

CAS Annual Report, 2005-2006

Members of the CAS, 2005-2006:

Bob Turner, Government (chair)

Rik Scarce, Anthropology, Sociology, and Social Work

Bill Standish, Physics

Grace Burton, Interim Dean of Studies

Ann Henderson, Registrar

Sarah Kunz, Student Representative, Fall

Beth DeBold, Student Representative, Spring

Regular visitors (nonvoting):

Tina Levith, Associate director, Dean of Studies

Dave DeConno, Associate Registrar

The Committee on Academic Standing (CAS) met weekly during the year and held two Academic Review sessions, one in January 2006 and one in June 2006. In addition to hearing petitions and requests, and upholding the academic standards of Skidmore College, the CAS also enacted a new policy regarding Advanced Placement Credits, including academic integrity violation information in Academic Review sessions, withdrawals from Scribner Seminars, UWW admissions policy and disqualified residential students, studying abroad in Israel, and the 2 withdrawal limit.

- **Advanced Placement Credits-** CAS forwarded a proposal to CEPP that was subsequently approved by the Faculty in April 2006 to change how Skidmore counts AP credits for graduation requirements. The new policy would limit the total number of AP credits an incoming student can transfer to 16 and the number of credits a student can receive for a single AP class to 4. CAS wanted to set a ceiling of one semester that students could use their AP credits to opt out of. CAS felt that a student's educational experience would be diminished if they could opt out of more than one semester of collegiate level work using their AP credits.

- **Including academic integrity violation information in future Academic Review sessions** - In January and June of each year, CAS reviews students who are not meeting minimal academic standards for disqualification. In January 2004 in response to a request by Dean Oles, CAS agreed to take into account social integrity information provided by his office in our deliberations regarding disqualification. In January 2006, CAS decided to also take into account academic integrity violations in our deliberations.

- **Scribner Seminar policy** – In conjunction with the Director of the FYE and CEPP, CAS has been studying what Skidmore policy should be concerning students who do not successfully complete the Scribner Seminar. Last year, it was decided that for the next two years, withdrawals and failures would be decided on a case-by-case basis by CAS and the FYE director. CEPP presented this information to the faculty at the April 1, 2005 faculty meeting.

In 2005-06, CAS and Michael Arnush reviewed the cases of 10 first year students who did not complete their Scribner Seminars and decided the outcomes on a case-by-case basis. Our decisions today fell into five categories:

1. Students who medically withdrew from their SSPs and who will remain on medical leave through spring 2006, thus returning to Skidmore in fall 2006 as “new freshmen,” will be required to repeat the SSP. CAS felt that such students did not fully engage in and thus benefit from the FYE (despite their relatively late withdrawals) and would therefore benefit from repeating both the academic and co-curricular aspects of the FYE (2 students).
2. Students who medically withdrew from their SSPs, but were registered for spring 2006 (pending approval of their Return From Medical Leave applications) will not be required to take another SSP in fall 2006 and will not be required to take an interdisciplinary course during the spring 2006 semester. CAS felt that these students would not benefit from repeating the SSP after they have taken a full semester of courses during the spring term—that they would be more analogous to the new transfer student coming to Skidmore with 12 or more credits and who are exempt from taking the SSP because of their advanced standing. If these students do not return to campus in spring 2006, CAS will revisit their decisions (2 students)
3. Students who were suspended for social reasons in fall 2006: one will be given the option to take the SSP if he wishes to do so while the other will not be required to repeat the SSP. Both of these students will be full-time students in spring 2006. (2 students)
4. One student who withdrew from SSP and who, although doing poorly at the time of the late withdrawal, remained with the course as an auditor will not be required to repeat SSP. (1 student)
5. Students who matriculate in January 2006 with no previous full-time college experience will have the option of taking the SSP in fall 2006 if they so choose. CAS felt that these students belong in a category similar to transfer students since all of them will have completed 12 or more credits by the beginning of the fall 2006 semester. They could surely benefit from the SSP, but will not be required to take it. (3 students)

UWW Admissions Policy and Disqualified Skidmore Residential Students

The Office of Special Programs and CAS agreed to a new policy regarding disqualified students being allowed to enroll in University Without Walls. Now, CAS will review disqualified residential students who seek readmission both to the Residential College and to UWW.

• **Studying Abroad in Israel-** Currently Skidmore does not endorse or approve study abroad to countries where there is an active Department of State warning. Israel is one of those countries. CAS considered a request to grant credit to students studying abroad in programs in Israel, such as allowing students to study in Israel on a personal leave. These students would then return to campus and petition to allow the credits to transfer toward

the Skidmore degree. This policy would require that we make an exception to the current policy regarding students abroad on a personal leave. The current policy states that students may not transfer any credits that are acquired while abroad on a personal leave. This exception would be made only for students studying in Israel.

Schools across the country handle this question in a variety of ways: approving study in Israel, approving study in Israel with waivers in place, approving personal leaves to study in Israel and allowing students to transfer credit, or not approving study in Israel under any circumstances. OIP discussed these options and schools with CAS to give an overview of where our peer schools stand on the issue.

While all understood the education benefits of study in Israel, it was felt that this policy change would be very problematic. This policy would be a singular exception to the current policy regarding study abroad and personal leaves. Making such exceptions for one specific destination would cause any number of conflicts and brings up questions of why Israel and not other countries with DOS warnings. It would also bring up questions regarding the newly implemented Approved Programs structure. Why should one select group of students be allowed to participate on non-approved programs by taking a personal leave? Finally, it was not clear that allowing credits from a personal leave would avoid the issue of institutional liability should our students be harmed while away.

After lengthy discussion, CAS decided not to adopt a policy that would allow students to study in Israel on a personal leave and bring back transfer credits.

- **Two Withdrawal policy** – A persistent challenge for CAS has been how to consistently and fairly apply the Two Withdrawal policy to students suffering from mental or physical illness. These discussions are part of an ongoing discussion within CAS about how policies designed to promote academic rigor (full time status, progress towards degree, the 2 withdrawal policy) have a disproportionate effect on students suffering from mental illness.

Currently, Skidmore’s policy is to permit students two withdrawals (Ws) and then petition CAS for additional Ws. The question we discussed is how to apply the 2 W policy fairly given the number of medical Ws and the timing of the Ws. The various course withdrawal permutations we considered included:

- (1) Students who withdraw from a semester (4 Ws) and then request additional withdrawals thereafter;
- (2) Students who already have two “simple” withdrawals then requesting an additional withdrawal for medical reasons;
- (3) Students with one or more medical withdrawals then requesting a “simple” withdrawal.

CAS agreed upon two proposals: (1) we added language to the current withdrawal form that indicates a student may attach relevant medical information from a medical professional to distinguish a medical from a simple W; and (2) the CAS will keep track of

medical withdrawals in 2006-2007 in order to help us further assess whether there has been an increase in this type of request.

Bob Turner will be leaving CAS, to be replaced by William Standish of the Chemistry Department, who will be chair. Next year the Committee will look something like this:

Bill Standish (chair)

Ann Henderson, Registrar

Michael Ennis-McMillen, Dean of Studies

Tillman Nechtman, History

Rachel Roe-Dale, Mathematics and Computer Science

Beth DeBold, Student Representative

Regular visitors (nonvoting):

Tina Levith, Associate Director, Dean of Studies

Dave DeConno, Associate Registrar

Respectfully submitted,

Robert C. Turner, chair, CAS, July 10, 2006