Enhancing Accessibility at Academic Events and Ceremonies
A white paper for enhancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) at Skidmore College
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Academic ceremonies, such as convocation and commencement, are significant milestones for students, families, and the broader campus community. To fully embody Skidmore's commitment to equity and inclusion, it is imperative to ensure these events are accessible to all individuals, regardless of ability.

The Accessibility Imperative
Currently, many academic ceremonies across higher education institutions fall short of meeting accessibility needs, leaving both participants and audience members with disabilities excluded or underserved. By integrating accessibility services such as open captioning, translation services via closed captioning (sent to mobile devices), and braille programs, Skidmore College can set a new standard among its peers.

Proposed Services for Accessibility
1. **Open Captioning**:
   Display text for all spoken content during ceremonies in real time, ensuring those with hearing impairments or English language learners can fully engage.
2. **Closed Captioning with Mobile Translation**:
   Provide a live translation service accessible via personal devices, accommodating guests who need language or disability-specific support.
3. **Large Print and Braille Programs**:
   Offer large print and braille programs for individuals who are blind or visually impaired, aligning with best practices for universal design.

Benefits to Skidmore
1. **Leadership in Inclusion**:
   By adopting comprehensive accessibility measures, Skidmore College would distinguish itself as a leader in inclusivity among small liberal arts colleges.
2. **Enhanced Reputation**:
   Accessibility-focused ceremonies enhance the college's reputation among prospective students, faculty, and staff. Families and communities often choose institutions where their needs are visibly valued.
3. **Legal and Ethical Alignment**:
   Implementing accessibility services aligns with federal laws regarding spaces of public accommodation such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) while also reflecting Skidmore's ethical obligations.
4. **Enriched Community Engagement**:
   Inclusive events create a sense of belonging and foster community pride. Ensuring everyone can fully participate strengthens bonds among students, alumni, and stakeholders.

Reasonable Costs and Vendor Readiness
The cost of implementing accessibility measures is increasingly reasonable due to advances in technology and a growing network of specialized vendors. Companies offering real-time captioning, translation, and braille services provide scalable solutions tailored to event needs. Initial vendor research has identified reliable partners, including firms with experience serving academic institutions. Many offer flexible, package-based pricing to meet budgetary constraints.

With the endorsement and support from the President's Office, I would be pleased to help lead an implementation effort at Skidmore in a similar fashion to how I coordinate open captioning at JKB and Zankel (made possible by PDF funds through DOF).

Advancing Skidmore College by Supporting Mental Health of Students of Color

Introduction
Skidmore College is committed to advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) as part of its strategic planning. We aim to enrich the academic environment and the overall student experience. This paper highlights key initiatives recommended by the **Equity in Mental Health on Campus Workgroup** as part of our partnership with the Steve Fund toward supporting the mental health of students of Color at Skidmore. These initiatives have yet to be shared with the Committee on Intercultural and Global Understanding (CIGU) for feedback and refinement, but it is our deep desire to add their experience and insight to our own.

Key Initiatives:

1. **Recruit, Train, and Retain Diverse Faculty and Staff**
   Skidmore will prioritize hiring faculty and staff from diverse backgrounds and support their retention through structured career advancement and professional development, ensuring representation that resonates with the diversity of the student body.
2. **Elevate Cultural Competency of Current Faculty and Staff**
   Ongoing DEI training for faculty and staff will enhance their ability to support marginalized students, focusing on creating inclusive classrooms and mental health support. Safe Zone training will also help foster a welcoming environment for LGBTQ+ students, especially queer students of color.
3. **Expand Culturally Competent Mental Health Services**
   Access to mental health resources tailored to students' cultural needs is critical. Initiatives include:
   o **Timely Access to In-Person Therapy:** BIPOC students are twice as likely as white students to seek Counseling Center services at Skidmore. These services must remain available, accessible, and inclusive.
   o **Student of Color Wellness Coaches**: Providing personalized wellness support.
   o **Healing Circles and Mentoring Programs**: Offering spaces for community building and support.
   o **Digital Counseling Platforms**: Continue accessible, culturally competent counseling through services like BetterMynd, which offer a large network of clinicians with a variety of lived experiences.
   o **Trauma-Informed Care**: Addressing racial trauma through healing circles and counseling.
4. **Strengthen Interdepartmental and Community Partnerships**
   Collaborating across departments and with local organizations will create a strong network of resources, enhancing support for students of color.
5. **Develop Peer Support Networks and Mentorship**
   Peer support networks, such as Mental Health Ambassadors from BIPOC communities, and virtual/in-person healing circles will provide students with mentorship and space to address racial stress.
6. **Regular Campus Climate Assessments**
   Continue conducting climate assessments will provide insight into the campus environment, helping students and staff advocate for necessary resources and DEI-driven improvements.
7. **Integrate Wellbeing and Resilience into Campus Life**
   Skidmore will embed stress management, self-care, and resilience training into campus life, with initiatives such as:
   o **Culturally Adapted Mindfulness Programs**: Reflecting students' cultural backgrounds.
   o **Centralized Resource Website**: A hub for academic and social resources.
   o **Early Alert Systems with DEI Analytics**: Targeted support for at-risk students of color.

Conclusion
By focusing on DEI in recruitment, training, mental health support, partnerships, mentorship, and well-being, Skidmore College is poised to become a higher education leader regarding inclusive, supportive, and resilient campus life, enhancing its reputation as a premier liberal arts institution. When the college focuses on inclusion, all students benefit.

Skidmore Strategic Plan – Artificial Intelligence White Paper
Peter Murray, Tom O'Connell, Aarathi Prasad

The strategic priority

- Establish an Institute for the Study of AI and Humanity to act as a hub for AI-related research and curricular initiatives at Skidmore College.

- The Institute will be focused on: (1) understanding how AI is transforming the nature of the work that we do and the lives that we lead, the questions we ask, how we go about answering those questions, the impact of AI on humanity and our self-understanding, and the impact of our self-understanding on the development of AI; (2) ensuring that students thrive through this transformation and are prepared to engage critically with AI.

- Models for such an institute already exist at Colby College, University of Albany, and Amherst College. Other major initiatives at peer and aspirant institutions that we can use as models include AI initiatives at Bowdoin, Middlebury, and the University of Richmond.

The problems this priority addresses

- AI has already had a dramatic impact across a range of fields and professions, and it has the potential to be the most transformative technology in history. What will be the place of human beings in a world that is increasingly organized and managed by AI systems? How will AI affect the way we communicate and relate to each other? These are issues with which Skidmore must prepare its students to grapple and existential conditions in which we must prepare them to thrive.

- AI is already being used in the delivery of Skidmore's current curriculum, but it is critical that we devote resources to understanding how AI is transforming the nature of the fields that make up that curriculum, and so the nature of the curriculum we are delivering. For example, to do history well in the very near future will involve collaboration with vast datasets organized and explored by AI models. But how will the questions that we traditionally ask and answer in history be transformed by that approach? What does the discipline of history consist of when entire archives are a mere ChatGPT query away?

- Every academic field contributes to our understanding of AI, humanity, and their reciprocal impact on each other. However, Skidmore lacks the cross-disciplinary institutional infrastructure to enable and promote the exchange and collaborative development of deeper insights and understanding of the interaction between AI and humanity. The Institute will provide this essential infrastructure.

- The various categories of Skidmore College Goals for Student Learning and Development – knowledge acquisition, intellectual skills and practice, personal and social values, transformation – all look very different through the lens of AI. We would do our students a disservice if we do not invest the resources required to achieve these goals in the practical context of an AI-infused world.

Resource needs

- Apply for NSF and NEH funding and approach donors interested in AI to underwrite costs of founding an Institute for the Study of AI and Humanity at Skidmore College. There are faculty who are already poised to work on this effort across the disciplines. Tom O'Connell in Computer Science has already compiled [a list of courses, resources, and faculty at Skidmore](#) ready to be mobilized in the service of this Institute.

ARTS at Skidmore

Art, Arts Administration, Dance, IdeaLab, MDocs, Media and Film Studies, Music, Special Programs, Tang Teaching Museum, Theatre, Arthur Zankel Music Center

We would like to intentionally link the arts together as the *ARTS at Skidmore*. Currently, the arts are siloed across campus in separate buildings and individual programs. Even though we are spatially apart, we often work together on collaborative projects and events like the annual Arts Quad Party. In this white paper, we want to build on these collaborations and create more intentional connections through people, spaces, marketing, and institutional frameworks. We are inspired by the collaboration and cross-pollination in the sciences made possible by the recently completed The Billie Tisch Center for Integrated Sciences. We see this cross-pollination as integral to maintaining Skidmore's unique identity as an institution with a history of excellence in creativity and the arts.

Here are some of the ideas for ways to connect the Arts. The ideas have been created by individual representatives in the Arts so every idea does not represent the thinking of the collective. As a whole, they demonstrate the overall approach of creating more opportunities for connection between the *ARTS at Skidmore*.

People
- Create a new multi-year residency that would bring new ideas to campus and connect different disciplines
- Create a position to coordinate the *ARTS at Skidmore* programming, there could be a possibility for an inclusive (DEIJA) series linking all the areas

Space
- Buy and renovate a space in downtown Saratoga Springs for Intermedia programming and curriculum
- Create shared spaces on campus for Arts collaborations (similar to the IdeaLab)
- Create physical linkages (bridges, walkways) between buildings and programs
- Offer studio space to support the artistic research of Skidmore faculty across the whole College

Marketing
- Create an *ARTS at Skidmore* webpage and marketing materials similar to ColbyArts ([Colby Arts](#))– would allow us to market our excellence and diversity in the arts
- Create a shared calendar for the *ARTS at Skidmore*

Institutional Framework
- Create an academic division that represents the Arts–the current Pre-Professional designation feels like a catchall rather than a designation based on shared academic expertise

Strategic Planning White Paper: Championing Faculty Development
This white paper envisions advancement and growth in areas that intersect with Faculty Development that are needed for the College to remain a leading liberal arts institution.

Skidmore's greatest asset are the Faculty. Over the past decade, the Faculty have become more diverse, more self-reflective in recognizing equity issues in our constituency, and overall, an increasingly stellar representation of creative thinkers across all disciplines. As a collective, our activity as teacher-scholars is at the heart of Skidmore's academic excellence that attracts applicants, supports transformative student experiences, and weaves the fabric of ongoing alumni relations. Our Faculty are publishing papers and books, participating in international fora, bringing their arts to the global stage, and receiving honors at a level that is unprecedented for the College. Yet, we have relatively few internal means to garner support for research and creative endeavors; with the budget crisis, these monies cannot be reduced. We outline the current landscape of internal faculty development opportunities and identify ideas for growth and expansion that we believe should be cultivated through our new Strategic Plan. The impact of faculty development resources is significant to the continued success of Skidmore, and the risks of falling behind in this area are very real in terms of faculty retention[1] and diminished performance as a liberal arts institution.

Today: During the past 10+ years, monies for student research and high-impact experiences have grown, the positive impact of which is seen in student theses, advanced student work, and career success among recent graduates. However, faculty development resources have not grown in a commensurate manner. At present, the internal monies available for student research are more than double that available to Faculty. For example, the College is now supporting 30 SEE-Beyond awards at $6000 per student, yet there are only 5 Faculty Initiative Grants at $3000 per year, and 47 Faculty Development Grants, capped at $1800, were awarded in AY23-24. There is also asymmetry in support for student-faculty collaborative research, which stipulates summer on-campus experiences, resulting in uneven access across disciplines. Furthermore, many of our faculty engage in international research, yet the cost of a single plane ticket can exceed available travel monies. Scarcity among existing faculty development resources has resulted in perceived trends of uneven distribution, while some faculty choose not to apply at all. **Internal faculty development resources are critical seed monies that pilot new research endeavors, spark external grant applications, and bring nearly complete projects to fruition.** We need this support for Skidmore to remain competitive on the academic stage; the results impact our students, teaching, and community.

Future: The scope of Faculty research and creative endeavors is astounding and inspiring. **Our breadth and achievements, paired with how Faculty involve students in our work, distinguishes Skidmore among liberal arts institutions.** Excellence in this area will be critical for our success as an institution in the years ahead. Elevating the visibility of existing strengths in faculty activities and fostering additional support in faculty development resources will be exciting to donors, attractive to student applicants, and can reach all disciplines. We have identified several areas that would inject new energy into faculty development and diversify opportunities to provide greater access among our community (we welcome the opportunity to discuss the rationale and scope of each). In the new Strategic Plan, championing the intellectual and creative activities of Faculty cannot be lost among student facing initiatives.

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[1] Personal communication, Oscar Pérez Hernandez (white-paper in progress, Oct. 2024)

Championing Faculty Development

New areas of Faculty Development

- Faculty/Student Spring Break Research: 1-week intensive during March break provides alternative opportunity for hands-on research; outcomes presented at Academic Festival;
- Creative Thought 2.0 awards: Faculty-Alumni collaborative grants;
- Creative Thought 3.0 awards: Faculty-Alumni-Student collaborative grants;
- Visiting Scholar Sponsor program: award to faculty to bring a collaborator from another institution for multi-day campus visit with programming targeted at student interaction;
- Faculty-In-Residence: piloted in 2018 and 2019, this "do/share your research here" award kept faculty engaged at Skidmore and supported time for blending research with curricular engagement;
- "No Ivory Tower" Prize: support for a public-facing faculty project, with greater support for interdisciplinary collaboratives (e.g., Copper Smelting by Galt, Sadanaranda, Peterson, & Cholnoky). FDC has seen an uptick in applications with projects for non-academic audiences, which fall outside current guidelines.

Existing programs that might be better utilized

- Review existing FDG and FRI awards for equity in access by all faculty: eliminate existing tiered ranking of applications between NTT, pre-tenure, tenured and make awards based on merit of the proposed research; create variable levels/pools of support to which all can apply: for faculty that can demonstrate need (e.g., a coach plane ticket to Asia at $2000+, NTT ineligible to apply for federal grants due to contract duration), high-impact topics (e.g., working with targeted Strategic Plan initiative), and/or track record of demonstrable results (e.g. previous award was well utilized, reporting completed, outcomes realized); consider a time-limit before reapplication if awarded;
- Travel Seminars: review policy/procedures so that a seminar might enable a research component for faculty leaders, incentivizing greater/more diverse faculty participation and maximizing travel supported by the College;
- Advancement-Faculty bridging: build capacity and knowledge through intentional exchange; encourage opportunities (and eventual normalcy) in which faculty share what they are doing with Advancement and/or encouraging Advancement staff to attend Skidmore faculty lectures / new book events / colloquia.

Potential for external institutional awards

- Faculty2Faculty Travel Seminars: targeted travel experience through which faculty address a theme and inject new materials (& new collaborations) into their teaching;
- Subvention funds for open access publication costs: as a liberal arts institution, we can't compete with R1's in this area; increasing the visibility of and access to faculty publications is a win-win. A subvention funds initiative piloted through the Library (2016-2017?) was a great program that was sadly discontinued.

Fall 2024 Strategic Plan White Paper—Humanistic Inquiry Symposium/Center

Proposal: Stage 1—to guarantee the running of Skidmore's annual Humanistic Inquiry Symposium; Stage 2—to grow the program as detailed below.

Our Record of Achievement: The CHI (Center for Humanistic Inquiry) has hosted three successful symposia and a fourth event "Generations," which invited alumnae/i back to campus to enter into conversation with their Skidmore mentors. In spring 2025, we will hold our fourth symposium, on the faculty-selected theme of TIME. Please see our website here to learn of our full record of work, consistently guided by this mission:

To support humanistic inquiry at Skidmore; to underscore Skidmore's historic strength in the humanities; to express an on-going commitment to the work of humanists as a vital, vibrant force and presence within our institutional culture; and to make public the process and the fruits of humanistic inquiry.

Strategic Planning and Priorities: This moment is an opportunity to commit to Skidmore's historic strengths and to remain true to its institutional brand. This proposal responds most directly to the first strategic theme, "Creativity and Academic Excellence." Stage 1 requests permanent funding for Skidmore's annual symposium dedicated to an exchange of ideas that facilitates creative, interdisciplinary collaboration among faculty. A conference held on Skidmore's own campus, the Humanistic Inquiry Symposium is a forum for the sharing of scholarly work, providing professional development for faculty. Stage 2 intensifies the proposal's impact for the College community, offering additional professional development for faculty and, for the Student Fellows, opportunity for career readiness. Potential collaborations between Skidmore and other educational institutions connect the College to the region (see bullet 5# below). Though the future is a time for managing resources, a strength of this proposal is that it ensures maximal effect for a manageably sized investment.

Stage 1: A modest investment of $10,000-$15,000 supports the running of a yearly Humanistic Inquiry Symposium. We have been the beneficiaries of two trustee donors Barbara Kahn Moller and Katherine Gross, with some supplemental support from the President's Discretionary Fund, when needed. Our donors have made clear that they provide these gifts to signal to the College their hope, and expectation, that Skidmore will commit permanent funding to what they see as a vital enterprise.

Relevance to Strategic Plan: Foundational to Skidmore's Academic Excellence, humanistic inquiry occupies one of the essential modes of thought of a liberal arts education. Through inquiry, scrutiny, and colloquy, faculty from all disciplines who see their work as based in the humanities explore (broadly defined) and comprehend the past and study the present, shape values and ethics, and develop aspirations. Scholars within humanistic fields of inquiry examine what makes us human, cultivating methods of examination whether those scholars are grappling with texts, objects, or ideas in order to interrogate meaning, representation, social contexts and relevancies. Thus, this proposal serves President Conner's institutional priority of freedom of speech and expression.

The College has an opportunity to support faculty in pursuing and sharing intellectual work, to connect across departments and disciplines. Education is, fundamentally, a social enterprise. The symposium brings together faculty to learn from one another's research, explore connections that emerge, and commit to the continued importance of humanistic thought and action. The center underscores that we are a faculty that excels as teacher-artist-scholars; it allows our students to see us in action, and faculty may invite students to be co-presenters and to join in the symposium planning. It also instantiates the single most valuable feature of a residential liberal arts college: close, collegial collaboration between faculty and students. Such vital mentoring distinguishes the type of higher education institution that Skidmore is; it is the best proof of return upon investment for students and their parents.

Centers/institutes for the humanities are a feature of many leading liberal arts colleges. That Skidmore does not have a humanities center seems a missed opportunity—especially given our reputation for strength in the humanities and arts as well as our notable early adoption of an interdisciplinary General Education curriculum. Other liberal arts colleges that have humanities centers or institutes include Amherst, Dartmouth, Pomona, Wellesley, Wesleyan, Haverford, Smith, Grinnell, and Carleton. Indeed, humanities centers/institutes are often aimed directly at raising the intellectual bar of an institution and building national reputation.

Stage 2: A larger allocation of funding may not be possible, we realize; however, here we map out the growth of the CHI in order to conceptualize the broader vision animating this proposal:

- Skidmore Faculty Fellows, granted research stipends to direct toward a project of their choosing that pertains to the selected annual theme.
- Undergraduate Fellows in their senior year working on codas that relate to the selected annual theme.
- Post-Doctoral Fellows with salary and benefits to support two years of research and mentored teaching. These Fellows would mentor the Undergraduate Fellows and teach one course per semester for Skidmore after their first semester. Here there is DEI potential, for post-doc positions could help to diversify our faculty and demonstrate our interest in mentoring ECRs.
- Ongoing programming such as salons, one-week residencies from visiting scholars, monthly discussions among fellows of their work in progress.
- Collaboration with other institutions such as the NY6 consortial colleges, public schools with whom we could partner for public humanities projects, community colleges, and RPI, a STEM institution—with whom we have had a preliminary meeting.
- An on-line journal/blog/podcast series, run by the Undergraduate Fellows and mentored by the Post-Doctoral Fellows.
- What we don't need: a physical space. By "center," we mean this suite of programming.

Submitted by the Co-Organizers of the Humanistic Inquiry Symposium,

Barbara Black, Professor of English and Tisch Chair in Arts and Letters
Jason Ohlberg, Associate Professor and Associate Chair of Dance

<div align="center">**CIGU White Paper**
Strategic Plan 2025-2030</div>

Introduction
The Committee on Intercultural and Global Understanding (CIGU) has identified key areas of focus to advance the following priorities: Retention and Recruitment, International Students and Global Engagement, Ability/Accessibility, and First-Generation Student Support. Below are our recommendations, designed to advance our diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts and support the success and well-being of all Skidmore community members.

Retention and Recruitment
To strengthen retention and recruitment efforts, Skidmore College must provide resources that align with the diverse needs and cultural traditions of current and prospective faculty, staff, and students.

1. **Evaluate Gaps and Resources**: Conduct a comprehensive review of existing resources to identify gaps in support structures.
2. **Develop and Enhance Materials**: Create culturally relevant materials and programs based on identified needs to foster a sense of belonging for diverse populations.
3. **Increase Accessibility and Visibility**: Ensure these resources are easily accessible and well-publicized to all members of the campus community.

International Students and Global Engagement
To support Skidmore's commitment to global engagement and the success of international students, we recommend the following initiatives:

1. **Establish Sustainable Structures**: Develop frameworks and educational programs that embed cultural competencies across the institution.
2. **Leverage Robust International Alumni Networks**: Strengthen connections with global alumni to create opportunities for internships and employment for current students, enhancing both Skidmore's global impact and the visibility of international students.
3. **Strengthen Administrative Support for Student Clubs**: Provide increased support to student organizations that represent international students, empowering them to create meaningful programming and fostering an inclusive campus culture.

These actions will deepen cultural understanding, foster inclusivity, and strengthen Skidmore's global presence while addressing retention challenges among international students.

Ability/Accessibility
Guided by principles from disability justice movements, including "Nothing about us without us," Skidmore must center the leadership of disabled individuals and address accessibility comprehensively. In more recent disability justice movements, we are encouraged to center the leadership of those most impacted, including disabled people of color, poor and working class disabled people, young disabled people, and those living with multiple marginalized identities. It is critical that we work from these frameworks in the next Strategic Plan. As such, we suggest the following:

1. **Working Group**: Form a working group co-chaired by a student and a faculty/staff member to work with relevant bodies (SGA, CIGU, OSDI, SAS, related student groups,

etc.) to write a robust plan to gather feedback from disabled students, staff, and faculty at Skidmore about their needs. This process should involve a variety of feedback mechanisms so that folks of all abilities, learning, and communication styles can participate. Based on the gathered data, craft strategic initiatives around accessibility for the campus. It is important that these initiatives consider not only physical accessibility, but also accessibility for those with learning disabilities, mental health related disabilities, sensory disabilities, etc.

2. **Program Reviews** (notably of Student Academic Services, the Counseling Center, and Health Services):
   a. Assess how the offices perform in comparison to their stated mission / goals and in comparison, to peer institutions with regards to serving students with disabilities.
      i. These program reviews should focus on the institutional support needed for each office to meet the needs of students and to do its best work.
      ii. At the Counseling Center, this program review should pay specific attention to the working group on the mental health of Students of Color at Skidmore.

First-Generation

To support First-Generation and low-income students more effectively, we recommend the following:

1. **Designate a staff person with explicit responsibility for First-Gen student support:** Clearly assign a staff member to oversee and manage First-Gen student initiatives. This individual would be responsible for ensuring that First-Gen students receive consistent and targeted support across both Student Affairs and Academic Affairs.

2. **Address access to summer courses at Skidmore and financial aid**: Improve access to summer courses on campus, which can help ease students' academic load. One way to do this is by offering a limited number of scholarships specifically for First-Gen students to study on campus in the summer. Pair the scholarships with room and board, financial support for one or two courses, and a campus job. This comprehensive package would provide both academic and material support, fostering a more supportive environment for First-Gen students.

Together, these recommendations address both the psycho-emotional and academic needs of First-Generation students, creating a more holistic support system that encourages their persistence and success.

Conclusion

CIGU remains committed to advancing these specific priorities and looks forward to collaborating with stakeholders to bring these and other overarching DEI recommendations to fruition as we implement the next *Strategic Plan*.

Skidmore College has long emphasized its commitment to environmental sustainability, highlighting programs like the Skidmore garden and compost, and investing in institutional renewable energy opportunities (such as geothermal projects, small hydroelectricity projects, and the Skidmore solar field). All of this has "positioned [Skidmore] as a national leader on innovative energy strategies" (Strategic Plan, 2016). Yet, despite the progress that the college has made in uplifting community-oriented sustainability and the preservation of natural resources, Skidmore College only refers to sustainability as it is "understood in the widest sense" (Strategic Plan, 2016). This loose definition has reduced the college's ability to prioritize climate action.

The college's shortcomings in tackling sustainability through a climate lens is demonstrated by the stalled progress over the last ten years in accomplishing the sustainability goals set forth in the Campus Sustainability Plan (2015-2025). The plan lays out desired goals without a step-by-step process on how to achieve them, lacking a clear direction for the institution. This is the heart of Skidmore's problem. Plans that set goals without clear benchmarks or systems of accountability rarely achieve their desired goal. Based on data provided by the organization Second Nature, which supports higher education institutions in their pursuit of climate action, twenty out of twenty-six of Skidmore's peer institutions have signed carbon commitments and are well on their way to achieving carbon neutrality, such as Colgate, Dickinson, Bates, Bowdoin, Colby, and Middelbury (Second Nature Org). We recognize the financial implications of an endeavor such as decarbonization. We are not asking the college to immediately take on a task such as this, rather, recognize the commitments of peer institutions as forward-thinking and to align ourselves with an organization such as Second Nature, allowing us to externally commit to climate action, align our long-term goals with sustainability values, and open Skidmore up to a network of support.

Institutions of higher education have a responsibility to instill values of citizenship in their students and apply the findings of academia to their campuses. Tactics of decarbonization have been linked to carbon dioxide reduction as a method of combating climate change. Given the international knowledge that climate change is a global issue and, even more so, a matter of environmental justice, Skidmore College has a duty to incorporate these larger academic understandings into institutional planning. Skidmore must address the contributions of its Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions to climate change and incorporate climate action into its strategic planning accordingly. The institutional embodiment of climate action is core to Skidmore's mission of education and the development of students into informed, responsible citizens. Moving forward, Skidmore College must re-frame its definition of sustainability such that it directly addresses the college's carbon footprint. Additionally, Skidmore must develop an action plan for the attainment of sustainability goals and form a governing body that has the direct responsibility of facilitating the strategic implementation of these changes.

The Environmental Action Club (EAC) recommends that Skidmore College re-define its terminology such that the college's commitment to climate action is recognized and held separate from all other aspects of sustainability. In doing so, the college will create a recognizable climate goal and hold itself to a higher standard to initiate climate action. Further, EAC recognizes that in order to strategically implement sustainability into all aspects of the college and to substantially and quickly alter energy sources, Skidmore College must restructure itself on an institutional level such that decisions regarding sustainability and climate action are explicitly designated to a governing body that has the educational background and the necessary authority to make changes

that move the college along a path towards the achievement of climate action goals. Ideally, this group would be small and composed of individuals from financial services, facilities, the ESS program, the Sustainability Office and the President's Office, separating itself from the college's pre-existing Campus Sustainability Subcommittee by including individuals of institutional authority to move away from an advisory role and ensure actionable progress. EAC asks the strategic planning committee to recognize the faults in the college's previous plans by defining sustainability in too broad of terms, by neglecting design a clear path for the achievement of sustainability goals, for lacking a governing body designed for the strict implementation of sustainability goals, for the overall lack of progress in achieving the goals stated in the 2015 Campus Sustainability Plan, and for not recognizing climate action as an institutional goal. Skidmore College has an opportunity and a responsibility to create substantial change regarding sustainability and climate action. The Skidmore College Environmental Action Club believes it is possible and critical for the college to reorient itself on a trajectory of sustainable work by implementing these recommendations.

Collaborative FYE

Co-Authors: Ruben Castillo, Sarah Sweeney, Sarah Kizuk

What it is:
- Faculty from two disciplines co-teaching an FYE
- Very much like the current collaborative FYE that is taught every year (Human Dilemmas) but with two content experts and around a specific topic

How it could work:
- Each faculty would meet with their individual class most of the time and share classes occasionally
- Faculty would advise their own class of 16 students
- One year in advance there could be a faculty mixer to find a co-teacher (or a list could be circulated)
- Peer mentors could occasionally collaborate on 4th hours

Why it makes sense:
- Collaborative teaching is generative for both the faculty and students
- Collaborative teaching models excellent relationship building and community making
- Students would get to know multiple disciplines and multiple faculty
- The teaching would model interdisciplinarity and co-creation for the students
- Faculty would gain greater insights into other disciplines and approaches rendering faculty more able to teach and think across disciplines

Why it would be challenging:
- For each new co-teaching team they would have to create a new syllabus and prep a new class each time they taught an FYE but this could be made easier by synching up FYE schedules so each pair could teach the class together several times.
- The number of students might feel overwhelming but by having the classes meet together only occasionally the students and faculty would still have the experience of a small class.
- Grading could be difficult but it also could challenge faculty to be more creative in their grading by getting them to work together on a shared grading system. Each class could also be graded individually by the faculty member teaching the class.
- Two classes might require more resources but there might also be savings through shared resources. The types of excursions could also be more ambitious through the shared resources of two classes and two faculty.

Resources Needed:
- Larger, flexible teaching space for a large group in a seminar setting
- More Funding for off-campus activities or materials for group projects
- Collaboration between departments and chairs/program directors

Cost Savings 101

- Expand online course offerings during the summer, prioritizing large introductory courses and those that fulfill all-college requirements.
- Increase faculty teaching loads. Faculty get course releases for being chair, on a committee etc....., and this could be reduced. (Instead of a 1 course release, it could be a %)
- Raise the number of students per class (just like admissions has summer melt, students withdraw from the course or take a leave of absence. Adding 1-2 to each course will help maintain a true student/faculty ratio.
- Streamline or eliminate underperforming programs. The anticipated wave of faculty retirements could provide an opportunity for leaders to restructure departments with fewer challenges related to change management.
- Reform the tenure system, as it is costly and often rewards professors who provide the least value to the institution. (This is evident in Skidmore's 990 form.)

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- Implement collaborative purchasing strategies, by uniting with other colleges and strengthen our bargaining power with suppliers.
- Strengthen enforcement of on-contract spending and purchasing policies to reduce wasteful expenditures.

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- Optimize facility usage by exploring options to rent out spaces and utilizing them during off-hours. This could improve overall space utilization. (Not just in the summer. Example, conferences)

- Reevaluate the athletic programs. In conversations with students and staff, it's clear that basketball is the only sport that appeals to many minority students. Why doesn't Skidmore offer track or cross-country? With nationally recognized coaches in Saratoga Springs, this could also enhance the college's marketing/publicity.

- Reduce administrative overhead by cutting unnecessary administrative staff. AKA Administrative Bloat. What is our ratio of students/administrators/faculty? Do we have any administrators with vague positions that serve primarily as liaisons between bureaucratic arms?? This could contribute to higher costs and slower decision-making.
- Optimize energy consumption across campus, focusing on reducing waste in heating, lighting, and water usage.

- **Workflow**: The shift to remote work during the pandemic accelerated digitalization, but there's still more to be done to simplify processes. For example, eliminating duplicative steps can help ease workloads, thus reducing staff.
- Move away from paper-based systems to further streamline operations and increase efficiency.

Admissions:

- Promote dual degree programs to provide students with diverse academic opportunities.
- Reevaluate the cost of recruiting international students, particularly considering the expenses involved in offering need-based scholarships.
- Simplify the credit transfer process, such as for AQR to attract more students.
- Encourage local high school students to take college-level courses by offering a "local scholarship" to make them more affordable. Consider offering a course specifically designed for high school students, scheduled after 3 p.m.
- Offer three-year bachelor's degree programs for high-achieving students who enter with 12+ AP or transfer credits.

Affordable Course Material Initiative White Paper

Submitted by SGA VPAA Anna Barnes, SGA EVP Tess Malloy, and College Librarian Marta Brunner
November 12, 2024

1. Course material affordability for students should be a collective responsibility of the college and a priority of the administration, the faculty, and other relevant campus partners.

2. The current insufficient attention to and commitment toward affordable course materials for students is inconsistent with the institution's professed campus values of inclusion, diversity, and equitable opportunity.

3. Data from Skidmore and its peer institutions clearly demonstrate that the cost of course materials presents a financial burden to students and disproportionately disadvantages marginalized students.

4. While a universal solution may not be feasible due to the varying needs and contexts across different departments, programs, and disciplines, it would be appropriate for Skidmore to formally recognize the affordability of course material as a campus-wide priority. Financial resources are not the sole avenue for addressing this issue; by naming course material affordability as a key institutional concern, the college can strengthen its position in negotiations with publishers, among other benefits.

5. Several departments, programs, and disciplines have already initiated small-scale efforts to alleviate the financial burden of course materials. These existing solutions can serve as valuable models for broader, campus-wide implementation.

6. The Committee on Educational Policies and Planning (CEPP) would be the ideal body to take a leadership role in this initiative, as the long-term success of such an effort is more likely if managed through shared governance rather than imposed by a non-faculty working group. CEPP has expressed willingness to collaborate in this capacity.

7. With the projected increase in high financial need admissions in the coming years, Skidmore must be prepared to support these students. A campus-wide commitment to reducing course materials costs will have a greater impact than book and supply card awards alone. As Skidmore's student body has become more diverse, with students from a broader range of socioeconomic backgrounds and a growing number of first-generation college students, it is likely that many will require new forms of financial and academic support upon their arrival. Addressing course material affordability is one crucial step in meeting those evolving needs.

8. Bookstore staff are often unfairly scapegoated when faculty behavior, such as submitting book adoptions after established deadlines, hinder efforts to provide more affordable textbook options, such as used or lower-cost versions. The Bookstore seeks to collaborate with faculty to help students obtain the most affordable course materials available. On

occasion, bookstore staff advise students to purchase materials from alternative vendors when it is in the students' best financial interest,

9. Other institutions have implemented systematic, campus-wide initiatives to prioritize the affordability of course materials, providing valuable models that Skidmore can adopt without needing to reinvent the wheel. Examples of similar resolutions:

    -   [University of Rhode Island: Resolution on Affordable Course Materials](#)
    -   [Academic Senate for College of the Canyons: Open Educational Resources Resolution](#)
    -   [The Faculty Role in College Affordability: Syllabus Creation and Resource Affordability](#)

SKIDMORE
C O L L E G E

Creativity and Academic Excellence in the Age of New Media:
The Strategic Role of a Media Studies Lab

Skidmore's interdisciplinary Media and Film Studies (MFS) minor explores the function and structure of written, aural, and visual media through core courses in media studies and media practice. Students learn how to navigate the history and cultural impact of media and acquire the know-how necessary for working with a wide array of techniques and technologies for media production. For all these reasons, **MFS is strategically situated to develop as a fundamental hub for creativity and academic excellence at Skidmore vis-à-vis a quickly changing and increasingly more mediated world**.

Since its academic inception, the field of media studies has been uniquely concerned with pressing questions about the growing power of media technologies within modern societies. And over the course of the following decades, the field of 'media research' has become the de-facto vantage point for studying, in rigorous yet highly original ways, the broad techno-cultural changes shaping our world.[1]

Through its twofold emphasis on theoretical and practice-based research, Skidmore's MFS program already caters to students' growing need for active, multimodal, interdisciplinary, and research-based learning experiences.[2] However, **despite its forward-looking perspective and solid presence on campus, the MFS program is in dire need of a dedicated physical space to support faculty-led instruction, media research, hybrid theory-practice courses, and student work outside of class**.

From a pedagogical standpoint, teaching media requires a mix of traditional spaces for scholarly work and flexible spaces for experimentation across media formats and production techniques—from 16mm filmmaking to experimental new media practices. A dedicated space for MFS will drastically impact the type and quality of new course offerings in media and film studies. Furthermore, it will position our College on par with leading media studies programs in the U.S.—all of whom already benefit from dedicated production facilities, media labs, or studio spaces.[3] In fact, since the early 2000s, all the top media-studies programs in the U.S. have been strategically re-located within art departments or granted dedicated production facilities.[4]

In short, a Media and Film Studies Lab will allow MFS students to do the kind of work that 'media and film' students can do elsewhere—getting the irreplaceable experience they will need once out of college. Without such a strategic investment, the MFS program will lag and remain ill-equipped to train and educate innovative scholar-practitioners and will struggle to keep up with the evolution of this field of research.

To conclude, media studies and media practice are two aspects of the same field of research. Media practice requires knowledge, expertise, materials, resources, and physical space. Skidmore will have to make a strategic commitment to studio space for media practice to attract promising students and prepare them for future jobs and competitive graduate programs in this growing field. Overall, a flexible Media Studies Lab will play a critical role in making Skidmore a more competitive college of choice for media study in a liberal arts setting.

Emilio Vavarella, Ph.D., *on behalf of Media and Film Studies*

Endnotes:

[1] In less than a century, the broad field of media studies has incubated crucial fields of research that didn't fit into pre-existing departments and yet, today, form the backbone of the humanities. Film Studies, Gender Studies, Visual Studies, Sound Studies, and many other cognate fields share the same interdisciplinary roots to Media Studies. Furthermore, Media Studies has also been uniquely concerned with intermedia, post-media, and new media practices that never fit within traditional art programs (which are still primarily organized around questions of medium specificity or disciplinary tradition). In the last decade, new 'branches' of media studies have coalesced into well-theorized fields of research, for example media archeology (with courses, programs, and labs at NYU, Colgate, Concordia, UB, UCLA, etc.) and the growing international focus on 'cultural techniques' and 'media anthropology' (see special issue of *Theory, Culture & Society* edited by Geoffrey Winthrop-Young, Ilinca Iuarascu and Jussi Parikka, Vol. 30, Issue 6, 2013). Unsurprisingly, many of the leading media studies programs in the US were initially launched by media practitioners (Pauline Oliveros, Richard Karpen, Mark Amerika, etc.) and instituted with concerns about studio space front and center.

[2] Media practice plays a fundamental role in the 'student experience' of an increasingly more diverse student population, especially in relation to issues of identity and inclusion. See: Kristjansson-Nelson, K. (2022). "Learning and Teaching Through Media Arts." In: Peters, M.A. (eds) *Encyclopedia of Teacher Education*. Springer. See also: Olsen, Dain (2024). *Media Arts Education: Transforming Education Through Multimodal Cognition, Learning, and Techno-Embodiment*. Routledge.

[3] Examples of comparable US programs in media studies and media practice include Stanford's Film and Media Studies undergraduate program (their major requires all film theorists to take at least one production course in film and video production); Harvard's Film and Visual Studies major and Critical Media Practice program (both require students to take several production courses); Colorado Boulder's Critical Media Practices program (which includes a Media Production BA or minor); the 'Department of Media Study' at the University of Buffalo (which offers several BAs in Media Study with emphases in Production, Critical Studies, or Film Studies); the BS in Electronic Arts at RPI along with its practice-based graduate program in Electronic Arts); the University of Washington offers eight different programs at the intersection of art and media, and houses a Department of Digital Arts & Experimental Media; finally; the University of California Santa Cruz has a very robust BA in Media Arts and Practice—a hybrid theory/practice program.

[4] The 'Film and Visual Studies' undergraduate program at Stanford is housed within the Art Department, offering its students full access to studio facilities. Similarly, the 'Film and Visual Studies' program at Harvard University, initially developed as an interdisciplinary program, was adjoined in 2016 to the Department of Visual and Environmental Studies (rebranded in 2019 as the 'Department of Art, Film, and Visual Studies') for the primary reason of making studios and production facilities available to faculty and students. Around one-third of its students are also enrolled in the 'Critical Media Practice' program, which draws from the resources of the Film Study Center for its 16mm courses. The 'Department of Media Study' at the University of Buffalo functions as the primary space for all media practice in the university, from the undergraduate to the PhD level. The 'Digital and Experimental Arts' program at the University of Washington was instituted in 2001 and now hosts a 5,000 square foot warehouse incorporating state of the art CNC fabrication tools, electronics laboratories, exhibition space, as well as more traditional wood and metal workshops.

Sustainability in Strategic Planning

To contribute to a more sustainable and just future, through both education and action, Skidmore should emphasize sustainability literacy and environmental stewardship. Elevating environmental sustainability through collective community action and as a planning priority, while seeking to strike a balance between socio-ecological considerations and economic viability, will position Skidmore as a leader, enhance both the student experience and admissions goals, and increase institutional resilience (such as operational efficiencies, energy security, and lower price volatility).

Sustainability Literacy

As "the college seeks to prepare liberally educated graduates… to make the choices required of informed, responsible citizens," Skidmore should pursue initiatives that advance the sustainability literacy of the student body and the community in recognition of the pressing environmental and social issues of our time. Priority sustainability literacy initiatives:

- Develop and promote institution-wide student **sustainability learning outcomes**
- Design and administer longitudinal student **sustainability literacy assessments**
- Support the faculty in integrating **sustainability in the curriculum** through incentives and/or a community of practice
- Expand **applied learning opportunities** for students to link theoretical learning with experiential sustainability solutions
- Advance education and engagement activities that **foster a culture of sustainability** through training and communication that builds skills, awareness, and collaboration

Environmental Stewardship

Environmental sustainability commitments and initiatives are a powerful tool for attracting and engaging students. By greening our operations, Skidmore lives our values about the responsible use and protection of the natural environment. Priority environmental stewardship initiatives:

- Position **climate leadership and decarbonization** as a core objective, informed by science-based targets and executed by climate action planning, with strong consideration of a formal commitment to climate neutrality for leadership, student demand, and accountability reasons
- Follow a **strategic energy management** approach that increases capacity for data-driven monitoring and assessment to support education and energy conservation investments
- Deliberate on the creation of an **energy/green revolving fund,** or identify other **financial mechanisms**, to finance energy efficiency and sustainability improvements
- Pursue and plan for major **energy** (e.g., geothermal conversions, renewables, fleet electrification**), waste** reduction and diversion, and **sustainable food** projects
- Capitalize on **state and federal funding opportunities** to support projects and programs that save financial and natural resources in the long-term

Governance

To strategically integrate sustainability into all aspects of the college, Skidmore should aim to:

- Examine internal structures, roles, and processes in order to improve institutional effectiveness, collaboration, and accountability around sustainability goals and outcomes
- Integrate sustainability and systems-thinking through a cross-campus approach with identification of revisions to and development of key policies, practices, and programs
- Recognize and advance decarbonization and sustainability initiatives as holistic long-term investments that improve resource efficiency, address risk, and advance resiliency
- Apply the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals throughout all realms of sustainability teaching, learning, and decision-making to demonstrate how Skidmore approaches sustainability broadly as environmental, social (DEIJ), and economic well-being
- Utilize ongoing annual assessment and our next Sustainability Tracking Assessment and Rating System (STARS) Report for informed decision-making and goal-setting

Skidmore College Strategic Planning White Paper: Foundation for Data Structures & Operations

Introduction

This document outlines the creation of a college-wide working group dedicated to the development of a proposal for integrated data systems and structures at Skidmore College. Skidmore College has systems that contain rich sources of data. However, the collective data is under-utilized given the splintered and independent systems that hinder the productive flow of information. The imperative at this moment is to effectively corral and use that data and make it accessible to inform policy development, strategic planning, and decision-making.

Reason

Skidmore's infrastructure is not currently designed to meet the contemporary data demands of the College. A well-structured and interconnected data environment is crucial for improving the efficiency and accuracy of all aspects of our operations and, ultimately, for promoting student success, understanding student lifecycle, etc. At present, data are often fragmented and reside in isolated silos, making it difficult to harness their full potential via dashboards, etc. Even data residing in single systems may not be ideally structured to answer increasingly complex questions.

The timing of this proposal coincides with new imperatives to address complex questions asked by Middle States, state and federal reporting demands and college constituents who are increasingly tasked with responding to shifting student needs to promote student success. Beyond the offices that routinely engage with data, there are "end-users" who are also requesting access to dynamic information to guide their own work. There are significant benefits of everyone being able to access the same data and, as a result, getting the same answers and using the same language. As higher education increasingly relies on specialized software products within functional areas, a pan-institutional collaboration is necessary to understand data structure and enterprise system needs.

The data structures & operations directly ties into three of the Strategic Planning themes:

- Creative & Academic Excellence – Excellence calls for us to set high expectations that we can then demonstrate we are meeting. Data informs whether we are meeting our high expectations and where we need to direct resources to achieve our goals for student learning.
- Sustainability – Financial sustainability necessitates that we use data efficiently and effectively to inform our resource allocations and attention appropriately. Given the changing landscape, we need to be nimble in our use of accurate data to be able to respond in a timely manner to those changes. Effective data sharing and use can also benefit admissions, retention, and targeting requests from alumni that will also be of

benefit to increase the endowment for need-based financial aid (another Strategic Planning theme).

- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion – To effectively meet our goals for equity and inclusion to support a diverse community requires that we have the accurate and appropriate data to direct resources and attention where they are needed and to determine if our interventions work.

Objectives of the Working Group

This is an initial outline of a proposed working group convened to assess Skidmore's current infrastructure and propose solutions. The group would be charged with developing a proposal to achieve the following objectives.

Systems

Conduct an environmental scan

Identify peer and aspirant institutions that are at the forefront of utilizing data systems. What are they doing? How? Who does it? What company and/or software are they using? What are the associated costs? What are their staffing models?

Data Warehouse

Propose new systems that consolidate and hold data from software packages dedicated to specific college functions and estimate resources needed to maintain them.

Operations

Define Function and Membership of Data Governance Group

Propose the development of a comprehensive framework for the governance, use, and reporting of data at Skidmore College. Examples of the duties of this group include:

a. Designate who stewards what data.
b. Create shared definitions and understanding of sources.
c. Systemize data entry.
d. Oversee the development of standardized data reporting procedures.
e. Promote data use.
f. Address ongoing data trends, needs, and concerns of the College community.
g. Monitor and ensure compliance with data regulations.

Composition and Structure

The IPPC Subcommittee on Institutional Effectiveness pulls key members across the institution from IT, IR, Admissions, Advancement, Student Affairs, Communications & Marketing, DOF/VPAA Office, Human Resources, Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment, and designee of the Chief Diversity Officer (Director of the Wycoff Center) would serve as an ideal group taking advantage of current structures to oversee the work.

Timeline

We propose the working group be established in spring 2025 with a mandate to develop a proposal identifying options, personnel needs, and estimated costs by the end of the 2025-2026 academic year.

Strategic Planning White Paper
Digital Preservation – Archives and the Historical Record

The College relies upon its historical record for myriad activities, and yet, for the last 100+ years, Skidmore has not had a dedicated archivist nor any meaningful retention plan for maintaining its historical record. Instead, the College has operated in an ad hoc manner, relying upon various departments and individuals to retain what they deem necessary. Prior to 2000, when most publications, photographs, and much of the correspondence existed in physical form, the lack of urgency could be attributed to the sense of permanence we ascribe to physical objects, but this "permanence" belies the fact that many individuals, over decades, squirrelled things away knowing they would be useful in the future.[1] Since 2012, the library has made a concerted effort to digitize some of the most important aspects of this record, and, as of this writing, has digitized all the major publications, including the *Bulletins* and *Catalogue*, *Skidmore News*, *Eromdiks*, *Alumnae Bulletin* and *Quarterly*, *Scope* as well as thousands of photographs and items of ephemera.

We are now 25 years into a "born-digital" world. Since at least 2004, the library has prompted discussions, major and minor, with various departments and entities on campus, including an April 22, 2019 presentation to President's Cabinet, about the need to develop strategies for retaining and maintaining the now "born-digital" historical record of the College. These efforts have little to show for them. There are now vast troves of correspondence, publications, photographs, and more that are under the stewardship of disparate individuals across campus, and we are once again relying upon ad hoc arrangements (and luck) to preserve these born-digital objects without a retention plan, requisite training, or infrastructure. This is not a sustainable model and the College exposes itself to serious risk of loss, especially as people with institutional knowledge retire or move on.

Minimum requirements to confront the problem:

- **Retention Plan**: Comprehensive and articulated with clear parameters and enforceable actions

- **Digital Archivist**: A dedicated Scribner Library position tasked with implementing the plan into the future, in collaboration with other library and campus partners

- **Infrastructure for Access and Preservation**: Scribner Library currently utilizes TIND DA for access to its Digital Collections and PORTICO (through JSTOR) for the long-term preservation of the files that constitute Digital Collections. Our institutional repository, Creative Matter, lives on the Digital Commons platform and preserves Skidmore's creative and scholarly output, including student theses in a variety of programs and majors.

- **Training:** Lightweight, low- to no-cost training will ensure that campus individuals in the best positions to implement the retention plan are empowered to do so. Elements of our infrastructure, specifically Creative Matter, are already available to offices, departments, and programs across campus with self-service uploading.

Submitted by:
David Seiler, Head of Digital Projects and Collections   Wendy Anthony, Head of Special Collections
Mike Paulmeno, Systems Librarian   Marta Brunner, College Librarian

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[1] It wasn't until the early 1990s that the library had a Special Collections department, and most of what remains of the physical historical record prior to 2000 resides within the department.

I believe as their public commitment, Skidmore should:

1. Adopt an Investment Policy Statement with a commitment to divest from companies that consistently, knowingly, and directly enable or facilitate genocide, apartheid, or other war crimes and crimes against humanity. (trustee investment committee would be the one to do this)
2. Commit to a process with a reasonable timeline for implementing the new policy.
3. Report on the implementation periodically to a committee with student, faculty, and community representation.

To implement an Investment Policy Statement, Skidmore should:

1. Sell direct investments in stocks or bonds of companies highlighted for divestment for their ongoing complicity in Israeli human rights violations.
2. Engage with investment managers to identify or create pooled funds that comply with the new policy.
3. Create a process to periodically review investments and better align them with the policy.

- Skidmore should consider divesting From: HP, Sabra and Caterpillar
- Skidmore's campus should be a place in which Palestinian students feel safe and supported

Skidmore Coalition For Palestine
October 17th, 2024

Our Mission

Skidmore should withdraw their support of Israeli human rights violations, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.

As part of their public commitment, Skidmore should:

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Sources: American Friends Service Committee https://afsc.org/divest

Skidmore Coalition For Palestine
October 17th, 2024

What We Want To Divest From And Why

<u>**HP (Hewlett Packard)**</u>
- **HP-branded corporations supply technology used by Israel to uphold apartheid and occupation over Palestinians.**
- **Hewlett Packard has documented violations of Palestinian human rights.**
- **HP provides services and technology to the Israeli army and police, supporting the occupation and siege of Gaza.**
- **HP supplies exclusive Itanium servers to Israel's Population and Immigration Authority for the Aviv System.**
- **The Aviv System enforces racial segregation and apartheid against Palestinian citizens in Israel.**
- **HP's technology is involved in Israel's settler colonialism through the "Yesha database," which tracks Israeli citizens in illegal West Bank settlements.**

In November 2015, HP split into two companies: HP Inc. for consumer hardware like PCs and printers, and Hewlett Packard Enterprise (HP-E) for business and government services. Both HP-branded corporations remain complicit in Israeli apartheid and settler colonialism
Source: BDS movement https://www.bdsmovement.net/boycott-hp

<u>**Sabra Hummus**</u>
- **Sabra produces Middle Eastern-style food, including hummus, and is jointly owned by PepsiCo and the Strauss Group (an Israeli corporation).**
- **The Strauss Group funds and supports the Israeli military, specifically elite units like the Golani and Givati Brigades. These brigades are known for human rights violations and war crimes in Lebanon and Occupied Palestine.**
- **Purchases of Sabra products indirectly support the Strauss Group, which contributes to Israeli military actions and human rights violations against Palestinians.**
- **In 2023, Strauss Group CEO Shai Babad reaffirmed support for the Israeli army and its soldiers.**

Source: Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East
https://www.cjpme.org/fs_239

Skidmore Coalition For Palestine
October 17th, 2024

Caterpillar

- **Caterpillar bulldozers are used to demolish Palestinian homes, roads, and olive groves.**
- **The vehicles have also been used to build Israel's "security wall," which has faced international criticism due to it being a tool used for segregating Palestinians.**
- **Responsible for the death of Rachel Corrie, an American peace activist, who was run over by an Army-driven Caterpillar bulldozer in Gaza 2003.**

Source: The New Zealand Herald https://www.nzherald.co.nz/world/caterpillar-group-boycotted-for-selling-bulldozers-to-israel/.

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Divesting for Palestinian Rights
afsc.org

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Source: BDS movement https://www.bdsmovement.net/boycott-hp

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Ensuring Access to Housing for International Students During Breaks

Skidmore is home to over 200 international students. Some of us have families in the U.S., while others do not. Regardless, Skidmore offers a secure and inclusive living environment. Even during summer and winter breaks, when the school is not in session, we are guaranteed on-campus housing, ensuring we always have a safe place to stay. Highly aided students even receive meal subsidies, further demonstrating our school's commitment to supporting students in need.

Unfortunately, the situation is completely different for international students planning to study abroad. Those planning to study abroad in the Spring semester are not provided with housing during Winter break, while those planning to do in the Fall face a similar issue during the summer. We are required to leave campus as soon as possible. This indirectly forces those of us who have no one in the U.S. with no choice but to find costly, temporary housing options.

We do not claim to understand the complexities of Residential Life's operations. We are certain that allowing students who will study abroad to remain on campus during breaks must have been hard, inconvenient, and cost-ineffective; otherwise, we should have implemented this a while ago, given our institution's commitment to equity and inclusion.

However, we still want to implore our school to reconsider this current policy and permit international students who will study abroad to remain on campus during breaks. For many of us, especially those from distant countries, the financial burden of international travel is significant. A round-trip ticket can easily cost $1500 to $2000, an expense that is often beyond the means of highly aided international students. Allowing us to stay on campus would provide a much-needed sense of security and financial relief.

The Equal Opportunity and Title IX Model: Accountability, Compliance, and Protecting Inclusion
By Joel Aure, Director of Equal Opportunity and Title IX
November 20, 2024

In the everchanging landscape of bias, discrimination, and compliance across colleges and universities in the United States, Skidmore College is in the process of fortifying its efforts in these areas by transitioning the College's Title IX Office to an Equal Opportunity and Title IX model. This model aligns with recommended practices in diversity, equity, and inclusion work, compliance with existing and potentially forthcoming federal regulations, and an interest in a focused point of contact for relevant cases and reports. As a result, the Title IX Coordinator will be retitled as the Director of Equal Opportunity and Title IX.

The Equal Opportunity & Title IX model is a team-based approach comprised of a primary administrator (Director) receiving reports and coordinating responses with existing offices and relevant personnel in matters involving discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, pregnancy and related conditions, national origin, shared ancestry, religion, age, disability, veteran status, marital status, status as a survivor of sexual & gender-based misconduct, and related identities and protected categories. As a team approach, the Director serves as a single point of contact for students, faculty, and staff to report and then consults and coordinates the response with the Associate Director for Employment and Workforce Diversity, Bias Response Group, Human Resources, Student Affairs, and subject-matter experts as appropriate.

This model was initially recommended in 2022 after an external review of the College's Title IX Office by [Leslie Gomez of the law firm Cozen O'Connor](#). This model has become more common both nationally and among colleges in the New York Six Consortium. Additionally, since 2022, the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights (OCR) has become increasingly focused on [Title VI matters](#), specifically incidents in both K-12 and colleges involving discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin, including based on a person's actual or perceived race, color, national origin, ethnicity, or ancestry. Their involvement is driven by:

- Increased reports of Antisemitism & Islamophobia nationally
- Broad criticism on how various colleges and universities responded in 2023 and 2024
- Entering into Resolution Agreement with colleges to reform their Title VI policies

One of the major criticisms from OCR communicated in these agreements was that responsibility to address reports of discrimination were often structurally diffuse and confusing for students, citing student conduct, human resources, equity offices, or biased or climate-response groups all having some partial responsibilities but also inconsistencies. Skidmore's new Equal Opportunity and Title IX model will address this issue.

In its execution, the model will lead student community members to reporting bias, discrimination, and related harassment to the Director, who will then contact the reporting individual for an intake meeting to review options, resources & accommodations. The Director conducts "a hostile environment" analysis, including Title VI, Title IX, and ADA/Section 504, and either manages the case directly or refers it to the relevant office. The Director would be the point of contact for case updates and accommodations requests. Faculty and staff complaints will be coordinated between the ADEWD and the Director, and a full-time Deputy will be hired to aid in investigations and reduce costs from and reliance on external investigators.

Skidmore's strengths that should be emphasized and further developed:

Faculty Scholarship:

1. As Skidmore has grown from a "B" ranked school to perhaps an "A-" ranked school, this has allowed it to recruit better students and better faculty.
2. Skidmore's faculty today are more effective than ever before in the area of scholarship. They publish with students, they bring in grants, they receive awards, and they are generally very invested in their research programs throughout their careers.
3. Unprecedented faculty success sometimes seems to perplex the administration. It is true that when a faculty member like Dr. Kristofer Covey is suddenly bringing in millions of dollars to the College, it can raise new issues that the College has not had to address in the past. But Skidmore simply has to get creative and handle those issues, with the recognition of the immense value that these faculty efforts have for the students and for the institution as a whole. In Dr. Covey's case, his students are carrying out internships on Al Gore's farm in Tennessee, traveling around the country to collect data and attend conferences, etc. And these efforts raise Skidmore's profile in a very positive way, helping to recruit future students.
4. Dr. Covey is just one example of this faculty success – Dr. Jason Breves recently received an international research award typically reserved for faculty from larger research institutions, and multiple faculty have ongoing research awards from the NIH, NSF, etc. These successes should be emphasized, and supported in any way the College can – because success breeds success, and Skidmore's administration needs to play the role of facilitator here to make sure the cycle continues.

Five-Year AI Strategy Proposal for Skidmore College

Date: November 11, 2024

To: Skidmore College Strategy Committee
Subject: Five-Year AI Strategy Proposal: Advancing Skidmore as an AI-Enhanced Institution

Dear Members of the Strategy Committee,

I am pleased to present a comprehensive, five-year strategic proposal that aligns with Skidmore College's vision for pioneering artificial intelligence (AI) in higher education. This proposal is designed to position Skidmore as a leader in AI fluency across students, faculty, administration, and alumni, preparing our community to leverage AI for innovative learning, research, and operational efficiency.

This strategy framework follows insights from the recent "AI Pacesetter" one-page strategy outline (attached), which identifies critical gaps and opportunities for Skidmore in the rapidly evolving AI landscape. With the implementation of this strategy, Skidmore aims to move from a reactive to a proactive position in AI adoption, establishing a robust foundation for future-ready educational experiences and operational frameworks.

Strategic Goals:

1. Build AI Literacy and Skills Across All Stakeholders: Empower students, faculty, staff, and alumni to utilize AI in creative, ethical, and impactful ways, fostering a campus culture that is fluent and confident in AI applications.
2. Enhance Curriculum and Research Opportunities with AI Tools: Integrate AI resources into curricular and co-curricular learning, enabling hands-on experiences that prepare students for AI-centered careers and research innovations.
3. Leverage AI for Administrative Efficiency and Data-Driven Decision-Making: Introduce AI to streamline administrative processes, improving resource allocation, student services, and institutional growth through data-driven strategies.
4. Engage Alumni and Build Industry Partnerships for Lifelong Learning and AI Development: Cultivate alumni engagement through AI-driven networking and learning platforms while partnering with industry for collaborative projects, funding, and internships.

Strategic Phases (2025-2030):

1. Phase 1: Foundation and Awareness (Months 1-6)
   - Form Presidential and Departmental AI Working Groups to define departmental usage principles and ethical guidelines.
   - Launch foundational AI Fluency Workshops and establish an AI Resource Hub for ongoing access to learning materials.
   - Establish "Skill2Build AI Institute" to drive faculty and staff AI training initiatives and launch a pilot program for AI-integrated courses.

2. Phase 2: Integration and Development (Months 7-10)
   - Deepen curriculum integration with AI tools and support interdisciplinary projects.
   - Initiate AI-driven research projects, and develop a comprehensive AI toolkit for students, faculty, and staff.
   - Begin partnerships with industry for funding, internships, and collaborative learning opportunities.

3. Phase 3: Expansion and Optimization (Months 10-15)
   - Scale AI applications in administration, expanding toolsets and initiating AI-driven institutional analytics.
   - Establish mentorship programs connecting students with AI professionals and alumni, creating collaborative project opportunities.
   - Develop an annual assessment report to evaluate AI adoption across the college.

4. Phase 4: Consolidation and Future Planning (Months 15-20)
   - Conduct impact assessments and consolidate AI resources into a digital library, accessible to all stakeholders.
   - Host an AI Symposium to showcase achievements, discuss future AI directions, and solidify Skidmore's reputation as an AI-forward institution.
   - Establish ethical guidelines for ongoing AI use, complete the digital library, and initiate sustainable funding models for departmental AI advancements.

5. Phase 5: Long-Term Evolution (Post-Year 5)
   - Finalize AI policies for scalable solutions in support of evolving student and faculty needs.
   - Continue developing industry partnerships and update the centralized AI resource hub to remain current with advances in AI.

Metrics for Success:

- Students: Increased engagement and learning outcomes in AI-integrated courses.
- Faculty: Enhancement in research quality and integration of AI in teaching.
- Administration: Measurable efficiency gains in operational processes.
- Alumni: High participation in AI-driven platforms and mentorship programs.
- Future Students: Positive feedback in career preparation and AI skill-building opportunities.

Through these structured phases, Skidmore College can ensure that every stakeholder benefits from the responsible use of AI. This proposal envisions a college community that is not only prepared for an AI-centric future but also adept at shaping it.

Sincerely,

Matt Lucas
Harder Chair – Professor Of Business Administration

Vice Chair – Skidmore AI Work Group

WHITE PAPER SUBMISSION: GLOBAL LITERACY IN A MULTIPOLAR WORLD

The U.S.'s preeminent position on the world stage has sheltered the country from many things including the need to be more aware of noteworthy external changes and events. Despite frequent allusions to globalization and claims to cosmopolitanism, large sections of American higher education (particularly in smaller colleges) remain intellectually insulated from shifts in the outside world. The recent Israel/Palestine crisis has arguably jolted Skidmore College and many of its peers out of this complacency while revealing deep fault lines in our course offerings and insufficient exposure in our expertise. Put bluntly, we were, as a college, quite unprepared to cope with this volatile situation. We continue to be deficient in having the necessary skill sets and the moral resolve to engage with it on an ongoing basis. Skidmore was certainly not alone in this. Not too many institutions in the field of higher education were prepared to deal with this crisis as it spilled over into U.S. college campuses with momentous reverberations.

In our minds, the Israel/Palestine tragedy is merely a harbinger of other cataclysmic global events to come, requiring the college to be able to move into crisis management mode on a routine basis. Further, even while the U.S. still occupies a dominant position in planetary affairs, the 21st century has been characterized as an increasingly *multipolar* world where a number of nations have emerged as powerful and active players who constantly challenge the geopolitical and economic status quo. These shifts in power dynamics and the growing interdependence of nations call for a more calibrated understanding of parts of the world that receive insufficient attention at the college. Taking these factors into account, we propose a concerted effort toward enhancing the *global literacy* of the Skidmore community.

We understand global literacy to be an informed familiarity with different countries/cultures as well as an appreciation of their positionality in global affairs. As a result of local institutional circumstances, we have a somewhat acceptable level of awareness of certain countries, notably the UK, Western Europe, China, Japan and Mexico. Our literacy levels with respect to other equally and even more prominent countries such as Brazil, India, Russia, Iran, Egypt, South Africa, and Nigeria are far more deficient. Yet all these countries are extremely salient actors in world affairs and we neglect them at our own peril. We (an informal group of interdisciplinary faculty with expertise in international affairs) are proposing to work closely with the Administration and other faculty to develop the global literacy of our students and colleagues by targeting those areas where it is most needed.

We suggest selecting a theme having global relevance and mindfully pursuing it for an academic year on an ongoing basis. Potential themes could include global health, border disputes, peace movements, threats to democracy, global social influencers, exile and diaspora, tribalism, sovereignty, changing nature of warfare etc. We anticipate screening films, organizing lectures and workshops, bringing in artists, offering one credit courses, have students debate on relevant topics etc. with the intent of giving them a nuanced and accurate understanding of the topic under consideration. We also envision creating a Global Literacy Campus Dialogue Forum which would include students who might play active partnership roles with faculty in this endeavor.

Such an approach is fully in keeping with the central mission of the Liberal Arts with a further accent on *transnationalism*. Space limitations prevent us from elaborating on these ideas but this effort to enhance global literacy connects closely with two of the strategic themes, they being Creativity and Academic Excellence and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. Global literacy is all about academic excellence and seeks to simultaneously increase the international diversity of our curriculum.

White Paper Proposal

To whom this may concern…

It is time we act with more urgency. We have sidelined our planet's health for too long, for we continuously have "greater" concerns regarding human affairs as if our environment is not essential for us to survive. If it continues at its current rate of depletion, we will fall, not flourish. As an institution, we must acknowledge we have neglected our sustainability plans, for the sake of creativity and diversity. Though not prioritized improving, our beautiful landscape is vital in the special and unique community that makes up Skidmore. We must begin to utilize our college landscapes and grounds sustainability plan and integrate it into our ever-changing and evolving home. For if we do not improve our campus soon, what hope do we have for the rest of our planet?

As a part of most syllabuses, we have a land acknowledgment, paying homage to the natives your ancestors cheated. Besides this acknowledgment, what are we doing to respect this land? At our college's current rate, do you think it is sufficient, considering all the violence Americans instilled to acquire this land? Though appealing to the average eye, a grass lawn is the epitome of the unachievable American dream, sacrificing nature's health for aesthetics and efficiency. It represents Western societies, with its striped lines, and everything neatly compiled into one box. Nothing out of place. No weed in sight. In reality, these lawns are dead zones. They kill pollinators and birds, require continuous care, and siphon resources such as fertilizers, water, and pesticides.

Imagine a place on campus outside, that is the epitome of nature's beauty in your mind. Perhaps case green pops up, with a sea of students grazing outside studying or socializing, under the late summer sun—the essence of a liberal arts lifestyle. But imagine what this exact spot looked like centuries ago. Could you have predicted that this "Garden of Eden" would have turned into the plain and same American Lawn? Neither could I. We must start to restore, or even attempt to put our planet's wellbeing into the forefront of our minds. By introducing more no-mow meadows on campus, we would be supporting a plethora of wildlife: pollinators attracted to the native species, shelter for pray in the tall grass, and a newfound appreciation of this transformed landscape. It could be beneficial for all, less maintenance, better flood control, and less over usage of resources like sprinklers, of which we heavily rely on.

By prioritizing the health of our campus and our sustainability, we can begin to deconstruct The American Narritive, and start to rebuild out community with our planet's wellbeing as one of its core values. I'm not asking for the world, just the time of day for you to consider my pleas.

Best,
Sydney Mann

Increasing the Endowment for Need-Based Financial Aid: Need-Blind Admissions

Bradley Kadets `27, SGA Vice President for Financial Affairs
Josh Maxwell `26, SGA President
Tess Malloy `26, SGA Executive Vice President

Thank you for giving the entire Skidmore community an opportunity to provide input on the College's next strategic plan. While we agree that all five institutional priorities set forth are extremely important for our future, we also believe that increasing the endowment for need-based financial aid is of the utmost necessity for the continued success of this institution. The reason this is the case is because over the past few years, the number of prospective undergraduate students in the United States has declined, and this trend is expected to continue for the foreseeable future. While there are several reasons for this, the two that likely have had the largest impact are demographic changes at the national level and the growing number of Americans who believe attending college is no longer worth the cost. These factors would be a problem for higher education on their own, but they are coupled with the fact that an increasing percentage of total applicants require financial aid to be able to attend college.

This is a problem for Skidmore, because as we were surprised to learn recently, Skidmore is not a need-blind institution and does consider an applicant's ability to pay when deciding whether to offer admission or not. Having a need-aware admissions process is not inherently bad, as many institutions with limited financial resources do so in order to ensure fiscal responsibility. However, in an environment where an increasing percentage of applicants out of a shrinking whole view cost as a decisive factor, Skidmore must be prepared to offer admission to more aided students in order to maintain its current market share. As such, we must make a serious and substantial effort to grow the endowment so that Skidmore can overcome this challenge and become a more competitive institution in the market for higher education. As we have stated, it is not inherently bad for Skidmore to be need-aware in its admissions process if that is the responsible thing to do. However, we do believe it would be beneficial for the strategic plan to include a goal of eventually transitioning to need-blind admissions, even if this is not able to be accomplished in the near future.

Implementing a need-blind admissions process would be extremely helpful for ensuring that we maintain full incoming classes each year, but it also has several other benefits. For one, it would make the admissions process fairer and contribute to the institutional priority of diversity, equity, and inclusion. It would also allow us to admit more of the highest-achieving students, even if they have less of an ability to pay than other applicants. This would contribute to the institutional priority of creativity and academic excellence, and over time would raise the profile of our institution in the higher education landscape. There are many other reasons to make this change, but the last one we will share here is that several of our peer and all of our aspirant institutions have already implemented need-blind admissions. Not only would doing so bring us into line with our peers and aspirants, but it would also make Skidmore a more competitive option relative to similar institutions. Thank you for your consideration.

Nov 2024 Strategic Plan White Paper—"Indigenous Visibility and Justice"

PROPOSAL: An administration-led, campus-wide effort focused on Indigenous visibility and justice and attendant campus land acknowledgment.

SUMMARY & RATIONALE: This moment presents an opportunity to prioritize Skidmore College's responsibility to advance Indigenous justice and equity issues on our campus and in relationship with the land, local context, and communities to which we are connected. This commitment speaks directly to *diversity, equity, and inclusion*, as well as *creativity and academic excellence* and *sustainability*—three themes identified as central imperatives for our next strategic plan.

As articulated on Skidmore's *Racial Justice Initiative* website, the college has a long history of meaningful DEI work. To paraphrase the vision articulated there, our aspirations should move, not toward redundancy, but toward new avenues that "address today's concerns" and which "channel our energies" toward justice, community, truth, and reconciliation.[1] Many institutions are taking up the important work of rectifying the injustices enabled by the organizing logics of settler colonialism, which 'disappear' Indigenous people and relegate them to 'the past.' Indeed, these issues have reached national prominence with endeavors that include President Biden's recent formal apology for the boarding school system and Elizabeth Warren's Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act.[2] The time is ripe for Skidmore College to center Indigenous visibility and justice in its Strategic Plan—a plan that will guide efforts to reckon with the past, regenerate trusting relationships and community in the present, and creatively envision an inclusive, just, and sustainable future.

IDC'S FOUNDATIONAL WORK: This proposal reflects the culmination of three years of volunteer labor from dozens of members of the Skidmore College Indigenization and Decolonization Collective (IDC, formerly Collaborative)—a 'grassroots' group of staff, faculty, and students representing over 13 programs, departments, and offices across campus. IDC formed in AY2021-22 to initiate transformation in the College's relationship with its history, the land and resources the College is built on and from, and Indigenous communities. During AY2022-2023, IDC undertook a series of projects designed to establish institutional credibility.

IDC's efforts resulted in **expanded relationships** with Indigenous partnering organizations; **an Indigenous Studies faculty/staff Racial Justice Learning Community**; **archival research** on Skidmore's history vis-à-vis Indigenous peoples; **audits/surveys** of collections, materials, archives in some areas; **ongoing digitization** of the Kanatsiohareke Mohawk Community media archive; and **nine co-sponsored events** with local Indigenous partners and organizations, including the Kanatsiohareke Mohawk Community, The Aunties Dandelion, and the Ndakinna Education Center. Notably, Skidmore College students have been central to these efforts, contributing through both course-related projects and collaborative summer research.

Buoyed by the insights of this foundational work, IDC turned attention toward securing institutional commitments. In Spring 2023, IDC representatives apprised CIGU of the group's work and sought institutional support. During Summer 2024, IDC worked with FEC to distribute a report to faculty, detailing our work and grounding the need for institutional investment.

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[1] "A Community of Trust: The Racial Justice Initiative at Skidmore"

[2] S.1723/H.R. 7227. See https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-bill/1723/text; https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/7227/text; https://boardingschoolhealing.org/truthcommission/.

STRATEGIC PLANNING: AN OPPORTUNITY TO SOLIDIFY INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENTS
In light of the above, IDC urges the college to solidify commitments to the following in our next strategic plan:

1. Explicitly prioritize truth, reconciliation, and racial healing with respect to tribal nations impacted by Skidmore College's land and resource ownership, investments, policies, and practices.
2. Develop an institutional land acknowledgement[3] and programming around Indigenous Peoples Day[4], Native American Heritage Month, and Orange Shirt Day.[5]
3. Engage in presidential outreach to tribal governments and work toward the appointment of an official liaison between the President's Cabinet and/or the Board of Trustees and the Stockbridge Munsee Band of Mohican Indians and the Kanien'kehàka (Mohawk) nation.
4. Provide resources to support existing and future courses and permanent hires in Indigenous studies, and a plan for targeted improvement in recruitment and retention of Indigenous students.[6]

SUBMITTED BY The Indigenization and Decolonization Collective and SUPPORTED BY:

Siobhan Hart, Faculty, Anthropology
Rachel Seligman, Assistant Director for Curatorial Affairs/Malloy Curator, Tang Museum
Callahan Mainzer, Student, Religious Studies and Media and FIlm Studies
Sarah Kizuk, Faculty, Philosophy
Kathryn Baustian, Faculty, Anthropology
Adam Tinkle, Faculty, Media and Film/MDOCS
Emily Czelusniak, Student, Anthropology and Religious Studies
Kristi Peterson, Faculty, Art History and LACLAS
Marta Brunnner, College Librarian, Scribner Library
Angela Beallor-Press, Documentarian in Community Co-Creation, MDOCS
Jennifer Mueller, Faculty, Sociology and Intergroup Relations
Francis Davies, Student, Anthropology
Alexandra Prince, Faculty, Religious Studies
Charlotte D'Evelyn, Faculty, Music
Sharadha Kalyanam, Faculty, Gender Studies
Jess Somerville-Braun, Faculty, Education Studies
Barry Pritzker, Retiree, Advancement
Eloise Ochoa, Student, Religious Studies/Gender Studies/Black Studies
Andrew Bozio, Faculty, English
Maddy Morton, Student, Anthropology
Ben Harwood, Learning Experience Designer, LEDS

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[3] Peer institutions with land acknowledgements include Middlebury, Colgate, Vassar, Bard, and Bowdoin.

[4] *Sruti Ramaswamy and Will Bryce*, "SKIDMORE'S LACK OF RECOGNITION ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S DAY." *The Skidmore News.* October 18, 2024.

[5] See https://orangeshirtday.org/orange-shirt-day/. For an institutional example at Ohio State University, see: https://odi.osu.edu/events/orange-shirt-day

[6] Colgate has an Indigenous community liaison on their museum staff and a Native American and Indigenous Learning Community Program Coordinator in their DEI office. Bard has an American and Indigenous Studies Program. Vassar's American Studies Program offers a correlate sequence in Native American Studies.

Nov 2024 Strategic Plan White Paper—"Indigenous Visibility and Justice"

Chelsea Taylor, Faculty, Religious Studies
Ryan Richard Overbey, Faculty, Religious Studies & Asian Studies
Nick Junkerman, Faculty, English
Eric Wilken, Student, Education Studies and Psychology
Gillian Ross, Student, History, Education and Arts Administration
Jennifer T. Cholnoky, Faculty, Geosciences
Lia Donahue, Student, Anthropology and Classics
Anna Siddiqui, Student, Education Studies and Mathematics
Heather Hurst, Faculty, Anthropology
Nurcan Atalan Helicke, Faculty, Environmental Studies and Sciences
Eric Morser, History and Faculty Director of Civic Engagement
Merritt Baldwin, Student, English
Eliza Schnauck, Student, English
Emma Jorgensen, Student, Geosciences and Anthropology
Samantha Rochlin, Student, Religious Studies and Business, Peer Mentor
Zhenelle LeBel, Director, Arthur Zankel Music Center
Maggie Greaves, Faculty, English
Evan Kitt, Student, English and History
Kayla Hassett, Student, English and Art History
Edward Myers, Student, English
Kiersten Simpson, Student, English
Kimberly Pienkawa, Student, English
Camille Paradis, Student, Computer Science
Emily Gress, Student, International Affairs
Joowon Park, Faculty, Anthropology & Asian Studies
Anna Brooks, Student, Sociology
Margot Kelly, Student, Environmental Studies
Oshanna Jones, Student, Psychology
Diego Flores, Student, Social Work
Sophie Green, Student, English, Anthropology, and Dance
June Paul, Faculty, Social Work
Bella Lagatta, Student, English & Classics
Viviam Norales, Student, Health & Human Physiology
Emily Serrano, Student, Biochemistry
Georgie Svrcek, Student, Theater & English
Ella Haney Foulds, Student, Anthropology
Audrey Kostick, student, Health & Human Physiology and Anthropology
Hidha Abdulla Naushad, student, Anthropology
Lauren Attwell, student, Art History & Anthropology
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Emmanuel Balogun, Faculty, Political Science
Mimi Hellman, Faculty, Art History
Larry Jorgensen, Faculty, Philosophy
Sadie Applegate, Student, Anthropology
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Laura Hess, Student, Art History

Nov 2024 Strategic Plan White Paper—"Indigenous Visibility and Justice"

Katie Hauser, Faculty, Art History
Rebecca Gleit, Faculty, Sociology
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Jack McLaughlin, Student, Art History and French
Jane Schmucki, Student, Religious Studies
Mbaye Seck, Student, Religious Studies/Gender Studies/Black Studies
Anna Mathews, Student, Religious Studies/Education
Walter Boyce, Student, Sociology
Lorelei Heuer, Student, Religious Studies
Lisa Grady-Willis, Faculty, Intergroup Relations
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Elijah Lembo, Student, Religious Studies
Emma Staton, Student, English and Economics
Sana Arif, Student, Art History
Syd Koshefsky, Student, English
Lulu Feeney, Student, Religious Studies
Anika Eastman, Student, Native American Cultural Club
Willow Forbes, Student, Religious Studies
Lucy Daigle, Student, Art
Will Bryce, Student, Native American Cultural Club
Sarah Karoff, Student, Math and Education
Finn Krol, Student, Theater and IGR
Emma Bedard, Student, Anthropology and Sociology
Olivia Dunn, Faculty, English
April Bernard, Faculty, English
Laurie Rabinowitz, Faculty, Education Studies
Cian Schneider, Student, Computer Science
Elliot Bamford, Student, Music
Scott Segall, Student, Classics

Strategic Planning White Paper: Invest in a Permanent Pavilion to Enhance Student Experience and Sustainability

This white paper is submitted by the following offices, who support this initiative for the positive impact a permanent structure would have in each of their respective areas:
Admissions (J. Dunn), Alumni Engagement (C. Connors), Conferences & Events (W. LeBlanc), Dining Services (M. Miller), Facilities Services (B. Murray), First Year Experience (R. Roe-Dale), Stewardship and College Events (S. Koppi), and Student Government Association President (J. Maxwell).

Executive Summary
Skidmore College should invest in constructing a permanent pavilion on the Upper South Park to provide a flexible space that supports key themes in the College's strategic plan: enhancing the residential student experience, well-being, and advancing sustainability initiatives. The pavilion would serve as a year-round gathering place for students, enabling more social activities, club events, and outdoor classroom use. It would also reduce the college's reliance on costly tent rental for events such as Opening Convocation, Orientation programming, Founder's Day, Reunion, and more.

The Residential Student Experience
A permanent pavilion would give students a dedicated space to socialize, host events, and study outside of traditional campus buildings. This would enrich the residential life experience by providing an inviting, functional, and all-weather venue for student gatherings and community-building. The pavilion's flexible design could accommodate a range of programming, from club meetings to outdoor movies to cultural gatherings/dinners.

Well-Being
A pavilion would provide opportunities to strengthen the inclusiveness, health, and well-being of our community. The Campus Master Plan suggests that open spaces across campus should be activated and programmed to continue to connect people to nature and each other. The Plan also suggest a Scribner Library Exterior Stair to connect the library balcony to South Park easing access to these spaces.

Sustainability Initiatives
Constructing a permanent structure would reduce the college's environmental impact and operating costs compared to renting tents for outdoor events. The pavilion could be designed with sustainable materials and features to support Skidmore's sustainability goals, such as solar panels, and (a partial) green roof.

Outdoor Classroom Opportunities
The pavilion's open-air layout and scenic natural setting would provide an inspiring backdrop for academic classes, guest lectures, and other educational programming. Faculty could utilize the space for hands-on learning experiences, group discussions, and project presentations across disciplines.

Funding*
Eliminating recurring tent rental fees would also allow the college to reallocate those funds to support this project. A permanent structure would be an attractive selling point to groups booking Skidmore for summer conferences. In addition to tent rentals, the pavilion may include a kitchen space and permanent bathroom – allowing for the redirection of rental costs associated with those functions. For reference, Alumni Engagement and College Events alone spend over $75,000 per year on rentals associated with events.

Conclusion
Investing in a permanent pavilion on the Upper South Park would deliver significant benefits to Skidmore's students, faculty, and sustainability efforts. By creating this flexible space, the College can enhance the residential experience, advance sustainability, and expand opportunities for outdoor instruction and community events. This strategic infrastructure investment aligns with key themes in Skidmore's strategic plan and represents a prudent long-term use of college resources.

*Additional funding/financial information available upon request.

<center>**Kevin Chai's White Paper on Strategic Planning for Environmental Sustainability**</center>

Goal Setting

In the 2025–2030 campus sustainability plan, the Campus Sustainability Subcommittee of the Institutional Policy and Planning Committee should set not only a series of long-term goals to achieve by 2030 but also a series of specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound short-term goals to achieve by the end of each reporting period.

Progress Reports

The Campus Sustainability Subcommittee of the Institutional Policy and Planning Committee should write half-yearly progress reports on environmental sustainability to keep its parent committee informed.

In these reports, the Campus Sustainability Subcommittee of the Institutional Policy and Planning Committee should

- state the extent to which Skidmore College achieves each of the short- and long-term goals set in the 2025–2030 campus sustainability plan by the end of each reporting period more clearly, preferably as a percentage;
- continue to provide comprehensive, detailed, and in-depth analysis of the data; and
- explain in great detail why Skidmore College fails to achieve the goals set in the 2025–2030 campus sustainability plan, if any, by the end of each reporting period.

Incentive Mechanism

The leadership of Skidmore College should provide incentives for the student body to be committed to environmental sustainability, and I would like to propose an incentive mechanism for rewarding the students for their engagement in environmental sustainability. In this mechanism, the students who attend or plan and organize environmental sustainability events on campus, such as compost and community garden work parties and environmental sustainability fairs and summits, and/or submit proposals for new environmental sustainability programs to the Campus Sustainability Subcommittee of the Institutional Policy and Planning Committee, will win points in exchange for prizes, such as

- extra credits;
- opportunities to apply for a 24-hour extension to the deadline for an assignment without grade penalty;
- opportunities to have dinner with President Conner at the Scribner House; and
- free concert, movie, or theater tickets.

The student who wins the most points will win the grand prize—for example, free Universal and/or Walt Disney World theme park tickets.

Task Force on Environmental Action and Sustainability

The leadership of Skidmore College should form a task force on environmental action and sustainability, which is composed of representatives of students, faculty, and staff, to

- implement the 2025–2030 campus sustainability plan and the environmental sustainability programs developed by the leadership of Skidmore College;
- address the problem of Skidmore College's failure to achieve the goals set in the 2025–2030 campus sustainability plan, if any, by the end of each reporting period, such as how the environmental sustainability programs that have been launched should be expanded and what new environmental sustainability programs should be proposed; and

- put forward recommendations for strategic planning for environmental sustainability to the leadership of Skidmore College.

CTM: Establishing the Learning Design & Innovation Center in Academic Affair

Prepared by:
Beth DuPont, Director of Learning Experience Design & Digital Scholarship Support,
Ben Harwood, Learning Experience Designer, and **Aaron Kendall**, Learning Experience Designer

Executive Summary: This whitepaper recommends realigning Learning Experience Design and Digital Scholarship Support (LEDS) under Academic Affairs and potentially rebranding the unit as the Learning Design & Innovation Center (LDIC). This realignment will enhance faculty development, curricular innovation, and the student experience while advancing Skidmore's Creative Thought Matters mission and digital pedagogy leadership.

Strategic Context: The post-pandemic landscape has reshaped higher education's reliance on digital tools in teaching and learning. With IT increasingly prioritizing cybersecurity, privacy, data infrastructure, and business processes, LDIC's alignment with Academic Affairs establishes critical services focusing on the intersection of teaching, learning, and technology. Successful models at Colgate, Union, and Middlebury confirm that positioning educational technology under academic leadership fosters curricular innovation and faculty engagement.

Strategic Benefits: The Learning Design & Innovation Center (LDIC) bridges academic and co-curricular realms. While its primary mission is to enhance educational experiences by supporting faculty and curricular innovation, its commitment to digital literacy, mentorship, and integrative learning naturally extends into co-curricular support for students. This dual focus broadens LDIC's impact beyond traditional classroom boundaries, fostering skills essential for academic achievement and personal growth. Anchored in academics, LDIC's multi-dimensional approach to student support—through mentorship, digital fluency, and real-world applications—creates an integrated learning experience that enriches students' Skidmore journey.

Implementation Framework: LDIC will report to the VPAA or an Associate Dean, enhancing faculty support and operational agility within Academic Affairs. A new collaborative framework, *Campus Nexus (placeholder name)*, will host monthly cross-departmental meetings with representatives from OCM, CLTL, IdeaLab, MDOCS, Writing Center, Library, FYE, SAS, and IT. This structure supports rapid response to faculty needs, maintains IT collaboration, and creates a cohesive environment for advancing educational initiatives.

Addressing Transitions: To mitigate potential drawbacks of moving LEDS from IT, LDIC will maintain robust workflows and communication channels for technical support, avoiding disruptions in system integration and faculty assistance. Resource coordination with IT, including software licensing, will prevent duplication while service agreements and cloud solutions maintain operational continuity.

Institutional Impact: This transition incurs no additional costs, as LDIC will leverage existing resources and infrastructure, maximizing impact without increasing operating expenses and financial burdens. Through *Campus Nexus*, LDIC will advance Skidmore's reputation for innovative liberal arts education. Our location in Saratoga Springs and the Capital Region provides unique opportunities for real-world engagement, strengthening our academic programs and graduate outcomes.

Recommendation: This realignment will establish LDIC as a catalyst for curricular innovation, reinforcing Skidmore's commitment to forward-thinking education where creative thought thrives. By bringing LEDS back under Academic Affairs, Skidmore will strengthen its capacity to meet emerging challenges, spark new opportunities, and foster excellence in teaching and learning.

Strategic Planning White Paper: Sustaining the Co-creation Initiative

MDOCS (John B. Moore Documentary Studies Collaborative)

In seeking to remain a college of choice for the college-going population of the future, Skidmore faces both the opportunity and the need to re-articulate how its **residential student experience** hinges on its relations with its geographic place. Strategic tone-setting about what sort of neighbor Skidmore seeks to be in Saratoga trickle down to daily "town-gown" dynamics that will inflect our students' daily interactions, opportunities, and general sense of **belonging**.

Yet, having sunset both its Office of Community Relations and community engagement roles within Student Life, Skidmore's intentional engagements with Saratoga now fall substantially within Academic Affairs. There, complementing such related efforts as Civic Engagement and Bridge Experience courses, Skidmore's most robust and focused engagement with our neighborhood is the MDOCS **Co-creation Initiative (CCI),** which links Skidmore faculty and students with off-campus partners in the production of community-instigated research and storytelling projects. Funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation from 2020-25 and facilitated by a staff member in MDOCS, CCI serves as an interdisciplinary hub for community-based research and public action, with its longitudinal, multi-year projects involving faculty from over a dozen academic departments, and touching over 200 students, representing all the disciplinary divisions. The coalitions CCI assembles, linking faculty with community leaders through reciprocal, respectful relationship-building, seek to address key challenges of our time and dominant narratives of this place, merging threads of artistic, humanistic and (social) scientific inquiry to articulate data with stories in an effort to intervene constructively in civil society. Faculty and students come to us craving support in pursuing impactful action; CCI provides the infrastructure for them to become active players in the transformation of their communities.

But not only is MDOCS' CCI an exemplar of Skidmore's **creativity** in action (with *effective* action an indisputable marker of **excellence**), it's also become a key thread of Skidmore's **DEI** work. Too long has the College tried to diversify its community and improve the inclusiveness of its climate without truly reckoning with the ways that Saratoga's predominating climate inexorably impacts it. Nonetheless, beyond Broadway's monoculture, there is profound cultural richness around the region, which students who feel minoritized or excluded tend not to discover on their own, and write the place wholly off – a context to merely be endured until they get their degree. CCI has become the key campus space for linking creativity, community engagement, and DEI, because we recognize that Saratoga's current realities have a *history*. Pursuing that history grounds us in the true diversity of our region and propels us towards meaningful relationship-building across natural affinities that belie supposed campus/community division. This is why our signal efforts have focused campus and community attention on Mohawk presence on this land, on environmental justice struggles, and on urban renewal projects that decimated Black businesses and demographics. After filming a Black elder speak about such impacts, Luna Peralta ('23) "wished I had known about this sooner. It would have made my time at Skidmore much different."

No other SLAC has a CCI (nor for that matter a Documentary Studies Collaborative). Thus, the strategic plan should reflect the College's ongoing, successful, distinctive, and differentiating approach to community engagement, through an ongoing commitment to sustaining its Co-creation Initiative, which has itself sustained so many deep, reciprocal long-lasting relations with key neighbors and slowly built a more plausible context for members of our increasingly diverse community to belong. Our next plan should own and promote the route

Strategic Planning White Paper: Sustaining the Co-creation Initiative

MDOCS (John B. Moore Documentary Studies Collaborative)

the College has taken on community engagement: CCI is unique, signature, and **unites multiple strategic pillars**, offering high-impact academic experiences that simultaneously work to render our communities more welcoming, inclusive, and just.

From Skidmore MSA

Dining Service - Halal Food and Diverse Options

Skidmore has begun to label food as Halal in our Dining Hall since the Fall Semester of 2022 however, they have been inconsistent and incorrect with the labeling of such food. MSA suggests overcoming this by initiating an educational discussion for all staff and student staff on the definition of Halal food and the importance of preparation and cross-contamination. Muslim students are often unsure if the labeling is correct thus they often ask staff; sometimes the staff themselves are unsure if it is Halal or are unaware of what Halal food entails. Encounters our e-board has experienced include pork being labeled as Halal and cross-contamination in Delhi. Muslim students should not feel as if they are burdening this institution by requesting food that we can eat. It is a privilege for this institution to be comprised of a diverse student body and faculty. This privilege of diversity comes with the responsibility of the administration to ensure that all student body and faculty, despite their identity, are included in safety and comfort.

SGA - Changes made to policies disproportionately impact OSDI clubs

In Spring 2024, clubs on campus were introduced to several changes made to bylaws that impacted club spending, budget, and planning of events. One of these changes was an emphasis on our unionized Dining Hall on campus and the requirement for all clubs to have their events catered by the Dining Hall. It is virtuous that our institution is supporting such unions on campus as the basis of unions is to represent the well-being and voices of workers. (I hope that our institution extends this behavior to its OSDI clubs and minority students and faculty.) The implementation of this new requirement, although a good example of action to support union policies, disproportionately impacts OSDI clubs.

OSDI clubs on our campus have conveyed stories of liberation and tradition through the sharing of authentic foods. It is inauthentic for the stories we want to share through food to be made by the hands who haven't lived these stories. For MSA in particular, we have had many of our events catered by Grill Mediterranean Cuisine in Troy, New York. Firat, the head of this Halal restaurant, is a Kurd from Turkey who has immigrated to the United States to share his story of a people without a border. Our goals as an MSA are to uplift our Muslim community on campus, create connections within the greater capital region, and create a space where non-Muslims can unlearn dangerous stereotypes and learn about our religion.

Ramadan - Religious Accommodations and Education

During Ramadan, the most sacred month for Muslims, our Muslim students have continuously experienced forms of Islamophobia while requesting accommodations. Proper education of Ramadan and the reasons why Muslims fast during this sacred month must be communicated to all staff as much of the rejection of accommodations and Islamophobia

stems from a lack of education and a misunderstanding of this holy month. Minority students should not feel as though their practices are less important or are not a valid reason to request accommodations. Many of the accommodations that we Muslim students request include the ability to break our fast in class, requesting if any exams that interfere with Magrhib can be rescheduled, and asking if we may be excused for 5 minutes to pray in the evening times. The New York State Human Rights Law and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 protect against religious discrimination. Having a *Conscientious Religious Observance Policy* and following this policy are two different things. If the policy is not followed with action and implementation, it has failed as a policy for the members who attend this institution.

Anonymous Reporting - Bias Response Group

MSA is committed to fostering a safe environment for all Muslims on campus. As of Fall 2023, many of our members feel unsafe and unheard. They have come forward to us to share their experiences with forms of intimidation, harassment, and hate speech. As leaders on campus, we reported these through the bias response group immediately. Despite the goal of this initiative, no action was taken. The current poster policy and all initiatives that aim to dismantle hate speech have failed our members by allowing harmful rhetoric and symbols of Islamophobia, Xenophobia, and Anti-Arab sentiment to remain present. In an effort to feel safe on campus, students have utilized campus safety services to escort them around classes to their various classes and meetings. However, the safety on our campus should not reach the point where students of certain identities must require escort services. As a community, we feel glad there are countermeasures in place for situations such as these but feel that preventative action would be more beneficial. This could be in the form of altering policies so they are viewed case by case and take into account the current global political climate.

The MSA is committed to working with the administration of Skidmore College and feels that the White Paper Initiative is a great starting point but is looking forward to more productive conversations to come.

Our Mission

Skidmore should withdraw their support of Israeli human rights violations, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.

As part of their public commitment, Skidmore should:

1. Adopt an Investment Policy Statement with a commitment to divest from companies that consistently, knowingly, and directly enable or facilitate genocide, apartheid, or other war crimes and crimes against humanity. (trustee investment committee would be the one to do this)
2. Commit to a process with a reasonable timeline for implementing the new policy.
3. Report on the implementation periodically to a committee with student, faculty, and community representation.

To implement an Investment Policy Statement, Skidmore should:

1. Sell direct investments in stocks or bonds of companies highlighted for divestment for their ongoing complicity in Israeli human rights violations.
2. Engage with investment managers to identify or create pooled funds that comply with the new policy.
3. Create a process to periodically review investments and better align them with the policy.

What We Want To Divest From And Why

HP (Hewlett Packard)

- **HP-branded corporations supply technology used by Israel to uphold apartheid and occupation over Palestinians.**
- **Hewlett Packard has documented violations of Palestinian human rights.**
- **HP provides services and technology to the Israeli army and police, supporting the occupation and siege of Gaza.**
- **HP supplies exclusive Itanium servers to Israel's Population and Immigration Authority for the Aviv System.**
- **The Aviv System enforces racial segregation and apartheid against Palestinian citizens in Israel.**
- **HP's technology is involved in Israel's settler colonialism through the "Yesha database," which tracks Israeli citizens in illegal West Bank settlements.**

In November 2015, HP split into two companies: HP Inc. for consumer hardware like PCs and printers, and Hewlett Packard Enterprise (HP-E) for business and government services. Both HP-branded corporations remain complicit in Israeli apartheid and settler colonialism
Source: BDS movement
https://www.bdsmovement.net/boycott-hp

Sabra Hummus

- **Sabra produces Middle Eastern-style food, including hummus, and is jointly owned by PepsiCo and the Strauss Group (an Israeli corporation).**
- **The Strauss Group funds and supports the Israeli military, specifically elite units like the Golani and Givati Brigades. These brigades are known for human rights violations and war crimes in Lebanon and Occupied Palestine.**
- **Purchases of Sabra products indirectly support the Strauss Group, which contributes to Israeli military actions and human rights violations against Palestinians.**
- **In 2023, Strauss Group CEO Shai Babad reaffirmed support for the Israeli army and its soldiers.**

Source: Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East https://www.cjpme.org/fs_239

Caterpillar

- Caterpillar bulldozers are used to demolish Palestinian homes, roads, and olive groves.
- The vehicles have also been used to build Israel's "security wall," which has faced international criticism due to it being a tool used for segregating Palestinians.
- Responsible for the death of Rachel Corrie, an American peace activist, who was run over by an Army-driven Caterpillar bulldozer in Gaza 2003.

Source: The New Zealand Herald

https://www.nzherald.co.nz/world/caterpillar-group-boycotted-for-selling-bulldozers-to-israel/.

Fall 2024 Strategic Plan White Paper – Periclean Honors Forum

Proposal:
Skidmore's next 5-year strategic plan should extend the college's historical support to the Periclean Honors Forum (or HF). Since 1997, the HF has produced invaluable scholarly opportunities and co-curricular experiences for Skidmore's top-achieving students, including high-profile lectures, dialogues, trips, leadership projects, courses, and awards. Moreover, HF initiated and oversees the annual Academic Festival, a celebration of excellence that is now a mainstay in Skidmore College culture. These initiatives align with Skidmore's mission to intellectual creativity and achievement. As the HF undergoes its first leadership transition since 2016 and its first self-study since 2010, we request sustained institutional support to ensure its continued success during this critical period of review and renewal.

Rationale:
The HF minor is one of several academic units at Skidmore that foster interdepartmental and interdisciplinary studentship, as well as an environment of classical liberal arts learning in which students are educated holistically in ways that bridge the traditional divisions between faculties. (In this sense, HF shares goals in common with the college's Center for Humanistic Inquiry, Scribner Seminar program, Tang Teaching Museum, Science in Society program, and various other major departments and offices.) The forum helps uphold the traditions of well-rounded undergraduate education and academic discussion that have been the core of Skidmore's educational identity for decades. Its curriculum is grounded in specially designated courses that reward student excellence while also remaining open to non-HF students, thus benefiting some of our most gifted students while still retaining an egalitarian openness to the entire student body consonant with Skidmore's identity. Drawing participants from all four of the college's departmental divisions, the program works to create a forum in which students can understand how diverse fields of human inquiry build supplemental value when working together across traditional divides — letting students in psychology, dance, or history learn in conversations with students in computer science, management/business, or physics.

The "added value" generated by HF is considerable, and our program is not especially cost-intensive. Our regular personnel needs include only one administrative assistant, whose full-time line is split with Civic Engagement. The HF director is led by a tenured Skidmore professor who receives only one course release for the program's many planning and administrative responsibilities. Our courses are delivered by full-time tenure-stream faculty through their regular departmental teaching, while others are delivered through tenure-stream faculty earning Helios credit. (Only occasionally do NTT faculty engage in HF course delivery.) Additionally, the HF has also historically been instrumental in helping our Office of Advancement persuade alumni donors to contribute new sources of revenue for the college, as evident in the recent gift of Emily Chiles Startz '74 to support "Dialogues Across Differences" ($25,000 per year for the next five years, with a $1M pledged gift thereafter), a bequest to the college that will be stewarded through the HF Director's office. In this way, a modest institutional investment can yield a significant return in the fields of alumni engagement and giving, college prestige, and student learning and morale.

The Forum was established at the college in the 1990s, amid a wave of collegiate honors colleges and honors societies being founded nationwide. The functions HF serves have undoubtedly changed since that time. It was created to attract and particularly retain our most gifted students who often transferred because they could not find an intellectual community among their fellow students. Given the program's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, HF separated from Admissions to admit into the forum a more diverse student body with acceptance based solely on students' achievement at Skidmore. The decision to make HF courses open to all Skidmore students has, in turn, elevated the intellectual rigor of the entire College.

Fuller specifics about the program's financial needs and benefits are in the process of being generated as HF undertakes a yearlong self-study, our first since 2010, to pinpoint areas of strength and opportunities for potential improvement and growth. In AY25–26, we will undertake our first external review since the early 2010s, aiming to identify directions for future development. To understand the program's operational efficiencies better, and to plan for its continued future success, the program needs to continue being funded into the near future so the HF Council can undertake this important review work and implement any needed changes. We ask that the program continue to be funded for the coming 5-year strategic planning cycle, and we look forward to bringing the HF more fully into the next chapter of its existence.

Strategic Planning and Commitments (bullet points):
— Maintain program funding at or above AY24–25 levels.
— Encourage and invest in new pathways for interdisciplinary curriculum, potentially in tandem with the Center for Humanistic Inquiry or other interested stakeholder parties.

Signatures:

Joseph Cermatori, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of English
Affiliated faculty: Theater and Gender Studies
Director, Periclean Honors Forum, 2024–2026

Flagg Taylor, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Political Science
Director, Periclean Honors Forum, 2016–2024

Catherine Golden, Ph.D.
Professor of English
Director, Periclean Honors Forum, 2011–2015

Skidmore Strategic Planning White Paper: Enhancing Post-Graduation Outcomes

Introduction

The national conversation around higher education increasingly centers on the value of a liberal arts education. Skepticism about its practical benefits has grown, particularly as students and families face rising tuition costs and increasing economic uncertainty. Skidmore College, as a leading liberal arts institution must ensure its graduates are well-prepared for diverse career paths, advanced study, and meaningful contributions to society. This white paper outlines a proposal for improving and leveraging post-graduation outcomes data to reinforce the value of a Skidmore education as an investment in students' creative selves, attract prospective students and families, engage alums, and demonstrate accountability to the broader community.

The liberal arts model emphasizes critical thinking, adaptability, and interdisciplinary knowledge—skills that are increasingly valuable in a rapidly evolving job market. Studies consistently show that liberal arts graduates experience long-term career success, with many achieving leadership roles and personal fulfillment. However, short-term employment and graduate school enrollment metrics often dominate public perception. Skidmore must align its messaging and data collection efforts to emphasize both the immediate and enduring benefits of its educational model.

Typical Metrics for Benchmarking Post-Graduation Outcomes

To benchmark and communicate post-graduation success effectively, institutions typically track the following metrics:

1. *Employment Outcomes:* Percentages of graduates employed full-time, part-time, or in internships, and their fields of employment.

2. *Graduate School Enrollment:* Percentage of graduates pursuing advanced degrees, fields of study, and institutions attended.

3. *First Destination Survey Results:* Self-reported data on employment, further study, and other pursuits within six months of graduation.

4. *Earnings Data:* Median salaries by major and industry, when available through partnerships or alum surveys.

5. *Alumni Impact Metrics:* Contributions to the community, leadership roles, and long-term career advancement.

Integrating Institutional Data Sources

Currently, Skidmore's post-graduation outcomes data resides in silos across various offices and departments. Integrating these data streams is essential for creating a comprehensive and accurate picture of alum success. Key sources include:

1. *Career Development Center's First Destination Survey:* Provides an overview of initial post-graduation activities but requires higher response rates and cross-verification with other data sources.
2. *Graduate School Clearinghouse Data:* Tracks graduate school enrollments but may miss self-reported data from alums.
3. *Senior Exit Surveys by Academic Departments:* Rich in qualitative insights but inconsistently compiled and shared.
4. *Advancement and Alumni Relations Data*: Offers long-term perspectives on career trajectories and community contributions but lacks immediate post-graduation details.
5. *HEDS Alumni Survey*: The Higher Education Data Sharing (HEDS) Alumni Survey provides valuable longitudinal data on graduates' career satisfaction, job alignment with education, leadership roles, and civic engagement. Incorporating HEDS data into a centralized platform would strengthen Skidmore's ability to analyze trends, tailor support programs, and demonstrate the value of a liberal arts education.
6. *Pre-Health Acceptances & Matriculations*: Acceptances and matriculations into medical schools and other health professional programs through application systems (e.g., AMCAS).
7. *Informal Academic Departments/Programs:* Certain academic departments and programs maintain LinkedIn pages to stay in contact with alumni and or maintain spreadsheets of alumni careers post-Skidmore based on contacts with the alumni by faculty.

Proposed Actions

1. Centralized Data Platform: Develop a unified system for collecting and analyzing data on post-graduation outcomes. This platform should allow seamless data integration from various offices while ensuring data privacy and security.

2. Cross-Departmental Collaboration: Establish a task force including representatives from Career Development, Institutional Research, Advancement, and academic departments to align methodologies and timelines.

3. Data Validation and Enrichment: Use multiple verification methods—such as LinkedIn scraping, follow-up surveys, and alum engagement—to enhance the accuracy and completeness of outcomes data.

4. Continuous Improvement: Conduct regular audits of data collection processes and adopt best practices from peer institutions.

Using Post-Graduation Outcomes to Tell Our Story

Post-graduation outcomes data can play a critical role in demonstrating Skidmore's value proposition to key stakeholders:

1. Prospective Students and Families:

- Showcase employment and graduate school success rates in admissions materials and campus tours.

- Highlight alumni testimonials and success stories to personalize the data.
- Emphasize the versatility and creativity of a liberal arts education through diverse career examples.

2. Community Engagement:

- Share alumni contributions to societal well-being, such as entrepreneurship, public service, and creative achievements.
- Develop partnerships with local employers and organizations to demonstrate impact.

3. Alumni Relations and Fundraising:

- Use outcomes data to engage alumni, showcasing Skidmore graduates' continued relevance and success.
- Highlight the ROI of Skidmore's education to encourage donations and involvement.

4. Support Current Students

- Connect current students with alumni as part of the Zen Experience Network mentoring program to discuss possibilities, how to prepare for post-Skidmore lives while at Skidmore, and help students to develop materials for applications and to prepare for interviews.

- Set-up potential internship, shadowing, and employment opportunities.

5. Specific Student Populations Trends:

- Disaggregate data by demographic categories such as race, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status to understand and address disparities and successes in post-graduation outcomes.
- Use these insights to create targeted support programs and to demonstrate Skidmore's commitment to equity and inclusion in outcomes.

Skidmore College has an opportunity to enhance its reputation and value by strategically leveraging post-graduation outcomes data. By integrating and investing in a shared data source, aligning departmental efforts, and effectively communicating alum success stories, Skidmore can reinforce the enduring value of a liberal arts education and demonstrate that Creative Thought Matters. These efforts will attract and reassure prospective students and families and strengthen ties with alums and the broader community.[1]

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[1] *Created by Todd, Nicole, Career Development Center and Tweedy, Amy, Institutional Effectiveness. Reviewed by SIE Committee Members. Strategic Planning for Skidmore College: Enhancing Post-Graduation Outcomes. Co-authored with ChatGPT-4, 2024.*

Adding a New Tenure Rank: Professor of the Practice
A white paper for enhancing creativity and academic excellence at Skidmore College
by David Howson
Senior Teaching Professor
Arthur Zankel Executive Director of Arts Administration

As a small liberal arts college known for its pre-professional programs, creating a new tenure rank of "Professor of the Practice" offers an opportunity for Skidmore College to enhance both academic and career-focused education. This rank would allow Skidmore to attract and retain highly experienced and accomplished professionals who bring real-world expertise directly into the classroom, bridging the gap between theory and practice. By appealing to students and their families seeking practical, career-oriented learning within Skidmore's signature liberal arts environment, this role can also become a critical factor in attracting and retaining a diverse student body, ultimately benefiting enrollment. Furthermore, this rank adds value to and strengthens the tenure system by diversifying its scope, ensuring that it remains relevant to students' evolving educational and professional needs while maintaining rigorous standards of excellence.

Making the case:

1. **Industry Expertise for Pre-Professional Programs**: Professors of the Practice bring extensive real-world experience directly relevant to students in pre-professional tracks, enhancing the practical, career-oriented education that complements the liberal arts model.
2. **Bridging Theory and Practice**: Professors of the Practice create a critical connection between theoretical learning and practical application, making classroom experiences more relevant to students' future careers and equipping them with actionable skills.
3. **Strengthening Community and Employer Connections**: With established networks in various fields, Professors of the Practice can facilitate internships, mentorships, and professional connections, enhancing career placement rates and bolstering Skidmore's reputation among employers.
4. **Enhanced Student Mentorship and Advising**: Professors of the Practice, drawing on their direct industry experience, provide specialized guidance on career pathways, skill-building, and professional development, adding depth and expertise to student advising resources.
5. **Supporting Enrollment Growth**: The practical focus offered by Professors of the Practice appeals to prospective students and families seeking a balance between a liberal arts education and career readiness, helping the college attract a broader and more diverse applicant pool, ultimately boosting enrollment.
6. **Strengthening and Diversifying the Tenure System**: By expanding the scope of tenure to include professionals with demonstrated excellence in their fields, this new rank enhances the tenure system's value. It ensures the institution remains adaptable to evolving educational and professional demands while maintaining rigorous standards and a strong commitment to academic excellence.

Skidmore already employs faculty in this category in areas including Arts Administration, Education Studies, Theater, Management and Business, Music and Social Work (among others). These faculty are classified as NTT but could easily be converted to TT PotP lines. AAUP provides freedom to institutions to make *any* position tenurable and has made a case for Professors of the Practice to be afforded the protections of tenure, as indicated in [this linked article](). Skidmore stands to be a leader among its peers by modernizing the tenure system and creating equity among its long-term faculty.

In writing this white paper, I aimed to keep it brief for initial review but would be pleased to engage in further conversation around its impetus.

Promoting a Liberal Arts Education with Minor curricular changes- Bob Turner, Political Science Department

1. Make Junior/Senior standing as a pre-req for most 200 and 300 level classes at Skidmore
2. End/limit the super-size major

I think taking a broad range of classes is essential to creating liberally educated graduates. While our general education requirements ensure a measure of broad education on the front end, I think we could make some minor curricular adjustments to promote the broad range of classes on the back end.

The more alums I talk with about their post Skidmore professional lives, the more I am struck by how often they talk about the value of an "odd" class outside of their major their junior or senior year to their ability to think and problem solve creatively.   This phenomenon is becoming increasingly rare I find for two reasons.

First, the rise of the dreaded pre-reqs for many 200 and 300 level classes. When I was a senior at Middlebury, I took a series of phenomenal upper-level classes on Russian Literature, Central American History, America in the Sixties, and the Sociology of Women. I had not taken a 100-level introductory class in literature, history, American studies or Sociology. It was assumed that as a liberally educated senior, I had the intellectual wherewithal to be able to read, analyze and write outside of my discipline. Also, that the professors were not teaching incredibly disciplinary specific material.

I think Skidmore should create a blanket pre-requisite for most 200 and 300 level class as Junior/Senior Standing. Obviously, there should be some exceptions such as in the sciences, languages, and certain other classes, but it should be the exception rather than the norm. Departments should be able to reserve seats for majors, but a portion (4 out of 18 for a 300-level class?) should be open to any student of Junior or Senior standing. In theory, many classes are that now when they say permission of the instructor. In practice, this minor step is enough to discourage many students from reaching out.

My other observation is that students end up creating unnecessary minors because they have taken an introductory class and can now get into the interesting upper-level classes. Also, that seniors take 100 level classes which are not challenging for them because they can't get into upper-level classes outside of their major.

Second, I think the rise of super-credit majors comes at the expense of a liberal arts education. I understand the temptation to add requirements for breadth or methods to enhance the disciplinary proficiency of our majors. While a Political Science major would certain be better at political science if they took more PL classes, it is antithetical to a liberal arts education. College, Departments, and the Curriculum Committee should put limits on majors that require more than 33-35 credits (10 classes).   Some examples:

- Business Major- 55-62 credits
- Art 54 credits
- Environmental Studies- 41 credits
- Environmental Science 54 credits
- Economics 40-44
- Psychology 32-38

Both of these ideas would promote a broad liberal arts education and also create more curricular flexibility for the college as we reduce the number of professors going forward.

To: VP for Strategic Planning and Institutional Diversity

Topic: New ID Program and Major in Public Health

Student Interest- HIGH

Career Opportunities- GOOD

Intrinsic Importance- HIGHEST

Intrinsic ID Nature- (Skidmore Strength) – PERFECT FIT

Already Have sufficient Faculty Expertise, Course Repertoire- IMPRESSIVE

Synergy with Natural and Social Sciences, Bridge Courses, Integrated Science Concept, FYS, DEI, Study Abroad/Global Studies, Summer Collaborative Research and Internship Programs, alumni network- INGREDIENTS FOR A DISTINCTIVE PROGRAM

Strengthen Ties with the Saratoga Springs Community – AN OPPORTUNITY

No New Faculty Lines or Facilities Needed- ENOUGH CURRENT EXPERTISE

Resources: Administrative Support, Program Director, Internship Director, Modest Budget- MINIMAL WITH LOTS OF UPSIDE

Structural Limitations: Few local opportunities for Internships. We are not Boston or NYC, so we'd need to develop connections to NYS public health institutions in Albany, and local Saratoga Springs and County public health needs - THINK GLOBAL, ACT LOCAL

Fortuitous Timing: HHP has three tenure-track positions turning over which could be aligned with both HHP and core support for an ID program in Public Health. Continuing tenured HHP faculty already align well with health-related integrative and applied physiology and solid training in research methods-CHANCE FAVORS THE PREPARED MIND

Recruitment and Institutional History: Public Health is a relatively uncommon but increasingly attractive major at liberal arts colleges- fits nicely with Skidmore's pre-professional history and strong commitment to ID programs and taps into a broader potential applicant pool than disciplinary programs alone can. This will replicate the success and impact of our ES and NS programs- we leapfrogged over much of the competition and it helped us to catch up to our peer and aspirant institutions in the sciences. A Public Health Program and Major would leverage our natural sciences to strengthen ID connections with the social sciences and further integrate the basic natural sciences. Ending the Nursing Program in the 1980s allowed the basic sciences to flourish. An ID program and major in Public Health is the reincarnation of the Nursing Program and Skidmore's historical commitment to the Health Sciences: MAKE NO SMALL PLANS

<u>White Paper on Academic Excellence at Skidmore College</u> – Steve Ives HHPS

Skidmore College has fallen behind our peer and aspirant institutions by not offering Public Health track (major or minor). While schools in the NY6 as well as peer or aspirant institutions offer programming in public health the absence of a program at Skidmore, given the uniqueness of the Colleges Health and Human Physiological Sciences (HHPS) department, surprising. That said, a number of prominent liberal arts colleges in New England (i.e., Bates, Middlebury, etc.) do not offer academic programming in public health, highlighting an opportunity to be a leader in this area, leveraging existing strengths.

There are multiple compelling reasons to create an interdisciplinary minor in Public Health at Skidmore College. First, given the ubiquitous effects that COVID-19 has had on our collective health, economy, and society have brought Public Health to the forefront. Applications to Public Health programs have increased 3-fold over the last decade or so, but the pandemic accelerated this growth even further. In terms of transition and transformation, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reports the demand for careers in public health are expected to rise in the next decade by upwards of 26%, much faster than the average. Internally, there has long been student interest in a minor over the years as evidenced by students completing a self-determined major in public health (completions on par with some departments), and student interest is strong. Specifically, *Introduction to Public Health* (HP131), fills to capacity nearly every semester (capped at 28, enrollments ranged from 93-100% capacity over the last 10 semesters, totaling 275 students). We recently surveyed 311 students across 29 majors from all 4 academic divisions of the college regarding their potential interest in a Public Health Minor. An overwhelming, 109 students (35%) replied that they "strongly agree" that they would be interested in a minor in Public Health, when we include "agree" the total rises to 196 students (63% of respondents). 94% of student supported the creation of a minor in Public Health.

Second, the creation of interdisciplinary minor in Public Health would be a significant step toward the fulfillment of priorities outlined in the college's most recent Strategic Plan. Specifically, the interdisciplinary nature of Public Health would help achieve Goal I of the Strategic Plan, which addresses the importance of integrative learning. Public Health minor is "*grounded in and applies a wide range of disciplines and includes integrative and experiential learning approaches to address public health concerns of individuals, communities, and populations.*" Such a program would be a keystone offering in the aim of integrative learning. Further, considering Goal III of the Strategic Plan, which aspires to improve the Health and Wellness of the student community, such coursework in Public Health will make informed citizens that are equipped to consider factors related to health and employ strategies to promote health in themselves and the campus community. A notable example of current student coursework in this area is HF 215 Peer Health Education, an area with opportunity for expansion with the hire of a new TT faculty and creation of a new minor in Public Health. There are endless possibilities that could involve the new Health & Wellness facility (engaging in the Exercise is Medicine on Campus from the American College of Sports Medicine), service learning in the FYE or bridge courses, etc.

Thus, last but not least, what makes me most excited about this opportunity is the existing strengths that Skidmore has. While the creation of a public health minor has been a goal for HHPS for going on 20-years, the creation of a public health minor is strongly supported by other departments and programs, many who have expressed a desire for HHPS to establish this new minor. I am excited about this potential opportunity and have ideas, the potential for the collective strength of Skidmore to wield something truly unique and powerful. Departments and programs, ranging from STEM-focused departments like Biology, Mathematics & Statistics, and Psychology to Economics, Environmental Studies, and Social Work, to name a few, could all add to a blockbuster. Public Health is the embodiment of the Liberal Arts but it could also be a shining example of an integration of the sciences. <u>This is a call to action for the College to move forward on the creation of a minor in Public Health.</u>

White Paper on LGBTQIA+ Inclusion and Support at Skidmore College
for 2025-2030 Strategic Planning Consideration
Submitted by Mariel Martin on behalf of the Queer Faculty and Staff Affinity Group

Background and Rationale

In light of potential changes to federal and possibly state protections for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, plus (LGBTQIA+) individuals, it is essential that, as part of its strategic planning process, Skidmore College proactively reaffirms its commitment to creating a supportive, inclusive, and equitable environment for LGBTQIA+ students, staff, and faculty. As our demographic data indicates*, LGBTQIA+ individuals represent a significant portion of our community, and fostering a campus that affirms and protects their rights and well-being is crucial to Skidmore's mission. As an institution and campus dedicated to diversity, equity, and inclusion - with a longstanding commitment to non-discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity and expression - Skidmore has a responsibility to safeguard the rights and well-being of our LGBTQIA+ community members. This includes ensuring access to essential services, affirming identities, and fostering a campus climate rooted in respect and belonging.

Recommendations for Strategic Plan Inclusion

Protecting Access to Gender-Affirming Care

Skidmore should continue to offer and support gender-affirming healthcare services for students through our Health Services office, ensuring that LGBTQIA+ students feel safe and supported in accessing critical care. Additionally, Skidmore should strive to ensure that employee healthcare plans provide comprehensive coverage for gender-affirming care.

Ensuring Access to All-Gender Restrooms

Building on the 2011 IPPC commitment, Skidmore must continue to ensure that any new construction or renovation projects prioritize the inclusion of all-gender restrooms to meet the needs of all community members.

Respecting and Facilitating the Use of Chosen Names and Pronouns

Skidmore should continue to prioritize systems that allow community members to easily update their chosen names and pronouns across all campus platforms. This respects individual identity and is critical to fostering an inclusive campus culture.

Supporting LGBTQIA+ Affinity Groups

Providing institutional support, resources, and spaces for LGBTQIA+ student and employee affinity groups creates crucial support networks, promotes community building, and encourages a greater sense of belonging for LGBTQIA+ individuals.

Commitment to Responsive and Adaptive Policies

Skidmore must actively monitor changes in federal and state policies affecting LGBTQIA+ rights and adapt our institutional policies accordingly. By doing so, we can ensure that Skidmore remains a leader in advocating for a campus culture grounded in inclusion, access, and mutual respect.

* According to NACCC survey data, the following percentages of our community identify as transgender or nonbinary: 8% of students, 5% of staff, and 2% of faculty. Additionally, the following identify as "other than heterosexual": 34% of students, 9% of staff, and 14% of faculty.

Conclusion

By embedding these commitments into our 2025-2030 Strategic Plan, Skidmore College will affirm its dedication to supporting LGBTQIA+ individuals and ensuring an inclusive environment. Through inclusive policies, accessible resources, and a proactive stance, Skidmore can uphold its core values and be a beacon of equity and support for LGBTQIA+ rights within higher education.

Radical Ideas for the Future of Skidmore:

1.) Create New Hierarchical Structure for Professors:
   a. Skidmore could be the first college (that I know of) to eliminate the "Assistant, Associate, Full" professor designations. These are confusing to people outside of academia and even to many, if not most, of our students. Multiple times, students asked me "who are you an assistant to" during my first years here.
   b. We could instead come up with a new tiered structure with more informative names. Perhaps "Pre-Tenure Tier 1", "Tenured Tier 1", etc. VAPs would be renamed as well. We are already considering renaming tiers for Non-Tenure-Track faculty as part of the Collective Bargaining Agreement, so this would be a good time to consider this for the entire College.
   c. Along with this, I suggest that we consider adding continued opportunity for promotion throughout a faculty member's career, with multiple Tenured Tiers (maybe a max of 5). The reasons for this change are:
      i. Currently, there is little incentive to continue maximizing research output once a faculty member reaches Full Professor. And this happens earlier in people's careers than it once did.
      ii. This is very different than in other professions, where promotions and advancement are typically available throughout one's career. For a job that essentially now pays at a lower middle-class scale, it is important to provide an incentive scheme that will draw qualified candidates.
      iii. Tenure is viewed externally as a cushy safety net, where faculty can get complacent and lazy afterward. Showing the country that we are still pushing faculty to achieve at high levels throughout their career is important.
2.) Rethink "Liberal Arts" Label:
   a. This title comes from ancient Rome ("artes liberales" – basically, "subjects of study of the free people". This idea was originally very classist, as non-free subjects, as well as women and others, were not expected to aspire to these studies.
   b. The early concept of Liberal Arts education in America is a very lofty one – to pursue higher learning purely for the learning component, not to train for any one career. But now we are increasingly being asked to demonstrate how we are preparing students to have success finding jobs and earning back the money spent on their college education. Frankly, this is totally reasonable, given the incredibly high cost of this education.
   c. Combined, this history is not an ideal origin, especially as we need to combat the concept of "liberal elites in their ivory towers".
   d. A large swath of the country takes the word "Liberal" to mean something different than it originally did. As demographics shift and our pool of applicants shrinks, we need to make sure that we are appealing to potential students from all political persuasions.
   e. It is important that we attract students from more conservative households to come to Skidmore – not just because we need the bodies, but because exposing those students to people and ideas from different backgrounds is critical, if we want to make sure that they learn to appreciate diversity, intellectual thought, and fact-based decision-making. And also, we want our more liberal-leaning students to be exposed to conservative ways of thinking, instead of creating a more and more siloed liberal echo chamber.
   f. In summary, I think we should consider a new label for Skidmore other than as a "Liberal Arts College". And beyond that, we might consider developing programs that would actively recruit students from more conservative backgrounds. I am not sure what these programs might look like, but it would be worth brainstorming.

A Renewed, Reimagined Vision of Skidmore's Arts Quad

Zhenelle LeBel (Zankel Music Center), Adam Tinkle (MDOCS), Chris Emdin (IdeaLab)

Summary & Rationale

As Skidmore strives to enhance its identity as a premier liberal arts institution—one where the arts are accessible to students from all majors—it is essential to create spaces that support student-centered, interdisciplinary collaboration. Moving beyond its current role as a cluster of academic departments, the Arts Quad is ideally positioned to become a central hub where academic, co-curricular, and community engagement intersect. By reimagining this space, Skidmore can cultivate a collaborative, sustainable environment that reflects its commitment to creativity and academic excellence, enhances inclusive student access to co-curricular resources, and demonstrates environmental stewardship through more intensive and innovative uses of limited indoor and underutilized outdoor spaces.

Creating new, flexible spaces within existing buildings and unifying their collective purpose can strengthen interdisciplinary and co-curricular connections, boost campus vibrancy, and contribute to Skidmore's memorable and marketable sense of place. Aligning the aesthetic of the Arts Quad with the CIS/IdeaLab spaces could conceptually extend the CIS footprint, advancing the vision of a campus STEAM center that embodies interdisciplinarity beyond the classroom.

Description of the Problem

The current Arts Quad lacks flexibility for co-curricular activities, underuses the outdoor amphitheater and adjacent green spaces, and has outdated wayfinding. Additionally, the fixed, discipline-specific nature of certain spaces no longer reflects Skidmore's evolving interdisciplinary priorities. This rigidity restricts opportunities for collaboration and sidelines newer, smaller arts programs—the very ones that distinguish Skidmore's offerings—from the vital resources they need to fulfill their missions.

Possible Solutions

1. Interdisciplinary Flex Spaces

To foster collaboration across arts, humanities, and sciences, Skidmore can revitalize existing spaces, such as the Filene Recital Hall (Filene), Elisabeth Luce Moore Hall (Zankel), the IdeaLab classroom (CIS), and areas throughout the Hoge Building, creating a network of adaptable, technology-equipped, forward-looking spaces that offer students and faculty room to innovate together outside of the Quad's densely programmed primary venues. The Arts Quad as we understand it could expand northwards, anchored by the IdeaLab, to establish a physical perimeter that spatially links art and science, reinforcing how interdisciplinary integration is central to Skidmore's identity.

2. Student-Centered Design and Co-Curricular Integration

A reimagined Arts Quad can better support student-led initiatives, clubs, and projects that reflect Skidmore's diverse interests, spanning from traditional arts to social impact, technology, innovation, and entrepreneurship. Inspired by the success of the IdeaLab, more flexible venues can be established to host co-curricular and inter-departmental activities. The new Arts Quad can empower students to experiment and learn alongside mentors and peers, strengthening their sense of ownership and community.

3. Activation of Outdoor Gathering Spaces

Recommitting to the original vision of the Thomas Amphitheater as a central gathering and performance space can make the Arts Quad a vibrant campus hub, fostering spontaneous creativity and public engagement. Adding natural shading, vertical garden walls on patios and balconies, and expanding native green spaces can improve air quality, support biodiversity, and attract pollinators. These enhancements can make the outdoor areas more inviting for study, small group gatherings, and community events, while also reinforcing Skidmore's commitment to sustainability.

4. A Front Stoop for Our Campus

Employing placemaking strategies to establish the Arts Quad's spatial identity as a network of inviting gathering spaces can welcome artistic activation, innovative teaching, and socialization. Unified wayfinding, dynamic digital signage, and public seating can make the Arts Quad accessible and engaging to students and visitors alike, showcasing student and faculty work and positioning Skidmore as an inclusive cultural hub and regional gem.

Strategic Plan White Paper
"Reimagining the Standards for Promotion"

~

We respectfully submit this white paper in the hope that our next Strategic Plan will include some reimagining of the criteria for promotion to Full Professor.

One of the keys to supporting mid-career faculty, we believe, involves modifying the *Faculty Handbook* language around promotion. Right now, there is really only one professional profile that is rewarded: the candidate who is a solid teacher, a good servant of the college, and a <u>very</u> successful scholar/creator. Colleagues will delay standing for promotion if they don't believe they have an impressive enough scholarly record. Historically, "thin" scholarly output has been most frequently cited as the reason for a negative recommendation from CAPT/PC.

What has always troubled us is that mid-career faculty are penalized for investing their time in service to others and the institution. Indeed, we've had numerous Associate Professors whose contributions as Associate Deans, Department Chairs, and Program Directors have been costly for them (literally) in the form of delayed or nonexistent promotions. The irony is that a lot of us have achieved promotion precisely because we have been freed up to be "productive" by the "reproductive" service of these colleagues, including their work on behalf of our career trajectories.

This does not seem right. As such, we're calling for a reimagining of our criteria and standards for promotion. It begins with *Faculty Handbook* language change. We have tried to imagine language (below) that still preserves the primacy of teaching as a criteria for advancement, but also recognizes that faculty members may take a variety of paths over their careers, depending on their circumstances and the needs of their departments and the college. In short, we've tried to capture a sense that all faculty have to maintain a high level of teaching in order to be promoted, but that each faculty member could advance in rank with an impressive, and very individualistic, combination of scholarship/creative work and service.

Our goal is not to loosen the criteria or to dilute the standards. In other words, we're not trying to make it "easier" for faculty to get promoted. Rather, the object here is to align more accurately the standards and criteria for promotion with the reality that necessary roles the institution requires of many mid-career faculty are in conflict with their individual career advancement. We are not suggesting that faculty do not have to be engaged in all all three parts of the job — teaching, scholarship, and service — in order to be promoted. The question is what combination of scholarship and service might warrant promotion. In the past we've had a one-size-fits-all approach that has not served us well.

To be inserted on pages 130-131 of the *Faculty Handbook*.

F. Promotion
1. Guidelines for Advancement in Rank

<ol style="color:red">
Promotion at Skidmore is awarded not on the basis of time in rank but because of the candidate's demonstration of accomplishments that satisfy the applicable standards at the level specified for the desired rank. Faculty may stand for promotion at their discretion.
For the rank of Associate Professor, the appropriate terminal degree (or its professional equivalent) normally is required. The absence of the appropriate terminal degree is not an absolute deterrent to advancement to any rank. Other qualifications, however, shall be closely scrutinized by the department, CAPT, and the administration for evidence of extraordinary merit.

3. For the rank of Professor, the appropriate terminal degree (or its professional equivalent) normally is required. Promotion to this rank shall be granted to faculty who have shown evidence of continuing high- quality teaching (or, in the case of Library faculty, librarianship) as well as sustained and significant creative or scholarly growth; and significant involvement in the affairs of the college.

To merit promotion, a faculty member must present evidence documenting having met relevant standards in three areas: teaching, scholarship, and service.

Evaluating the teacher-scholar-leader is more nuanced when considering candidates for promotion to the rank of Professor. Indeed, each candidate for promotion to Professor may have different strengths in teaching, scholarship/creative work, and service. Such variation in strength signals a healthy and well-functioning community of teacher-scholar-leaders. Put differently, a community as rich as Skidmore's depends precisely on the *combined* skills, passions, and interests of its faculty. Moreover, variation in strengths among the faculty also reflect the reality that the arc of an individual faculty career does not follow a single trajectory. Faculty members pursue different interests at different points in their career. The decision to promote a faculty colleague must take that reality into consideration.

It is also important to consider the question of promotion from an institutional perspective. Certain institutional needs require some faculty to take on intensive administrative and leadership roles at moments that may not align with the standard path to promotion. In cases where faculty members shift their attention from their disciplinary trajectories to forms of scholarship and service related to administration, leadership, and other issues in higher education, this work should be factored into assessments of promotion candidacies.

Precise weights thus cannot, and should not, be attributed to each criteria; no two promotion files are exactly the same. But some general guidelines about what constitutes a successful promotion file can be established. Teaching remains paramount at Skidmore, and so successful candidates for promotion must continue to demonstrate sustained high-quality teaching across the range of assigned courses so as to show mastery of the craft of teaching in the candidate's areas of competence. As accomplished teachers, Full Professors are expected to excel in their own classes and, as reflective practitioners of the craft, should also be able to serve as a teaching resource for other faculty. Full Professors are expected to remain committed to their own continuing development as teachers.

Scholarship and creative work are also essential to the life of the mind and to the vitality of a community of intellectuals. As such, a successful candidate for promotion will demonstrate a record of engagement with their discipline(s), continued development as a scholar or artist, and evidence of success in completing some substantial aspect(s) of research or artistic agenda beyond the candidate's accomplishments at the time of promotion to Associate Professor. Through their research or creative work, Full Professors are expected to have developed a mature perspective on their field(s) that enables them to situate both their own work and the work of their students in the landscape of their discipline(s). The maturation of scholarly/creative careers could also look quite different. Put another way, a scholarly identity could take one or more turns both within and outside one's original disciplinary inclination. A supportive community of scholars and artists celebrates the interesting transformations that might happen in a faculty member's long career.

Serving the College (and/or disciplinary) community is also a critical part of the life of a faculty member. Moreover, the College—and in particular the management of the faculty's business by the faculty itself—depends on the type of service that takes time and effort—human capital that may not be expended towards other criteria. Accordingly, a candidate for promotion will demonstrate a record of effective contributions in service. Indeed, given the college's commitment to faculty in their tenuring, senior faculty are expected to play a leading role in the service that sustains the college community.

The criteria for promotion are clear: high quality teaching, scholarly or creative engagement, and effective contributions in service. How the standards are manifest in each case for promotion are not as clear. Some candidates may have spent their post-tenure career focused primarily, though not exclusively, on their scholarship or creative work. Others might have spent that same time serving the institution in critical ways. Some may have made a turn from disciplinary scholarship to scholarly contributions related to higher education. A promising case for promotion will include evidence of growth and maturity in all three areas: the absence of evidence in one (or more) area disqualifies a candidate for promotion to Professor. And yet the amalgamation of criteria can be different in different cases.

Insofar as teaching is still the chief criteria for continued service at Skidmore College, its importance in the evaluation for promotion is supreme. As with tenure, teaching carries half of the weight in the evaluative standard. The other half of the evaluative standard is a candidate's record of scholarship/creative work and service/leadership, the proportions of which may vary depending on individual career trajectories. These two criteria are therefore evaluated in combination and in relation to one another.

Revising Career Advising as a Tool for Promoting Academic Engagement and Promoting Diversity, Bob Turner Political Science Department

Skidmore needs to rethink Career Advising. I have worked closely with Career Services for 10+ years and been on the search committees that have hired 3 previous directors. Historically, academics and career advising are separate domains at Skidmore. At present, career advising at Skidmore is viewed mainly as sending students to Career Services. Occasionally, Career Services reaches out to faculty. This separate and reactive approach is failing.

First, I think Career Advising is "the" DEI issue. Much of the career advising is done informally by family members. When I ask students, do you have a LinkedIn page, students with professional parents have them, the others don't. Same with which students have a good resume or not. When I ask students about how they got their high quality internships, most students get them through parents or family connections.

Second, "real world" experience has a transformative impact on student engagement, especially for boys who do better with experiential learning. If students have an internship, they come back as a better student because they can see the value of what they are learning and why proofreading matters. The value of High Impact educational experiences is well documented and was studied extensively by CEPP as part of their Transition and Transformation project (CEPP annual report 2010-11, p. 5-7). The conclusions then about the tension between the academic impact versus unevenness of experiences vs impact on faculty time remain. Unfortunately, the current Skidmore approach to HIEs – summer research and funded internships- are expensive and limited in number.

Third, whether we like it or not, Skidmore's tuition costs means that parents have to think about the value proposition. When Phil Glotzbach came here, one of the first things he did was to dramatically overhaul the first year drop off and orientation process. He said something along the lines of parents are going to judge how competent Skidmore is as an academic institution by how they can do that one highly visible activity. I have had countless conversations with my students' parents at graduation. I know can tell you parents at graduation do a similar calculation on whether Skidmore was worth it by whether their child has a plan and strategy for finding a job and figuring out their career.

There are ideas out there about how to reimagine Career Services, such as Workforce Relevance of Liberal Arts Education white paper. I think finding a way to tap into the relative strengths of departments' close relationships with students and knowledge of their respective fields; and Career Services strengths in career preparation in general. More than anything, I think we need to get away from the current reactive model where career advising only happens if students go to Career Services.

Some faculty will say, that is what Career Services is for or I have only gotten an academic job so how can I advise them. I don't think career advising is rocket science. There are some departments doing career advising systemically- Mimi Hellman in Art History, Karen Arciero in Ex-Sci, the ESS Capstone, and David Howson in Arts Administration are the ones I am familiar with. I created a senior coda in Political Science (see Syllabus and Coda Assignments) to ensure

that every graduating senior has a resume, linkedin page, knows how to network, conduct informational interviews, prepare for interviews, develop a target employer list, and ability to assess graduate programs. I don't think it is perfect, but it has been very well received by the students.

Some other ideas might be:

- Explicitly incorporate a career planning component into Senior Coda classes to ensure all students learn how to career plan and have Career Services create a template of career planning readings and assignments;
- Bridge the institutional gap between Departments and Career Services by having each department designate a faculty member to be their majors' liaison with Career Services. (eg We think your majors might be interested in this event; we would like a panel on Y)
- Create creative partnerships between groups that work closely with students and Career Services. For example, why not have Career Services work with the Athletic Department to run mandatory career sessions on resume, networking, interviews etc for teams when they are in pre season (late August/early January) and have a bunch of down time. (It would encourage men who have low High Impact Experiences to get a little more focused; Parents would love this.   It would also have positive collateral effects as the athletes' friends would say- can I see and copy your resume). Also, work with Coaches to bring back former players who are now successful alums to come see a game and talk with the players afterwards about life post Skidmore.
- I would also have the OP program run career preparation classes for first generation students who are less likely to have the family networks or mentoring. I don't , think speakers are systematic enough.
- Leadership – I think having college leadership talk about gainful employment of alums as a DEI issue.

Strategic Advantages of Enhanced, Mission-Specific Participation in the Life of the College
by Older Members of the Skidmore Community
White Paper submitted as part of Skidmore's strategic planning process by the
Retiree Initiatives Planning Group (RIPG), November 2024

Strategic Theme Focus:
➢ Creativity and Academic Excellence
➢ Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
➢ Endowment for Need-based Financial Aid

Our world is aging. The higher education community, and Skidmore College in particular, are well positioned to provide innovative leadership regarding this demographic trend in ways that are grounded in, and enhance, the College's educational mission. This initiative recognizes older citizens as an asset and welcomes them to participate in the full range of College life, including teaching and learning, research, public policy development, health and wellness, and development. Elements of this initiative might include:

1. Facilitating the participation of older adults in all the College's **core activities**, including educational and research programs;
2. Promoting **intergenerational learning**; see numerous studies which speak to the benefits of reciprocal sharing of expertise for learners of all ages;
3. Widening access to **online educational opportunities** for older adults to ensure a diversity of routes to participation;
4. Increasing **undergraduates' understanding** of the productive contributions by older adults that add to economic growth, support social progress, and increase society's complexity and richness,
5. Enhancing access for older adults to the College's range of **health and wellness** programs and its **arts** and **cultural activities**;
6. Fostering **collaboration** with constituencies both on and off campus that represent the interests of the aging population.

This strategic initiative confers numerous benefits on all members of the Skidmore community, including undergraduates, faculty and staff, and retirees. It intentionally builds on existing programming at Skidmore, including academic departments/programs (such as HPPS, Social Work, and SEE-Beyond), volunteerism and other community-oriented programming, Skidmore's orchestra and chorus, numerous programs within the aegis of Special Programs, and the Office of Advancement. Regarding the latter, incorporating Skidmore's retirees and older external community members more intentionally into the life of the College, further engaging this constituency and building new connections with students and graduates, would likely provide enhanced support for Skidmore's fundraising efforts.

Demonstrating to both internal and external audiences the importance of focusing on this important (and rapidly growing) demographic raises Skidmore profile, especially regarding academic excellence and DEI. Skidmore has repeatedly affirmed its institutional commitment to both as top strategic priorities. Moreover, attending to the needs of faculty and staff *after* retirement supports community strength and stability by demonstrating to the Skidmore community, and to those who are being recruited to work here, that this institution is a good place to work and has a strong commitment to its employees and their well-being up to retirement and beyond.

The moment is ripe for Skidmore to take the lead among liberal arts colleges in New York and, indeed, the nation, in addressing issues of aging and ageism in its academic curriculum and its cocurricular programs and in proactively demonstrating the benefits of a fuller integration of its older constituents into all aspects of the life of the College. For these and other reasons which could easily be elucidated, this is a highly worthy (and likely relatively inexpensive) goal for Skidmore's next strategic plan.

A better sense of place might mean better admissions results

Skidmore not meeting its class this year was troubling. There have been many discussions about how to prepare for the future including recruitment in new markets in the west and south (i.e., away from the demographic cliff). However, one potential new approach that costs little money is to market Skidmore and the Saratoga Springs region more broadly, and maybe even more truthfully. Our geographic argument for coming to Skidmore and Saratoga Springs is often the idea of a cosmopolitan small city in the country, horses and hats, and location between NYC, Boston, and Montreal. That is fine for affluent urbanites, but most students are here only a short time before they realize that is mostly BS (not the distance to cities part). Saratoga Springs is simply a small city embedded within a fairly rural area, and that becomes obvious. What is not BS, however, is the broader regional setting as a complex urban-rural gradient and location as a gateway to the Adirondacks with significant high quality recreational opportunities. We really drop the ball here and miss out on many students who use access to the outdoors as an important deciding factor in choosing a college location. Our NE peer aspirants Middlebury and Bowdoin, for example, do an outstanding job of marketing to those students (probably many full pay as well) who place significant value on the outdoors and easy access to the outdoor lifestyle. We do have those students, but I have asked many of them why they came here and how they knew about opportunities around campus and the region. They all say they figured it out from looking at maps and that admissions never mentioned it during recruiting. We are basically ceding admissions territory to other schools.

I went to a school in the west, University of Montana, that attracted students like this (call it dirtbag culture, crunchy bunch, whatever trope you want). I watched this dynamic from the perspective of a Montanan who grew up nearby, and it is more powerful than our current admissions culture realizes. UM was filled with kids from affluent areas on the east coast, west coast, Chicago, Minneapolis, etc., that wanted the outdoor recreational experiences when they were not studying and could pay out of state tuition. They were often really good students as well. The number of out of state students was increasing rapidly in the mid-90s for this reason. I think we should market this directly in our recruitment materials by having pictures of students hiking, camping, skiing, mountain biking, and paddling, all within a short drive from campus. Tell them more directly what life can be like around here. Some of that can even happen right on campus, or from campus, if we talked about the Palmertown Range and leveraged our land holdings. We could start to attract students from Denver area, Seattle, Bay area, LA/San Diego, etc. The truth is, I can count on one hand the number of students I have had that gave two craps about racehorses and big hats. And when horse racing dies (coming soon to a theater near you), what will make us unique?

This area is also ideal, as one of the fastest growing areas in NY State, as a living laboratory for community engagement and studying models of smart development and growth. There are so many opportunities for diverse internship and hands-on learning opportunities that are not fully explored. Overall, I think the story of Skidmore and Saratoga Springs that we tell is dated and not comprehensive enough. Given admissions and budgetary projections, this seems like a valid conversation to have.

Service and Leadership at Skidmore

Sarah Sweeney

Service work at Skidmore is not recognized institutionally and often thought of as a burden by faculty. This perception has real implications in terms of the number of faculty that volunteer to lead departments, committees and administration. This white paper proposes ways to reshape the perception of service work through increased rewards, different valuing within our system of advancement and a shift in the language we use to describe service.

Change the language
- The current language *service* (the action of helping or doing work for someone) undervalues the importance of this work
- Change the language to more accurately reflect the work: *governanc*e (overseeing the control and direction of something) or *leadership* (to direct on a course or in a direction)
- Change from Teacher/Scholar to Teacher/Scholar/Citizen

Change the value of service in reappointment and tenure
- In the faculty handbook there is a section that describes the role that service should have in your workload: 50 percent, 40 percent, and 10 percent. While this is clear it also undervalues service. Deleting this passage from the faculty handbook or changing the percentages could make service a more important part of faculty work earlier in the faculty timeline at Skidmore.

Change the value of service in promotion
- In the faculty handbook it says, "In promotion, the teacher-scholar model remains the primary focus." It also says that faculty are, "expected to be the sustaining pillars of college service." For promotion it is clear that teaching and scholarship are the most important areas of work. This is a very limiting view of accomplishment as it excludes accomplishments in leadership and governance. Could there be a different valuation that imagines that achievement in teaching and one of the other two areas (service/leadership or scholarship) would lead to promotion?

Change the rewards
- Honor current and former leaders through new awards
- Change the compensation for chairs and program directors so that being a chair is a competitive and desired appointment
- Make the compensation for each leadership position public and consistent
- Create endowed chairs in leadership and faculty governance
- Create a section for recognition of leadership accomplishments in the Skidmore Weekly Bulletin

Change the training and support
- Create faculty leadership groups for support and mentorship (at a fun locations)
- Pair new leaders with former leaders to provide mentorship
- Create clear processes for dealing with personnel issues at the dean level to protect chairs and program directors from interpersonal departmental conflicts
- Hire an ombudsperson to help handle conflicts

I'd like to make several recommendations that I think will allow us to focus more on our core competencies, streamline our processes, and more comprehensively advertise our unique positioning in the physical landscape. These suggestions influence creativity and academic excellence by freeing resources to focus on those that are most central to our educational mission and enhance the residential student experience and campus sustainability.

- We have deep datasets that indicate which majors on campus have been struggling with enrollments for years. I understand the reluctance to eliminate these departments, but I encourage us to explore a "service department" model. Service departments could continue to offer courses that help field the all-college curriculum but are no longer underutilizing faculty to offer under-enrolled, upper-level courses simply to field a major for very few students. In addition, as people retire from service departments, faculty lines could be shifted to areas of greater need at the college.

- Is there another model we can develop to replace the director/chair model we currently use at the college? The current model absorbs stipend money and many course releases, very few people actually want to serve as chair/director, and it introduces all sorts of siloing, inconsistencies in procedures, and inefficiencies in course scheduling, etc. Are there larger groupings of programs/departments that could be served by a single, more interdisciplinary-focused chair?

- I think we should take more advantage of our unique positioning in the physical landscape and this should be clearer in our all of our college communication materials. Skidmore inhabits a convergence of incredible opportunities in the natural and social worlds, which influences academic opportunities (internships, civic engagement, field research, etc.), people's mental and physical wellbeing, and recreational possibilities. We typically talk about Saratoga Springs as "a bustling and creative small city with nightlife, shops, parks, coffee shops and restaurants. Plus, the nearby Adirondack, Berkshire and Green Mountains provide abundant recreational opportunities and we're only a three-hour drive to New York City, Boston or Montreal." But there is so much more we can say. The region, including the Capital District, offers so many internship opportunities, within driving distance, that students can engage in *during the academic year* (everything from the State Assembly to the Nature Conservancy). Our diverse environments afford us a wide range of civic engagement projects (from urban planning to biodiversity conservation). From a wellbeing and recreational perspective, we are at the base of the largest publicly protected wilderness area in the contiguous US (the ADKs) and we have a vast network of local trail systems for students to hike, bike, ski, etc. (the Palmertown Range, the Graphite Range Community Forest, the Wilton Wildlife Preserve and Park, our own North Woods, etc.). We have major waterways for study and recreation – Saratoga Lake, the Hudson River, the Battenkill River, etc. We really do have it all – intense urban to intense wilderness, and this affords us so many opportunities for innovative pedagogy and diverse student experiences.

- While our sustainability efforts to date should be applauded, I think we need to commit to a major on-campus renewable electricity project very soon (e.g., distributed rooftop solar). This would bring critical visibility to all of our sustainability efforts, signal our commitment very clearly to all who visit campus, and help us advance several of our campus sustainability goals. I have submitted more sustainability-related ideas through other avenues, but I wanted to highlight this most essential step, in my mind, in this document.

Strategic Planning for Campus Sustainability - Submitted by the CSL Subcommittee on Sustainability

In the next five years, Skidmore College should continue to increase awareness and action for sustainable measures enacted on campus. This paper presents the reasoning for strategic planning to increase support for environmental sustainability from a student perspective. The initiatives proposed will benefit student life and the College's continued welfare in areas such as admissions, college sustainable leadership, and contributing to long-term campus integrity.

Skidmore has implemented multiple initiatives that benefit student life and the campus. With sustainability-focused events such as the SGA Green Grant, Gardenside Sustainability Community, student-run compost programs, and sustainability-focused student jobs, the college offers many opportunities for students to be involved with sustainability on campus. In recent years, sustainability has been increasing in demand from students applying to institutions of higher learning.

How can Skidmore implement sustainability in education, student life, and strategic planning?
- **Educational Incorporation-** sustainability class requirement for students to increase sustainable literacy and awareness throughout the all-college curriculum by incorporating a living lab approach
- Increase **resource awareness** and management to students - single-use plastics reduction, increased water fountain availability, promoting **awareness** of resource use (e.g., heating and water conservation)
- **Sustainable Dining-** dining hall options that prioritize sustainable food options along with increased vegan and vegetarian food options
- **Goal Setting-** Skidmore should establish SMART/short-term goals aligned with the Campus Sustainability plan that may made available to students
- **Sustainable Infrastructure -** enhance infrastructure sustainability to improve sustainability ratings and increase **On-Campus** Solar to support students' education and engagement, therefore improving Skidmore's **admissions appeal** to prospective students interested in sustainability

How can Skidmore aid in raising student engagement?
The leadership of Skidmore College should
- develop an incentive mechanism to reward the students for their engagement in campus sustainability;
- provide more opportunities for faculty-student research projects on environmental sustainability and finance for these projects; and
- develop and implement on-campus and off-campus service-learning programs (e.g., volunteer trips to the local environmental education centers and travel seminars) and encourage the students to assume a leadership role in these programs by applying learning/ living-lab opportunities and connecting the campus to diverse education opportunities.

Skidmore is an environment for learning, and sustainability initiatives will enhance the educational value of our institution by awarding students responsibilities that will help them develop integral skills to manage future environmental challenges. Expanding sustainability in the strategic plan will allow Skidmore to match efforts amongst peer institutions that have already made significant advances in their sustainability such as carbon neutrality, advanced sustainable curriculums, and net-zero pledges. Advancements like these will allow Skidmore to remain competitive as a small liberal arts institution. By modeling environmental sustainability through our institutional choices, Skidmore demonstrates a commitment that resonates with increased student expectations for colleges to enhance their sustainability efforts. These advancements will increase appeal for prospective students, especially those who hold sustainability as a core value. Skidmore's priority on sustainability will also serve as an example for the Saratoga community and further empower local residents, Skidmore students, and educators.

Climate, Environment, and Society at Skidmore College

Three seemingly random observations:

- In 2023, China put 296 Gigawatts of renewable energy online compared to 40 in the US. Xi Jinping has stated that China can displace the US as the main global superpower through the "China saved the world from catastrophic climate change" strategy.
- Maggie Thomas' (White House Special Assistant for Climate Policy) talk at the Tang was expected to attract 75 people. Over 300 students showed up to pack the room.
- Although the majority of the American population is not college educated, they aspired to send their kids to college. Those attitudes are changing rapidly in response to campus culture, cost, politics, etc.; this pattern likely threatens Skidmore's future more than a demographic cliff.

The landscape in higher education is changing rapidly. What it meant to be a liberal arts college in the past has questionable relevance today much less in the future and denying that imperils the institution. The model of opening student's skulls, pouring diverse knowledge in, and letting them figure out what to do with it, is antiquated. Many students today, not to mention their parents, want the college experience to have a broader sense of purpose but also more focused outcomes. The growth of ESS at Skidmore is partly because many incoming students see themselves as change-makers; they look at the world they are inheriting, and they do not like what they are getting. Moreover, they clearly see, or at least sense, the intersection of climate science, environmental sustainability, and other societal issues they are concerned about such as equity, inclusion, justice, and economic opportunity. I have no interest in Xi Jingping saving the world. Instead, I want places like Skidmore to produce the next generation of leaders who will fix our mess. Thus, I propose that Skidmore fulfills the "integrative" and interdisciplinary vision of the BTCIS and either create a new Center for Climate, Environment and Society.

Drawing on successful models from some our peer aspirants, establishing a Center for Climate, Environment and Society at a liberal arts college represents a timely and strategic opportunity. This initiative would bring diverse faculty together to address some of society's most pressing challenges while leveraging the inherent strengths of liberal arts education: interdisciplinary thinking, close faculty-student collaboration, and emphasis on critical and creative thought. By bringing together disciplines from the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities, the Center could create innovative approaches to understanding and addressing environmental and societal challenges. Furthermore, the Center would distinguish the institution through forward-looking programs that integrate sustainable development, environmental justice, and environmental conservation. This approach would attract motivated students, create opportunities for meaningful research and community partnerships, and position the college as a leader in environmental and sustainability-related education. The initiative would also enhance the institution's profile for external funding and philanthropic support, while preparing graduates for impactful careers addressing critical global challenges. Through this focused investment, the college can build on its liberal arts foundation while responding to urgent societal needs and student demand for environmental and sustainability leadership training.

Such an initiative is a mechanism to directly foster interdisciplinary collaborations and bring together the various entities across campus that are already interested in broad sustainability issues but have not connected. It would also be an important student recruitment tool that leverages our current Princeton Review status as number 18 in the top "green" colleges and universities and a recent sustainability survey where half student responders (200+) said that Skidmore's focus on the sustainability was a significant part of their decision to study here. I see this is as low-cost relative to the payback. Moreover, space within Tisch could be renovated as part of a larger renovation to house the Center Director and collaborative space, and could also include the Skidmore GIS Center.

November 2024 Skidmore Strategic Plan White Paper:
Accessibility Justice at Skidmore College

PROPOSAL: a united effort between administration, faculty, students, and community that takes a holistic approach to matters of systematic, physical, and academic accessibility at Skidmore College.

SUMMARY AND RATIONALE: The incorporation of Accessibility initiatives is imperative to supporting College's ongoing commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. For years, student initiatives regarding accessibility have been relegated to ensuring compliance with the technical specifications of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). However, ADA compliance only ensures that students can physically *enter* spaces – it does not work to ensure that they are equitably *included* in those spaces.

Though disability does not always visibly present itself to others, over 800 students (approximately 30% of the student body) are registered with Student Academic Services, and every year that number is increasing. Beyond that, there's a considerable population of disabled students *not* registered with SAS due to insufficient documentation due to an absence of consistent healthcare or other factors. Whether a student consciously identifies as disabled or not, the accessibility of campus can impact their ability to thrive as a student and community member. That said, the absence of accessibility efforts that go beyond the bare minimum affects far more students than one might expect: there's a deep stigma about disability and accommodation that follows disabled students everywhere, and without consciously making efforts to undo that harm, it will continue.

To better support existing students, increase student retention, and attract prospective students, Skidmore needs to acknowledge its room for improvement with accessibility and actively uplift conversations about it in collaboration with students. It is important to note that **the majority of these proposed changes are about systematic efforts which will strengthen the Skidmore Community overall,** not expensive renovations.

Existing student-run organizations regarding disability, including the Disabled Student Group (OSDI-funded organization), have put forth the following suggestions:

1. **Presidential Task Force on Accessibility**
Advancing accessibility efforts on campus will require consistent collaboration between relevant faculty, students, and staff in a space that has the status and network to enable consistent communication and improvement.

2. **Better Recognition and Promotion of Disability Studies Academic Programming**
Existing classrooms play an important role in creating space to facilitate conversations about disability that enable explorations of identity which are not always visible. The students who take these classes are almost always the same students who pursue advocacy efforts, because these classes play a key role in developing an understanding of the need to try to fix systems and not individuals. Skidmore already has several minors that emphasize the importance of marginalized narratives having a place in academic spaces, including Black Studies, Intergroup Relations, and Latinx Studies. Therefore, a Disability Studies minor would be a fantastic addition and could feature existing classes from a variety of disciplines including English, Education, and Sociology.

Questions? Email Ellery Shea '25: eshea4@skidmore.edu

3. Specific Training on Accommodating Access Needs for All College Employees

Many students in the Disabled Student Group have expressed that their supervisors at on-campus jobs are often untrained in how to ask about access needs or accommodate them. Additionally, full-time employees have attempted to refuse access to essential resources like the kitchen elevator at the Dining Hall (when the public one was broken) unless the person has visible proof of disability. This often results in inconsiderate interactions that may inhibit students from comfortably inhabiting essential spaces like their on-campus job, or fulfilling the expectations of that job. New York State already mandates that all college employees complete training tutorials such as "Shine a Light," as well as the Mandatory Sexual Harassment & Workplace Discrimination Training. But what if Skidmore did more, and mandated a training to guarantee the right that every student has to safely work and be respected by workers? By mandating that all college employees attend a training on how to professionally ask others about their access needs and ensure that they are met, many more students will feel welcome in the spaces they must interact within.

4. Updated Recommendations for Language about Accessibility in Course Syllabi

Many syllabi include follow a template that simply refers students to Meg Hegener if they have a documented accommodation they need to register. While this may work well enough for students registered with SAS, in no way does it remind students that they have the option to converse with their professors one-on-one. Direct conversations with professors can enable supports that may not exist elsewhere: for example, their department may offer an alternate testing location that is a lot closer to the classroom than the Annex – but by skipping the encouragement of that conversation, a student may never know they can safely and effectively advocate for themselves.

5. Transitionary Self-Advocacy Resources During New Student Orientation

According to conversations with SAS, there was once an orientation program for students adjusting to managing their own accommodations and self-advocating as part of college life. Following the pandemic, this resource was done away with. We believe this program, once called "Recipe for Success," should be brought back and readdressed to the entire student body, because everyone – regardless of whether or not they have documentation – has access needs that they may need to advocate for. Introducing access needs to everyone's vocabulary works to destigmatize students who need them.

6. Streamlined Report System for Access-Based Facility Needs

Right now, the only way to report damage to essential access devices like elevators and door openers is through making a phone call to facilities, which many community members do not have the time to do. By making a digital report system integrated with facilities that documents each time that a elevator or door button is broken, we will have better data on how often particular access points are breaking, which will help predict maintenance needs.

7. Student Transit System

With Health Services transitioning from Jonnson Tower to the Sports Center, it is now more essential than ever that Skidmore provides the option of transit to disabled students and other students in need. Although Skidmore is a small campus, its hilly terrain makes it difficult and exhausting for some students to navigate – especially when they are not feeling well. A transit system that runs on a schedule would ensure that these students can make it to the physical spaces to get the care that they need. In 2022, Skidmore purchased a wheelchair accessible van with this purpose in mind, but instead of hiring someone to drive it, it is now another vehicle used in the Campus Safety Fleet.

Questions? Email Ellery Shea '25: eshea4@skidmore.edu

We, the Skidmore Coalition for Palestine and other concerned students - totaling over five dozen signatures - would like to request that implemented in Skidmore's strategic plan is the following:

1. Recognition of Skidmore's partnership with companies complicit in Israeli apartheid and war crimes (this includes Sabra, Caterpillar, HP, and Oracle).
2. Disclosure of the investments that sustain our endowment.
3. An ethical investment policy statement that commits to divesting from all companies supporting Israel's crimes against humanity, looking to the organized, international BDS movement for guidance.

To ensure ethical investment, we request that Skidmore specifically divest from:

1. HP (Hewlett-Packard)
   a. HP-branded corporations supply technology used by Israel to uphold apartheid and occupation over Palestinians. This includes surveillance at West Bank checkpoints.
   b. Hewlett-Packard has documented violations of Palestinian human rights.
2. Sabra Hummus
   a. Sabra produces Middle Eastern-style food, including hummus, and is partially owned by the Strauss Group, which funds the Israeli military, specifically elite units like the Golani and Givati Brigades. These brigades are known for human rights violations and war crimes in Lebanon and Occupied Palestine.
   b. There are many alternatives to Sabra that can be bought and sold in its stead…in fact, such an arrangement was already in the works and can be easily reestablished.
3. Caterpillar
   a. Caterpillar bulldozers are used to demolish Palestinian homes, roads, and olive groves in the West Bank.
   b. The vehicles have also been used to build Israel's "security wall," which has faced international criticism due to it being a tool used for segregating Palestinians.

In terms of making things safer for Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim identifying students and faculty on campus we request:
1. Skidmore to publicly condemn Israel's genocidal actions towards the Palestinians, along with acknowledging the way modern Zionism operates as a form of anti-Palestinian racism.
2. Events where Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim speakers are centered and celebrated for their identities, specifically for Palestinian speakers.
3. Encourage professors with expertise to speak freely of their opinions on Israel/Palestine without fear of repercussion.

Skidmore's strengths that should be emphasized and further developed:

1.) Interdisciplinarity:
   a. Skidmore has effectively created opportunities for highly interdisciplinary programs and majors to flourish, such as International Affairs, MDOCS, Gender Studies, Entrepreneurship, and Neuroscience.
   b. These programs emphasize the interconnectedness of different disciplines and are a unique feature of Skidmore's academic offerings.
2.) Unique Resources:
   a. SMIC – a truly incredible resource, which outshines what most top-tier liberal arts schools can offer, including most of our aspirant institutions. The access that Skidmore students have to microscopy tools is truly unparalleled, and should be emphasized more. FYI, a group of Skidmore faculty just submitted an NSF grant to obtain a new and improved confocal fluorescent microscope, which if funded would even further improve SMIC's capabilities.
   b. GIS – a unique resource at Skidmore that is currently tucked away in the Library. It would be ideal to find a way to relocate this to CIS or a nearby space where it could be more visible and physically integrated with the sciences. Learning to use GIS software is a very useful skill that many students could benefit from.
   c. CIS – Skidmore has certainly been emphasizing the value of this new building. The building will need continued support and development to make sure that it stays up-to-date and effective at enabling high-level teaching and research in the sciences. I worry that this building was constructed on a budget that did not accommodate for future growth (no net gains in classrooms, no science amphitheater for talks, no loading dock, and very few empty spaces for new faculty). This will lead to the need for substantial creativity in finding room as the sciences continue to grow.
   d. The Tang – I include the Tang here, although I think it is already highly utilized and recognized as an outstanding museum.
   e. The IdeaLab – I include the IdeaLab here, although I think this is already getting utilized effectively by several courses and other student projects.
3.) Campus Location:
   a. Not only is Saratoga Springs a great town, but it is also located at the edge of the Adirondacks, with immense natural beauty and outdoor resources.
   b. Further developing that connection and emphasizing it to prospective students would be a valuable recruitment tool.
   c. Maybe programs could be developed to take students on weekend hikes in the Adirondacks during the semester, and this could be touted to touring students.

A small thing to consider:

1.) Provide a larger number of meal tickets to each department/program/non-academic office. These basically cost the College nothing, but improve morale, allow for C/PD/supervisors to feel more able to have community-building lunches, and allow faculty to join students for lunches without paying out of pocket. I would suggest approximately 10 tickets/semester/faculty-staff member.

WHITE PAPER: The Role of Pre-Professional Programs in Strategic Planning for Skidmore College

The Social Work (SW) and Education Studies (EDS) programs stand at a critical intersection of liberal arts education and professional preparation at Skidmore College. These programs are rooted in the historic tradition of mind and hand embodying the college's commitment to integrating theory and practice. Looking into the future, these fields address urgent societal needs, and the departments can enhance institutional sustainability.

Transforming Society Through Pre-Professional Education:

- As pre-professional programs, EDS and SW support the college's DEI mission by preparing future educators and social workers who will contribute to a socially just and democratic society. Through coursework and field experiences, our students develop strategies to create inclusive environments, implement systemic change initiatives, and engage in the challenging conversations necessary for transformative justice.
- EDS and SW address critical workforce shortages in education and social work by preparing professionals who can sustain long-term careers in these challenging fields and serve as leaders who adapt to changing societal needs.

Contributions to Institutional Sustainability:

- **Liberal Arts Integration:** The integration of pre-professional programs in the liberal arts framework strengthens student outcomes by equipping graduates with the intellectual depth and practical capabilities needed to excel in their professional roles. Pre-professional programs is a unique strength of Skidmore among its liberal arts peers.
- **Cross-Disciplinary Learning:** Examples of cross-disciplinary studies include EDS students collaborating with PS faculty on child development-related research, often using The Early Childhood Center as a research site. SW students engage with political science to conduct policy analysis and community assessments, and apply health science, sociological, philosophical, and psychological theories/approaches in their clinical practice.
- **Recruitment and Retention of Diverse Students:** SW and EDS have consistently high enrollment and growing student interest in specialized courses (e.g., bilingual education, special education, policy/practice, DEI-focused coursework), reflecting both students' commitment to social justice and their desire for professional preparation in these areas. This interest spans both domestic and international students, contributing to the diversification of these professional fields and demonstrating to stakeholders our commitment to serving diverse student populations.
- **Alumni and Donor Relations**: SW and EDS strengthen Skidmore's sustainability through robust collaboration with alumni relations and career services. Alumni in these fields provide mentorship, internships, and job placements, creating sustainable pathways to professional success while demonstrating the long-term value of our programs to prospective students, families, and potential donors.
- **Relationships with Community Stakeholders:** Our partnerships with local schools and social service agencies strengthen Skidmore's position as an engaged community partner responding to critical workforce needs and creating sustainable, reciprocal relationships between the college and local stakeholders.

EDS and SW prepare transformative professionals while strengthening Skidmore's position as a leading liberal arts institution. To sustain our contributions to Skidmore, institutional support to our programs could include:

1. **Enhanced transportation opportunities and coordination.** To support community-engaged work at Skidmore, adequate transportation is crucial for ensuring program accessibility and student development. In SW and EDS, removing transportation barriers by reimbursing students' travel costs and enhancing the college's fleet not only allows all students to participate in clinical/teaching experience regardless of having a license or access to a vehicle, but it also ensures the departments can place students in high-need settings (such as urban and rural settings) that expands their marketability post-graduation. To this end, **designating a staff member who can coordinate transportation** across Academic and Student Affairs for a wide range of community involvement, including co-curricular commitments, Bridge Experiences, Civic Engagement, internships, clinical practice placements (SW and ED) in high-need areas (rural and urban school districts), would facilitate efficiencies in the transportation costs for these high-impact learning experiences.
2. **Faculty to adequately staff required coursework and allow current faculty to teach specialized coursework.** Fully staffing SW and EDS allows for the provision of required coursework and the time for current faculty to expand offerings in their areas of expertise (e.g., special education, bilingual education). These are areas that are of great interest to students, allows for their increased professional marketability, and support critically needed areas in the fields of social work and education
3. **Additional support from Alumni Relations.** EDS and SW could benefit from support to strengthen our stakeholder partnerships through surveying alumni and sharing a list of alumni working in these fields.

Submitted by the Education Studies and Social Work Departments on November 20, 2024

Strategic Initiative: Increasing the Endowment for Need-Based Financial Aid

Skidmore's most recent persistence rate is 89.6%, higher than the national average of 82.9% for full-time starters; likewise, our most recent retention rate is 80.5%, compared to 74.5% nationally, according to the National Student Clearinghouse. "Financial difficulties" was only 21st out of 33 possible reasons for leaving in the 2023 survey of non-returning students. To the extent our admitted students are able to enroll and then continue to afford their educational experience at Skidmore, the potential for their engaged and meaningful participation to and contribution in the campus community is supported.

Unsurprisingly, institutional grant for returning (current sophomore/junior/senior students) students represents approximately three-quarters of the financial aid budget. The single biggest driver of increases in need for grant support by returning students is the increase in our costs of attendance. In addition to increases in our costs, there are other factors that influence increased need.

Key Financial Aid Policies Supporting Retention

1. **Upper-Class First-Time Applicants**

Students who attend Skidmore without institutional grant aid can apply for assistance if their family's financial circumstances change. This policy ensures that Skidmore adapts to evolving family needs. In 2024-25, 16 students who initially did not qualify for grant assistance demonstrated financial need for the first time and were awarded institutional grants. Without this flexibility, these students would not have been able to continue their education at Skidmore.

2. **Appeals for Family Financial Crises**

Skidmore's financial aid program responds to changes in families' financial situations—such as job loss, healthcare costs, or unexpected expenses. This policy reflects a community of care while ensuring continuity for students facing economic uncertainty. With 54% of the student body receiving institutional grants, Skidmore demonstrates both compassion and financial responsibility in addressing families' appeals.

3. **Support for Study Abroad**

Study abroad is a high-impact educational experience and an integral aspect of a Skidmore education. Skidmore ranked 6th among the top 40 Baccalaureate Institutions for study abroad participation in 2022-23. To make these opportunities accessible, financial aid is extended to cover additional costs like airfare and program fees. In Spring and Fall 2024, Skidmore allocated over $400,000 in additional grants for students participating in approved study abroad programs. As a record number of students plan to study abroad in Spring 2025, this need is expected to grow.

4. **Managing Average Indebtedness**

Skidmore is committed to minimizing student debt while ensuring access to a transformative education. The college's financial aid policies help reduce borrowing for families facing financial challenges, supporting student success post-graduation.

The Strategic Imperative

To maintain Skidmore's high retention rates and equitable access to transformative experiences like study abroad, the endowment for need-based financial aid must grow. This growth will ensure Skidmore's ability to respond to changing financial circumstances, support student persistence, and sustain the college's mission of academic excellence and opportunity.

Developing Robust Systems to Incentivize a Growth-Oriented Approach to Teaching

Skidmore College has long taken pride in its commitment to high quality, student-focused teaching. In recent years, we have seen unprecedented changes in technology (including artificial intelligence), student experiences (including the pandemic), insights into how the brain learns (including developments in cognitive neuroscience) and the headwinds facing small, residential liberal arts colleges (including the demographic cliff and political attitudes regarding higher education) that have challenged us to rethink long-valued strategies to support student learning. In order to support the value proposition that Skidmore offers a top tier, student-centered educational experience, the faculty and staff require opportunities to grow our capabilities as teachers that are comparable to our scholarly development.

This new strategic plan provides the potential to move towards an energized and exciting growth-oriented mindset for teaching. Our goal is to experiment with new approaches and strategies that might better support student learning and development as we respond to the changing reality of higher education. Through our work to understand Skidmore's systems for assessing teaching, the Working Group on Inclusive and Accessible Teaching and Learning has discovered that our current structures have very limited opportunities for developmental feedback that help faculty (across ranks and positions) and staff advance as teaching professionals. Instead, our current systems reinforce a "good enough" or fixed mindset that doesn't encourage further development once a certain rank or level of student ratings is achieved. There are neither robust supports nor incentives to adopt new pedagogical strategies that may better support the learning of <u>every</u> student.

We believe that a critical focus of the next strategic plan should be establishing systems that support and incentivize pedagogical development among the faculty and staff that are teaching at Skidmore. This is directly linked to the strategic areas of Academic Excellence and Creativity and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.
● We could build on our strengths in the Center for Leadership, Teaching and Learning and the Schupf Family Idealab by providing more robust budgetary and personnel support while also considering the other opportunities that might incentivize a growth-oriented mindset among the teaching faculty and staff.
● In a truly groundbreaking approach, we could also invite students to partner with us in revising our pedagogical approaches. One example of such programs is the Allies for Learning and Teaching being piloted by a group of students working alongside Lucia Hulsether and Juliane Wuensch.
● Skidmore could build on expertise in accessibility and inclusion to encourage more robust implementation of inclusive teaching approaches such as universal design for learning (UDL) and intergroup dialogues (IGD).
● We could explore new systems of teaching evaluation that structurally and formally recognize and value intentionally pedagogies that support all students.
● We could develop a more robust, on-going suite of incentivized opportunities to come together in community to implement pedagogical changes. These could include professional development communities similar to the AI Think Tanks or more radical changes through programs similar to the Academy for Course Innovation and Design (ACID), a semester-long laboratory for unconventional course development meant to enhance student accessibility and participatory learning through liberatory and critical hands-on pedagogies.
The above are just a few examples of the many other directions an initiative to support growth-oriented teaching could take. By simultaneously combining the strategic priorities of creativity and academic excellence along with our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, we can strengthen Skidmore's value proposition by establishing a culture of growth-oriented teaching.
Respectfully submitted,
    Aarathi Prasad, Associate Professor, Computer Science
    Beck Krefting, American Studies and Director, CLTL

Eilleen Sperry, Senior Teaching Professor, English
Jazmin Ruiz Hernandez '27
Jamin Totino, Director, Student Academic Services
Juliane Wuensch, WLL/German
Kayla Melendez '26
Kelly Sheppard, Chemistry and Faculty Director of Assessment
Kim Frederick, Chemistry
Lisa Grady-Willis, Intergroup Relations
Maggie Greaves, English
Oscar Pérez Hernández, WLL and Associate Dean of the Faculty
Xiaoshuo Hou, Sociology

A Center for Creative & Innovative Teaching & Learning to Support the Academic Excellence for Both Students and Faculty

Take-Home

Develop an integrated center to bring the Schupf Family IdeaLab, the Center for Leadership, Teaching, & Learning (CLTL), and Learning Experience Design & Digital Scholarship Support (LEDS) together with Assessment of Student Learning and Success, Health Professions Advising, Civic Engagement, Collaborative Research, Quantitative Reasoning, and the GIS. The Center for Creative & Innovative Teaching & Learning would be devoted to creative and innovative teaching, advising, and mentoring to support all of our students in meeting our high expectations for learning and development and preparing for their lives after college (***Strategic Planning – Creative & Academic Excellence and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion***). Such a center would better serve all our students and faculty by using available structures and programming on campus more effectively (***Strategic Planning – Sustainability***) and assessment work to improve student learning and inform faculty professional development (***Strategic Planning – Creative & Academic Excellence***). In addition, it would allow for better coordination of programming and events on-campus and obtaining external funding to support the initiatives (***Strategic Planning – Sustainability***). Such an integrated center would make transparent to all of our students how to engage in the transformative experiences in and out of the classroom offered at Skidmore (***Strategic Planning – Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion***) and communicate that education to the world to pursue opportunities beyond Skidmore. Such a center would clearly communicate the value of a Skidmore education to the world while supporting students throughout (***Strategic Planning – Creative & Academic Excellence***).

Motivation

Skidmore College is committed to the liberal arts and putting them into practice by cultivating the mind with the hand, where Creative Thought Matters is more than a slogan. It gets to the heart of the institution's goal of delivering a transformative learning experience for all our students. It is therefore not surprising that the top institutional values that emerged from Vision & Values were **creativity, curiosity, and caring** and that **close faculty-student connections, embracing creativity, and encouraging exploration and innovation** were Skidmore's top commitments. Critical to that education to support all of our students in meeting the high expectations of excellence that we have for them is a faculty who embrace creativity, innovation, and exploration through their inclusive and accessible teaching, advising, and mentorship of students.

Effectively delivering and communicating that transformative education for all of our students is even more critical now than it was during Skidmore's first century of existence, given the demographic changes ahead, a political climate questioning the value of a liberal arts education, and the ongoing differential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on student preparation for an elite, residential liberal arts college. The challenging environment we find ourselves in requires us to be even more intentional in student learning and development across the student life cycle with faculty members who are appropriately supported to cultivate academic excellence in our students through learning experiences both inside and outside the classroom. Given our financial constraints, we must leverage existing strengths and use resources more effectively.

Proposal

I, therefore, propose that we strategically partner the Schupf Family IdeaLab, the Center for Leadership, Teaching, & Learning (CLTL), and Learning Experience Design & Digital Scholarship Support (LEDS) into one center with multiple hubs to sustain and further strengthen the faculty as a whole as innovative and creative teacher-scholars, advisors, and mentors who support all of our students meeting our high expectations for learning and achieving their goals while at Skidmore and beyond. The partnering would integrate multiple different roles to more effectively serve our students, faculty, and staff on-campus and better position our students for success at Skidmore and in their lives post-Skidmore. It would also enable better highlighting and use of the Zankel Experience Network and improve coordination with the Career Development Center and Academic Affairs. The Center for Creative & Innovative Teaching & Learning would oversee and be responsible for the following:

- Schupf Family IdeaLab
- Faculty Professional Development
  - Inclusive and Accessible Pedagogies
  - Faculty Learning Communities
  - Scholarly & Creative Endeavors (SCE)
  - Integrating Scholarship into Teaching and Mentorship of Students
  - Integrating Experiential Learning into Courses & Curriculum
  - Preparing Students for Life after Skidmore
  - Advising
- Assessment of Student Learning and Success
  - General Education Curriculum
  - Departmental/Program Assessments
  - Cumulative GPAs
  - High Impact Experiences
  - Retention and Graduation
  - Post-Graduate Outcomes
- LEDS
- Periclean Honors Forum
- Collaborative Research (including the summer program)
- Health Professions Advisory Committee (HPAC)
- Civic Engagement and the Bridge Experience
- Geographical Information Systems (GIS) Center for Interdisciplinary Studies
- Quantitative Reasoning Review Team
- Coordinating with Sponsored Research, Corporate & Foundation Relations, and Advancement to pursue additional funding opportunities

To efficiently and effectively support such a center, integrating the LEDS Director, the Schupf Family IdeaLab Director, Director of the CLTL, the Faculty Director of Assessment, the Director of Civic Engagement, the Director of the Periclean Honors Forum, the Director of the Faculty-Student Summer Research Program, the Director of the Bridge Experience, the Health Professions Advisory Committee (HPAC) Coordinator (HPAC Chair), and the Director of

Quantitative Reasoning positions would be beneficial. What would emerge would be a Center for Creative & Innovative Teaching & Learning with the following positions:

- Executive Director – responsible for
    - assessment of student learning and success
    - faculty professional development, including inclusive and accessible teaching, leadership, SCE, and learning communities
    - serving on CEPP (ex officio) and the IPPC Subcommittee on Institutional Effectiveness (co-chair)
    - coordinating with Institutional Effectiveness Specialist (Accreditation Liaison Officer) regarding accreditation and institutional assessment
    - coordinating with the Wyckoff Center
    - coordinating with the Office of Student Academic Affairs and the Associate Dean of the Faculty for Student Academic Affairs
    - overseeing the Center for Creative and Innovative Teaching, supporting the center's directors, and coordinating their activities together to best support students, faculty, and staff
    - seeking out external funding opportunities and administering grants as warranted, coordinating with Sponsored Research, Corporate & Foundation Relations, and Advancement
- Director of the Schupf Family IdeaLab – responsible for
    - the Schupf Family IdeaLab to center creative and innovative pedagogies that push our understanding of what courses and classrooms are and related professional development
        - IdeaLab Manager would directly report to
    - supervising LEDS
    - coordinating with Start-Up Skidmore, Freirich Entrepreneurship Competition, and the Sands Family Foundation Initiative for Creativity, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship
    - seeking out external funding opportunities and administering grants as warranted, coordinating with Sponsored Research, Corporate & Foundation Relations, and Advancement
- Director of Experiential Learning and Discovery – responsible for
    - supporting civic engagement, the Bridge Experience, internship-for-credit, and collaborative research
    - faculty professional development to deliver such experiences, on how to integrate them into the curriculum, and to mentor students involved in those experiences
    - publicizing to students regarding opportunities available
    - assessment of these engaged liberal learning practices
    - coordinate with the Director of the First-Year Experience so all first-year students are aware of the opportunities available to them and how to get involved in those opportunties
    - serving as the academic affairs liaison with the Zankel Experience Network
    - coordinating with mDocs, the Tang Teaching Museum & Art Gallery, the CDC about the Summer Experience Fund and other opportunities, and with the Office of Student Academic Affairs regarding SEE-Beyond, and OSCE

- o overseeing the Faculty-Student Summer Research Program and the Periclean Honors Forum
  - o seeking out external funding opportunities and administering grants as warranted, coordinating with Sponsored Research, Corporate & Foundation Relations, and Advancement
- Director of Quantitative Reasoning – responsible for
  - o overseeing the Applied Quantitative Reasoning requirement
    - ▪ approving transfer credits
    - ▪ making sure students make timely progress
    - ▪ student quantitative reasoning placement
    - ▪ encouraging and supporting the development of new quantitative reasoning courses
  - o chairing the QR review team
    - ▪ approval of new quantitative reasoning courses
    - ▪ assessment of the Applied Quantitative Reasoning learning goals
    - ▪ assessment of the Quantitative Reasoning Placement Diagnostic and refinement
  - o faculty professional development around teaching quantitative reasoning and data analysis
  - o faculty and staff professional development regarding quantitative reasoning and data analysis/visualization
  - o assessment of quantitative reasoning use on-campus,
  - o supervising the GIS (direct report to)
  - o coordinating with SAS regarding effective strategies to support Peer Academic Coaches related to quantitative reasoning and data analysis
  - o seeking out external funding opportunities and administering grants as warranted, coordinating with Sponsored Research, Corporate & Foundation Relations, and Advancement
- Director of Student Professional Development & HPAC – responsible for
  - o chairing HPAC and the bulk of the HPAC advising, writing committee letters, keeping the website up-to-date, and working with the CDC to host events and let students know about opportunities
  - o keeping articulation agreements up-to-date and strategically seeking out new opportunities
  - o providing support to pre-engineering advising and Senior Codas
  - o professional development of faculty
    - ▪ as advisors for students, not just to navigate the curriculum but also how to help students develop into professionals
    - ▪ on how to integrate career development into the curriculum (*e.g.,* the St. Mary's College of Maryland Chemistry & Biochemistry model), and
    - ▪ on how to write effective letters of recommendation and serve as references for students
  - o assessment of the work, including Senior Codas
  - o coordinating with the CDC and the Zankel Experience Network

- seeking out external funding opportunities and administering grants as warranted, coordinating with Sponsored Research, Corporate & Foundation Relations, and Advancement

The structure would also work if the Director of the Expository Writing Program and the Director of the Writing Center were merged into one Director of Writing who is also part of the Center for Creative & Innovative Teaching & Learning. The Director would oversee the Writing Center, the Writing requirement, and the assessment of student writing for both the Writing requirement and the In-the-Major writing requirement. The director would also provide faculty professional development on how to teach writing. Having the Director of the First-Year Experience under the center might also make sense.

Benefits

The integration to create such a center would enable the college to support better student learning and development, engagement with high-impact transformative experiences, and preparation for life post-Skidmore by helping faculty stay up-to-date in their teaching, advising, and mentoring (***Strategic Planning – Creative & Academic Excellence***) that is inclusive and accessible to all (***Strategic Planning – Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion***). There would be greater transparency about opportunities available to students and how they connect with student aspirations at Skidmore and beyond to benefit all students, especially first-generation students and other marginalized students (***Strategic Planning – Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion***). That transparency would start in the first year and continue through graduation. Skidmore would be better positioned to use existing structures and programming more effectively and in an integrated manner (***Strategic Planning – Sustainability***). Faculty members would be better able to sustain their work (***Strategic Planning – Sustainability***). Skidmore could also pursue more external funding to support such a high-quality educational experience for our students (***Strategic Planning – Sustainability***).

A Center for Creative and Innovative Teaching would communicate to prospective students and families that Skidmore is a leader in delivering a high-quality liberal arts education that matters by being transformative for all of our students so they can be successful in their post-Skidmore pursuits. The integration would better facilitate assessment results leading to action, including faculty professional development, to support better student learning and development (***Strategic Planning – Creative & Academic Excellence***). It would also build capacity to pursue and use external funding and meet accrediting expectations (***Strategic Planning – Sustainability***). LEDS would be better used and connected to academic affairs (***Strategic Planning – Sustainability***) to benefit our students (***Strategic Planning – Creative & Academic Excellence***). The QR development for faculty and staff would help with institutional effectiveness and telling our story to the outside world (***Strategic Planning – Sustainability***). Bringing all the positions together into one center would make it easier to coordinate events so each is better attended and effective (***Strategic Planning – Creative & Academic Excellence*** and ***Strategic Planning – Sustainability***).

With HPAC primarily handled by the director role, it would free up the OAA staff on HPAC to spend more time supporting all students at Skidmore and other initiatives on-campus (***Strategic Planning – Creative & Academic Excellence***). The workload would dramatically decrease for faculty members on HPAC, so they would serve more in an advisory capacity rather than as advisors, allowing them to re-direct time to other parts of their job responsibilities (***Strategic***

Planning – Creative & Academic Excellence). Pre-health students would be better supported in supporting professional programs and other students on campus (***Strategic Planning – Creative & Academic Excellence***). Such a director would also better support first-generation students and other students without parents in the health professions to pursue their career goals (***Strategic Planning – Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion***).

Altogether, Skidmore would be better positioned to support the student life cycle in a manner that would allow the institution to be a sustainable leader in higher education and communicate to the world the value of a Skidmore education.

Skidmore Strategic Planning White Paper: Strengthening Skidmore's Brand and Reputation for a Changing Future

Submitted by: Elizabeth Stauderman, Sara Miga, Julia Marco, Mike Sylvia, and Martha O'Leary, Office of Communications and Marketing; Jessica Ricker, Janessa Dunn, and Deanna Doughty, Office of Admission

In today's challenging higher education landscape, Skidmore College must prioritize strengthening its brand and reputation to ensure a sustainable future. Higher education, especially the liberal arts and sciences, faces demographic, economic, political and social headwinds. As our Strategic Plan focuses on internal and programmatic improvements, it must also prioritize external visibility – particularly awareness, reputation, and public identity. *"Creative Thought Matters"* is more than a motto – it's a model that makes Skidmore unique. It's a reason students choose Skidmore, a connection that unites alumni and donors, and an inspiration for our employees. To thrive in today's rapidly evolving higher education environment, Skidmore must focus on brand strength and reputation as fundamental drivers of admissions, fundraising, and recruiting – both to attract and retain excellent faculty and staff, and to build interest from recruiters, organizations, and graduate schools that will provide our students with post-college opportunities.

Prioritizing and continuing to invest in Skidmore's brand and reputation will strengthen Skidmore's position in an increasingly competitive market. Investing in our brand supports every strategic planning goal, helping us:
- Define and communicate Skidmore's unique value proposition, encapsulated in *"Creative Thought Matters"* and elaborated on in our Visions and Values work.
- Increase national and international awareness of our academic excellence and post-graduation outcomes.
- Expand our institutional awareness and geographic reach to address enrollment challenges.
- Drive critical fundraising efforts, to ensure that Skidmore is a sought-after philanthropic partner.
- Foster innovation in all areas of the academic enterprise.
- Build community morale through times of change.

The following efforts are priority areas of investment for brand strength:
- Marketing and Advertising: Expand paid digital outreach to build brand awareness in key growth markets with a high potential ROI.
- Website: Continue to build out a dynamic, distinctive brand experience to attract students, engage alumni and donors, and communicate the power of our curriculum.
- Engagement: Strengthen connections within and among social communities and influencers and further invest in traditional media to connect with parents, alumni, and the public.
- Messaging: Refresh brand guidelines and messaging platforms to communicate the value of a Skidmore liberal arts and sciences education for professional success.

A compelling, consistent brand is essential for securing long-term financial sustainability. A strong brand heightens the visibility and reputation of the College and increases the value of a Skidmore degree with compounding interest. Skidmore is an extraordinary place: a diverse, creative, and caring community committed to academic excellence. Let's tell everyone about it.

11/24

Skidmore Strategic Planning White Paper: Data, Technology, and Innovation

Submitted by: Elizabeth Stauderman, Sara Miga, Julia Marco, Mike Sylvia, and Martha O'Leary, Office of Communications and Marketing

The Skidmore College workforce faces a rapidly accelerating need to interpret, decide, coordinate, respond, and collaborate seamlessly. Our capacity to meet this demand effectively and confidently depends urgently on a robust technological infrastructure. The rapid innovation in resources like AI presents an invaluable opportunity the College must seize to advance our work.

Concurrently, we have:
- Aging physical infrastructure and technology
- An increase in technology demands and expenses
- Systems that don't work together, can't share data, and are patched through short-term means

This has created an environment where:
- Data sharing and/or maintenance (e.g., email addresses; student, donor, and applicant information) can be complex and cumbersome, reducing our power to operate confidently and expeditiously
- Purchasing of enterprise systems is siloed, impacting our total operational costs, contract negotiation power, governance, and ultimate ROI of existing solutions
- Cyber security vulnerabilities are high and our ability to quickly respond is a challenge as critical and confidential information exists across numerous, insecure, ungoverned systems
- Outdated and isolated systems limit data sharing opportunities, hamper productivity and impede both administrative and academic functions

As a strategic priority, a focus on data, technology, and innovation could empower us to set goals and implement tactics that will:
- Position Skidmore as a forward-thinking institution
- Streamline purchasing and governance of major technologies to curb financial waste
- Bolster our ability to implement new, time-saving and ability-expanding tools such as generative AI in all areas of the college
- Address aging technology infrastructure alongside other physical plant priorities
- Inform future hiring and skill development decisions
- Integrate critical systems, fostering a culture of data sharing for faster administrative processing, smoother experiences for our stakeholders, and more confident decision-making
- Establish clear, well-defined governance with explicit responsibilities for implementation and management
- Fortify our cybersecurity, safeguarding sensitive data and confidential business matters both in internal systems and those that are publicly facing, such as our website
- Meet the expectations of external audiences seeking modern, meaningful digital engagement with Skidmore's people and programs and help ensure compliance and accessibility

11/24

<u>Addendum to the White Paper for the 2025-2030 Strategic Plan</u>.

1. Like Skidmore, the other NY6 colleges invite well-known guest professors, scholars, musicians and artists for a lecture or a performance.   If Skidmore can coordinate with our NY6 peers, we may be able to invite some of the same guests to Skidmore too. As the visitors are already in the area, it will be less expensive and time consuming for Skidmore to invite and host them.

2. Skidmore has the employee appreciation program, where someone from the Skidmore community can show their appreciation to a Skidmore employee by sending them a Thoroughbred Thanks. We can also have a similar program where someone can make a money contribution to Skidmore Cares in their honor, and the money can go to one of the local non-profits that Skidmore supports. Eg., some non-profits allow a person to make a contribution in someone's honor. And the non-profit will send a message/card to the person who is being honored. Similar to Thoroughbred Thanks, Skidmore Cares can send a message to the employee that a donation has been made in their honor.

Thanks,

Subhan Ali

White Paper – Suggestions for Skidmore 20225-30 Strategic Plan

Skidmore residential halls: The winters in Upstate New York can be dark, cold and dreary, so it becomes very important that students find their residence halls and apartments warm and inviting. The college has 8 residence halls (not including apartments) comprising of approximately (I think) of 31 floors (including 10 for Jonsson).   Here are a few suggestions that we can do to make the residential halls a warm and welcoming place for our students:

1. Some common areas on the residence floors should have day-light therapy lamps. These are not very expensive to buy - https://www.amazon.com/dp/B00PCN4UVU/?tag=thewire06-20&linkCode=xm2&ascsubtag=F0401HZT38XPMJXNNGA4MXDY10NKW
2. Have nature wallpaper (rainforest, beach, mountains) in residence hall common areas. Psychological studies have shown that even looking at photos of nature reduces stress levels in people. College life can be a stressful experience, if there is something the college can do to it make it less stressful, why not?
3. Have some potted plants in the common areas of the residence floor. It will give the common area a natural and outdoor feeling. It helps reduce stress levels and makes a better student experience. Also, potted plants do not cost that much.
4. Pilot Program: A few administrative offices can adopt a floor in a residence hall, and work with students living on that floor to make it more appealing to them.
5. Some of our residence halls do not have proper air-conditioning. Some days in September and October can be quite hot, and it can be an uncomfortable experience for students if they live in a residence hall that does not have proper air-conditioning.
6. Psychology students can conduct a study to see if changes improve student wellness.

Faculty/Staff Student Networking events:

Many students do not get to interact with the professors outside the classroom and office hours. We can create a sense of community by increasing informal networking between faculty/staff and students. One suggestion would be for professors to have monthly breakfast, lunch or dinner with the students in their class.   Or it can be a monthly "Pizza With Professor" or "Coffee & Cookies with Professor". For example, professors in a Department invite students in their class for an informal monthly breakfast, lunch or dinner in the DHall, (or pizza or coffee in the Department). Students are welcome to come and go as they want, and join the professors for an informal chat about their class, the weather, politics, sports or anything under the sun. If it is in the DHall, the Department can offer meal tickets to any student not on the DHall meal plan. (Side note: We recently started doing this with our international students and the response has been quite good).

SCOOP: It helps students connect and bond with other students, so by the start of the school year students have already have a group of friends and are at home at Skidmore. Please make SCOOP program free and essential for all incoming students.

Hiking Bus: Organize a once or twice a semester bus to Lake George, Adirondacks High Peaks, Saratoga Battlefield (history & nature), Saratoga State Park or Moreau Lake State Park. This can be coordinated with student clubs like the Skidmore Outings Club.

SKELI – Skidmore English Language Immersion summer program is defunct. It used to help international students adjust to life at Skidmore. This program should be reinstated.

Hate Crimes: Past few years, there have been many stories of Asians being attacked in NY and other cities. This has created fear and anxiety among Asian students and their families. Suggestion: Skidmore should come out with a strong statement that the safety and well-being of our students is our top-priority. If we can get the Mayor's office, the City Council and the Police chief to issue similar statements can make the students from Asian countries, BIPOC & LGBTQ students feel more welcome in Saratoga.

College Credit for Volunteering and funding for Unpaid Internships: Increasing Funding for unpaid student Internships – Skidmore should encourage students to volunteer or do internships every summer. The students have more than 3 months free every summer. Some do internships, some volunteer or do research, but a majority do not or are unable to do internships. Skidmore should require all students to do 4- 6 months of internships, research or volunteer during their time at Skidmore. Skidmore should offer college credit for volunteering with a local fire department, EMS, Red Cross or Habitat for Humanity, or other civic engagement activity.

Presidential Fellows: Skidmore should establish a Presidential Fellows program for a new or recent Skidmore graduate. Skidmore has many talented and passionate students, the Presidential Fellows program will allow the fellows to create and implement innovative student programs and share their ideas and passions with the students.   The Fellows can be provided free tuition, housing and a stipend (to keep costs down).

Strategic Planning for Campus Sustainability - Submitted by the CSL Subcommittee on Sustainability

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In the next five years, Skidmore College should continue to increase awareness and action for sustainable measures enacted on campus. This paper presents the reasoning for strategic planning to increase support for environmental sustainability from a student perspective. The initiatives proposed will benefit student life and the College's continued welfare in areas such as admissions, college sustainable leadership, and contributing to long-term campus integrity.

Skidmore has implemented multiple initiatives that benefit student life and the campus. With sustainability-focused events such as the SGA Green Grant, Gardenside Sustainability Community, student-run compost programs, and sustainability-focused student jobs, the college offers many opportunities for students to be involved with sustainability on campus. In recent years, sustainability has been increasing in demand from students applying to institutions of higher learning.

How can Skidmore implement sustainability in education, student life, and strategic planning?
- **Educational Incorporation-** sustainability class requirement for students to increase sustainable literacy and awareness throughout the all-college curriculum by incorporating a living lab approach
- Increase **resource awareness** and management to students - single-use plastics reduction, increased water fountain availability, promoting **awareness** of resource use (e.g., heating and water conservation)
- **Sustainable Dining-** dining hall options that prioritize sustainable food options along with increased vegan and vegetarian food options
- **Goal Setting-** Skidmore should establish SMART/short-term goals aligned with the Campus Sustainability plan that may made available to students
- **Sustainable Infrastructure -** enhance infrastructure sustainability to improve sustainability ratings and increase **On-Campus** Solar to support students' education and engagement, therefore improving Skidmore's **admissions appeal** to prospective students interested in sustainability

How can Skidmore aid in raising student engagement?
The leadership of Skidmore College should
- develop an incentive mechanism to reward the students for their engagement in campus sustainability;
- provide more opportunities for faculty-student research projects on environmental sustainability and finance for these projects; and
- develop and implement on-campus and off-campus service-learning programs (e.g., volunteer trips to the local environmental education centers and travel seminars) and encourage the students to assume a leadership role in these programs by applying learning/ living-lab opportunities and connecting the campus to diverse education opportunities.

Skidmore is an environment for learning, and sustainability initiatives will enhance the educational value of our institution by awarding students responsibilities that will help them develop integral skills to manage future environmental challenges. Expanding sustainability in the strategic plan will allow Skidmore to match efforts amongst peer institutions that have already made significant advances in their sustainability such as carbon neutrality, advanced sustainable curriculums, and net-zero pledges. Advancements like these will allow Skidmore to remain competitive as a small liberal arts institution. By modeling environmental sustainability through our institutional choices, Skidmore demonstrates a commitment that resonates with increased student expectations for colleges to enhance their sustainability efforts. These advancements will increase appeal for prospective students, especially those who hold sustainability as a core value. Skidmore's priority on sustainability will also serve as an example for the Saratoga community and further empower local residents, Skidmore students, and educators.

White Paper: How the Tang Fulfills Skidmore's Strategic Priorities

The Tang Museum, as both a national academic museum leader and a distinctive campus resource, embodies Skidmore's strategic priorities by fostering creativity and academic excellence; adding to the College's endowment; enriching the residential student experience; promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion; and committing to sustainability. The Tang enhances the academic environment and promotes a vibrant, inclusive community that prepares students for a diverse and interconnected world while serving as a town square for the college and a key factor in admissions, alumni and community engagement.

1. Creativity and Academic Excellence

- The Tang inspires innovative pedagogy and scholarship: 102 faculty members integrated 153 courses in FY24 with exhibitions and collections; Tang-specific courses include "Psychology in the Tang," "Writing in the Tang," "Math in the Museum" and others.
- Engagement with contemporary art fosters students' critical thinking skills and creativity.
- The Mellon Faculty Seminar has taught 138 professors how to teach with objects.
- Skidmore faculty have co-curated 51 exhibitions, enriching academics at Skidmore.
- The Tang's 90 publications feature 127 contributions from faculty and 55 contributions from students, showcasing their scholarship beyond the Museum and campus.

2. Increasing the Endowment for Need-Based Financial Aid

- The Tang's endowment has grown from $2.8 million to $28.4 million, which alleviates College budget pressures, even as the Tang provides more vital services to campus.

3. The Residential Student Experience

- ROOM•MATE, which allows students to borrow artworks for their living spaces, creates a vibrant campus culture that integrates art into daily life.
- The Tang's numerous visiting artists, talks, and workshops provides a central hub for campus life. For example, the Tang hosted 31 student-organized events in FY24.
- In FY24, the Tang employed 47 student interns, welcomed 58 student volunteers onto the Student Advisory Council (SAC), and presented six student-curated exhibitions, providing all of them with extraordinary pre-professional experiences on campus.

4. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

- Since opening in 2000, the Tang has consistently focused on the work of historically underrepresented artists, most notably women, Black and Queer artists, thereby broadening the narrative of contemporary art and who gets included.
- Visiting artists routinely come from historically underrepresented groups (based on gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, and sexuality) to give talks, lead workshops, and meet students, expanding understanding of the complexities of the human experience.

5. Sustainability

- The Tang's growth in collections, staff, and service to the College has been sustainable through robust fundraising - the Tang is a consistent beacon to external funders.
- In addition to important endowment growth, the Tang's goal for the annual fund was raised to $400,000 two years ago. The Museum has surpassed that goal each year.
- In the most recently completed capital campaign, the Tang was one of six priorities with a goal of $20 million. The Tang brought in $31 million.
- The Tang was also one of the first buildings on campus to use geothermal energy and seeks to implement energy-saving updates in its lighting and window systems.

White Paper on Enhanced Tang Capacity

Since opening in 2000, the Tang has solidified itself as a site of distinction, creativity, and academic excellence that advances Skidmore's liberal arts mission and strategic agenda. In both the 2015 strategic plan and in the 2022 Master Plan, the Tang has remained a Skidmore priority.

Changes and Challenges
- In recent years, the Tang's capacity has been challenged by exceptional increases in class use: 4,602 student visits in FY23 and 3,856 in FY24 (the previous record was 2,499 in FY19). So far this fall, there have been 77 class visits and 1,147 student visits.
- In FY24, a record number of faculty—102—worked with the Tang, giving their classes access to diverse ideas, artists, and artworks through creative and rigorous pedagogies.
- The new gen-ed integrations have led to more Scribner Seminars at the Tang, as well as new Bridge, Senior Experience, and Racial Justice Initiative courses, including Tang-centered courses like Black Panther Party Archive and Psychology in the Tang.
- Larger class sizes have also been a challenge. In FY19, 25 class visits had 20 or more students; FY24, 59 class visits were that large. Large classes are too big for the Print Study Room, so they get split up or take up other museum spaces.
- The Tang collection's growth also consumes space. The collection storage area was an active classroom for 15 years. Now there is no longer enough space for class visits.
- These curricular spaces (Print Study, collection storage) once made the Tang unique among academic museums. Today, peer and aspirant schools have expanded or will expand their museums, diminishing Skidmore's competitive advantage.
- More students are making the Tang central to their Skidmore experiences. In FY24, 44 paid interns and 58 volunteer members of the Student Advisory Council learned about all areas of museum work; however, space is often tight for students to perform their duties.
- Students, departments, and offices all hold special events at the Tang, in addition to the Tang's own public programs. In FY24, the Tang hosted 248 events. Capacity constraints, however, resulted in 15 event requests being denied, including student club events.

New Opportunities
This year, the Tang worked with Oudens Ello Architecture on a feasibility study of what enhancing the Museum's capacity would look like. The study proposes an addition with new classrooms, multi-use event spaces, a screening room, and open collection storage. These spaces build upon and extend the Tang's unique role as a site for Skidmore excellence and would:
- Meet the greater demands by faculty, students, and staff for use of the Tang for curricular, co-curricular, and broader community/town hall-like needs.
- Provide a signature conference and event space to accommodate convenings that combine meetings, panels, workshops, screenings, talks, receptions, and dinners, such as the Board of Trustees meetings as well as other gatherings, conferences, and symposia.
- Signify object-based teaching and learning as distinctive and central to Skidmore.
- Provide space to enhance Skidmore interns' pre-professional experiences, directly assisting Admissions and alumni relations.
- Expand the number of available classrooms for classes of all disciplines.
- Fulfill campus DEI efforts by making the diversity of the Tang collection more accessible and visible, with active teaching and learning spaces
- Create Skidmore's first dedicated screening room to meet rising faculty and student interest in the theory and practice of film and video.

**The Center for Intercultural Understanding, Community, and Justice
at the Tisch Learning Center**

Prepared by: Lisa Grady-Willis (Director of the Intergroup Relations Program, IGR), Winston Grady-Willis (Director of the Black Studies Program), and Oscar Pérez Hernández (Associate Dean of the Faculty)

Respect, understanding, dialogue, and collaboration across differences are crucial for building inclusive, resilient, and just communities. Humanities and social sciences departments and programs at Skidmore have played a vital role in fostering these values by equipping students with tools to engage meaningfully with diverse perspectives and global challenges. Establishing the Center for Intercultural Understanding, Community, and Justice at the Tisch Learning Center will continue and strengthen this tradition by bringing together humanities and social sciences departments and programs with an aligned vision.

The Center (naming opportunity) will serve as a hub where students, faculty, and staff can explore and celebrate global cultural diversity, foster a commitment to social justice, and reimagine the role of humanities and social sciences in our community and beyond. By prioritizing these themes, the Center will aim to cultivate empathetic, responsible global citizens prepared to excel in their personal, academic, and professional lives.

The Center will require a collaborative and thoughtfully designed infrastructure and resources to support its mission, but it will also take advantage of existing structures and enable possibilities to manage resources more efficiently. The Center will transform the current Tisch Learning Center into a centralized location on campus with dedicated spaces for learning, research, and collaborative activities. It would create synergies between the current departments and programs located in the TLC and potential new occupants (e.g., Black Studies, Gender Studies, Intergroup Relations, Latin American, Caribbean, and Latinx Studies, and Social Work, among others). These are some ideas for key features:

- Intercultural Learning Studio: A multimedia-rich classroom to host workshops, classes, and videoconferences with invited speakers. This room will enable experiential learning, equipped with projectors, audio systems, and seating arrangements for group work.
- Community Commons: A flexible, open space for creative expression and community building. A space for students, staff, faculty, and alums to come together in support of experiential and community-engaged learning.
- Resource Center and Study Lounge: Stocked with academic materials, literature on social justice and sustainability, and multimedia resources, this space will support both research and casual reading. Comfortable seating and private study areas will encourage reflection, quiet work, and informal conversations.
- Ombuds Office and Mediation Room: This space could house a campus ombuds person and provide students and faculty access to culturally sensitive mental health resources and conflict-resolution services, promoting emotional wellness and intercultural empathy.
- Updated classrooms to enhance student collaboration and new pedagogies.

The Center will be the anchor to reimagine the humanities and social sciences at Skidmore, providing opportunities for close collaboration with departments, programs, and offices across the college. Core departments and programs could potentially pool resources and collaborate on shared programming to improve coordination, strengthen impact, and reduce overlapping. The chairs and program directors of the core participants could rotate as leaders of the Center to avoid additional administrative infrastructure (many departments and programs already share administrative assistants). It would be the natural academic counterpart and partner to the Wyckoff Center. The Center will serve as an inclusive, dynamic space for academic and personal growth. By emphasizing creativity, academic excellence, and social justice, the Center will inspire students and faculty to become well-rounded scholars and compassionate global citizens committed to fostering equitable communities.

Fall 2024 Strategic Plan White Paper—The Humanities at Skidmore

Proposal: We propose that Skidmore College reassert and expand its commitment to the humanities, and that it endorse humanistic education as vital to all our students and their learning. We propose that Skidmore remain bold, and grow even bolder, in its commitment to the humanities as a core institutional principle, a keystone in every student's Skidmore experience, whatever the student's major.

We seek both institutional encouragement of and long-range investment in the humanities. For the humanities effectively and powerfully serve our institution's mission by educating our students in critical thinking and deepening their understanding of the importance of civic engagement. The humanities can help provide urgent value sets and moral guardrails to our students' (and our culture's) political-economic thinking. In a world of generative AI, the humanities teach difficult and necessary skills, such as interrogating what is taken for granted, conducting research that calls into question hidden assumptions and creatively, rigorously poses new questions–work of the human brain unrelated to automation. We believe as humanists that we prepare students for citizenship, and our work advances President Conner's institutional commitment to free speech and academic expression.

We ask that decision-makers consider the intangibles (such as our reputation and brand) as well as the tangibles (such as class enrollments). Both provide compelling evidence for the strength of the humanities at Skidmore.

Rationale: We cite two consequential arguments that shape the thinking of this proposal. First, from Sarah Blackwood's argument in the April 2, 2023 issue of The New York Review:

This [institutional] disregard [of the humanities] is demonstrated in most universities' built environments, real estate investments, hiring practices, staffing ratios, and unwillingness to direct resources toward the humanities even in appropriate balance with the often substantial revenue they bring in. I heard in these young people's comments a real awareness of the funding priorities of the colleges they attend. Students are quick to associate those priorities with their job prospects: when it comes to deciding on a major, they sense that their own personal, intellectual, and creative interests don't really matter at all.

Second, from the November 4, 2024 issue of The Chronicle of Higher Education, speaking to the contemporary moment yet also germane to possible future inflection points, Aman Khalid and Jeffrey Aaron Snyder write:

We need to recommit to the humanities and historical learning….This generation of students'…understanding of politics has…been shaped by…public discourse since 2015….To that end, it is also important to recognize that Americans can learn something from other countries. The inward worldview steeped in American exceptionalism is preventing us from seeing the many ways in which other societies have dealt with authoritarianism. This is not the time to nix the humanities and foreign-language departments where students acquire these skills, but to bolster and buttress them.

Strategic Planning and Commitments
We request the following:

- Foreground the humanities in future branding efforts.
- Develop a humanities-focused admissions tour.
- Improve built environments for the humanities to ensure a functioning and attractive physical presence on campus. Without this, the second bullet won't—and does not—happen. Students and parents alike infer the degree to which the humanities are valued based on the physical plant. As was made clear from the 2022 Campus Master Plan, addressing physical plant challenges is a priority need that facilitates both student and faculty recruitment and fosters a sense of belonging, well-being, and thriving. As detailed on page 22 of the plan, Palamountain, one of the most-utilized buildings on the campus, needs a major renovation, especially of its classrooms, including more seminar-style rooms essential to much modern humanities instruction as well as student-welcoming spaces for study and sociability—all with stylish, clean, updated décor in functioning condition. These material improvements signal in tangible ways that the humanities are valued at the College.
- Maintain visibility of the humanities within the curriculum (specifically, Expository Writing, Humanistic Inquiry, and Language Study), for all curricula tell a story. Curriculum is a key place for displaying institutional support for humanities study. Here we are asking that the College continue its commitment.
- Support high profile events and programming that signal to humanities students and faculty that their work is consequential. With financial resources directed toward the humanities, we could consider any of the following initiatives: a Humanistic Inquiry Center (not a building but a suite of programming); a campus Writer's Studio, where student authors can gather to workshop work, to write together, to connect and network laterally; a Skidmore Book Club that hosts each semester a discussion of a selected campus author's (both faculty and alumni/ae) work; a campus-wide program of student Writing Fellows and Public Speaking Fellows, prestigious positions that students compete for. Known as "experts" in their respective craft, these Fellows can be assigned courses to be consultants for; they can be invited into a class for a coaching or demonstration. They might be selected to introduce speakers to campus or, through an apprenticeship with Communications, to write a Skidmore blog or to create a podcast, all educational opportunities that advance our students in their career preparedness.
- Sustain commitment to secure and support an outstanding humanities faculty; improved hiring and staffing ratios for the humanities; continued financial investment in humanities-related professional development, publication efforts, conference travel, sabbatical leaves, and service-related course releases.

Submitted by Skidmore humanists,

Asian Studies Program, Joonwon Park (director)
Department of Classics: Dan Curley (department chair)
Department of English: Tim Wientzen (department chair); Barbara Black and Joseph Cermatori (co-signing)
Department of History: Jennifer Delton (department chair)

Department of Philosophy: Larry Jorgensen (department chair); Silvia Carli and Peter Murray (co-signing)
Department of Religious Studies: Ryan Overbey (department chair)
Department of World Languages and Literatures: María F. Lander (department chair)

We are a college situated at the forested, often snowy, often cold, base of the Adirondack Mountains. So why are we decorating our spaces like a corporate Californian office? The new furniture on the first floor of the library creates, sure, a very "modern" looking environment, but it is modern and disconnected from the actual environment it is situated in. When it is a 10 degree night with snow coming down hard outside, it feels strange and unsettling to be greeted with geometric orange and grey cubes. I think the library, and other spaces around campus, would benefit from an embracing of where we are in the world. We are in the Northeast- an old area with rich history. Imagine a snowy night in the library with furniture and décor more along the lines of wood and warm tones, rich warm textures and deep chairs to sink into once you've brushed the snow off your shoulders. It is cold and precipitating most of the year here- even when it is not winter, we have almost as many grey drizzling days as Seattle. Skidmore would benefit from embracing its location and digging into the uniqueness of it, instead of following the trend of what is seen as "modern" across the nation. It would also be beneficial for marketing the college experience. With an increasing number of colleges adopting the same strange corporate furniture and décor, it would make Skidmore stand out to offer something unique- this is a small college based on rich, unique, creative character, with a deeply involved student body. That is fantastic, and offers a very personal college experience. Let's make our campus look like it. That warm creative spirit, and wonderful location.

This is also an essential concept that should be carried into the second item I'd like to stress. Skidmore has a complete lack of indoor "third spaces". This is devastating for the residential and social experience of Skidmore. Case Green is great to hang out on- for 2 months out of the academic year. What about the rest of the time? There are almost no spaces on campus to casually hang out and work, or mingle and meet other people in a friendly, casual and

comfortable environment. This may not be visible from an administrative perspective, but it is true. This is what drives many students to hang out in classrooms on the weekends, because there is nowhere else to do that. Case Center is great, but too open and impersonal to make up for the kind of space we are lacking. The Saratoga Room changes are a great step. Dorm common rooms have the spirit of a soulless airport lounge- but worse, given no windows or tables to do things like play board games on and the oppressive cold florescent lights. Not to mention that common rooms have very little sound-reduction, and the dorm rooms surrounding them will struggle to sleep if a loud group is hanging out in the common room. We need third spaces. Desperately. The Johnson Tower Penthouse is a great example, and maybe the only example, of a potential existing third space on campus. It could see a lot more utilization if the appeal of the space was improved through things like cleaning the windows (they are dirty) and even a light level of decoration to make it cozy- a rug or two, some plants, and string lights would be a cheap way to make the space more appealing. But regardless, there is a desperate need for more small to medium third spaces on campus, where several groups of students can comfortably sit down and enjoy a board game or do work in comfortable and easy proximity. The Joto Penthouse is a great size to go off of though when thinking of potential new third spaces- roughly the size of a classroom would be great. And as mentioned earlier, let us embrace our terroir and uniqueness, and create cozy and welcoming vibes in these spaces through warmth. Lamps, string lights, plants, rugs, even some hangings on the wall potentially would be good (and serve to dampen noise, which is critical especially for common rooms. Rugs would help with this as well). All in all, it saddens me to see Skidmore favoring a more soulless, "modern" style of campus. Let us embrace our amazing creative uniqueness, create cozy havens that potential students get excited about seeing themselves in, and make the Skidmore experience stand out from any other.

<u>**Undergraduate Research White Paper**</u>

Juan Navea, Lia Ball, Madushi Raththagala, Steven Frey, Kelly Sheppard

At Skidmore College, our unwavering dedication to undergraduate research sets us apart as a leading liberal arts college. To achieve even greater excellence and impact, we must continue and expand our investment in these transformative experiences. As we prepare students to thrive in an increasingly complex world, research experiences provide unparalleled opportunities for hands-on learning, critical thinking, creativity, and personal growth, by engaging in open questions that require nuanced and integrated analyses. **Strengthening this investment is essential, as it not only bolsters students' academic and career readiness but also deepens faculty engagement, aligning closely with our mission to foster liberally educated, well-rounded graduates**.

Primarily Undergraduate Institutions (PUIs) are known for the individualized learning experiences they offer, a key factor for students when choosing a college. Skidmore College has a strong tradition of providing research opportunities throughout the academic year and summer. **These experiences are pivotal in preparing our graduates for success and empowering them as lifelong learners and responsible citizens**.

Today, especially in the sciences, the line between research and teaching has become increasingly blurred. Graduates are now expected to have had hands-on research experience that bridges theoretical knowledge with practical application. At Skidmore College, opportunities for undergraduate research enrich classroom learning, giving students a more integrated and comprehensive understanding of their fields while fostering a wide range of skills. **Importantly, Skidmore College's commitment to undergraduate research also plays a pivotal role in advancing our effort to strengthen diversity, equity, and inclusion.** Collaborative research in every discipline has to be critical in supporting a diverse and inclusive learning community and increase retention by offering underrepresented students a strong sense of community and belonging.[1] Thus, **continued investment in undergraduate research is essential for providing a pathway for students from underrepresented backgrounds at Skidmore College**. By exposing students to research opportunities, we address systemic barriers to participation, **supporting our mission to cultivate a more inclusive and diverse student environment**.

Support for undergraduate research during the academic year and summer also fosters faculty scholarship, stimulates external funding by faculty members, and enriches student learning in transformative ways. **These goals are achieved synergistically, making collaborative research an especially effective use of college resources.** Over recent years, the college's investment in undergraduate research has acted as a catalyst, leading to high-value grants that, in turn, have fueled further growth in undergraduate research experiences and enhanced the college's reputation.

Our recent investment in the Billie Tisch Center for Integrated Sciences (BTCIS)—a facility dedicated to fostering collaborative educational and research experiences—underscores our commitment to this high-impact faculty-student collaborative research. Here, undergraduates work closely with faculty, developing skills and perspectives that significantly impact their academic and personal growth. Undergraduate research fosters entrepreneurial skills by teaching students how to troubleshoot, manage projects, navigate adversity, and embrace calculated risks. Strengthening these programs will unite students from various disciplines in a dynamic environment that encourages creative thinking, expands their aspirations, and solidifies their academic foundations.

[1] Guo, F. et al. Promoting the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Organic Chemistry Education through Undergraduate Research Experiences at WSSU. Education Sciences. 2021. 11(8)

Barber, P. H. et al. Re-Envisioning Undergraduate Research Experiences to Increase Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and Harness the Power of Diversity in Ocean Sciences. Oceanography. 2024. 36(4): 22-34

Cooper, J., K. Jabanoski, and M. Kaplan. Exploring experiential opportunity impacts on undergraduate outcomes in the geosciences. Journal of Geoscience Education. 2019. 67(3):249–265,

To maintain Skidmore College's position as a beacon of undergraduate research, it is essential that we continue and expand interdisciplinary research opportunities that appeal to new generations of prospective students. In doing so, we solidify Skidmore College's role as a forward-looking institution, where students and faculty collaborate closely, preparing students to lead, innovate, and contribute meaningfully to their fields and society.

In summary, strengthening our commitment to undergraduate research at Skidmore College enhances student success, supports faculty scholarship, aligns with our mission, and positions Skidmore College as a leader in liberal arts education:

- **Enhances Student Success:** Research links theory and practice, making graduates more competitive and capable.
- **Foster Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:** Undergraduate research fosters diversity by giving underrepresented students hands-on learning and support networks, opening pathways to STEM careers and inclusion.
- **Provides an Arena for Creativity:** Research is a creative endeavor that provides students and faculty with the opportunity to design, innovate, and invent.
- **Supports Faculty Engagement in Student Education:** Fosters a collaborative environment where faculty engage in meaningful research with students.
- **Aligns with Institutional Mission:** Reinforces our commitment to fostering liberally educated graduates.
- **Distinguishes Skidmore College in Higher Education:** Positions Skidmore College as a premier institution for students seeking a hands-on, individualized education.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as a Strategic Initiative for Skidmore College's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Plan Theme

Introduction - As Skidmore College prepares to craft its new Strategic Plan, it is essential to reaffirm our commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) by embedding innovative approaches that support our mission of providing an inclusive and dynamic liberal arts education. One such approach is the adoption of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as a strategic initiative under the DEI theme. UDL offers a framework that fosters flexibility in learning environments, meeting the diverse needs of all students and ensuring equitable access to educational opportunities.

What is Universal Design for Learning? - Universal Design for Learning is a research-based educational framework that encourages the creation of flexible learning experiences tailored to a wide range of learners. UDL is built on three core principles: providing multiple means of representation, action and expression, and engagement. These principles ensure that all students, regardless of learning style, background, or ability, are afforded the opportunity to succeed academically. By designing courses and curricula with UDL principles in mind, Skidmore College can create more accessible and inclusive learning environments that reduce barriers to student success.

The Case for UDL at Skidmore College - Skidmore has long been committed to fostering creativity, critical thinking, and inclusivity across all facets of the student experience. By integrating UDL into our strategic plan, we can enhance our ability to support students from diverse backgrounds, including those with disabilities, first-generation students, and those from historically underrepresented groups. This initiative aligns with Skidmore's mission of cultivating a campus culture that values and respects individual differences while advancing the College's DEI goals and reflects our dedication to not only meeting legal obligations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) but going beyond compliance to proactively support student success.

UDL also embraces the latest technologies that create equitable access to learning. Tools like screen readers, captioning services, and flexible digital resources allow students to engage with course content in ways that suit their individual needs. This integration of technology ensures that learning remains accessible, dynamic, and effective for everyone. This initiative would position Skidmore as a leader in accessible education, enhancing both student retention and academic success.

Strategic Benefits of UDL

1. **Improved Student Outcomes**: UDL's inclusive design promotes academic success for a broader range of learners, increasing retention and graduation rates by providing more accessible paths to learning.
2. **Faculty Engagement and Development**: UDL supports ongoing professional development for Skidmore faculty, encouraging them to adopt inclusive teaching strategies that reflect best practices in higher education pedagogy.
3. **Institutional Leadership in Inclusion**: By adopting UDL, Skidmore College will demonstrate its leadership in fostering an educational environment that celebrates diversity and inclusion, positioning the institution as a model for accessible liberal arts education. This recent article from Educause discusses a growing trend around how IHE's are using UDL as a means to "creating equitable and inclusive environments and experiences."
4. **Alignment with Skidmore's DEI Values**: UDL is an extension of Skidmore's commitment to diversity and equity. By embedding UDL in our teaching and learning practices, the College reinforces its dedication to creating an environment where all students, regardless of background or learning style, can thrive.

Conclusion

Incorporating Universal Design for Learning into Skidmore College's Strategic Plan is a bold and forward-thinking step that aligns with our values of creativity, inclusivity, and academic excellence. By making UDL a central component of our DEI initiatives, Skidmore will enhance the learning experience for all students while reinforcing its commitment to accessibility and equity. UDL represents a long-term investment in the success of every student and will ensure that Skidmore remains at the forefront of inclusive, student-centered education.

This initiative is being submitted by Jamin Totino, Associate Dean of Student Affairs - Student Academic Services (SAS) as a cross divisional collaboration and is supported by 17 faculty and 6 staff

Strategic Initiative: Increasing the Endowment for Need-Based Financial Aid

How Institutional Grant Enables Enrollment of the Most Academically Prepared and Diverse Students at Skidmore College.

Financial aid is vital to Skidmore's mission, making it possible to enroll a diverse and academically strong student body. However, today's rising costs and growing demand for aid make it increasingly urgent to expand Skidmore's endowment for need-based grants. In fact, grant aid represents our investment in our future.

The Role of Financial Aid in Enrollment and Excellence

- **Academic Quality and Diversity:** Nearly 80% of applicants now seek financial aid, a significant increase from 70% a decade ago. Among Skidmore's most academically qualified applicants, 90% of those who enroll are grant recipients.
- **Revenue and Selectivity:** Institutional grant aid is an investment that allows Skidmore to enroll 705 new students each year. Aided students are three times more likely to enroll than full-pay students, supporting enrollment stability and selectivity, which enhances Skidmore's market appeal.

Why the Demand for Financial Aid is Growing

Rising Costs vs. Family Income:

- According to Trends in Higher Education 2024 published by the College Board, the price at private non-profits increased by 74% in the 20 years from 1994-95 to 2024-25 after adjusting for inflation, while the median family income in the U.S. increased by 39%, from $72,340 to $100,800 during the same time period. Skidmore's price has increased by an inflation-adjusted 63%, over the past 20 years. Private higher education price increases significantly outpace family income.

Broader Need Across Income Levels:

- College sticker prices are expected to continue increasing, and outpace both families' willingness and ability to pay. The need for assistance spans from families at poverty levels to higher-income families feeling the impact of tuition inflation. At our 2024-25 cost of $88,000, even families with incomes over $400,000 may qualify for financial aid, when they have multiple dependents in college.

The Strategic Imperative

To remain competitive in a challenging higher education landscape, Skidmore must make affordability a cornerstone of its strategy. Financial aid is essential for maintaining our position and supporting our mission.

Call to Action

Over the next five years, Skidmore must prioritize endowment growth for need-based aid to meet the rising demand and sustain accessibility for future generations of students. This investment is critical to uphold Skidmore's commitment to academic excellence, diversity, and affordability in a competitive market.

Skidmore Strategic Planning White Paper:
Enhancing our capabilities with a cloud-based (Software as a Service) student information system

In the coming years Skidmore will face a number of challenges with respect to technology. For this paper on our student information system we've listed some of those challenges from most to least easily quantifiable impact; software licensing and support costs, soundness of technical environment and utilization of technology.

Our student information system (Banner) is currently an "on-premises" application, software that is purchased outright and saved, stored or running on college owned infrastructure. This model can be misleading because although we purchase the software as a one-time expense there are recurring costs associated with maintenance and infrastructure running into the six figures range. This is particularly problematic since the application doesn't not meet our needs fully leading to additional software purchased to fill the gap.

Looking at our technical landscape there are a number of areas where we should exercise caution. We have made a conscious decision to trend towards cloud applications, Software as a Service (SaaS), for our major platforms. Banner is the last of our Enterprise level applications which hasn't undergone this transition. Moving in this direction enforces an environment where we don't create insular technical customizations, which make upgrades difficult or impossible, and we are protected from falling behind the current version of the software. Since the application is housed and processed on infrastructure maintained by the vendor we take advantage of the scale and capabilities of IT Security infrastructure we would not be able to financially justify building out. All of the above elements allow for enhanced functionality while saving considerable time and resources and ensuring that we have access to the latest technology and IT Security infrastructure.

There are a number or new functionalities within technology today which provide a myriad of benefits. As we analyze our technical landscape we want to ensure we have access to that functionality and the capabilities that come with it. Our current on-premises student information system is behind current technological standards resulting in decreased functionality, decreased integration of software infrastructure and missed opportunities. Moving to a more modern platform will allow us to streamline process, more thoroughly interconnect the data and functionality in our systems and give access to a new way of understanding and interacting with our students, staff and faculty. This would offer everyone new tools with which they could innovate, enhancing process and improving efficiency.

Recommendations:

- Assess, plan out and execute on a student information system implementation. Work towards signing a long-term contract keeping pricing flat for as long as possible.
- Increase connections technology between systems and with users
- Promote a culture of asking "how can we best leverage technology" nascent, unowned or owned

Although the recommendations above support all of our strategic themes with the exception of "Endowment for need based financial aid" these concepts most align with sustainability.

Dwane Sterling

White Paper on the Potential for Expanding the Compost Program

   Skidmore College is devoted to sustainability and makes impactful choices to limit our harm to the environment. We are also in a privileged position to be able to do so. Not merely financially, but because we are a community. We can share knowledge and skills, teaching each other and sharing responsibility. This proposal seeks to expand these programs and introduce a new stream of revenue.

   The rollout of composting bins to academic buildings is a step in the right direction, but have surveys been done to see who uses compost bins on campus? What would help more people use the compost bins? Do we have methods to encourage people who haven't composted in their own kitchens before? How could we expand the use of the composting system in our community?

   We need not limit our community to the college grounds, many people might be happy to compost, but are limited by space, knowledge, capital, or time. Could we expand the composting service to the local area? Proving buckets for a small fee, and having a drop off/bucket exchange location on campus? How many of the faculty and staff might be interested in composting? What do the many restaurants downtown do with their food waste? Going beyond the physical community, how many other schools in the Hudson Mohawk Association have robust composting programs?

   Having collection points at the farmer's market or other community spaces could eventually be phased in. If a restaurant is willing to partner with the college, could they become a drop-off point? If space or the speed of composting presents a hurdle, how deeply have we explored vermicomposting? If the initial costs of expanding the program seem insurmountable, would we able to partner with the city or county? Many composting programs sell the humus – the nutrient rich soil that results from composting, if we increased scale enough to sell humus and charged for people off campus, we could introduce a dual income stream for the program.

   In a world where governments, even well–meaning ones, are slow and unapproachable, groups of concerned citizens must take responsibility to better our world. And when we are doing a good job, we shouldn't stop patting ourselves on the back, and instead find ways to help others do the same.

The Departments of Classics and World Languages and Literatures' Fundamental Role in Fostering Creativity and Academic Excellence

Proposal for the Strategic Plan 2025-2030

Studies across cognitive science, linguistics, education, and psychology demonstrate that learning a language goes beyond acquiring vocabulary and grammar; it develops cognitive flexibility, problem-solving, adaptability, and cultural competence—skills that are essential for navigating an interconnected world. These qualities help students excel in any profession and prepare them to meet the challenges of modern life.

The college should continue to prioritize language study because linguistic and cultural competencies are crucial for addressing issues of belonging, personhood, and equity, both nationally and globally. Language learning also supports a wide range of academic fields across the sciences, social sciences, and arts, offering students valuable skills that contribute to their professional and personal growth. Also, for racialized students, language study can be a powerful tool for reclaiming their cultural heritage, fostering retention, and enhancing their sense of belonging. All these skills align with the college's commitment to preparing graduates for global markets and diverse professional environments.

The Departments of Classics and World Languages and Literatures propose:

Strengthening the foreign language requirement to ensure that all students graduate with upper-intermediate proficiency. This will ensure that students develop essential communication skills that enhance adaptability and problem-solving. Additionally, combining language study with professional pathways, such as in Environmental Studies or Social Work, will allow students to apply their language skills in real-world contexts. Collaboration across departments to align course offerings with student interests and career pathways is essential. Interdisciplinary majors and minors can attract students to smaller programs and enhance their value.

Skidmore's study abroad participation rates are another valuable asset, with more than 50% of the Class of 2024 studying abroad. Language learning should be more intentionally integrated with these international experiences to strengthen Skidmore's position as a leader in global education. Organizing events with international focus will also help engage students and highlight the richness of world languages and cultures.

Academic Affairs must resist pressures to prioritize the sciences at the expense of the humanities. While the sciences are crucial, the humanities—including language and cultural studies—are equally important in fostering creativity, critical thinking, and cultural understanding. These qualities are fundamental to Skidmore's identity as a liberal arts institution and its commitment to academic excellence. It is essential to protect the humanities and ensure equitable resource allocation to maintain the integrity of the liberal arts mission.

Smaller classes, especially in specialized or upper-level courses, should be viewed as opportunities for high-impact, individualized learning, not liabilities to be eliminated. Increasing class caps or canceling under-enrolled courses undermines the quality of education and limits access to specialized subjects. A course-based teaching model would ensure that workloads are

balanced across departments and help protect low-enrollment but high-value courses. Maintaining academic rigor while addressing financial constraints is key to preserving a well-rounded liberal arts education. Small class sizes and diverse course offerings are central to Skidmore's educational experience and should be safeguarded.

Investing in faculty development and supporting programs aligned with diversity, equity, and inclusion will ensure the success of these initiatives. Strengthening communication strategies will also help showcase the strengths of smaller or less visible departments. Providing students with opportunities to explore a broader range of disciplines early in their academic careers will allow them to discover and engage with programs that match their evolving interests. Finally, encouraging flexible course delivery methods and supporting faculty as they adapt to new teaching challenges, including AI in education, will keep Skidmore's academic offerings dynamic and responsive to student needs.

By continuing to invest in language, culture, and the humanities, Skidmore can maintain its commitment to providing a well-rounded education that prepares students for success in an interconnected world.

Respectfully submitted by

The Departments of Classics and World Languages and Literatures.