

Students in Associate Professor of Theater Eunice Ferreira's *Theater for Social Justice and Change* class engaged in an intergenerational community partnership with local groups *Black Dimensions in Art (BDA)* and *MLK Saratoga*, with further support from a Mellon-funded project with the *MDOCS Co-Creation Initiative*.



Applied Civic Engagement courses that emphasize the value that community-based research brings to scholarship. Topics range from gender and intersectionality in political marketing to educating parents in the digital age.

For the Skidmore Bridge Experience, a new requirement of the general education curriculum, students critically examine how power and justice have shaped the experiences of people with a variety of identities in the United States and how they have responded to the reality of inequality in their lives. A practice and application component of the course calls on students to reflect on their own positions in their communities and on campus, and to connect their study of power, justice, and identity to other areas of their education and their everyday lives.

It's not uncommon for the volunteer component of Skidmore courses to inspire deep personal reflection, and it's the crux of the EN 105 writing seminar *What's In It for Me?* Brenda Pashley-Rabbitt, a lecturer in the English Department and academic counselor and peer academic support coordinator for Student Academic Services, asks her students to take on a community service project and then ponder its impact on self and community as a foundation for their writing in the class.

Arianna Cruz '24, who volunteered with the organization *Camp Good Mourning!*, offering bereavement services for children between the ages of 7 and 17 who have lost a parent or sibling, reflected on how profound an impact the opportunity had on her life. "It has been the most rewarding experience," she wrote. "I know that everything I've done to help CGM! has had a positive effect on grieving children.

Not only that, but in giving my time I have reaped so many benefits, including pride and satisfaction, enhanced communication skills, valuable networking acquaintances, and a greater perspective on what it really means to be a responsible member of the community. It goes to show that kindness and good deeds have a way of coming back to you."

Eric Morser, professor of history, faculty director of civic engagement, and director of the Bridge Experience, says he feels fortunate every day he comes to campus and works with Skidmore faculty who are committed to civic engagement. "Their classes are innovative, robust, inspirational, and important. They challenge students to apply what they learn in the classroom to address real-world problems and, in the process, teach them to be critical thinkers and good citizens."

Even beyond the curriculum, civic engagement is an integral part of Skidmore's culture, observes Michelle Hubbs, director of community service programs.

From the campuswide effort behind the College's annual Skidmore Cares donation drive, to the community service projects undertaken by athletic teams and organized by resident assistants for their halls, to the student clubs that make it their mission to give back, examples of responsible and generous citizenship abound.

"What I love about Skidmore is that civic engagement and community service are really embedded throughout the College," Hubbs says. "You'll find it everywhere."

SKIDMORE-SARATOGA CONSULTING PARTNERSHIP:

# A Secret Treasure

by PETER MACDONALD

For more than 20 years, the Skidmore-Saratoga Consulting Partnership has generated fresh, impactful ideas for local nonprofit, for-profit, and arts organizations, an important example of how Skidmore courses are making a difference in the local community.

A few years ago, Elizabeth Sobol, president and CEO of Saratoga Performing Arts Center (SPAC), joined the students of the Skidmore-Saratoga Consulting Partnership (SSCP) to thank them for the amazing work they had done for SPAC, calling SSCP "Saratoga's secret treasure." The Skidmore students had just completed an intensive, 12-week consulting practicum with SPAC to produce a 40-page deck of their research and findings and a PowerPoint presentation with their recommendations.

With a mission of making an impact and "making North Broadway shorter," — the Skidmore-Saratoga Consulting Partnership engages with three clients each semester, usually a mix of not-for-profits, for-profits, and arts organizations.

In the cultural arena, SSCP has previously consulted with Caffé Lena, Universal Preservation Hall (UPH), Saratoga Arts, Northshire Bookstore, Saratoga Springs Preservation Foundation, and Pitney Meadows Community Farm, among others.

When Colleen Burke, executive-in-residence and director of the program, first pitched the idea of having SSCP provide pro bono consulting services to SPAC, Sobol was receptive, thinking it could be a good opportunity to build a closer relationship with Skidmore.

Sobol recalls putting a single hour on her calendar. That first conversation ended up lasting two and one-half hours, and the partnership was sealed.

"The students had so many questions, so many ideas, so much energy," says Sobol. "We were getting a huge amount of value out of the students' questions and perspectives, and it was also a significant learning experience for them. We were both mentoring and being mentored."

Burke is adamant that she isn't going to let any deliverable go out to the community that isn't an A+. She is also quick to point out that the success of SSCP comes from many sources: the willing collaboration of Skidmore faculty members; the interdisciplinary liberal arts curriculum; and the diversity and inclusivity of the campus community, to name some.

In true Skidmore fashion, SSCP students bring a variety of majors to the mix — math, physics, social work, political science, studio art, dance, philosophy, and more — which brings multiple perspectives to class discussions and consultant teams.

A growing Skidmore alumni network is also crucial to SSCP's success. Some graduates come back from their consulting firms — Deloitte, Accenture, Ernst & Young (EY), KPMG, Kantor, and IBM Consulting — to recruit SSCP students for internships and entry positions. Others come to SSCP classes in person or via Zoom to share their expertise. Bill McKendree '74 from the Clarion Group, Amy Munichello '94 from EY, Tess Mattimore '16 from IBM, and Jack Sloan '18 and Mark Purowitz '87 from Deloitte have had a huge impact on the course, says Burke.

The idea for a Skidmore-Saratoga partnership was developed by Economics Professor Roy Rotheim in 2000. Since Burke inherited the partnership in 2013, SSCP has consulted for more than 60 local businesses and organizations, including Saratoga National Bank, Saratoga Eagle, Wellspring, Saratoga Senior Center, Habitat for Humanity, the Daily Gazette, and Artisanal Brewery.

Many of the clients implemented SSCP's recommendations: Healthy Living Market added the family-owned image to its public story; Saratoga Today adopted its "blue box" identity; bike lanes and bikeshares appeared on the streets of Saratoga Springs after SSCP engaged with the Capital District Transportation Authority and the city Mayor's Office; and the Saratoga Farmer's Market changed its foot traffic flow after SSCP consultants flew a video drone over the market to capture disruptions. The YMCA and Pitney Meadows even appointed SSCP graduates to their boards of directors.



Members of the 2019 Skidmore-Saratoga Consulting Partnership team that provided recommendations on positioning SPAC as a cultural destination. From left, Roman DiPasquale '19, Emily Einhorn '19, SPAC President Elizabeth Sobol, Bella Rinskaya '19, and Ian Carter '19.

In addition, SSCP students are occasionally offered positions at client organizations. Aaron Rosenblum '20, a business major and arts administration minor, consulted with and was subsequently hired by Yaddo, the retreat for artists here in Saratoga Springs.

"More than anything, our team brought a youthful perspective to Yaddo," says Rosenblum. "I think that is a big part of what SSCP brings to local businesses — a curiosity and fresh thinking that brings things into a different light and creates new possibilities."

Back at the 2019 Skidmore team presentation for SPAC, a guest from the Abu Dhabi-based parent company of semiconductor producer GlobalFoundries, headquartered in nearby Malta, New York, was so impressed, he quickly hired two SSCP students: Roman DiPasquale '19, a Filene Music Scholar (violin) and business major, and Sonju Mohan '19, a double major in business and economics.

DiPasquale's SSCP team focused on positioning SPAC as a cultural destination. They interfaced with about two dozen cultural leaders, from SPAC board members to the UPH president to the head of the Chamber of Commerce.

**"People were excited to be involved and talk to one another, and they were impressed with what we brought to the table. 'Oh, you're Skidmore students — Wow!' they said."** — Roman DiPasquale

SSCP and SPAC are now in conversations about fall 2022, when the new SPAC School of the Arts may become an SSCP client.