

Tribute to Phil and Marie Glotzbach
Delivered on the Faculty Meeting Floor
May 15, 2020

The eminent British historian Thomas Carlyle once wrote that “history is the essence of innumerable biographies.” And while I recognize that the history of Skidmore College is indeed constituted by “innumerable biographies,” we cannot underestimate the importance of one of those biographies, that of Skidmore’s 7th President Philip A. Glotzbach, Phil.

Since 2003, Phil has guided the college through a dynamic and consequential period of both extraordinary growth and equally extraordinary challenges and he has done so with passion and compassion. Thoughtful, deliberate and steady, Phil’s leadership has guided Skidmore to a new level of institutional excellence and unprecedented recognition as one of the nation’s premiere liberal arts colleges.

Quite remarkably, Phil has accomplished all the plans he laid out for Skidmore in his 2003 inauguration speech.

First, he noted back in 2003, we need academic vision; that Creative Thought truly Matters. And so, we have witnessed the launch of the First-Year Experience and are poised to witness the launch of a new General Education curriculum. We have welcomed the Moore Documentary Studies Collaborative and the Black Studies Program, as well as majors in environmental studies and neuroscience and minors in arts administration and intergroup relations.

Second, he said, we need to enhance diversity and cross-cultural and intercultural understanding. During his presidency, the percentage of domestic students of color has grown from 12% to 25%, the international student population has increased ten-fold, and the number of students studying abroad has doubled from 30% to 60%. And financial aid has expanded more than three times to \$52 million, a powerful tribute to Phil’s enduring emphasis on access.

Also, he presciently noted back in 2003, we need to build new student housing and a music center where we can bring the world to Skidmore. Not only has he overseen the building of two new student residencies (Northwoods Apartments and Sussman Village) as well as the Zankel Music Center—where we have indeed brought the world to Skidmore—but he has also overseen a transformation of Murray-Aikins Dining Hall, a major renovation of Scribner Library, a retrofit of Filene Hall, the expansion of Saisselin, improvements to the Wachenheim Field, and the construction of the Center for Integrated Sciences.

All of this, and more, was accomplished as the result of two remarkably successful and visionary Strategic Plans and two equally remarkably successful Capital Campaigns, the latest of which has to date raised nearly \$211 million. If this all sounds like a check list of achievements, let me point out that it is not just the fact that these items were accomplished, but of note how they were accomplished—through Phil’s abiding commitment to shared governance and an inclusive process. Even in tough institutional moments, we have all benefitted from his willingness to listen and, if necessary, pivot.

Phil, of course, did not accomplish all of this alone. He would be the first to acknowledge the work of the entire Skidmore community. And, he would certainly be the first to acknowledge the partnership with his wife, Marie, who has worked equally tirelessly and relentlessly on behalf of Skidmore. Marie, who Phil describes as his “confidant, partner and toughest critic,” has been no less active both at Skidmore and in the community where she has spearheaded several enduring initiatives, including *Saratoga Reads*, *Skidmore Cares*, and *SaratogaArtsFest*, the latter a truly visionary initiative that brought together multiple arts organizations in Saratoga for a joyful four-day summer celebration. Marie also serves on the boards of Leadership Saratoga and the Wesley Community and was recently honored by the Saratoga Springs Rotary Foundation for her community service and by Saratoga Arts for her arts leadership. Marie has been named one of the top 10 “Women of Influence” in the region. Together, Phil and Marie have cemented dynamic relationships between the College and partners across the region in the arts, education and business.

And Phil has accomplished all of this with grace, dignity, and humility, not to mention a delightfully warm, philosophic, and indeed, dare I say it, occasionally Monty-Pythonesque sense of humor. As an administrator, I have learned that it is not always easy to maintain grace, balance, and humor, because, as an administrator, you can’t always defend yourself; because you realize that if everything seems to be going well, you know you must have overlooked something and you’re gonna pay for it; because you find out that administrative experience is often something you don’t get until after you need it; and, because, as Steven Wright once said, “if you want the rainbow, you gotta put up with the rain.” And I know that Phil has gotten wet on more than one occasion.

In his influential publication, *Scholarship Reconsidered*, ex-President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching, Ernest Boyer once said that the purpose of education was to fashion an “educated heart,” and Boyer’s words, it strikes me, serve as a fitting tribute to Phil because Phil has always demonstrated in full measure what it means to have an “an educated heart,” which is, to use Boyer’s words, “a reverence for community life and a respect for excellence, the development and appreciation of beauty, a tolerance of others, a reaching for mastery without arrogance, a courtesy toward opposing views, a dedication to fairness and community justice, an adherence to integrity and precision of thought and speech, an openness to change and a love for graceful expression and audacious intellect.”

Let me finally note that, notwithstanding the extraordinary circumstances in which we currently find ourselves, Phil and Marie can leave us knowing that they have most assuredly left the College in a much better place than they found it and for that we must all be deeply and profoundly grateful. I know they both have ambitious plans for the future; I know for one that Phil plans to play a lot more golf, and boy does he need the practice!

So, on behalf of all of us, let me say that we wish you, Phil, and Marie every happiness and success in your retirement and we collectively thank you both for your enormous and enduring contributions to the community of which we are all a part.