**INSTITUTIONAL POLICY AND PLANNING COMMITTEE**
**MEETING MINUTES**
**October 23, 2026**

**Present:** Silvia Carli, Marc Conner (Chair), Pablo Gomez, Patricia Hilleren, Raahim Latif Khan ’28, Dylan Kostbar ’28, Zhenelle LeBel, Kerry Nelson, Ryan Overbey, Jessica Ricker, Tarah Rowse, Joseph Stankovich, Elizabeth Stauderman, Natalie Taylor, Amy Tweedy, Joshua Woodfork, Murat Yildiz (Vice Chair), Aiwu Zhao.

**Absent:** Adrian Bautista, Melissa Komora.

**Zoom:** Daniel Konstalid, Sarah Vero.

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

1. **Approval of October 9, 2026 Meeting Minutes**

With no proposed changes, **the October 9, 2026 minutes were unanimously approved.**

2. **Mission Statement Revision**

Discussion continued on the College’s Mission Statement revision process. President Conner reviewed feedback from various sessions including the IPPC earlier discussions, Extended Cabinet, President’s Leadership Council, Committee on Educational Policies and Planning (CEPP), “Faculty Voices,” and the Board of Trustees’ Strategic Planning Committee. He reviewed feedback on three draft mission statement versions, noting preferences, while highlighting both positive aspects like “transformative liberal arts education” and areas needing clarification, such as the “mind and hand” concept. Concerns were raised about redundancy and feedback received on specific phrases like “lives of consequence” and “lifelong pursuit of knowledge, truth, and beauty,” all of which we will examine as we consider further revisions.

The group discussed feedback on the draft options, with particular focus on word choice such as the words “yoking” and “manifold” and potential complexity for different audiences versus adding uniqueness to Skidmore’s mission statement. The discussion highlighted the need to balance eloquence with accessibility for various stakeholders including parents, students, and alumni, with suggestions to consult parent focus groups for additional feedback.

Questions were expressed about starting with “the mission” and some suggested using active language instead, such as “Skidmore College provides a transformative liberal arts education.” The group debated incorporating Skidmore’s motto “Creative Thought Matters” into the statement, with a suggestion to emphasize even more the concept of creativity and to continue to review other institution’s use of it. The discussion concluded with a focus on maintaining alignment between the Mission Statement, the draft “Guiding Principles,” and the forthcoming revised Goals for Student Learning and Development.

The group also discussed preserving the “Mind and Hand” focus and suggested adding elements like “heart” or “creativity” to make it even more distinctive, noting another institution’s similar approach highlighted a historical tension between liberal arts and practical education. Student Government Association (SGA) VP for Finance Raahim Latif Khan raised questions about the accuracy of claims in the draft Mission Statements regarding professional preparation, given his understanding that some competitive companies do not consider Skidmore applications, though

President Conner clarified this refers more to academic offerings rather than career placement success. He emphasized the need to demonstrate return on investment for education in a competitive global marketplace while maintaining core values.

Director of Sustainability and Environmental Initiatives Tarah Rowse suggested incorporating sustainability, respect, and diversity into the guiding principles since these values were identified in previous Visions and Values work, after the terms "creativity, curiosity, caring," but are not explicitly mentioned in the drafts (though featured in the principles that follow). Associate Professor and Chair of Philosophy Silvia Carli proposed linking diversity and creativity by framing diversity as a source of self-knowledge and understanding limitations, suggesting this concept could be moved from the Guiding Principles to the Mission Statement itself, though this could challenge the need for a concise statement. It was suggested that the draft Guiding Principles continue to be reviewed, especially the interplay between them the Mission Statement, and the motto.

Exploring ways to gather feedback from various student groups including club leaders, peer mentors, residential assistants, and Admissions Ambassadors was discussed, with plans to engage these groups through forums and outreach efforts. The discussion concluded with plans to review the draft Guiding Principles again in the future, considering alignment with the *Strategic Plan* and reaccreditation cycles. President Conner and SGA President Dylan Kostbar discussed bringing the Mission Statement drafts to an upcoming SGA Senate meeting. Next steps include the IPPC returning to the Guiding Principles, a November SGA Senate visit, a session with the Alumni Board, a Zoom session with the Board of Trustees, a two-week public community comment period post-Thanksgiving Break, returning to the IPPC to seek endorsement, and seeking approval of the Board of Trustees at its February 2027 meeting.

**3. Skidmore Board of Trustees October Meeting Update**

President Conner provided an update on the October 2026 Board of Trustees meeting, highlighting that Skidmore is performing well despite challenges in higher education. Key topics discussed included review of the six priorities of the 2026-2027 Strategic Action Agenda (SAA), which was approved unanimously; recognition of the completed campus entrance renovation project and its significance especially to the prospective student experience; workshopping potential drafts of the College's revised Mission Statement; review of the timeline, costs, and co-curricular concepts of the residence hall renovations; budget considerations; admissions challenges; and the Dean of the Faculty/VPAA search process. The Board also addressed issues related to speech and expression, AI at Skidmore, an update on the College's Title IX and Title VI compliance, an update on the faculty Voluntary Separation Incentive Program, an update on the Campaign, and discussion of the importance of campus visits for student enrollment. Many trustees visited classes and former Board Chair and Life Trustee Sue Corbet Thomas '62 had the prestigious Lucy Skidmore Scribner medal bestowed upon her in recognition of her many contributions to the College and the community.

**4. Higher Education Updates**

The committee held a preliminary discussion about the August 2026 McMahon letter from Education Secretary Linda McMahon, "A National Call to Action to University Presidents and Governing Boards," regarding higher education institutions. The group addressed the McMahon

letter's impact on colleges, with VP of Human Resources and General Counsel Sarah Vero clarifying that while it's not a requirement to respond, institutions should consider how to respond, particularly regarding the seven areas mentioned in the letter. Along with the letter, the committee also reviewed Harvard Professor Danielle Allen's opinion piece, "Linda McMahon Wants Higher Ed to Reform Itself. Here's How to Respond," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Aug 13, 2026. As time was running short, President Conner said he would circulate three questions regarding the McMahon letter to the IPPC committee members for reflection before the next meeting. He also explained that he and Dean Taylor are hosting an upcoming "faculty voices" discussion on this topic for faculty members on November 13 from 12:30-1:30 pm at Wyckoff Center, and announced that Professor Danielle Allen will be on campus later today for the Kuroda Symposium, including a 5:00 p.m. public lecture and receipt of an honorary degree.

**5. Call for Agenda Items**

No new items were introduced.

**6. Other Business**

Associate Professor Carli provided updates on voter engagement efforts on campus, including registration drives and messaging about early voting opportunities. President Conner praised the work Professor Carli has done for years in encouraging voting, noting how this aligns with our mission language of preparing students for "responsible democratic citizenship."

President Conner emphasized the importance of maximizing campus visits for prospective students and discussed initiatives like travel funding for admitted students and faculty-led sample classes.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:57 a.m.

Summary document assisted by Zoom "Using Meeting Summary with AI."

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