

Committee on Academic Standing (CAS) Annual Report, 2016-2017

Members of the CAS (voting)

Rebecca Johnson, Psychology (Chair)
David Cohen, Management & Business
Hope Casto, Education Studies
David DeConno, Registrar
Corey Freeman-Gallant, Associate Dean of the Faculty (Fall)
Ron Seyb, Associate Dean of the Faculty (Spring)
Orr Genish, student representative
Megan Weitzner, student representative (Fall)
Dylan Quinn, student representative (Spring)

Regular Visitors (non-voting)

Cori Filson, Director, Office of Off-Campus Study and Exchange
Shannon Phillips, 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 from September through May. 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.

The committee also held an Academic Review session in January of 2017, and will convene a second Academic Review in June of 2017. At these end-of-semester Academic Review sessions, CAS considers all students who, in the most recent semester and over their time at Skidmore, have failed to maintain the standards required for good academic standing. In addition, the CAS held an Academic Review focused on graduating seniors in May 2017 to review the academic plan of seniors who had not yet completed their degree requirements but wished to participate in the May commencement activities as August graduates. Finally, select committee members gathered in August

2016, January 2017, and May 2017 to consider requests from students applying for readmission to Skidmore and from those returning from medical and personal leaves of absence.

Along with this regular annual work, the CAS made a number of decisions that either clarified or changed important policy issues:

1. **Display of Transfer and Off-Campus Study Grades on Transcripts** – With help from the Registrar’s office, the CAS changed the practice of displaying the grades earned from transfer credits and off-campus study abroad experiences (other than those that are from a Skidmore program) on students’ official Skidmore transcript. Now, earned credit from these outside sources will appear only as TR (transfer credit), NC (no credit earned), or ML (maturity level credit) on all official transcripts. The grade earned will still be displayed on all Skidmore-internal systems (e.g., the student’s degree audit), so that they can be used for advising and OCSE purposes. The CAS came to this decision after considering that (1) these grades are not factored into students’ GPAs and (2) other schools/employers may be using our transcripts rather than requesting official transcripts from the original institution, which could allow for important information (e.g., failed courses, sexual misconduct violations, integrity violations) to be lost from the original transcript.
2. **Course Loads for Matriculated College Employees** – In following up on the policy formation initiated by the 2015-2016 CAS which granted matriculated Skidmore employees the ability to continue as part-time students, the CAS worked with the Registrar’s Office to develop language outlining the details of this new policy.
3. **Revisions to the Withdrawal-Without-Grade Penalty Policy** – Throughout the year, the CAS had several discussions about the Withdrawal-Without-Grade-Penalty policy and form. Specifically, the committee noted the inconsistency in the language used on the withdrawal form with that used in the College Catalog, where instructors and advisors are asked to provide “permission” for students to get “approval” from the CAS to Withdraw from a course and need not be in support of the request for it to be reviewed by the CAS. The CAS modified the language on the Withdrawal Form (1) to clarify the purpose of the instructor/advisor signature, (2) to note that faculty members may have limited information due to confidential/sensitive medical and personal issues, and (3) to invite faculty to provide the CAS with academic information in cases in which they do not support the withdrawal request. Furthermore, in order to increase transparency of our current practices to all students, the CAS made modifications to its Operating Code to more clearly specify the decision-making criteria used in approving additional and late Withdrawal requests.
4. **Change in Audit Caps** – In consultation with the Registrar’s Office, the CAS changed the cap on the allowed number of audits from 2 courses to 6 credits. A

switch in limiting the number of audits by credits rather than courses helps to keep an upper limit on the total number of credits and more accurately allows for the auditing of multiple 1 and 2-credit dance courses, for example. CEPP was also in support of these changes.

5. **College Credit earned in High School** - The committee worked with the Registrar's Office to approve changes in language concerning the circumstances under which entering students can use course work done in high school to satisfy all-college, major, or minor requirements. The maximum number of credits that a student can bring in is still 16, but the college work no longer needs to be above and beyond high school work or taken off of the high school campus.

6. **Reduction in the Minimum GPA Requirement for Study Abroad** – The CAS approved a proposal from OCSE to reduce the minimum GPA requirement for study abroad from 3.0 to 2.75. This change was made for the following reasons:
 - The 2.75 requirement more closely aligns with the requirement at our peer and aspirant institutions.
 - The new requirement better conforms to the current CAS practices of granting appeals in the 2.75 to 3.0 range.
 - Students that we have sent with GPAs in the 2.75 to 3.0 range have been successful in transferring in credit, earning a C (2.0) or better.
 - Importantly, the new requirement expands access to this important educational opportunity to a greater number of students. Given Skidmore's commitment to intercultural and global understanding, it is important that we allow access to this transformative experience to a large number of students.

The CAS will now still review applications from students with GPAs between 2.5 and 2.74. No applications will be reviewed from students with a GPA below a 2.5. CEPP also supported this change. The CAS updated their operating code in light of this change, outlining the specific requirements needed to study abroad, who will be able to petition, the materials needed for petitioning, and the criteria that CAS will use in granting petitions. This new GPA requirement will be tracked for 3 years and reviewed with particular attention to the success of students in the 2.75-3.0 GPA range.

7. **Discussion Surrounding Add Deadline** – Representatives from SGA met with the CAS to communicate student concerns about the add deadline. Currently, students can add a course through the online system without their instructor or advisor's signatures during the first 3 days of the semester, at which point they need signatures. The CAS discussed the pros and cons of extending the add deadline to the first 4 days of the semester, recognizing that this would often give students the weekend to add courses via the online system. However, the CAS felt that students benefit from having conversations with faculty when wanting to add a course after the semester has begun (especially for lab/studio courses). Given that a student's likelihood of succeeding in a course after missing 4 days of the semester likely varies widely as a function of the type of course that it is, the number of class meetings missed, and the student's previous coursework and

preparedness, the CAS decided to keep the deadline at 3 days. Students will still be able to add a course with faculty and advisor signatures for up to a week after the add-without-signatures deadline (and e-mail signatures will be accepted, too).

8. **IdeaLab Discussions** – The steering committee for Skidmore’s grant from the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations is sponsoring new pedagogies that differ from Skidmore’s typical full semester course, including pop-up courses prompted by some event, intensive courses lasting less than one semester, and full-year courses. In light of this, the CAS began conversations about issues that will likely arise concerning grades, add/drop deadlines, and withdrawals from courses. The committee will continue to talk about these matters as they arise when these courses begin to be offered this fall.

Members of the CAS (voting) for 2017-2018

Hope Casto, Education Studies (Chair)
Christine Page, Management and Business
Kurt Smemo, Environmental Studies
David DeConno, Registrar
Ron Seyb, Associate Dean of the Faculty
2 Student Representatives, appointed by SGA

Regular Visitors (non-voting) for 2017-2018

Cori Filson, Director, Office of Off-Campus Study and Exchange
Shannon Phillips, Assistant Registrar
Elizabeth McPhee, Academic Advisor
Kim Marsella, Director of Academic Advising

Respectfully Submitted,

Rebecca Johnson
Chair of the CAS