

## Committee on Educational Policies and Planning (CEPP)

Motion

Faculty Meeting

November 3, 2006

**Motion:** CEPP moves that the faculty empower the Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Dean of the Faculty to assign fully dedicated (100%) tenure track lines to Interdisciplinary Programs. In determining the appropriateness of the assignment, the Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Dean of the Faculty should consult with the Director of the Interdisciplinary Program and, if necessary, the faculty serving in the selected program.

**Rationale:** Skidmore College enjoys a unique liberal arts identity owing in part to its dedication to interdisciplinary education. Once a philosophy shared by few institutions of higher learning, the importance of interdisciplinary study is now at the center of a national dialogue in higher education reform. In order for Skidmore to remain a part of that dialogue, it must continue to find ways to support and enhance these critical programs. The proposed change in College policy to support dedicated tenure-track lines in interdisciplinary programs reflects the College's commitment to that philosophy and is based upon consideration of the following realities:

- 1) Over the last several years, particular interdisciplinary programs have reconceptualized and/or reorganized their curriculum in response to innovations and developments in the field. These changes, which have been introduced in an attempt to provide a solid undergraduate education in the specific field, have been compromised because of staffing pressures.
- 2) Certain interdisciplinary programs may have a genuine need for core faculty that are themselves trained in interdisciplinary graduate programs and, as such, do not easily fit into one specific discipline or department. Dedicated tenure-track lines placed in interdisciplinary programs may serve as an important recruitment tool as more institutions seek to fill these positions with highly competitive candidates.
- 3) The emergence and growth of interdisciplinary programs is driven in part by student interest and enrollments, and yet program rigor, course availability and program continuity is seriously challenged by a policy based primarily on *ad hoc* faculty participation.

Skidmore's Strategic Plan emphasizes a continued commitment to leadership and innovation in interdisciplinary education. A primary goal for the College over the next decade is to cultivate an environment in which "students and faculty" are encouraged to make "insightful connections across disciplinary boundaries." Perhaps the Preamble to the Academic Vision Statement said it best. It reads, "we continue to believe that an interdisciplinary perspective provides an important hallmark for our community. Such an indispensable perspective demands that all of us think broadly in making connections across borders." For that to happen, the College must be more flexible in its approach to deploying tenure track appointments.