

# Skidmore College Institutional Effectiveness Plan

Developed by  
IPPC Subcommittee on Institutional Effectiveness

## Contents

Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness (IE) at Skidmore College .....	1
The Responsibility of the President, Cabinet and Board of Trustees .....	1
Organizational Structure for Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness.....	1
IPPC Subcommittee on Institutional Effectiveness (SIE).....	1
Staffing .....	2
Mission Driven Assessment .....	3
Goals for Student Learning and Development (GSLD).....	3
Strategic Plan .....	4
Institutional Effectiveness Process .....	5
Documentation .....	5
IE Annual Report .....	5
Website .....	5
Assessment across the College .....	6
College-wide Assessment .....	6
Administrative Offices.....	6
Academic Departments Assessment .....	6
Assessment of General Education .....	7
Surveys of Students, Faculty, & Staff .....	8
Program Reviews .....	8
Administrative Departments.....	8
Academic Departments .....	8
Assessing Assessment .....	8
Appendix A: Areas Engaging with Assessment .....	9
Administrative Department Self-Study.....	10
Annual Assessment/Institutional Effectiveness Plan for Administrative Offices .....	11
Appendix B: Mapping General Education Curriculum to Goals for Student Learning.....	12

## Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness (IE) at Skidmore College

The Institutional Effectiveness Plan for Skidmore College is designed to outline college-wide processes and expectations. These processes are designed to support and encourage intentional reflection of programs and services that uphold the mission of the college and align with the strategic plan in meaningful, manageable, and measurable ways. This Assessment Plan is adapted from the 2015-2019 plan.

Assessment provides evidence of the knowledge, skills, and values that our students have achieved, and of the transformation that their Skidmore education brings about. When we have evidence that our students are not achieving all that we hope, we are committed to making evidence-based changes to curricula, pedagogies, academic requirements, facilities, support services, and co-curricular programs that will improve their learning.

In areas with an operational focus, we are also committed to applying best practices, engaging in continuous improvement, and cultivating sustainable practices. Ultimately, all areas of the college work together to support an environment that fosters student learning.

Finally, our plan has been designed to meet the standards for accreditation by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

### The Responsibility of the President, Cabinet and Board of Trustees

The President oversees all institutional assessments and ensures that appropriate processes are in place to set goals, assess outcomes, and make improvements on the basis of evidence in every division of the College.

All Cabinet members (Academic Affairs, Admissions, Advancement, Finance & Administration, and Student Affairs) are responsible for ensuring that assessments are conducted in their area, reporting the results of their units' assessments to the President, and providing appropriate resources for their implementation and effective use of their results.

### Organizational Structure for Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness

#### IPPC Subcommittee on Institutional Effectiveness (SIE)

The Institutional Policy and Planning Committee (IPPC) ensures that strategic planning and budgeting processes consider pertinent evidence. A subcommittee of IPPC, the Subcommittee on Institutional Effectiveness (SIE), has the following charge:

*This governance committee's function is to advise the President and members of the IPPC on matters related to institutional effectiveness. The Subcommittee on Institutional Effectiveness (SIE) also advises the President and members of the IPPC on assessment of institutional goals as appropriate to each area of the College as they bear on student learning and development and on the fulfillment of standards for accreditation. In fulfilling this function, the SIE works to ensure that assessment plans are in place, are executed, and are consequential in all areas of the College. The SIE acts as a resource to both the IPPC*

*and all bodies in the College engaged in strategic planning and data-informed decision-making.*<sup>1</sup>

The SIE is co-chaired by the Faculty Director of Assessment (FDA) and the Institutional Effectiveness Specialist (IES) and consists of representatives from every division in the college that are appointed by the respective Cabinet member.

Membership:

- Institutional Effectiveness Specialist, Co-chair (Academic Affairs)
- Faculty Director of Assessment, Co-Chair (Academic Affairs)
- Dean of the Faculty/VPAA -or- Associate Dean of the Faculty (Academic Affairs)
- Director of Institutional Research (Academic Affairs)
- Chief Diversity Officer or appropriate designee (President)
- Representative of Student Affairs in a leadership position (Student Affairs)
- Representative of Advancement in a leadership position (Advancement)
- Representative of Admissions & Financial Aid in a leadership position (Admissions & Financial Aid)
- Representative of Finance and Administration in a leadership position (Finance & Administration)
- Representative of Communications & Marketing in a leadership position (Communications & Marketing)
- One student, appointed for a one-year term through an SGA willingness-to-serve process (Students)

## Staffing

### *Faculty Director of Assessment*

The FDA coordinates academic assessment activities across the college and serves as representative to CEPP. The FDA works with academic departments and programs throughout the academic year to assist in the planning and execution of their annual assessment projects. The FDA also coordinates annual college-wide academic assessment projects, such as assessment related to general education.

### *Institutional Effectiveness Specialist*

The Institutional Effectiveness Specialist (IES) advances the college's goals by coordinating effective and useful assessment of strategic goals and administrative functions in and across all divisions of the College. The IES serves as a representative to IPPC and the College's Middle States accreditation officer.

### *Coordinator for Institutional Research and Assessment*

The Coordinator for Institutional Research and Assessment assists in tracking academic and non-academic department assessment plans and reports, and maintenance of the assessment report archive on the IE/Assessment website, and provides administrative support to the FDA and IES.

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<sup>1</sup> Taken from the Institutional Policy and Planning Committee Operating Code

## Mission Driven Assessment

### Goals for Student Learning and Development (GSLD)

During the academic year 2008/09 the then Assessment Steering Committee developed a list of characteristics that we hope all of our students will achieve by the time they graduate: the Goals for Student Learning and Development (GSLD). This list of goals was endorsed unanimously by the Skidmore faculty in December 2010.

The goals that follow reflect the unique characteristics and synergies of our B.A. and B.S. programs, as well as certain emphases that are deeply engrained in Skidmore's history and culture: on creativity, on civic responsibility, and on interdisciplinary thinking. As in the past, we aim to graduate students who strive for excellence, think deeply and creatively, and communicate and act effectively. We continue to ask our students to link theoretical and practical learning, and now also to develop intercultural understanding and an appreciation of their roles as global citizens. These goals have much in common with those of all liberal arts colleges who share a common mission, though we take pride in having long approached them in our own distinctive way.

Our goals emerge from our collective sense of a Skidmore education as a transformative experience. We want our students to acquire both knowledge and capacities that enable them to initiate and embrace change and apply their learning lifelong in new contexts. We believe that this learning takes place throughout our students' experience, both inside the classroom and out, on campus and off. Our goals articulate, then, in language that is as clear and lean as possible, our understanding of students' learning and development at Skidmore. They lay the groundwork for our continued inquiry into the evidence of that learning.

Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Acquire knowledge of human cultures and the physical world through study in the arts, humanities, languages, mathematics, natural sciences, and social sciences</li><li>• Understand social and cultural diversity in national and global contexts</li><li>• Demonstrate advanced learning and synthesis in both general and specialized studies</li></ul>
Intellectual Skills and Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Think critically, creatively, and independently</li><li>• Gather, analyze, integrate, and apply varied forms of information; understand and use evidence</li><li>• Communicate effectively</li><li>• Interact effectively and collaboratively with individuals and across social identities</li><li>• Engage in and take responsibility for learning; strive for excellence</li></ul>
Personal and Social Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Examine one's own values and their use as ethical criteria in thought and action</li><li>• Interrogate one's own values in relation to those of others, across social and cultural differences</li><li>• Develop practical competencies for managing a personal, professional, and community life</li><li>• Apply learning to find solutions for social, civic, and scientific problems</li></ul>
Transformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Integrate and apply knowledge and creative thought from multiple disciplines in new contexts</li><li>• Embrace intellectual integrity, humility, and courage</li><li>• Foster habits of mind and body that enable a person to live deliberately and well</li><li>• Develop an enduring passion for learning</li></ul>

Assessments focused on student learning are aligned with GSLD. Academic department goals and the general education curriculum have been mapped onto the GSLD (Appendix B). In addition, the Division of Student Affairs centralizes these goals in their assessments. The college-wide assessment of the GSLD is primarily based on an Alumni Survey which has been mapped to the goals. Alumni at 1-, 5- and 10-years since graduation are surveyed, and the results are reviewed to determine areas that need to be strengthened.

## Strategic Plan

Our strategic planning and budgeting processes use the results of our assessment activities to maintain, improve, and strengthen Skidmore College and its ability to educate our students. Planning and budgeting effectively require the systematic gathering, analysis, and use of a variety of information about our efforts, all in support of our academic mission. Budgets provide appropriate resources for assessment activities.

When appropriate, divisions are asked to align their assessment efforts with the strategic plan to begin to measure the ways in which we are meeting the goals of the College. The current strategic plan *Creating Pathways to Excellence: The Plan for Skidmore College, 2015-2025* contains four main pillars of institutional priority.

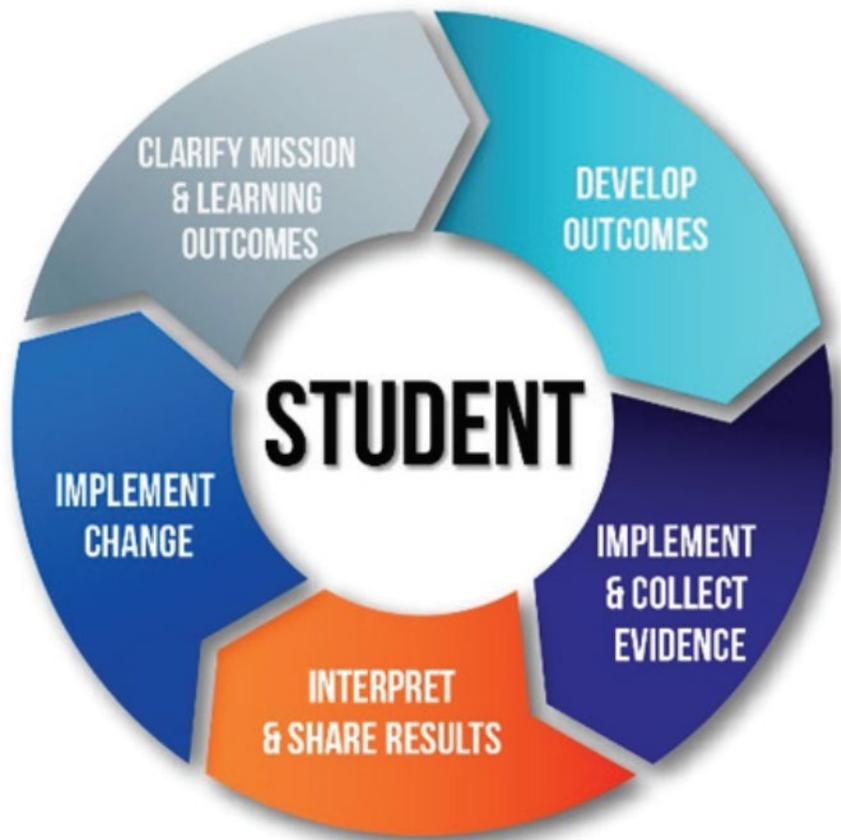
Integrative Learning and Education—To Develop Students’ Capacities to Create, Imagine, and Change the World, and to Enhance the Work of the Faculty as Teacher–Scholars: We will invest in pedagogical and scholarly programs and educational strategies that develop the capacities of students and faculty members to achieve, model, and demonstrate excellence as scholarly, creative, and integrative learners. In doing so we are committed to developing and implementing new and creative pedagogies and curricula that will support our transition to a technology-rich college.

Access—To Ensure Access for All Our Students to an Extraordinary Educational Experience: Students will have full access to opportunities for educational excellence across all three phases of their Skidmore careers—at admission, as undergraduate learners, and in transition to their post college lives.

Well-Being—To Strengthen the Inclusiveness, Health, and Well-Being of Our Community: We will create new opportunities for developing the skills that will make Skidmore a more healthful, inclusive, and creative community.

Sustainability—To Continue to Build a Sustainable Institutional Foundation for Excellence: Deploying the concept of sustainability, broadly understood, as an organizing principle, we will invest our time, energy, and funding in initiatives to ensure the College’s long-term viability and success.

## Institutional Effectiveness Process



The College follows a continuous improvement cycle of institutional effectiveness that places the student at its center. Skidmore's core belief that Creative Thought Matters is celebrated within our assessment models.

### Documentation

#### IE Annual Report

It is the task of the IES, in consultation with SIE, to ensure that the college documents assessment efforts across all divisions of the college. One result of this expectation is the preparation of an Institutional Effectiveness Annual Report that is submitted to both IPPC and the general community and published on the website.

#### Website

The IES, FDA and Coordinator for IR and Assessment maintain a college-wide website. In a password protected area, academic department annual reports are posted. In addition, a section has been designated as a repository of student affairs related assessment projects.

## Assessment across the College

### College-wide Assessment

The Faculty Director of Assessment and the Institutional Effectiveness Specialist work collaboratively with the subcommittee on Institutional Effectiveness, the President's Cabinet, and IPPC to plan, conduct and monitor pan-institutional assessment projects.

### Administrative Offices

Every area within the College is expected to be engaged in assessment on an ongoing basis. We strive to nurture creative thought. In addition, we recognize that different divisional priorities require different timelines and assessment approaches. As such, divisions have the flexibility to determine projects that are specific to their operations and are expected to document progress on an annual basis.

October 1 Offices submit an overview of the assessment projects planned for the academic year to the SIE.<sup>2</sup>

July 1 Offices submit summary of assessment projects that occurred in the previous academic year.

September 30 The IES publishes an annual report from previous academic year.

### Academic Departments Assessment

#### *Assessment of Student Learning*

All academic departments and interdisciplinary programs leading to a degree assess student learning within their programs regularly and systematically. In most cases, this implies the completion of an annual assessment project and report. More broadly, each academic program leading to a degree has an assessment plan that:

- Specifies the learning goals and outcomes that all students within the program are to achieve
- Specifies the methods that faculty will use including direct assessments of student work
- Plans a systematic approach to assessment that may be spread over a timeline of up to five years
- Explains how and when the assessment results will be reviewed and by whom
- Follows up on previous assessments and any changes made, to ensure that results are put to practical use.

Each academic department or interdisciplinary program's assessment plan may be modified as experience is gained with it and is to be included within the department or program annual report to the Assessment Coordinator and VPAA.

As noted above, each department/program is expected to conduct an annual project within the cycle of the assessment of student learning. Such assessments are typically narrow in focus. In its annual assessment report, the department/program is asked to discuss how the assessment results will be (or have been) used to improve student learning. Each department and program ensures that all courses within the program have goals that are clearly related to the overall goals of that program. Program

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<sup>2</sup> List of Departments Expected to engage in assessment included in Appendix A.

goals should, in turn, relate to the College-wide Goals for Student Learning and Development. Departments and programs are expected to participate periodically in College-wide general education assessments.

Department chairs and program directors have responsibility for guiding their academic programs' assessment planning, guiding the implementation of assessment activities, and, in their departments' annual assessment reports, reporting both results and how those results are being or will be used, as well as any follow-up on the effectiveness of changes made.

The faculty is responsible for developing assessment plans within their academic programs and for participating in and following up on academic assessments. As part of this work, faculty develop student learning goals for their courses—stated on their syllabi—that coordinate with departmental and College-wide goals for student learning and development.

June 1 Academic Department assessment reports due to the FDA. Reports include proposed assessment activities for the upcoming academic year.

June-August The FDA reviews reports and prepares a written response.

Faculty who participate in assessment are recognized for their efforts and contributions. Assessment participation counts toward tenure and promotion decisions, but the results of academic assessments are not used to evaluate faculty.

### Assessment of General Education

General Education curriculum assessment occurs along four dimensions: (1) integrative programs, (2) Foundations, (3) areas of inquiry, and (4) in-the-major literacies. All assessment of general education requirements is coordinated by the FDA in consultation with CEPP.

#### *Integrative programs: First Year/Bridge/Senior Coda*

The First Year Experience (FYE) and Bridge experience are stand-alone programs. As a result, the assessment of student outcomes are undertaken annually by the directors of those programs. The senior coda is offered by departments and programs across the college. Although senior codas are designed by individual academic departments, they are interdisciplinary by nature. As such, while any given department may assess how senior codas align with their curriculum expectations at any time, it undergoes a periodic assessment of its ability to meet its goals within the general education program on a periodic basis similar to the areas of inquiry described below.

#### *Foundations: Quantitative Reasoning/Global Cultural Perspectives/Language/Writing*

Assessment of the quantitative reasoning program is the responsibility of the QR director and the QR working group. Similarly, delivery of the courses that meet the world language and writing requirements is housed with specific departments (World Languages and English) who are responsible for their assessment on a periodic basis, though chairs of those departments may, in consultation with the CEPP, occasionally assemble a multi-disciplinary group to interrogate broader issues related to the requirement. Given that courses that fulfill the global and cultural perspectives requirement span many departments, CEPP will convene an interdepartmental working group to conduct periodic assessment of this requirement.

*Inquiries: Artistic, Humanistic, and Scientific*

Similar to the global and cultural perspectives requirement, the courses that fulfill each of these requirements span many divisions. CEPP will occasionally convene an interdepartmental group of faculty to conduct periodic assessment.

*In the Major: Information Literacy/Oral Communication/Technology Literacy/Visual Literacy/Writing in the Major*

Each department is responsible for integrating the assessment of in-the-major requirements into their broader assessment plan. The FDA will on an annual basis, make a recommendation for a special topic related to assessment of in-the-major literacies, though departments are not mandated to follow this schedule.

### **Surveys of Students, Faculty, & Staff**

The College maintains a survey administration [schedule](#). It specifically includes surveys that are all-college in nature with a focus on students, faculty and/or staff. Most of the surveys, especially student ones, are administered by Institutional Research (IR). The College uses a mix of instruments developed internally as well as nationally. Most surveys are administered on a biennial, triennial, or greater schedule. Some of the surveys administered include: ASQ, CIRP, NSSE, COACHE, FSSE, YFCY, Withdrawn Student, HEDS Alumni, HEDS Diversity and Equity Campus Climate, etc.

## **Program Reviews**

### **Administrative Departments**

In addition to assessment of student learning and/or institutional effectiveness, departments are highly encouraged to complete a self-study every eight years. Administrative offices in Academic Affairs are expected to conduct a self-study. This process of reflection includes a review of staffing, business processes, budgeting, and services. In addition to this internal process, departments should include an external component such as reviewing professional organization expectations and conducting benchmarking activities. See Appendix A for details.

### **Academic Departments**

In addition to the assessment of student learning, academic departments are routinely engaged in assessing their department and curriculum. Academic departments are expected to complete Triennial Reviews. In addition, academic departments are expected to engage in a self-study approximately every ten years. This extensive process includes self-reflection, review of quantitative student data, benchmarking best practices within the field and an external review. See the Chairs Handbook for specific details.

## **Assessing Assessment**

Every accreditation cycle, the SIE will be charged with reviewing the Institutional Effectiveness Process.

## Appendix A: Areas Engaging with Assessment

List of areas expected to engage in on-going assessment as determined by the IPPC Subcommittee on Institutional Effectiveness

### **Academic Affairs**

- Academic Advising
- Academic Departments/Programs
- Center for Leadership in Teaching and Learning
- First-Year Experience
- Foundation and Corporate Relations
- Institutional Research
- Library
- Off-campus Study & Exchanges
- Opportunity Program
- Registrar
- Special Programs
- Sponsored Research
- Sustainability
- Tang

### **Admissions and Financial Aid**

### **Advancement**

### **Communications and Marketing**

### **Finance and Administration**

- Campus Safety
- Dining Services
- Financial Services
- Human Resources
- Information Technology

### **Student Affairs**

- Athletics
- Campus Life and Engagement
- Career Development Center
- Health and Wellness
- Residential Life
- Student Academic Services
- Student Success
- Title IX- Deputy Coordinator Services

## Administrative Department Self-Study

Department self-study serves as a form of assessment of priorities, practices, and activities. The self-study is designed to be similar to the academic department self-study. However, the external review is replaced by a benchmarking exercise. Departments are encouraged to engage in a self-study every eight years or as directed by the divisional vice president.

### Outcomes:

1. Review and revise, as needed, department mission and goals in relation to the College's Strategic Plan, Goals for Student Learning and Development as well as divisional priorities.
2. Write a self-study that reflects on the current strengths, areas for improvement and opportunities within the department.
3. Engage in benchmarking exercise to review best practices, staffing models and future directions of department function.

### Outline

1. Executive summary
2. Introduction to the administrative department
  - a. Mission and Goals
  - b. Organizational Structure
  - c. Budget
  - d. Staffing
  - e. Metrics used to determine success of meeting goals
  - f. How Goals are aligned with institutional priorities
3. History of changes to the department since previous self-study
4. Overview of results of benchmarking exercise
5. Discussion of department strengths, areas for improvement and opportunities
6. Recommendations for the future including staffing, resources, equipment, or other support

## Annual Assessment/Institutional Effectiveness Plan for Administrative Offices

DEADLINE: *Discussed end of fiscal year, June 30*

Year		Department	
Division		Primary Contact	

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*GOALS (How project(s) connect with Strategic Plan, Division Goals, Department Goals, and/or Goals for Student Learning and Development)*

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

### SUMMARY

*COMMUNICATION OF RESULTS (How are results being communicated both internally and to key stakeholders?)*

*ACTION STEPS (What action steps arise as result of assessment)*

### FUTURE ASSESSMENTS

*Note: Academic Departments and Student Affairs have their own templates.*

## Appendix B: Mapping General Education Curriculum to Goals for Student Learning

General Education Curriculum Fall 2020															
Goals for Student Learning and Development	INTEGRATIONS <sup>1</sup>			FOUNDATIONS <sup>1</sup>				INQUIRIES <sup>1</sup>			IN THE MAJOR <sup>2,3</sup>				
	First Year Experience	Bridge Experience	Senior Experience Coda	Applied Quantitative Reasoning	Global Cultural Perspectives	Language Study	Writing	Artistic Inquiry through Practice	Humanistic Inquiry and Practice	Scientific Inquiry through Practice	Information Literacy	Oral Communication	Technology Literacy	Visual Literacy	Writing in the Major <sup>1</sup>
<b>I. KNOWLEDGE</b>															
Acquire knowledge of human cultures and the physical world through study in the arts, humanities, languages, mathematics, natural sciences, and social sciences															
Understand social and cultural diversity in national and global contexts															
Demonstrate advanced learning and synthesis in both general and specialized studies															
<b>II. INTELLECTUAL SKILLS AND PRACTICE</b>															
Think critically, creatively, and independently															
Gather, analyze, integrate, and apply varied forms of information; understand and use evidence															
Communicate effectively															
Interact effectively and collaboratively with individuals and across social identities															
Engage in and take responsibility for learning; strive for excellence															
<b>III. PERSONAL AND SOCIAL VALUES</b>															
Examine one's own values and their use as ethical criteria in thought and action															
Interrogate one's own values in relation to those of others, across social and cultural differences															
Develop practical competencies for managing a personal, professional, and community life															
Apply learning to find solutions for social, civic, and scientific problems															
<b>IV. TRANSFORMATION</b>															
Integrate and apply knowledge and creative thought from multiple disciplines in new contexts															
Embrace intellectual integrity, humility, and courage															
Foster habits of mind and body that enable a person to live deliberately and well															
Develop an enduring passion for learning															
<sup>1</sup> shading for Integrations, Foundations, Inquiries, and Writing in the Major is per CEPP comments in 28 April 2017 General Education Curriculum															
<sup>2</sup> shading for In the Major (other than Writing) extrapolated from 28 April 2017 General Education Curriculum															
<sup>3</sup> Learning outcomes for int the major competencies determined by individual academic departments and programs															