to conclusion.

a) Item one is about opening language, about advising on policy and the fact that there is both policy advising and lots of discussion about how we communicate policy. Proposed: As is clear in our charge, things like academic concerns, tenure and so forth are not in the purview of IPPC. Under procedures in the existing Operating Code, there is a lot of language about communication already.

b) Item two is about whether the IPPC advises the President or also the President's Cabinet, as the vice presidents sit on IPPC as appointed members.
c) Item three we discussed how much time would be sufficient time for the IPPC meeting materials? Proposed: meeting materials are sent before Wednesday so we are aiming for a minimum of at least two full working days for members to review.
d) Item four addresses if we should give more clarity on who writes the Annual Report. Proposed: we have made it clear that the vice chair is going to write the Annual Report and (following FEC Chair Dominique Vuvan's suggestion) we put the deadline to be before May 15.
e) Item five is about clarity and guidance on what the committee is asked to do on agenda items. Are items for discussion or endorsement? Proposed: the language added says the IPPC is not typically a policy creating body, but rather advises the President on policy issues. Often the committee's role is to discuss the advantages and disadvantages or potential implications of potential policies or give counsel about how the community might receive a certain policy. The committee's role and activity can vary depending on the needs of the institution and the community.
f) Item six is the subcommittee operating procedures. Proposed: suggestion is that we come back to this in the fall and look at the review and possible revision of the subcommittees and their operating procedures in the full context of the board approved Strategic Plan and the annual Strategic Action Agenda, trying to get a better alignment of the subcommittees with the priorities and initiatives expressed in the Colleges' strategic guidance documents. The current subcommittees reflect older strategic goals emanating from our 2005-215 Strategic Plan.

FEC Chair Vuvan asked about the Space Planning Working Group potentially coming under the umbrella of IPPC. Should it remain a working group or move to an IPPC subcommittee? SGA President Maxwell shared that there is a mistake where the term "the IPPC" and just "IPPC" are interchangeably used in the Operating Code. Tarah Rowse added one other language comment in terms of the last point, *at times the President will ask the committee to endorse key policies, Annual Strategic Action Agenda and Strategic Plans.* President Conner explained that neither the SAA nor the Strategic Plan are policies, though these documents will often guide policy. This is a great example of the types of more detailed discussion we want to have in the fall. President Conner entertained a motion to approve these revisions with the understanding that the Maxwell and Rowse's corrections will be considered. The motion was made and seconded. **With a unanimous vote, the committee approved the IPPC Operating Code changes as proposed.**

6) Call for Agenda Items

VP Vero proposed that IPPC review two legal policies: first, the Federal Stop Campus Hazing Act that went into effect January 1, with the compliance deadline of June 20; and second, an official Title VI policy, which covers discrimination based on race, color, and national origin.

7) Other Business

No other business was brought forward.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:53 a.m.

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