

## Committee on Educational Policy and Planning

Annual Report  
2001-2002

CEPP met 25 times during the 2001-2002 academic year. Minutes will be available on the CEPP web site.

Most of CEPP's discussion focused on the strategic planning process and on the issue of on-line learning:

### Strategic Plan

CEPP discussed the College's strategic planning process and composed a statement summarizing our views on the educational goals of the institution (Attachment A). The Committee reviewed drafts of the College's strategic plan and provided feedback to Dean Chuck Joseph and to IPC.

### On-line Learning

CEPP met with a number of people on campus who have been involved in on-line learning. We read a considerable amount of background material on the issue. The Committee concluded that the current practices for granting credit for courses taken at other institutions should be extended to allow the inclusion of on-line courses in cases where the Registrar or CAS and the department chair determine that the educational quality of the courses meets Skidmore's standards. CEPP sees the potential for difficulties in monitoring the quality of these courses and will have to compose guidelines for the process. CEPP brought this issue to the attention of Academic Staff at the May meeting. (See attachment B.)

CEPP also addressed a variety of other issues including approval of the expansion and addition of study abroad programs, academic prizes, the academic calendar, and the Dean of Studies' Classroom Protocols document.

Pat Fehling will be the Chair of CEPP next year.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandy Baum  
Sandy Baum (Chair)  
John Berman (Fall) Chuck Joseph (Spring)  
John Brueggemann Mike Meguerdichian '02  
Pat Fehling Pat Oles  
Frank Gonzalez Linda Simon  
Doug Humphrey '03 Janet Sorensen

Attachment A

CEPP Statement on the Strategic Plan

December 2001

As the committee responsible for "clarifying, improving and changing major policies and educational procedures" at Skidmore, the Committee on Educational Policy and Planning wishes to communicate to the community its conviction that educational policy should be a central focus of Skidmore's Strategic Plan. We would like to take this opportunity to comment on our sense of what the College's priorities in this area should be.

CEPP believes that Skidmore's curriculum is well balanced and the educational framework is sound. Rather than pursuing dramatic new directions or changes in the educational priorities of the College, we should focus on strengthening the programs and initiatives we have already undertaken and assuring that our efforts are supported with adequate resources.

### Additional Tenure Lines

Our ability to excel in the ambitious educational endeavors we have undertaken in recent years is limited by the fact that we have not been able to increase the number of faculty tenure lines. Adding additional lines is our top priority.

The primary goals for expanding the number of tenure lines at the College include:

- Allowing faculty to carry out their responsibilities for independent study, academic advising, and other forms of engagement with students that enhance the Skidmore experience without being forced to compromise either the quality of their classroom teaching or attention to their professional development and activity.
- Increasing flexibility for adjustment of the number of hours faculty spend in the classroom, enabling them to meet the expectations for interdisciplinary teaching, integration of technology into the classroom, and professional accomplishment, all of which have increased in recent years.
- The allocation of additional tenure lines should be decided carefully and systematically, taking into consideration a variety of factors including: class sizes, enrollments relative to caps, departmental participation in interdisciplinary programs, capacity for covering basic disciplinary offerings, and current reliance on adjuncts.
- CEPP has not attempted to address the question of the number of new faculty lines required to meet our educational goals. Decisions about the optimal number of new lines should take the cost of new lines, including potential capital costs, into consideration and weigh the high priority for this area against other priorities, including assuring progress in compensation levels.

### Financial Aid

Increased financial aid is a high priority, necessary to allow us to recruit more highly qualified students, including those from under-represented racial, ethnic and socioeconomic groups. The diversity of Skidmore's community and the quality of our student body are important components of the quality of education we are able to offer our students.

Incorporating cultural diversity into our course offerings is much more meaningful if diverse backgrounds are represented in the classroom. Students and faculty from diverse backgrounds enhance both the substance of the curriculum and the array of perspectives integrated into the college's intellectual community. Skidmore has moral obligations to offer opportunities to high quality students with differing levels of resources, to model the values so many of us espouse, and to create an environment in which our students can learn to value and participate in a diverse society. Narrowing the gap between Skidmore's financial aid resources and those available to the institutions with which we compete for students is a necessary step towards achieving these goals.

## Mind and Hand

This broad rubric characterizes a number of important aspects of the Skidmore vision and experience. It has historically referred to the partnership of abstract, theoretical reasoning and practical application, both of which have shaped the classic liberal arts as well as the pre-professional programs at the College. Work in science labs, art studios, computer labs, and internships, in addition to pre-professional programs are visible examples of this integration. We believe it is important the pre-professional programs do not lie outside of the College's liberal arts mission, but are fully integrated within it.

CEPP recognizes recent attempts to expand the integration of theory and practice through new opportunities for experiential learning and supports continued efforts in this direction. Service learning projects, internship opportunities and the integration of co-curricular activities with coursework all strengthen the academic foundation of the College and increase civic engagement among students. As we develop programs of this nature, we should assure that appropriate guidelines and procedures for quality assurance are in place.

## Curricular Innovation

### Setting Priorities:

Skidmore has an admirable history of successful curricular innovation. However, we are concerned that we frequently attempt to stretch too far, instituting potentially exciting programs without adequate recognition of the resulting strain on resources. We believe that we may be unable to continue offering the high quality program on which we pride ourselves if we do not find ways to more realistically assess the costs and benefits of alternative educational undertakings. We urge the faculty and administration to devise and implement strategies for prioritizing the many exciting ideas for curriculum innovation that emerge.

### Interdisciplinary/disciplinary study:

CEPP considers the current balance between disciplinary and interdisciplinary study appropriate. Our interdisciplinary offerings have evolved from a focus on the Liberal Studies program to a smaller LS program, complemented by more extensive opportunities in programs such as Environmental Studies, Law and Society, Asian Studies, International Affairs, and Women's Studies. CEPP urges the College to increase the resources available to these programs, rather than taking the approach of developing programs under the pretense that they do not require additional resources in order to meet their potential. We are hopeful that the addition of new faculty lines will enhance the ability of current and new faculty in the traditional disciplines to contribute to interdisciplinary efforts.

## International and Intercultural Studies

Our development of substantial interdisciplinary offerings has been accompanied by growth in our international opportunities and, to a more limited extent, intercultural courses. We hope that the College will explore ways of incorporating international students and international study into our strategies for increased diversity. We would also like to suggest that the new requirement for courses on diversity is a perFECt example of an important innovation that will have difficulty succeeding without additional support.

## Technology

There is clear potential for exciting new learning opportunities to develop through the use of technology. CEPP supports the continued integration of technology in the Skidmore educational experience, but we do not believe that technological innovation in pedagogy deserves primacy over other types of innovation. The faculty should continue ongoing conversations about how best to utilize technological resources in carrying out our mission, keeping in mind Skidmore's strength in rigorous personal interaction and discourse. For now, we recommend maintaining the current, substantial commitment to developing information technology.

## Summary

In sum, CEPP urges the College to plan for the strengthening of current educational and curricular undertakings by providing additional faculty and other resources to promote current initiatives.

## CEPP (2001-2002)

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John Berman  
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## Attachment B

## On-Line Learning

## CEPP PROPOSAL

CEPP recommends that the current practices for granting credit for courses taken at other institutions be extended to allow the inclusion of on-line courses in cases where the Registrar or CAS and the department chair determine that the educational quality of the courses meets Skidmore's standards.

Issue:

Currently, the Registrar and CAS do not (knowingly) grant transfer credit for any on-line learning experience taken at another institution. Department chairs use their discretion in granting transfer credit for courses in the major or minor.

1 ) Current guidelines for granting transfer credit relate to the accreditation and level of the institution, the minimum length of the session, the number of courses allowed during a summer, and definitions of studio courses. Faculty advisors, department chairs, the registrar and CAS all play a role. There is no written reference to the mode of delivery or other pedagogical methods involved in the course.

2) For several years, CEPP has approved experimenting with on-line learning in the Skidmore Summer Sessions. This summer, the college is offering four on-line courses taught by members of the Skidmore faculty. Skidmore students automatically get credit for these courses.

3) Because on-line learning is becoming more common and many institutions with excellent reputations, including Skidmore, are starting to offer on-line or "hybrid" courses, we are likely to face more frequent requests from students for credit for these courses. This could include both courses taken over the summer and those taken during study abroad.

#### CEPP Perspectives

CEPP devoted a considerable amount of time to the question of credit for on-line learning during the 2001-2002 academic year. We talked with faculty members who have designed these courses for UWW, with Special Programs staff who are very familiar with on-line learning both at Skidmore and elsewhere, and with Jon Ramsey and Ann Henderson about their views and perspectives on the issue.

We believe that it would be appropriate for Skidmore to modify its policy to be more open to granting credit for on-line learning experiences. We are, however, concerned that quality control will be even more difficult for on-line courses than for traditional classroom courses.

We should review all the current guidelines for transfer credit, in the light of changing pedagogies and new delivery modes, in order to produce a set of guidelines that are practical and internally consistent, while assuring quality. We might also consider setting stricter limits on the total number of courses for which a student can obtain transfer credit during academic years in which he or she is enrolled at Skidmore.

Issues to consider:

In composing guidelines for granting transfer credit for on-line courses, CEPP will include consideration of the following issues:

1. Should evaluation of the content of courses offered on-line or as hybrid courses be different from evaluation of "traditional" courses?

2. How should the extent of student-to-student and faculty-to-student interaction relate to the granting of credit?

3. Should Skidmore make a greater effort to find out what resources and teaching methods are used in on-line courses than in traditional courses?

CEPP 2001-2002

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