

INSTITUTIONAL POLICY AND PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

February 6, 2026

Present: Adrian Bautista, Claudette Castillo '28, Marc Conner (Chair), Amy Frappier, David Hargadon, Timothy Harper (Vice Chair), Michelle Hubbs, Zhenelle LeBel, Ting Li, Samantha Majiedt '27, Kerry Nelson, Jess Ricker, Tarah Rowse, Joe Stankovich, Elizabeth Stauderman, Natalie Taylor, Amy Tweedy, Sarah Vero, Joshua Woodfork, Murat Yildiz, Aiwu Zhao.

Absent: Yueqi Li.

This meeting was called to order at 10:33 a.m.

1. Approval of December 5, 2025 Meeting Minutes

With the correction to recognize that a motion was made and who made it, **the December 5, 2025 minutes were unanimously approved.**

2. President's Perspective: context in higher ed, spring semester top priorities

President Conner noted higher education headwinds, including:

- Enrollment pressures sector-wide; international enrollment down sharply, reducing what was once a reliable source of tuition revenue.
- Tenure under threat: a major university system has eliminated tenure institution-wide.
- Freedom of speech and academic freedom remain under threat nationally, reaffirming my commitment to defend both while upholding Skidmore's standards of civility.
- Financial constraints affect even elite institutions (for example., a prestigious Ivy League institution has 5% across-the-board cuts); college closures, while not as rampant as sometimes portrayed, will continue among smaller liberal arts colleges.
- Federal antagonism to higher education: my perspective views the institutional mission as directly threatened and believes institutional leaders must speak out; hence, I have submitted an op-ed arguing that the freedoms foundational to American democracy are equally foundational to higher education, and that current threats to those freedoms threaten the educational mission. Once published, I will share the piece with the community. President Conner was asked whether his op-ed might make Skidmore and/or its stakeholders a target.

President Conner explained that Skidmore is not facing mission-altering decisions, but the financial headwinds are real. The College cannot fundraise nor enroll its way out of projected deficits. The primary lever remaining is right-sizing personnel through attrition: approximately one of every two open positions may need to be eliminated in the coming years. The goal is to manage this without forced layoffs. The Board of Trustees will focus heavily on Foundation 6 (Financial Equilibrium) at the upcoming February Board meetings. Campaign planning is underway; the next fundraising campaign is seen as a forward-looking institutional moment, not merely a financial exercise. The VP for Advancement search is nearly complete; a hire is expected by March.

3. Spring Semester IPPC Overview: items for us to consider

VP Woodfork presented the full list of IPPC priorities for the remaining spring semester meetings. The committee was asked to identify must-accomplish items. Key priorities include:

- Task Force on Accessibility, which needs a charge, call for membership, and then a timeline, and consultant.
- AI Policy and Guidelines, draft language from the Working Group is forthcoming. Members highlighted that institutional risk grows the longer policies are absent.
- Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 Budget and Financial Equilibrium, the work is ongoing with IPPC's Subcommittee on Budget and Finance having deeper discussions.
- Enrollment Working Group, VP Ricker has proposed a new two-year advisory group; formal proposal forthcoming after consulting with the Faculty Executive Committee.
- Land Acknowledgement target, from the Strategic Plan's goals, hoping for Board of Trustees approval in May, enactment at Commencement. Collaboration with the Indigenization and Decolonization Collaborative (IDC), student Native American organization, and Elder-in-Residence, as well as work underway on NAGPRA efforts.
- Mission Statement Review, surfaced through Middle States work; current statement needs review and strengthening.
- Middle States Accreditation Team Visit, occurring March 29-April 1; will update the committee beforehand.
- Poster/Visual Communication Guidelines, Chicago Principles, IPPC Subcommittee Updates and Realignment, Data Governance Policy, Residential Life Curriculum, Career Preparation, and Campaign Update, all to be sequenced across remaining meetings.

4. Budget Development Update: trustee budget workshop, budget parameters

VP Konstalid presented budget updates, including that the Board of Trustees workshop was held to receive feedback and suggestions on our 5-year financial forecast including the parameters of the budget.

This year, Fiscal Year 2026, which is tracking toward a balanced above-the-line budget. Some negative variances in net-tuition revenue are offset by interest income and auxiliary revenues. Below-the-line enrollment is running above projections, generating approximately \$3.5 million to be reserved for capital purposes.

FY2027 Budget Parameters, include:

- Incoming class goal: 680 students; total on-campus enrollment expected to just reach the 2,370 projection.
- No net new positions or new initiatives; no inflationary growth in supplies and services.
- Capital spending temporarily reduced (to approximately \$10–11M, down from a \$13M target); contingency reserves also reduced.
- Remaining deficit of approximately \$2.5 million; division-level reduction goals will be distributed for response by end of spring semester, with a balanced budget for board approval in May.
- General salary adjustment (GSA) increase of not-to-exceed 2%, consistent with contractual commitments.

IPPC members asked questions regarding The Huron recommendations, the “below the line” total, and the GSA. VP Konstalid reported that The Huron recommendations are being worked through divisionally; complex cross-departmental changes are taking longer than anticipated. The President acknowledged the “Henny Penny” dynamic — dire projections that have historically resolved positively — but emphasized that the window for managing through attrition rather than layoffs requires action now. With personnel at roughly 70% of the operating budget, careful position management is the primary remaining tool for fiscal stability.

5. Task Force on Accessibility Updates: President’s thoughts on charge, membership, leadership, timeline, and best practices

President Conner outlined his initial thinking on the Task Force, and invited committee feedback, sharing:

- Duration: Approximately one year (launch target: March 1–15; final recommendations by Spring Break 2027). Actions continue in parallel; the task force is not a deferral mechanism.
- Co-Leaders: Dean of Students Adrian Bautista and Associate Dean of the Faculty and Co-Chair of the Space Planning Working Group Oscar Perez Hernandez have been invited and accepted.
- Student Leadership: VP Woodfork, on behalf of CIGU, proposed a tri-chair model with a student tri-chair. SGA President Majiedt affirmed this would be meaningful to students; the committee discussed care in selecting a student who won’t be placed in an unduly contested position.
- Scope: Accessibility is used to describe physical disabilities, neurodivergence, and more; the group will need to define its scope carefully to avoid duplication with existing structures.
- Resources: Both internal expertise and external higher education consultants will be engaged.
- Long-term structure: The likely model is eventual conversion to a standing CIGU (which is a subcommittee of IPPC) subcommittee like the Bias Response Group (BRG). Accessibility is not a one-year problem; the task force is a beginning, not an endpoint.

6. Inclusive Community Updates: all-gender restrooms, name policy, employee resource groups, Lovefest 2026

VP Woodfork provided these updates:

- Three new all-gender restrooms came online over winter break; updated campus map distributed.
- The website for name updates remains active and provides a central place for name changes within the College’s network.
- Employee resource groups remain active and are listed on the Human Resources website.
- 4th Annual Lovefest will take place February 13, 1–4 PM in Wyckoff Center. All are welcome.
- Black History Month programming is active; President’s Office co-sponsoring and organizing a webinar with eight accomplished African American male writers.

7. Student Government Association Updates

SGA President Majiedt and SGA VP Castillo reported on developments within student governance. Students sought to create a new Committee on Institutional Accessibility within SGA, separate from the existing ADA Subcommittee. Amending the SGA Constitution requires a 5/6 supermajority Senate SGA vote. On February 3, more than 125 students attended the SGA Senate meeting with 25 people speaking to the motion. The vote was 12 yes, 6 no, 1 abstention, well short of the threshold. The resolution failed. The outcome produced significant student distress. Yik Yak became a site of harassment toward SGA members; some senators are considering resignation. A protest against SGA, the College, and donors is planned for Monday. A community support session is scheduled for this afternoon. Students who voted no cited a belief that accessibility is the administration's responsibility, not SGA's, and noted that SGA already funds free period products, free laundry (which the College will cover after next year), contraceptives, the food pantry, and college break transportation. Students do not feel empowered to drive this change and expect the administration to act.

President Conner affirmed he will not override SGA's governance process. He noted that the IPPC endorsed the proposed Task Force on Accessibility in December which must now be launched promptly and communicated clearly to students as a tangible institutional commitment. Dean Bautista confirmed his team is supporting students with varying viewpoints and monitoring online activity.

8. Call for Agenda Items

No new agenda items were brought forth.

9. Other Business

No other business was brought forward.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:04 p.m.

Summary document assisted by Claude AI.

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