



## Reaffirmation, Recommitment, and Renewal

### The Strategic Action Agenda: 2011-2012

October 2011

As we enter the seventh year of the current *Strategic Plan*, we will focus our energy on three major themes that express different dimensions of the *Plan's* four goals:

1. Diversity and Inclusion;
2. Science at Skidmore; and
3. the Civic Engagement and Transition and Transformation Initiatives.

These themes represent our highest current priorities, and they will receive ongoing attention and emphasis throughout the coming months. In support of this and other work, we also will attend to issues of shared governance; financial capacity and planning (including, specifically, optimization and compensation); and reinvigorating our use of the phrase “Creative Thought Matters.”

#### **THE BROADER CONTEXT**

##### ***Reaffirmation***

For the 2011-12 academic year, we once again have welcomed another very promising entering class, one that continues the recent trend of increasing academic preparedness and diversity among our new students. Specifically, standardized test scores are up slightly for this new class, and we have maintained the gains we saw last year in their Academic Quality Ratings (as determined through the admissions process). 26% of our new students self-identified as students of color in the admissions process (the same as last year)<sup>1</sup>, 6% are international students (up from 4% last year and 3% in the previous year), and 6% are U.S. citizens holding a second passport. The Class of 2015 also includes 42% men – a higher proportion than in the past several years (last year's number was 36%). This year's acceptance rate was 42%, as opposed to 47% last year. The College's continuing attractiveness to prospective students and their families remains a significant indicator of the perceived value of a Skidmore education, and we must continue to do all in our power to maintain our positive trajectory, even in the face of increasing competition from other schools trying to do the same.

Over the summer, we were pleased to receive a strong reaffirmation from our recent Middle States Periodic Review. Following upon our last full review in 2006, the Periodic Review focused on the First-Year Experience, science education, and intercultural and global understanding; the reviewers' report cites progress in each of these areas. We also received praise for our various assessment initiatives (including “the articulation of Goals for Student Learning and Development”), and the report notes that the College's overall financial condition is “very

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<sup>1</sup>As has been our practice, in reporting this number we include international students who have self-identified as persons of color. The percentage of domestic students of color in the class of 2015, as reported in IPEDS, is 20%. Last year this number was 23%.

favorable.” As expected, the reviewers also offer a number of suggestions, which we will carefully consider. Sarah Goodwin and her team deserve great credit for their excellent work in moving us through this process.<sup>2</sup> Skidmore’s admirable performance on so many measures stems directly from the commitment of our faculty and their accomplishments in the classroom (lab, studio) and beyond (in their research and creative activity); this work is supported by the efforts of personnel in Student Affairs and in the other offices and divisions across the College.

### ***Recommitment***

Nevertheless, as seems ever to be the case, we continue to confront a range of issues that merit our attention and call for our best efforts. As a starting point for describing these issues and indicating our plans for addressing them, I want to reaffirm a number of values that inform our vision of the Skidmore College we aspire to create. First among these is the value of academic excellence, which we hold as the primary measure of accomplishment for ourselves and our students throughout our teaching and learning. Next is the central challenge at the heart of our *Strategic Plan*: *to ensure that our campus environment reflects our values, supports our educational mission, and remains conducive to the success of all of our students, not some or even most of them.*<sup>3</sup> Understanding that we all, especially our students, may have different personal definitions of success, we nonetheless are convinced that our curriculum and other resources enable us to challenge and support our students so that they may meet our standards and realize their individual aspirations.

As we contemplate the work before us this year, it also is helpful to remind ourselves of Skidmore’s broad conception of liberal education, rooted in our historical commitment to educating both “mind and hand”:

Merely to value ideas, however, is not enough. For the project of liberal education itself is grounded in an ethic of concern that aims not just to transform the lives of individual students but to empower them, ultimately, to transform the world: increasing the store of human knowledge, rising to the challenge of social problems, creating works of art that lift the human spirit or reveal previously unseen aspects of the human condition, parenting well, increasing our collective wealth, helping to realize the promise of democracy, and through service giving back to the human community more than they take for themselves. If this is to occur, our students must learn how to put their ideas into effect: to make their creative thoughts *material*. For the *un*-embodied thought – the building that is designed but never built, the novel envisioned but never written, the peace plan proposed but never implemented – remains decidedly *unreal*, a mere chimera, an illusion. Thus the very notion that *creative thought matters* is grounded in Skidmore’s dual legacy of *mind and hand, episteme and praxis.*<sup>4</sup>

This willingness to help our students understand how their education relates to issues they will encounter throughout their lives enhances the value of the core skills that still define what we expect our students to learn – critical reading, effective writing, the capacity to connect multiple perspectives, and so on. After all, we believe that a liberal education offers the best possible preparation for a life of professional achievement, no matter what fields of endeavor our graduates may choose to enter. So the idea that our students will apply what they learn at Skidmore in many different areas of work is built into our educational mission.

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<sup>2</sup>The Middle States Periodic Review team comprised the following individuals: Sarah Goodwin, Lisa Christenson, Beau Breslin, Rochelle Calhoun, Corey Freeman-Gallant, Kathryn Gallien, Winston Grady-Willis, Ann Henderson, Mark Hofmann, Barbara Krause, Susan Kress, Debra Peterson, Muriel Poston, Paty Rubio, Joe Stankovich, and Michael Thomas. *The Periodic Review Report* is available on the Assessment at Skidmore College web site: <http://cms.skidmore.edu/assessment/>.

<sup>3</sup>*Engaged Liberal Learning: The Plan for Skidmore College 2005-2015*, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup>*Strategic Plan*, p. 7.

**PRIORITIES FOR 2011-12*****Diversity and Inclusion***

Skidmore's commitment to *engaged liberal learning* also finds expression in our attention to the values of *intercultural and global understanding* and *informed, responsible citizenship* – the subjects of Goals II and III in the *Strategic Plan*. If our graduates are to live and work together effectively and in peace in our heterogeneous democracy – and, indeed, in a world increasingly marked by interaction among and across disparate cultures – they must develop a set of personal and intellectual capacities that we have described under the heading of *intercultural literacy*. These capacities represent fundamental dimensions of Skidmore's particular expression of the values of liberal education.<sup>5</sup> In order to help our students achieve these educational goals, we have set a course toward becoming *a more diverse and inclusive community* – one whose membership better represents the world in which our students will live, and one in which everyone feels fully included regardless of background. The importance of these objectives and our awareness of the distance we still must travel to achieve them were reinforced for us last year, when the Compton's incident and its aftermath brought heightened attention to underlying fault lines within our campus around unresolved issues of race, class, and inclusion.

We regard ourselves as an inclusive community, both in aspiration and in fact, and in many ways we live up to this ideal. But we also need to acknowledge that the events of last spring caused genuine pain to many within our community and that, as a community, we still have important work to do. The fact that we have succeeded in enrolling a considerably more racially, ethnically, economically, and internationally diverse student body has strengthened us as an institution and opened many new possibilities for the education of all our students. Unfortunately, our progress in diversifying our student body has not yet been paralleled by a proportional increase in the diversity of our faculty, staff, and administration – a situation that requires our renewed commitment to remedy. Moreover, it is clear that much remains to be done to increase the capability of all our faculty members to deal effectively with a more diverse and increasingly multicultural classroom. Some of our students are telling us of barriers they encounter to learning in the classroom. It is important that we listen to them and find ways to remove those barriers – so that we can continue the work of teaching and learning that remains our central focus. In short, we must renew our determination to provide outstanding educational opportunities for *all* our students, and I call upon academic departments and individual members of the faculty to lean into this work.

One important indicator of issues that we need to address is the troubling persistence of incidents involving intolerance that our students continue to experience. In April 2011, the Bias Response Group conducted a survey of all students to assess student awareness of and experience with bias incidents on campus. Those survey participants who responded that they had experienced an incident of bias were most likely to identify residence halls, downtown Saratoga Springs, or the classroom as the location for the incident. Reports of bias incidents involved homophobia and other issues as well as racism, which is simply to say that we have work to do on a number of fronts. As part of our institutional response, the Office of Student Affairs this fall launched a very promising initiative, "Everyday Leadership," that now has trained over 400 student leaders on strategies for intervening personally in situations where they perceive behavior that is inconsistent with our institutional values.

I hereby reaffirm my personal commitment, as President, to provide leadership in this area to help the College move forward toward a better future. If we are to "be the academic community we seek to become," we must continue to increase the capacity of *each* of us – every member of our community, including every member of the faculty, staff, and administration – to

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<sup>5</sup>See the *Strategic Plan*, pp. 7-8 and Goals II and III.

engage in meaningful dialogue about issues relating to race, class, sexual orientation, disabilities, and other markers of difference that can divide us as a campus community (and indeed that can divide our nation and the world). A number of strategic agenda items included below speak directly to these topics, and I ask that everyone in the Skidmore community embrace this undertaking and seek opportunities to increase our ability to engage in these difficult conversations, always within a context of mutual respect.

### *Science and Informed, Responsible Citizenship*

The above-referenced efforts are important in themselves and, as also noted above, they relate directly to the deep connection between intercultural literacy and another fundamental commitment in our *Mission Statement*: to prepare our students to function as *informed responsible citizens*. Current trends in our national political arena highlight the importance of this value. The increasing polarization of our political life threatens our nation's ability not just to achieve reasonable compromises among policy options but the capacity of our government to function at the most basic levels of operations. Our country has long been divided more or less evenly between Democrats and Republicans. But today our differences of opinion on issues are more often expressed not as alternatives to be considered and evaluated but rather as fundamental divisions that separate us into warring ideological camps – a dynamic that is reflected, unfortunately, in the membership of the House and Senate, where we see an increasing polarization toward the extremes of left and right, and thus with more members positioned further from the middle where compromise is more possible.

This political phenomenon reflects the current tendency for people to learn about the world primarily from sources that reflect and reinforce their existing beliefs. Paradoxically, in an age of burgeoning opportunities to gain information that reflects multiple perspectives, people are more often choosing to access information sources that simply reinforce their preexisting views and even, “in their neighborhoods and their churches, to be around others who live like they do and think like they do – and every four years, vote like they do.”<sup>6</sup> Democracies are founded on the principle that public deliberation over issues can induce people – and, most importantly, political leaders – to change their minds in response to persuasive argument or new empirical evidence that the world has changed. But increasingly, the prospect of politicians altering their positions has become politically problematic, and so the question, “What would it take to change your mind?” is not even raised in political contexts, much less answered.

Such reflections on the current state of our political affairs lead us to reaffirm our commitment to the values of *informed, responsible citizenship*. This commitment is given special emphasis in Goal III of our *Strategic Plan*, and I have come to believe that our institutional responsibility to prepare our students to play informed and responsible roles in public life – in some cases as political leaders, in the majority of cases, as engaged private citizens – should take an increasingly prominent place in our institutional thinking. It is neither our responsibility nor is it in our power, as a College, to solve the political problems of the day. But it is very much our responsibility, and certainly within our power, to educate citizens capable of reading critically, thinking cogently, and writing persuasively, on today's issues and those they will face in the future.

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<sup>6</sup>Bill Bishop, author of *The Big Sort: Why the Clustering of Like-Minded Americans is Tearing Us Apart*, quoted by Sheryl Gay Stolberg. She notes that in the 1976 presidential election, won by Jimmy Carter by 50.1 percent of the vote, “26.8 percent of Americans lived in ‘landslide counties,’ which voted either Democratic or Republican by 20 percentage points or more. By 2000, when Al Gore and George W. Bush split the popular vote, 45.3 percent of Americans lived in landslide counties. In 2008, the figure was 47.6 percent.” See “You Want Compromise? Sure You Do,” by Sheryl Gay Stolberg, *The New York Times* (13 August 2011); [http://www.newyorktimes.com/2011/08/14/sunday-review/youi-want-comprom...?\\_r=2&sq=you%want20compromise&st=cse&csp=1pagewanted=print](http://www.newyorktimes.com/2011/08/14/sunday-review/youi-want-comprom...?_r=2&sq=you%want20compromise&st=cse&csp=1pagewanted=print); accessed: 15 August 2011.

We also need to recognize that one cannot be an engaged, thoughtful, and responsible citizen today without a deep understanding of science, technology, and their relationship to issues of public policy. Many of the significant challenges facing us in an increasingly interconnected world — be they political, cultural, social, or environmental — include a scientific or technological dimension. As a leading, national liberal arts college, Skidmore needs to ensure that all our graduates are scientifically literate and that the sciences remain a strong presence in our curriculum. The document “Science Vision 2008-2018” places this realization in the context of the College’s broad arc of strategic planning:

As the College seeks to justify the value of a Skidmore education in the 21st century, fostering the scientific literacy of all Skidmore students and increasing the number of graduates with majors in the sciences is of the utmost concern. In fact, the concern for graduating a scientifically literate student body and increasing the number of science majors has been part of the College’s planning process for quite some time. The College’s *Strategic Plan: Engaged Liberal Learning*, adopted in 2005, calls for the College to “[s]trengthen the natural sciences to increase the number of science majors and enhance the science literacy of all Skidmore students.” The *Strategic Plan* recognizes that in order for the College to continue to grow and develop into one of the premier liberal arts colleges in the country “we need to raise the prominence of the natural sciences at Skidmore and provide support to this area of the College commensurate with our expectations for all academic programs.” President Glotzbach reiterated these same themes in “Science Matters” in the Winter 2008 *Scope Quarterly*: “Our strategic plan calls for significant investment in this area for two primary reasons. First, we will be a stronger liberal arts college with a larger percentage of science majors (or double majors) in our student population.” Second, we have a social responsibility to help all of our students achieve scientific literacy.” This latter statement also reflects the aim of Goal III of the College’s strategic plan which states that “*We will prepare every Skidmore student to make the choices required of an informed, responsible citizen at home and in the world.*”

Both the *Strategic Plan* and the “Science Vision” statement clearly announce that the time has come to include the physical and life sciences among the visible strengths of the College. As we move to accomplish this objective, we must continue to develop our expectations for our science majors beyond just increasing their numbers (where we already have made substantial progress). Specifically, we need to ensure that our science majors receive the kind of education that prepares them to become leaders in science who are able to address complex issues – in crucial areas such as health, energy, and the environment – from multiple perspectives. In doing so, we will draw upon Skidmore’s longstanding commitment to interdisciplinarity and to educating both “mind and hand,” values which have always been reflected in our science planning.

This is a critical year with regard to these issues. In particular, we recognize that our infrastructure and equipment must align with and fully support our aspirations, and we are aggressively moving forward with the program and facilities planning needed to implement the “Science Vision.” Toward that end, members of Academic Affairs and the natural science faculty will take up the important work of translating the “Science Vision” into an explicit description of programming and infrastructure needs. Beginning with the questions of what and *how* we want our students to learn about science, we will envision new space (including specifying which disciplines need to be co-located) and identify critical renovations, with the aim of fostering the type of rigorous, collaborative, and creative pedagogies called for in the “Science Vision” statement. This year, we also will advance a broad conversation regarding the curricular implications of the “Science Vision” statement’s first goal of helping all our students attain higher levels of scientific literacy.

### *Education for Responsible Citizenship; Education for a Life of Professional Success*

To return to an earlier theme, it is our responsibility to educate graduates who can say what it would take to change their minds. And it is certainly our responsibility to help our graduates swim against the strong social currents that are *decreasing* the diversity of viewpoints to which people are exposed and which they are able to seriously entertain. We must do all that we can, as a liberal arts college dedicated to the free interplay of ideas, to broaden the spectrum of views to which our students are exposed and help them learn the difficult arts of listening actively to those with different perspectives and interacting constructively with them. As part of this commitment, we must seize every possible opportunity to model these capabilities ourselves – among our own faculty, staff, administration, and the Board of Trustees. A College is not a democracy. At the heart of our enterprise, there exists a fundamental, non-democratic hierarchy in the relationship between professor and student. Furthermore, the Board of Trustees retains ultimate decision-making authority regarding the management of the College, some of which it delegates to the administration. At the same time, Skidmore’s Board, administration, faculty, staff, and students all affirm the importance of maintaining a vigorous system of shared governance in which students and faculty members have strong advisory roles and, in some important areas share decision-making responsibility. Within our formal shared governance system, we too must be intentional in exploring a range of viewpoints, listening to one another, genuinely evaluating (on conceptual and empirical grounds) the strengths of alternative positions, and above all exhibiting a genuine willingness to alter our perspective in the face of persuasive evidence. Our institutional capacity to do so can be enhanced or impeded both by formal operating structures or informal practices; consequently, we need to attend to both aspects of our shared governance system.

Last year, we continued work on two initiatives: *Civic Engagement* and *Transition and Transformation*. The former initiative arose directly from Goal III of the *Strategic Plan*; the latter had been introduced in the 2010 document, “Strategic Renewal: Reframing Our Priorities at the Mid-Point of the *Strategic Plan*.”<sup>7</sup> *Transition and Transformation* was referenced again in last year’s “Strategic Action Agenda,”<sup>8</sup> which largely reprised the former report, but it, too, is rooted in the *Strategic Plan*. The fifth Priority Initiative under Goal I states that we will “increase our effectiveness in helping our graduates plan and prepare for their post-Skidmore lives,” and the first Priority Initiative under Goal III is to “foster pedagogical innovation relating to responsible citizenship; support campus initiatives that teach and exemplify this value.” Both of these initiatives also related to the third section of Skidmore’s “Goals for Student Learning and Development.”<sup>9</sup> A working group was constituted to consider *Transition and Transformation* that included faculty representation and collaborated closely with the Committee on Educational Policies and Planning, and the College sought and obtained funding from two external sources to support these initiatives.<sup>10</sup>

### *Strengthening Shared Governance and Addressing Other Institutional Challenges*

Last May, however, some members of the faculty expressed concerns that the Administration had moved too quickly in advancing the *Civic Engagement* project (objecting, especially, to some language in the Arthur Vining Davis grant) and the *Transition and Transformation* initiative. Many people also were unclear about the relationship – and the differences – between the two. In response to these concerns, I announced that this fall I would convene a series of meetings bringing together appropriate administrators and representatives of governance committees to

<sup>7</sup>This document is accessible on the President’s Office strategic planning website: <http://cms.skidmore.edu/planning/upload/Strategic-Renewal-5-17-10.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup>This document is also accessible on the President’s Office strategic planning website: <http://cms.skidmore.edu/planning/upload/Strategic-Renewal-5-17-10.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup>This document is accessible on the Skidmore Website: <http://cms.skidmore.edu/assessment/goals-for-student-learning.cfm>.

<sup>10</sup>The Arthur Vining Davis Foundation and the Mellon Foundation.

examine where we are with these initiatives, to ensure that appropriate governance bodies are engaged, and, going forward, to see that necessary consultation with the faculty occurs. Furthermore, I also committed to exploring possible changes in either governance structure or operations (or both) to minimize the likelihood of miscommunication in the future. We now are following up on those commitments, and I will report back to the community in due course. Further conversations will take place in Faculty Meetings, governance committees, and elsewhere as appropriate. Beginning with the recently completed Middle States Periodic Review, the Cabinet has analyzed the progress we have made on several key initiatives over the past several years. That exercise will enable us to be more intentional in clearly articulating the processes and procedures we need to follow to effect institutional change in continuing to realize our objectives over the final years of the current *Strategic Plan*.

Over the summer I announced a series of personnel transitions in the office of Academic Affairs and indicated that I will take the occasion of Susan Kress's forthcoming retirement from the College to reexamine the current administrative structure that includes a separate Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Faculty. At the time of writing, we are moving forward, in consultation with appropriate governance committees, to convene a small faculty group to advise me in this examination. I will announce the results of these deliberations by the beginning of November and, at that time, will articulate a process for naming the College's next chief academic officer.

As has been the case in previous years, the College's planning will continue to be affected by the troubled external economic environment. This past June, our endowment had finally reached and then surpassed its level prior to the 2007 recession – totaling approximately \$298.5 million. Unfortunately, the growing global economic uncertainty, the inability of our political system to resolve either our current unemployment crisis or our long-term debt issues, and increasing fears of a “double-dip” recession have combined to drive stock prices lower by the end of August, a month that saw a 14 percent decline in the Dow Jones average.<sup>11</sup> Reflecting these market realities, our endowment no doubt declined as well. Economists remain divided as to the likelihood of a second recession, but it is clear that the current extraordinary level of volatility in both the financial markets and public opinion complicates any attempt to forecast future developments. Although we certainly are in no position to predict the economic reality we will face over the coming months, Skidmore is well positioned to deal with any short-term economic disruptions. But as we learned in the last recession, we are far from immune to the effects of large-scale economic trends.

## **RENEWAL**

Writing recently in the *New Yorker*, Louis Menand reminds us that, in the broad sweep of the large and heterogeneous U.S. system of higher education, students majoring in some area of the liberal arts now represent a minority – about 40% of the 21 million students currently enrolled in community colleges, colleges, and universities at all levels. He also writes that “public colleges enroll almost fifteen million students, private colleges fewer than six million,” and of course small private colleges such as Skidmore serve only a small fraction of the latter group.<sup>12</sup> We are fortunate to be the kind of institution we are. The disciplines that we teach ask fundamental questions about the natural and social milieus we inhabit. We challenge our students to develop their minds and creative capacities. At the same time, we cannot restrict our vision of our students to their time with us. When they graduate, they will enter a world fraught with obstacles

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<sup>11</sup>See “Hope Fading That Governments Can Reverse Global Economic Slowdown,” by John W. Schoen: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/44205176/ns/business/#.Tk6vn304KUY>; accessed: 19 August 2011. Schoen points out that “the Dow ... has moved more than 100 points in nine of the last 13 sessions.”

<sup>12</sup>“Live and Learn: Why We Have College,” by Louis Menand, *The New Yorker* (June, 2011), pp. 74-79.

that can prevent them from realizing their potential as contributing professionals, responsible citizens, and fulfilled human beings. Our best work with our students – again, what we do to enable them to acquire the foundation of a liberal education – equips them to surmount those obstacles. Even so, in our continuing pursuit of higher levels of academic excellence, we need to seek new ways to help our students articulate and use the capabilities they develop with us – the capacities that define the liberally educated person. Doing so is not incompatible with our traditional roles as teachers and mentors. Nor does it undercut our allegiance to the principles of liberal education. Rather, using our collective intelligence to help our students navigate the transition to the next stage of their lives represents an opportunity to renew, refresh, and reinvigorate what we already do so well. I look forward to the conversations we will have over the coming months around this issue, as well as the others referenced above.

The work we undertake together this year will move us closer to realizing Skidmore’s promise. Our faculty and students are privileged to teach and learn in the context of an institution that is clear about the primacy of its educational mission – one that remains firmly committed to the ideals of liberal education and sees such an education as the best possible preparation for a life of professional accomplishment and personal fulfillment.<sup>13</sup> We do this work within a community that, although far from perfect, remains committed to a set of ideals that do indeed define a space conducive to human flourishing in the fullest sense of that term.

Philip A. Glotzbach  
President

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<sup>13</sup>See, “Skidmore’s Distinctive Identity: The Values of Engaged Liberal Learning,” *Strategic Plan*, pp. 5-11.

## **Engaged Liberal Learning**

### **The Plan for Skidmore College 2005-2015**

#### **Goals and Priority Initiatives**

### ***Goal I – Student Engagement and Academic Achievement***

*We will challenge every Skidmore student to achieve academic excellence through full engagement with our rich and rigorous educational experience.*

#### ***Priority Initiatives***

- Increase student academic engagement in the first year.
- Increase support for research and creative activity throughout faculty careers.
- Enhance intellectual life for the faculty, students, and others who comprise the extended Skidmore community.
- Strengthen information resources across the College.
- Strengthen the natural sciences to increase the number of science majors and enhance the science literacy of all Skidmore students.
- Increase our effectiveness in helping our graduates plan and prepare for their post-Skidmore lives.
- Take better advantage of the resources and capacity for innovation in the Office of the Dean of Special Programs (ODSP) to support the relevant initiatives identified under this Goal (and others, as appropriate).

### ***Goal II – Intercultural and Global Understanding***

*We will challenge every Skidmore student to develop the intercultural understanding and global awareness necessary to thrive in the complex and increasingly interconnected world of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.*

#### ***Priority Initiatives***

- Increase global awareness across the community in order to sensitize all Skidmore students to a complex, diverse, and interdependent world.
- Renew the conversation about diversity both within the Skidmore faculty and broadly across the campus community; building upon the work of the Middle States review and other past efforts, establish clear educational objectives relating to this Goal and develop shared expertise in achieving them.
- Enhance the diversity of our student population while providing the resources necessary to support all of our students in meeting our educational objectives.
- Enhance the diversity of our faculty and other employee populations and enhance their skills that relate to achieving this Goal.

### ***Goal III – Informed, Responsible Citizenship***

*We will prepare every Skidmore student to make the choices required of an informed, responsible citizen at home and in the world.*

#### ***Priority Initiatives***

- Foster pedagogical innovation relating to responsible citizenship; support campus initiatives that teach and exemplify this value.
- Enhance residential learning.
- Enhance the campus residential environment, with special attention to common spaces.
- Increase support for athletics, fitness, and wellness.
- Develop, broaden, and deepen the College's connections to the local community; enhance our ability to function as a socially and environmentally responsible corporate citizen.

### ***Goal IV – Independence and Resources***

*We will preserve Skidmore's independence by developing the resources required to realize our aspirations.*

#### ***Priority Initiatives***

- Develop and enhance our key financial resources and our capacity to manage them.
- Achieve and maintain competitive compensation for Skidmore faculty, staff, and administrators; enhance our ability to support their professional development.
- Develop and enhance our capacity to manage our physical resources.
- Develop and enhance those relationships essential to the Skidmore community.
- Develop and enhance the "equity" in the Skidmore name.

# Strategic Action Agenda Items 2011-12

**Note:** Unless otherwise indicated, the expected date of completion for each of the following projects is June 1, 2012.

## *Goal I – Student Engagement and Academic Achievement*

*We will challenge every Skidmore student to achieve academic excellence through full engagement with our rich and rigorous educational experience.*

### *Projects/Action Steps*

#### ➤ *Enhance institutional structure to support academic excellence.*

1. **Review the positions of the VPAA and the DOF to decide whether these positions should remain separate or be combined. Complete the appointment process for VPAA or VPAA/DOF.**

Administrative Responsibility: President.

2. **Complete separation of the offices of the Registrar and Institutional Research.**
  - Implement new office structures as necessary.
  - Resolve space issues for the Office of Institutional Research.
  - Develop mission statement and institutional profile for OIR.

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Faculty.

3. **Continue to implement reorganization of the Office of the Dean of Special Programs.**
  - Finalize mission statement.
  - Determine principles for ODSP budget.
  - Recruit calendar position – establish priorities, process, and policies; implement Event Management System (EMS).

Administrative Responsibility: Dean of Special Programs.

4. **Enhance collaboration between IT and Library.**
  - Create group to develop campus information plan.
  - Continue implementation of integration of IT into Library space.

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Academic Affairs.

5. **Develop activities to realize the potential value of consortial relationships.**
  - Implement plans for Connect NY and MediaShare.
  - Participate in NY6 symposium on the Hudson.
  - Respond to Teagle RFP to NY6 with proposal to align institutional mission/rewards with faculty work.

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Academic Affairs.

**6. Enhance faculty resources to deliver the academic program.**

- Recruit 10-12 tenure-track lines.
- Continue to address contingent faculty concerns (e.g., possible conversion(s) to tenure-track line(s), compensation adjustments, etc.).
- Implement paperless advising.

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Faculty.

**7. Develop plan to institutionalize support for digital resources position at the Tang.**

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Academic Affairs.

**8. Curricular and program development.**

- Arts Administration – implement minor.
- Determine support requirements for departments/programs in transition.
- MALS Program: conduct internal and external review; develop plan for combined BA/BA/MALS degree program.
- Continue to establish Zankel Program (budget, operations, protocols, programming, etc.); establish social networking; create policies and procedures manual.
- And see item #14 regarding science planning.

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dean of the Faculty, and Dean of Special Programs.

**9. Enhance Skidmore's capacity for academic assessment.**

- Middle States Accreditation: develop a detailed 4-year plan leading up to the next self-study.
- Use completed Periodic Review Report for continued strategic planning.
- Restructure and reestablish Assessment Steering Committee.
- Achieve 100% participation of departments and programs in direct assessment of student learning.
- Review program review guidelines and revise as necessary; require assessment results in program reviews.
- Build upon CIGU's assessment plan and completed assessments to move forward on Goal II, including assessing student learning in Study Abroad and in the Cultural Diversity courses.
- Continue to explore possibilities for implementing e-portfolios.
- Develop plan for learning goal of effective communication in multiple modes and media; hold senior week symposium on visual communication (May).
- Develop effective assessment throughout Academic Affairs (e.g., in Special Programs, the Tang).
- Continue to work with Alumni Affairs to implement and analyze Learning Census.

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Faculty.

➤ *Increase support for research and creative activity across the faculty career.*

**10. Coordinate support of faculty development.**

- Review impact of Faculty Network Facilitator and Faculty Interest Groups and Faculty Writing Group.
- Coordinate opportunities offered by Tang, Library, Special Programs, academic technologies, etc.
- Continue to integrate/acclurate a new generation of faculty into habits of collaboration with the Tang.
  - Continue implementing Mellon grant.
  - Develop goals for pre-tenure and tenured faculty and strategies for faculty development.

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Faculty.

➤ *Strengthen our system of shared governance and our capacity for developing leadership throughout the College.*

**11. Continue a community conversation about our goals for shared governance and the effectiveness of our current structures and procedures.**

- Cultivate leadership skills and provide leadership development for institutional leaders, including department chairs, program directors, and other academic and administrative professionals.
- Clarify the role of Academic Staff and the faculty meeting in governance issues.
- Establish routine meetings of major committee chairs with VPAA Senior Staff and DOF staff.
- Address revisions to *Faculty Handbook* (Part One, Article X).

Administrative responsibility: President, Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Dean of the Faculty.

➤ *Enhance intellectual life for the faculty, students, and others who comprise the extended Skidmore community.*

**12. Develop a plan for the College calendar.**

Administrative Responsibility: Dean of Special Programs.

➤ *Continue to strengthen information resources across the College.*

**13. Ensure through institutional planning that the College's technological infrastructure, resources, and services are appropriately aligned with institutional needs.**

- Complete implementation of first phase of the new administrative Student Information System, including review of processes, seeking efficiencies where possible.
- Plan and design systems approach to improve integrated informational

retrieval from the new student information system and existing administrative systems.

- Implement Skidmore mobile applications and improve access for mobile devices to current key web systems as well as new student information system.

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Finance and Administration, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Vice President for Advancement, and Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid.

- *Strengthen the natural sciences to increase the number of science majors and enhance the science literacy of all Skidmore students.*

#### **14. Begin implementation of Science Plan.**

- Continue to engage community about and seek input on the Science Plan.
- Continue to develop curricular and pedagogical strategies to increase scientific literacy of our students.
- Submit invited grant application to HHMI.
- SWG to develop plan regarding program implications of Science Vision.
- Draft evaluation plan of existing science facilities.
- Develop new infrastructure plan for science facilities based on evaluation of existing science facilities and program planning for new facilities.
- Develop fundraising plan for science initiatives and begin identification and cultivation of prospects.
- Establish Science Advisory Committee to provide external expertise and assist with fundraising.

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dean of the Faculty, Vice President for Finance and Administration, and Vice President for Advancement.

- *Increase our effectiveness in helping our graduates plan and prepare for their post-Skidmore lives.*

#### **15. Support CEPP and the Transition and Transformation Working Group in continued development and review of comprehensive plan for post-baccalaureate experiences.**

- Increase the number of students who participate in (existing) experiential learning opportunities:
  - Summer faculty-student research
  - Student opportunity funds and travel-to-present awards
  - Paid summer experiences: research, internships, practicums, performance workshops, apprenticeships, etc.
- Develop programming and advising structures that address student access to experiential learning opportunities.
- Continue to implement new model for recruiting and supporting students who are competitive for national merit scholarships.
- Establish restructured Career Development Center.

- Seek expanded capacity to support pre-professional advising.
- Create coordinated fundraising plan to support the creation of experiential learning opportunities for all students.
- Develop programming options to support future increase in pre-orientation program participation.
- Expand Career Jam and SkidBiz programs.
- Expand concept of “Brand Called Me” (MB 190) to sophomore year.

Administrative responsibility: Dean of the Faculty, Dean of Student Affairs, Dean of Special Programs, Vice President for Advancement.

**16. Implement process for collecting and distributing five-years-out post-graduation information (e.g., graduate school, employment data).**

Administrative Responsibility: Dean of Student Affairs.

**17. Expand support for students interested in graduate and pre-professional school in the Career Development Center with the hire of the new associate director.**

Administrative Responsibility: Dean of Student Affairs.

- *Take better advantage of the resources and capacity for innovation in the Office of the Dean of Special Programs (ODSP) to support the relevant initiatives identified under this Goal (and others, as appropriate).*

**18. Continue to enhance summer conference and institute operations.**

- Enhance summer conferences and institutes in ODSP; consider expanded summer programming (in light of Northwoods and Scribner construction).
- Generate ODSP print and web materials that complement “CTM 2.0” branding and marketing initiatives.

Administrative Responsibility: Dean of Special Programs.

**19. Continue to enhance summer academic programs.**

- Evaluate summer academic programs in ODSP (create plan for summer term, including Summer Art Program).

Administrative Responsibility: Dean of Special Programs.

## ***Goal II – Intercultural and Global Understanding***

*We will challenge every Skidmore student to develop the intercultural understanding and global awareness necessary to thrive in the complex and increasingly interconnected world of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.*

### ***Projects/Action Steps***

- *Increase global awareness across the community in order to sensitize all Skidmore students to a complex, diverse, and interdependent world.*

**20. Support Campus Disabilities Advisory Committee.**

- Continue review of campus accessibility issues and needs.
- Develop long-range plan.

Administrative responsibility: Dean of Student Affairs.

- *Renew the conversation about diversity both within the Skidmore faculty and broadly across the campus community; building upon the work of the Middle States review and other past efforts, establish clear educational objectives relating to this Goal and develop shared expertise in achieving them.*

**21. Review the structures established to support Goal II to ensure effective implementation of priority initiatives.**

- Follow up on recommendation of the Committee on Intercultural and Global understanding (CIGU) to “review the ‘diversity triad’ structure and the supporting role of CIGU....”

Administrative responsibility: President, with support of Cabinet and in collaboration with IPPC and others as appropriate.

**22. Continue efforts toward creating a more inclusive campus climate.**

- Review available data and reports (PRR, NSSE, CHAS, CIGU) to determine action steps.
- Intercultural Literacy: CEPP to consider revised criteria for Culture-Centered Inquiry in preparation for faculty deliberation.
- Implement further institutional support for IGR curricular and co-curricular programs.
- Develop program of events for faculty development.

Administrative responsibility: Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dean of the Faculty, and Dean of Student Affairs.

- *Enhance the diversity of our student populations while providing the resources necessary to support all of our students in meeting our educational objectives.*

**23. Enroll an incoming class that is 23-25% students of color and 5-7% international students.**

- Continue to increase travel to target schools and CBO’s.
- Expand travel to Middle East, Africa, India, and Latin America.
- Collaboration with faculty travelling internationally for recruitment activities.
- Increase number of full-pay international students in incoming class.
- Expand alumni programming in Hong Kong and London.

Administrative Responsibility: Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid and Vice President for Advancement.

**24. Re-launch the Multicultural Career Alumni Network (MCAN) in collaboration with the Alumni Association.**

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Advancement.

➤ ***Enhance the diversity of our faculty and other employee populations and enhance their skills that relate to achieving this Goal.***

**25. Continue efforts to recruit, attract, and retain candidates for faculty and staff positions who enhance the diversity of the faculty and staff.**

- Working with department chairs and program directors (for faculty) and appropriate administrators (for staff), ensure that search plans and recruiting efforts incorporate best practices from other similar institutions to increase the likelihood of developing diverse candidate pools.
- Research and implement as appropriate best practices of similar institutions regarding retention of faculty and staff of color.
- Support for affinity groups (e.g., Black Faculty and Staff Group) through the Committee on Intercultural and Global Understanding as a means for supporting and retaining staff of color.

Administrative Responsibility: Cabinet.

**26. Enhance educational and peer mentoring programs regarding diversity for all employees.**

- Initiate diversity and inclusion training for all members of the campus (beginning with Cabinet, then supervisors, and moving to selected staff across campus).

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Finance and Administration, in collaboration with Cabinet.

**27. Support Bias Response Group training initiative to educate campus community about interrupting bias incidents.**

- Pilot *Everyday Leadership* bias intervention program with upper-class campus leaders.
- Invite consultant to provide bias intervention training for Cabinet, faculty, and staff.

Administrative Responsibility: Dean of Student Affairs.

### ***Goal III – Informed, Responsible Citizenship***

*We will prepare every Skidmore student to make the choices required of an informed, responsible citizen at home and in the world.*

#### ***Projects/Action Steps***

- ***Foster pedagogical innovation relating to responsible citizenship; support campus initiatives that teach and exemplify this value.***
  - 28. Through the Responsible Citizenship Task Force, engage chairs and program directors in discussion regarding the public value of their disciplines.**

Administrative Responsibility: Dean of the Faculty and Dean of Student Affairs.
  - 29. Increase the number and broaden the curricular scope of courses that include community-based projects/service learning.**

Administrative Responsibility: Dean of the Faculty and Dean of Student Affairs.
  - 30. Support the new VISTA volunteer working with the Director of Community Services Programs to strengthen community partnerships.**

Administrative Responsibility: Dean of Student Affairs and Dean of the Faculty.
  
- ***Continue to enhance the campus residential environment, with special attention to common spaces.***
  - 31. Advance the Scribner Village Replacement Project.**
    - Complete the construction of Phase IA of the new College Northwoods Apartments by January 15, 2012.
    - Make significant progress on Phase IB (Slope Townhouses) with scheduled completion date of August 15, 2012.

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Finance and Administration.
  
- ***Increase support for athletics, fitness, and wellness.***
  - 32. Seek NCAA Division III Strategic Matching Grant to help fund new Assistant Athletics Director position.**

Administrative Responsibility: Dean of Student Affairs and Vice President for Advancement.
  - 33. Strengthen prevention, education, and response related to issues of sexual misconduct and alcohol and other drugs.**
    - Continue to expand student dialogue on consensual sex and sexual misconduct.
    - Implement revised Alcohol and Other Drug Policy.

- Support the work of the Campus Life and Student Culture Task Force.

Administrative Responsibility: Dean of Student Affairs.

**34. Review original plan to return the Opportunity Program to larger space in Student Services area (Weicking move is temporary).**

Administrative Responsibility: Dean of Student Affairs.

- *Develop, broaden, and deepen the College's connections to the local community; enhance our ability to function as a socially and environmentally responsible corporate citizen.*

**35. Conduct new economic impact study.**

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Advancement.

***Goal IV – Independence and Resources***

*We will preserve Skidmore's independence by developing the resources required to realize our aspirations.*

***Projects/Action Steps***

- *Continue to develop institutional capacity for effective planning and proactive internal communication.*

**36. Conduct planning and implement measures to ensure the College's immediate and long-term financial sustainability in light of ongoing economic challenges.**

- Continue to look for opportunities to collaborate across divisions, departments, and offices to leverage our resources and further enhance our interdisciplinary approach to learning.
- Communicate clearly at each stage of the budget process, providing information as necessary to enhance the community's collective strategic and financial literacy.
- Be attentive to community morale and include community-building initiatives.
- Develop plans for the next three to five years regarding New Initiatives supporting the *Strategic Plan* identifying funding sources including the new Comprehensive Campaign, Special Building and Endowment Campaigns, and the Operating Budget.

Administrative Responsibility: President with support from Cabinet.

**37. Continue to improve our institutional capacity to communicate financial information effectively throughout the Skidmore community.**

- Continue work of prior years to improve communications and provide fall and spring updates to College constituencies.

Administrative Responsibility: President, Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Vice President for Finance and Administration.

**38. Continue Participation in the New York Six Consortium, supported by the Mellon Foundation, to explore partnerships and collaborations with Colgate, Hamilton, Hobart and William Smith, St. Lawrence, and Union.**

- Areas of potential collaboration to be worked include information technology, acquisition of goods and services, sustainability, student engagement, faculty and staff development, and intercultural literacy.

Administrative Responsibility: President with support from Cabinet.

**39. Work with the Board of Trustees and other members to ensure a smooth and effective transition in the position of Board Chair.**

Administrative Responsibility: President.

➤ *Develop and enhance both our key financial resources and our capacity to manage them.*

**40. Continue to review and enhance Admissions and Financial Aid policies and practices in support of enrollment goals (including academic excellence, with diversity a component of excellence) and within targeted budgetary guidelines.**

- Continue to award need-based aid based on individual circumstances; continue Joint Appeals Committee (admissions and financial aid) to review requests for re-evaluation of need-based awards; institute appropriate measures for returning students late in submitting financial aid applications.
- Continue to analyze enrollment and financial aid trends for applications and yield.
- Work with enrollment management strategists to develop predictive model for enhanced recruitment and enrollment projections.
- Re-evaluate, in consultation with IPPC Subcommittee on Admissions and Financial Aid, the Subcommittee's role in enrollment planning.

Administrative Responsibility: Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid.

**41. Complete analysis of current discount rate parameter.**

- Compare current discount rate to peer institutions and analyze impact on enrollment goals if discount rate were raised by additional financial aid.

Administrative Responsibility: Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid and Vice President for Finance and Administration.

**42. Continue implementation of Banner Student Records system.**

- Enhance operational efficiency and capability in recruiting, selecting, and enrolling the class.

Administrative Responsibility: Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid.

**43. Achieve fundraising targets to support strategic initiatives and prepare for next campaign in 2014.**

- Raise \$7 Million for Annual Fund.
- Raise \$20 Million in total gifts.
- Increase visit numbers by 25%.
- Increase prospect pool by 30% over next three years.
- Increase FOPs by 10% (focus on mid-level donors and launch young FOP initiative).
- Expand Legacy Society members by 20% over three years.
- Review key internal processes and systems (database, gift receipting and acknowledgement, prospect tracking and management).
- Expand volunteer structure and volunteer supports (launch new Annual Fund National Committee).

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Advancement.

➤ *Achieve and maintain competitive compensation for Skidmore faculty, staff, and administrators; enhance our ability to support their professional development.*

**44. Continue to implement the Total Comprehensive Compensation Framework.**

- Continue efforts to implement the Total Comprehensive Compensation Framework goal of bringing both salaries and benefits of all Skidmore employees to our targets in relation to appropriate external comparison groups.

Administrative Responsibility: Cabinet.

**45. Enhance educational and peer mentoring programs for all employees.**

Administrative Responsibility: President with support from Cabinet.

➤ *Develop and enhance our capacity to manage our physical resources.*

**46. Filene Hall renovation.**

- Complete renovation of Filene Hall.
- Complete move to Filene of Special programs, Art History, and others.

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Finance and Administration, Dean of Special Programs, Dean of the Faculty, and Cabinet.

**47. Saisselin Art Building renovation.**

- Continue phased construction effort to renovate Saisselin Art Building.

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Finance and Administration.

**48. Scribner Library renovation and Information Technology facilities integration.**

- Complete plans for and commence construction effort to renovate Scribner Library and integrate Information Technology facilities (including renovation

of former heating plant building).

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Academic Affairs and Vice President for Finance and Administration.

**49. Continue to address facilities planning for academic space.**

- Plan for classroom and office space for next three to five years. (VPAA/DOF)
- Coordinate Campus Plan with Academic Plan. (VPAA/VPFA)

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dean of the Faculty, Vice President for Finance and Administration (as above).

**50. Address Admissions facilities needs.**

- Continue to develop plans for re-location of Admissions and Financial Aid offices to location on the west side of North Broadway.

Administrative Responsibility: Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid, Vice President for Finance and Administration, and Cabinet.

**51. Address athletic facilities needs.**

- Complete comprehensive athletic facilities plan and develop timeline.
- Complete fundraising for new boathouse.
- Identify and solicit lead donors for new tennis facility.

Administrative Responsibility: Dean of Student Affairs and Vice President for Advancement.

**52. Further develop campus sustainability policies.**

- Continue to develop campus sustainability policies, plans, and initiatives, and communicate to the community the College's commitment to sustainability.
- Seek long-term funding for program initiatives.

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Finance and Administration and Vice President for Academic Affairs in collaboration with the Cabinet, the Institutional Policy and Planning Committee, and others as appropriate.

**53. Further develop the Campus Plan.**

- Continue to develop the Campus Plan revised first-phase initiatives including defining initial programming plans, analyzing ranges of costs of these plans, and developing initial funding plans for these projects through Special Building and Endowment Campaigns, and the Operating Budget.

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Finance and Administration and Cabinet.

**54. Continue to address deferred maintenance.**

- Implement next phase of work to address issues of deferred maintenance.

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Finance and Administration.

**55. Improve the College's stewardship of the Skidmore North Woods and Other Similar Properties.**

- Continue to develop and implement the management plan for the Skidmore North Woods and other similar properties balancing the values of preservation and flexibility of use for the College's immediate and long-term needs. Ensure effective management for appropriate educational and recreational uses by the Skidmore community and local residents. Communicate the results of this work effectively within the Skidmore community and beyond. Continue work of the North Woods Stewards and Friends of the North Woods in education, development of policies, communication, and enforcement of policies for the woods.

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Finance and Administration and Vice President for Academic Affairs in collaboration with the President's Cabinet, the Campus Environment Committee, and others as appropriate.

➤ *Develop and enhance relationships essential to the Skidmore community.*

**56. Continue market research of and targeted outreach to prospective students.**

- Work with external recruitment services to expand our research and brand visibility.
- Refine CEEB Student Search Service outreach by retaining external consultant.
- Utilize Banner Relationship Model (BRM) for enhanced targeted recruitment.

Administrative Responsibility: Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid.

**57. Develop comprehensive social media plan.**

- Assess impact on recruitment of temporary two-year position of Online Community Manager.
- Continue to expand Skidmore's presence and engagement with students on social media sites.
- Continue to develop a plan for use of social media in Admissions, Advancement, and broader campus activities.

Administrative Responsibility: Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid and Vice President for Advancement.

➤ *Develop and enhance the "equity" in the Skidmore name.*

**58. Create and market "CTM 2.0" "branding" effort.**

- Revamp all major marketing materials.
- Launch revamped website.
- Create comprehensive "story bank" to support core messages.
- Create comprehensive social media plan.

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Advancement and Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid.