

## **Committee on Academic Standing (CAS) Annual Report, 2014-2015**

### **Members of the CAS (voting)**

Eric Morser, History (Chair)  
Jenny Day, History  
Rebecca Johnson, Psychology  
David DeConno, Registrar  
Corey Freeman-Gallant, Associate Dean of the Faculty  
Emily Knickerbocker, student representative (Spring)  
Douglas Patrick, student representative (Spring)

### **Regular Visitors (non-voting)**

Tina Breakell, Associate Director, Office of Off-Campus Study and Exchange  
Sharon Clemmey, Assistant Registrar  
Elizabeth McPhee, Academic Advisor  
Kim Marsella, Director of Academic Advising

### **Summary of Activities**

The CAS has a long tradition of celebrating shared campus governance. The committee brings together stakeholders from across the campus (including faculty, administrators, staff members, and students) who share a commitment to academic excellence. It also works hard to maintain open channels with other committees across campus. Overall, the CAS tries to embody the spirit of shared governance that so informs liberal arts education at Skidmore.

The committee met weekly during the academic year, held an Academic Review session in January of 2015, and will convene a second Academic Review in June of 2015. In addition, the CAS chair and select committee members gathered in January of 2014 to consider applications from students on medical leave who were seeking permission to return to Skidmore and continue their studies.

During the committee's weekly meetings, it considered student petitions brought from the offices of Academic Advising, the Registrar, and Off-Campus Study and Exchange (OCSE). These petitions and requests touched on a number of important issues, such as course scheduling, late withdrawals, study abroad, and general academic performance, that have an impact on the academic experience of Skidmore undergraduates.

Along with reviewing student petitions, the CAS made a number of decisions that either clarified or changed important policy issues:

1. **Waiving All-College Requirements:** The CAS reaffirmed the critical value of all-college requirements at Skidmore. The committee, however,

also made clear that in rare circumstances it may work with the Coordinator of Student Access Services and search to find reasonable ways to accommodate students with special needs who contribute to the life of the college but are simply unable to fulfill certain all-college requirements. After consulting with the Committee on Education Policies and Planning (CEPP) and receiving its unanimous endorsement, the CAS clarified this position in new language added to the committee's operating code.

2. **Independent Studies and All-College Requirements:** The committee debated whether a student should be allowed to use independent studies to fulfill all-college requirements. Members recognized that independent study courses and regular classes are often very different in terms of their pedagogical expectations and practical execution. In the end, however, the CAS decided to affirm current practice. If the independent study is taking the place of an existing Curriculum Committee approved course, it will assume all the attributes of the regular course, including the course's contribution to general education requirements. Independent studies proposed by students under the 171, 271, and 371 rubrics will not count for general education requirements because they have not been vetted by the Curriculum Committee, the committee charged with maintaining the integrity of all-college curriculum.
3. **Summer Transfer Credits:** The committee refined its policy on accepting summer transfer credits. In the past, Skidmore's policy has stated that students can earn no more than 16 credits in the summer: 8 in one session and 8 in a second session. Given that more and more schools are offering online courses with multiple starting dates, the CAS recognized that it has become increasingly possible for students to sign up for courses with variable starting and ending dates that would raise their number of enrolled credits above 8. In the face of this new educational reality, and to provide students with greater academic flexibility, the CAS granted the Registrar's office greater leeway to consider allowing up to 9 credits in in each session but not to exceed the 16-credit limit for the entire summer.
4. **Student Petitions to Study Abroad:** The committee worked closely with representatives from the OCSE and the Foreign Language and Literature Department to determine who should have final approval over whether a student who fails to meet the required minimum GPA to study abroad should be allowed to do so. After a fruitful and rewarding conversation, all sides agreed that it made sense for the CAS to review all petitions for study abroad with the understanding that the committee will strongly consider letters of support from faculty members who know the student well and understand the value of the often life-changing choice to immerse themselves in a foreign culture.

5. **Student Athletes:** The committee worked with the Athletic Council and Athletic Director to refine campus policy regarding athletes placed on academic waiver. In the past, athletes on waiver were not allowed to take part in practice or play on sports teams. Given that some athletes benefit academically from the structured experience of being a team member, the CAS decided that it will allow student athletes to petition the committee for permission to take part in organized team activities.
  
6. **Grade Inflation on Campus:** The CAS had a provocative and productive conversation about the issue of grade inflation in higher education generally and at Skidmore in particular. Members concluded that grade inflation at Skidmore is real and considered what factors have influenced this general trend. The CAS also reached out to the CEPP to discuss the issue further and explore possible ways to broaden the debate across campus. Both the CAS and the CEPP intend to revisit the conversation in the upcoming academic year.

**Members of the CAS (voting) for 2015-2016**

Rebecca Johnson, Psychology (Chair)  
David Cohen, Management and Business  
Eric Morser, History  
David DeConno, Registrar  
Corey Freeman-Gallant, Associate Dean of the Faculty

**Regular Visitors (non-voting) for 2015-2016**

Tina Breakell, Associate Director, Office of Off-Campus Study and Exchange  
Sharon Clemmey, Assistant Registrar  
Elizabeth McPhee, Academic Advisor  
Kim Marsella, Director of Academic Advising

Respectfully Submitted,

Eric Morser  
Chair of the CAS