Parents

The very large majority of Skidmore parents expect their sons and daughters to take responsibility for their decisions and behavior at Skidmore, trust the College’s expertise and supportive structures, and seldom (if ever) attempt to contact the faculty. Individual faculty will make their own decisions on whether to respond to a parent intervention or inquiry, but faculty should know that they have no obligation to “share” the advising (or teaching) process with a parent. The Office of Academic Advising and other administrative colleagues do routinely respond to parent inquiries and concerns, and that is part of our function – often a fruitful one. If a faculty advisor decides to engage in a conversation with a parent at the parent’s request, we encourage the faculty to talk with the student first and the parent second, thus keeping the student’s own concerns and decision-making as the primary focus. We also encourage faculty never to act upon a parent request for the advisor to intervene when the parent asks that their request be kept secret from the student. Honoring a request of this sort sets up a less-than-honest relationship between the student and the faculty member, gives inappropriate cues to the parent, and may then lead to further requests that the advisor “monitor” and report back to the parent. Our educational commitment is, after all, to the student; an important aspect of that commitment is to help the student become a more informed and independent being. There is no easy formula for parent and faculty interactions, and we invite you to contact The Office of Academic Advising if you find yourself in a situation with which you are uncomfortable.

Parents and FERPA. All Skidmore students are provided information about their right to access and amend their educational records under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). They are also advised that they must consent to disclosure whenever personally identifiable information is requested by a third party, including their parents. Although many students “waive” their FERPA rights and allow administrators to discuss their academic standing with parents, this consent to disclosure does not automatically extend to instructors and advisors. Parents who contact instructors or advisors for information about a student’s grades, course schedule, or academic standing should be directed to the Office of Academic Advising.