

To: President Glotzbach
From: CIGU
Date: November 25, 2014
Ref.: Recommendation for IPPC

Preface

Over the years, multiple stakeholders at Skidmore College have engaged in discussion and generated numerous reports regarding the changes needed to address challenges to diversity and inclusion at the institution. The goals set in these documents are well defined and ambitious, as is evident, for example, in Goal II of the Strategic Plan: Intercultural and Global Understanding. One of the priority initiatives for this goal states that the College must:

- 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.
- charge the Intercultural and Global Understanding Task Force to initiate and support this conversation.
- provide additional resources to faculty members to meet the pedagogical needs of an increasingly diverse student population and take advantage of the opportunities represented by a more multicultural classroom environment.
- identify individuals who will have leadership and operational responsibility for guiding the implementation of this initiative (page 29).

Various groups have worked diligently to implement these objectives, but progress has been limited by a lack of a clear strategy and a fragmented leadership structure that lacks the power to implement the proposed changes. Although we have considerably advanced on several fronts, for example in admissions and the hiring of an increasingly diverse faculty, there is much more we need to do to consolidate these gains and continue to address the Strategic Plan recommendations to:

- enhance the diversity of our student population while providing the resources necessary to support all of our students in meeting our educational objectives (page 30).
- enhance the diversity of our faculty, staff, and administration and enhance their skills that relate to achieving this goal (page 31).

Recommendation

After much consideration and the review of many past and current reports (see Appendix), CIGU can confidently and unanimously present one final recommendation to IPPC: the creation of the position of Chief Diversity Officer (CDO).

Rationale

Progress in Diversity Recruitment and Current Challenges

CIGU recognizes that Skidmore has made considerable progress in faculty recruitment, especially through efforts of the Dean of the Faculty's Office related to hiring and retention (inclusive hiring workshops, for example, have proven to be effective). Unfortunately, the retention portion of this important initiative has not been as successful, as the data from the past eight years demonstrates (Data from HR in appendix).

Our difficulties with retention of faculty of color, combined with other problems related to campus climate, cannot be ignored because they affect our ability to attain our mission of delivering an excellent education, as well as our long-term capability to continue to attract faculty of color. It also has a bearing on our resources, as recruitment and training of new faculty are expensive endeavors.

Many campus-climate surveys and studies indicate that Skidmore is not as welcoming as we aspire to be. This was clearly articulated in CIGU's Campus Climate Comprehensive Report and Recommendations, sent to IPPC in the spring of 2014. Recent data about the level of dissatisfaction among non-faculty personnel also reinforce the shortcomings of some of our efforts (HR report on staff satisfaction in appendix). In addition, the COACHE (Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education) report points to job dissatisfaction among faculty in general, as compared to our peers.

We commend the Admissions Office for its success in diversifying the student population; however, past and present data indicate that our students frequently perceive the campus as unwelcoming. Given the campus-climate data, such as CHAS (Consortium on High Achievement and Success) surveys, the Romney and Associates Student Climate Survey, and the IGUTF and CIGU's own senior exit interviews, we should not ignore the level of discontent expressed by some of our students. Another clear example is the *I, too, am Skidmore* campaign, which forcefully includes students' demands directly related to diversity and inclusion.

The lack of significant and sustainable change over the four years since the May 2011 CIGU Report provided in the appendix and the four years of the diversity quad preceding this document, attest to the fact that the current administrative structure at Skidmore is not yielding the desired results. This is not due to lack of dedication, vision, and effort on the part of the many offices and programs

currently working on diversity initiatives, but rather to the lack of a designated leader with the vision and authority to propose, promote, and effect change. Citing CIGU's 2011 report (page 4), we emphasize that the current administrative structure, while well intentioned, has not been effective.

Why we need a CDO

The creation of the position of Chief Diversity Officer would recommit our institutional vision for diversity and inclusion through a clear line of authority, responsibility, accountability, and resources. Historically, Skidmore has bestowed this level of responsibility to offices and positions, not committees (like CIGU). The above-mentioned CIGU's Campus Climate Comprehensive Report and Recommendations, sent to IPPC in the spring of 2014, addresses the confusing nature of the various definitions of diversity that circulate on campus. With a CDO, Skidmore can articulate a "functional definition of diversity as a resource that can be leveraged to enhance the learning of all students and is fundamental to institutional excellence, in addition to its historic definition as the presence of individuals that differ by race, gender, or some other social identity characteristic." (Williams and Wade-Golden, 2).

While research has demonstrated both the gains and challenges associated with the CDO model, we believe that this position will yield opportunities to attain institutional coherence in its efforts to continue to grow as a diverse, inclusive, and socially equitable liberal arts college. "Inclusive excellence" (a term used by AAC&U) requires that Skidmore commit to the strategically aligned leadership that affirms, both internally and externally, our commitment to this core value and positions us as a leader among our peer and aspirant institutions.

A CDO reporting directly to the President will have the leverage to recommend and enact policy and implement programs across the College as one concerted effort. A cabinet-level position will ensure that the CDO will have

.. the power and authority to enforce the policies created to guide the institution into becoming more receptive to diversity. ... It is imperative that the chief diversity officer is an executive-level position that reports directly to the university president if this appointment is going to have any influence. As a direct report to the person who has the most authority at the institution, the chief diversity officer should be able to effectively pursue diversity policy and change without going through a lot of campus bureaucracy (Wilson, 9)

The creation of a CDO cabinet-level position will underscore the centrality of diversity, inclusion, and social justice for the President, the College, and the campus community. It will signal strong commitment to changing the current climate, express the belief that diversity is essential for institutional excellence, and reinforce the already-expressed view that diversity needs to be not only part of the culture at Skidmore, but also of its structure.

There are also some significant external benefits to the creation of the position. For example, the creation of the CDO position will enable Skidmore to join the Liberal Arts Diversity Officers (LADO), a national consortium of liberal arts institutions that is at the forefront of diversity and inclusion initiatives. The organization's goal is to

. . .facilitate systematic and systemic change to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion, in support of academic excellence and learning across all constituencies, at colleges and universities with a core commitment to liberal arts education. We aim to work together to address the unique challenges and opportunities in liberal arts communities around issues of diversity and equity, in recognition of the significant potential of liberal arts graduates and institutions to engage in research and service that will contribute to transforming society.

While our admission to LADO would not be guaranteed, Skidmore would be in a strong position for admission. Because one of the external responsibilities of a CDO would be to stay abreast of changes in the field, s/he would be able to implement best practices across the College and advance this part of the agenda in an organic and consistent manner.

We have made significant progress in many areas, and it is now the time to build upon this progress. Skidmore is now embarking on a new strategic planning phase, is completing its Middle States ten year self-study, and has started a new fundraising campaign. We are setting the course for the college we want to be. We are poised to move to a different level, to the next stage, in terms of our diversity, inclusion, and social justice goals. To do so we will need the attention of a high-level administrator, a CDO, who can coordinate the efforts at the institution as a whole and be able to determine institutional priorities in consultation with the President and his Cabinet.