

Retirement from the Skidmore College Faculty

Spring 2020



Faculty Meeting
April the Twenty-Fourth
Two Thousand and Twenty

Be It Resolved:

The faculty of Skidmore College expresses its profound appreciation and admiration for the following members of the Skidmore faculty who have this year expressed their determination to retire. The faculty further resolves that the following biographical highlights be included in the minutes of the faculty meeting of April 24, 2020 in recognition and celebration of their distinguished service and achievement.



Mary DiSanto-Rose arrived at Skidmore College in 1981 with long flowing limbs and long flowing hair – both of which she blessedly still possesses! She has been spreading her unique brand of loving kindness and devotion to teaching ever since. A mesmerizing performer, *The Schenectady Gazette* once described her stage persona like this: “Her spirit is imbued with Isadora Duncan’s life-affirming, nature-inspired diversions of delight.” This utterly describes Mary as well: that life-affirming spirit has played a major role in the development of hundreds and hundreds of students as well as the dance department itself.

Mary graduated from St. Lawrence University with a New York State Teaching Certificate in the Sciences and went on to earn a master’s degree and doctoral degree in Dance Education from Temple University. She began her Skidmore career as a part-time instructor teaching Modern Dance, Improvisation, and Performance Workshops. The following year she was hired full-time and expanded her course work to include Kinesiology (which was designed for athletes and dancers), Dance History, and a newly created course, Dance for the Child. Mary specializes in reconstructing classic modern dance works of the early 20th century, and through her restaging of works by masters such as Doris Humphrey, José Limón, and Isadora Duncan, countless students have embodied the rich history encoded in their work. Under Mary’s directorship, many students benefitted from the opportunity to deepen their studies, touring and performing Isadora’s works in the archaeological sanctuaries of Greece, France, and Italy which served as the choreographer’s early inspiration.

Mary played a crucial role in the evolution of the dance department. In 1980, at the time of her hire, we were the Department of Physical Education and Dance, and in 1990 Dean Phyllis Roth asked her to become our Program Director. She remained in this role from 1990 to 2005, and skillfully led the way as the department transitioned to the Department of Exercise Science, Dance, and Athletics, and finally to an independent department. We proudly became the Department of Dance in 2005 and Mary served as our first Chair until 2009. This is but one example of her tenacious and remarkable service to Skidmore College and to our community.

A faithful contributor to the All-College Curriculum, Mary enjoyed many rich interactions with her colleagues in other disciplines. During the 1990’s she contributed to the Liberal Studies II program with a course entitled Women, Creativity, and the Performing Arts, team taught with Carolyn Anderson from Theater and Wilma Hall from American Studies. From 2000 to 2004, she taught in Liberal Studies I as part of The Human Experience, working closely with Michael Marx and Terry Diggory, to name a few. And finally, in an impressive crescendo of both department and college service, for the past twelve years Mary has worked with Sheldon Solomon as part of the FYE Human Dilemma’s team. Fortunately, Mary loves advising!

Mary’s desire to expose our students and the upstate New York region to major artists and companies led her to develop the unforgettable summer dance residencies at Skidmore. As the recent elimination of these residencies now coincides with Mary’s retirement, to say it’s “the end of an era” doubles in significance. It all began in 1984 when Mary joined the Board of Directors of the New York Capital Region’s Dance Alliance, an organization dedicated to supporting dance in our area. Soon after she established a connection with the legendary Beverly D’Anne, Director of the New York State Council on the Arts. Beverly had just initiated the Long-Term Dance Residencies for New York state, and Mary saw the opportunity for Skidmore to be one of the first partners and hosts. This preceded the establishment of Special Programs, so with just a few student assistants Mary took on the colossal task of coordinating, negotiating, scheduling, budgeting and publicizing a 5-week residency with the world famous José Limón Company. Those who followed were a veritable Who’s Who of the dance world: Twyla Tharp, Trisha Brown, Bill T. Jones, Mark Morris, Martha Graham, Lar Lubovitch, Doug Varone, and many others of note. In 1996, Mary expanded the program to include a January residency whereby companies would use the studios for creative time and interact with Skidmore students upon their return to campus.

Mary has given tirelessly to her professional community. When she assumes leadership, it tends to have a 10- to 30-year run. She fervently promoted dance as President and Vice-President of the board of the Capital/Saratoga Dance Alliance for over three decades and has been the co-coordinator of the area Dance+ Festival for the past 26 years. She has been on

the Boards of Partners in Dance – A Consortium of Capital Region Dance Sponsors, NYS Dance Educators Association, and the NYS Council on the Arts Dance Panel. She has been a guest lecturer in Greece, France, Italy, at the National Museum of Dance, Saratoga Performing Arts Center, The Egg Theater in Albany, and Skidmore Special Seminars. As part of a cultural exchange, she worked hand in hand with the indigenous people of Guatemala, offering dance classes to women and children in their villages. Acknowledgements for her service have included the following: an honorary Doctor of Arts from St. Lawrence University; the Innovative Leadership in Dance Education & Legacy award from the American Dance Legacy Institute, and the Exceptional Service and Scholarship award from the National Dance Association.

So many students have written to express their gratitude to Mary; their sentiments are beautifully summed up by Marti Wolfson, class of '02, who poignantly articulates the common thread: "There is so much to say to a woman, teacher, mentor, and leader whose wingspan is so wide. You have been one of the great women in my life whom I've looked up to and admired, for what you taught through dance extended to living life with grace, confidence, curiosity, and strength."

Endings and transitions are an inevitable part of life, often prompting us to take stock of our accomplishments, and in Mary's case there are far too many to mention. But, endings also leave us with pressing questions about the future, and none more pressing than the one posed by our department member, Jason Ohlberg: "Who will bring the trail mix to our meetings?" For some 40 years Mary has blown into our meetings, always fashionably late, her ever present decorative can of homemade trail mix tucked under her arm, issuing a cheerful "How Do"! Alas, our "mix-less" meetings will be a doleful reminder that we are a department without Mary, but her essence will continue to vibrate in our studios, on our stage, and in the lives of our students. Mary, we all love you and wish you brilliant new beginnings. Dance On!

Catherine Domozych began her teaching career right after receiving her undergraduate degree from Glenville State College, Glenville, West Virginia, (Major: Biology; Minor: General Science 7-12) teaching junior-high school at Wood County Schools in Parkersburg, West Virginia, for one year before beginning her graduate studies in the Botany Department at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. Here, she specialized in Phycology & Plant Systematics, with a minor in protozoology, cumulating in her theses: "The Taxonomic Distribution of the Multilayered Structure in Algae and its Phylogenetic Significance". While pursuing her graduate degree, Cathy was a graduate teaching assistant and teaching fellow. In this capacity, Cathy's gift for teaching must have left quite an impression among the faculty in the department at Miami University. To quote from one of letters of recommendations written on her behalf: "Cathy has the ability to explain hard concepts in a well-organized, clear, and precise manner. She speaks clearly and her voice projects strongly. The students she taught were excited by her presentations and some became biology majors after having her as a laboratory instructor. Cathy also cares about students and is willing to spend the time it takes to get them to understand the material."

After receiving her Ph.D., Cathy taught at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York; Manhattenville College and SUNY College at Purchase, New York, before arriving Skidmore College in 1985. For the next several years, Cathy was working in the Admission's office, and shared her knowledge and love for teaching through offerings in Special Programs, be it summer school or community education (Greenhouse Gardening; Wildflower course). After teaching for one year at Hudson Valley Community College, Cathy rejoined Skidmore in Spring 1993 teaching in Biology and was hired as full-time Instructor (Teaching Associate) in Biology beginning in Fall 1993. Throughout her teaching career, Cathy did not only challenge her students, but continuously worked on improving her courses and her pedagogy, taking advantage of conferences and workshops. Additionally Cathy was also more than willing to share her knowledge with fellow faculty as Patti Steinberger describes: "I would never have survived my first semester teaching the BI 106 labs. She was an amazingly brilliant, kind, patient, funny and exciting teacher. "

Cathy's teaching responsibilities within the Biology major involved the teaching and constantly improving *Plant Biology* laboratories, and developed new laboratory exercises for new Introductory Biology courses following two rounds of departmental revisions to the major requirements. Additionally, Cathy was responsible for the development and delivery of the laboratories for two non-majors lab science courses, one of them being *Marine Biology*, which Cathy took over delivering both lecture and labs in Fall 2007. And while this course was well established, Cathy continuously thought to improve and update both content and delivery. Keeping it current and relevant for the students, Cathy organized field trips for sea weed collection and identification, organized guest speakers, including the effects of the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico as a case study in the course in 2010. She also team taught in the Honors Forum Science Literacy Cluster and would spend her summer revising the half semester long research project for the course. It will be strange not seeing Cathy in Dana in July and August trying out new parameters for growing *Dunaliella* for her students' experiments. More than one science major started her/his college experience in *Marine Biology* and "got hooked."

Outside the classroom, Cathy enthusiastically shared her excitement about Biology. For years Cathy was the Co-Director of the Adirondack Life Science Institute that then developed into Skidmore's Life Science Institute for Girls. Both were staples of the summer offerings for many years. Cathy also continued her research on algae, attended conferences and coauthored publications; and mentored students (Skidmore as well as High School) in research projects, independent studies, and honor theses.

Monica Raveret-Richter's reflection greatly summarizes the kind of person and colleague Cathy is: "Cathy is always open to adventure, game to try something new, and generous in sharing her knowledge. Whether it's an aquatic trophic level buffet ranging from algae (whose representation, not surprisingly, expanded under her guidance), rife with 'stinky little fish,' and capped with Alaskan salmon, or a trip to (in her particular case we should say *into*) the bog with the ecology class, Cathy's knowledge of plants and their stories, boundless enthusiasm, and sense of wonder made her a delight to have in the group. She sampled exotic tropical fruits, some of them rather challenging to the palate (over time, she learned to close her door when she sensed that a durian

might be making the rounds), and reciprocated with seaweed snacks and salads far beyond our previous experience. I will miss catching up with Cathy in the hall and hearing her tell me about a new bit of research that had *just* come out and that she was planned to talk to her marine biology students about, or finding links in my email or papers on my desk, full of stories and science that I would otherwise have missed."

The department shares this sentiment. Knowing Cathy, we are assured that she will find some venue to continue to share her excitement about nature with others. For all Cathy has done for in her 27 years in the Biology department, we offer her our sincere thanks and wish her the best in this next stage of her life.

From the perspective of a physical chemist, the meaning of life is to avoid equilibrium by maintaining a dynamic steady state. For forty-one years, Judith Halstead has done exactly that by being a dedicated teacher-scholar-citizen invested in her students, her colleagues, and the world at large.

Prior to arriving to Skidmore, Judy was a teaching and research postdoctoral associate at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, where she also did her doctoral studies. She followed that up as a Research Scientist at the Environmental Health Laboratories Institute of the New York State Department of Health before returning to academia in 1982 as a Visiting Assistant Professor, first at Russell Sage College and then Williams College. In 1987, Judy joined the Skidmore College faculty to teach physical chemistry and conduct research as a tenure-track member of the then joint Chemistry and Physics Department.

Even before arriving to Skidmore, Judy brought new life, a new dynamic, to the department and College. For her scholarship, she already had external funding through a prestigious American Chemical Society Petroleum Research Foundation (ACS-PRF) grant. At the time collaborative undergraduate research was in its adolescence nationally - and in its infancy at Skidmore. In that era the natural sciences at Skidmore were underrepresented, understaffed, underfunded, and largely misunderstood. Right from the start, Judy established the new norm in the Chemistry Department of actively engaging undergraduate students in major research projects. She co-founded Skidmore's Summer Collaborative Research Program and was one of the

inaugural faculty participants by the end of her first year. Working with Judy on research was transformative for the many students and often sparked their greater engagement in classes. As Judy's longtime colleague, Ray Giguere, highlighted "Judy's contributions were pioneering and seminal" in establishing collaborative research with undergraduates as the gold standard nationally for scholarship in chemistry at top tier small liberal arts colleges.

Equally impressive was the breath of Judy's scholarship. Her work included spectroscopy of the mercury 6^3P_1 state, sulfate transport in the Adirondacks, chemical education, plasma etching kinetics, copper film deposition, and the water chemistry of Lake Lonely. Her studies resulted in 34 publications including articles, book chapters, and proceedings. While at Skidmore funding included a second ACS-PRF grant, New York State Sematech Center of Excellence subcontract, a seven-college collaborative chemical education project jointly funded through the National Science Foundation and the Jesse Ball duPont Fund, and a Research Corporation grant.

As a teacher, Judy was equally dynamic. In the classroom and lab, she was known for her intelligence, dedication to teaching, making connections between chemistry and the rest of the world, and getting students to ask themselves "is that a reasonable answer?". As one student noted "it becomes obvious very quickly how much she loves to teach and her enthusiasm of the subject infuses all aspects of her style of teaching." A longtime colleague, Steve Frey, notes that Judy is "an impassioned, dedicated professor who seeks not only to impart knowledge of the subject matter, but also to transform the way her students think about science and the environment." In addition, as her fellow physical chemist, Juan Navea, highlights, "Judy never stopped innovating in her courses, bringing new experiments and topics at the forefront of science to her students." In particular, the innovation was seen in her bread and butter courses, Physical Chemistry I and II. Physical Chemistry has an international reputation of being difficult courses. Students appreciated how Judy "always made herself available to help her students learn this challenging material" and "motivate a student's desire to learn the difficult".

The range of courses Judy taught beyond Physical Chemistry is impressive. She taught *General Physics*,

Laser Spectroscopy, *Instrumental Methods of Analysis*, *Environmental Chemistry*, and a Scribner Seminar on *Water: Society, Sciences and the Arts* to name a few. In addition, Judy famously submitted and had approved her Liberal Studies IV course before she officially started at the College. The course was *The Environment and the Physical Sciences* which quickly morphed into *Environmental Concerns in Perspective* that is taught to this day.

Springing from her Liberal Studies IV course came one of Judy's greatest contributions to Skidmore, the establishment of the Environmental Studies and Sciences (ESS) program. Students inspired from the class met with faculty in 1990 to push for the development of the minor in Environmental Studies. The minor came to fruition a year later with Judy's *Environmental Concerns in Perspective*, now ES 100, as the foundational course. Judy went on to develop another course, ES 105 *Field Studies in Environmental Science*, which, like ES 100, continues to serve as a foundational course for the program. As current ESS Program Director, Karen Kellogg, highlights, "many Skidmore students will attest that walking out on a frozen Loughberry Lake to take water samples with Judy in ES 105 was a formative moment, and the sounds of cracking ice will forever be etched in their memories." The program flourished under Judy's directorship, and her vision, keen intellect, and dedication were largely what drove the development of the Environmental Studies major in 2002. For nearly three decades Judy provided unwavering leadership for ESS through her roles as director, chair and member of the ESS Steering Committee, chair and member of the ESS Program Personnel Committee, and foundational member of the Northeast Environmental Studies group. In fact, it was only during Judy's fourth year of phased retirement that she concluded her term on the ESS Program Personnel Committee. As Karen relays, "Judy also built connections by introducing many of us – students, staff, and faculty alike – to great paddles and great hikes in the Adirondacks. Her deep love of the outdoors is absolutely contagious, and this, too, is her indelible mark on the ESS Program at Skidmore." One cannot underestimate the importance of this program with regard to establishing the unique character of the College, recruiting students and faculty, and attracting external funding. Indeed, Judy's skills at grant writing were also key in nurturing the nascent program, including a \$151K proposal to the United State Department of Education with Roy Ginsberg and a \$160K proposal with Karen Kellogg,

Barry Pritzer, and Bob DeSieno to the Rathmann Family Foundation.

For both the Chemistry Department and the ESS Program, Judy has served as a sounding board. As Karen Kellogg notes, “it is still not uncommon for one of us to make a quick stop in Judy’s office for advice.” Juan Navea concurs, highlighting that Judy, through her “mentoring, reading of proposals and papers, and listening, has been a positive presence in the Chemistry Department. She helped us to be better teachers and scholars.” For both programs, Judy was instrumental in establishing a strong sense of community. As Karen pointed out “this might not be known widely, but Judy loves a good party”. She regularly hosted ESS parties and Chemistry get-togethers, especially to welcome new members of the programs.

Additionally, Judy served as the Skidmore Chemistry Club advisor for many years, leading Skidmore chemistry students on numerous excursions to local elementary schools and annual National Chemistry Day celebrations in Albany, where they presented hands-on, science programs to inspire children. Her service also extended to numerous committees on campus including the early advisory committee of the Skidmore Child Center, since renamed the Greenberg Child Care Center.

Beyond Skidmore, Judy was an advocate for science education serving as a member of the Eastern New York ACS Education Committee including their Elementary Education Subcommittee. She also worked tirelessly as a Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR) Councilor for three straight terms (1995-2004) to support and advocate for collaborative research with undergraduates at a national level.

Through these, as well as many other contributions, Judy became a role model of a teacher-scholar faculty member, long before the College used such labels. Through those efforts and true to her training as a physical chemist, Judy catalyzed the Chemistry Department and ESS into the vibrant programs that they are today, full of life and far from stale equilibriums. Judy, we will miss your dedication to our students and all of us as well as your knowledge, wisdom, and humor. However, we celebrate your new dynamic steady state ahead full of bike rides, kayaking, bridge, and numerous other activities and adventures with your husband and your beloved children that have

already been filling your schedule. We wish you all the best.

Working in a college Writing Center can be an extremely rewarding experience, where one comes in contact with bright, flexible minds eager to turn a rough draft into something more polished.

It can also feel like crawling around inside a dark and mucky cave, trying to avoid the guano that litters the floor, hoping not to be impaled by or upon a stalactite, or a stalagmite (whichever one is which), searching for even the slightest glimmer of daylight, the kind of thing that might signal—please God—a way out, a hope of new air, or, to abandon the metaphor, a clearly focused thesis.

It is no doubt that Martha Wiseman has experienced both versions. But it is also certain that she will remember the reward more than the guano, the bright, flexible minds more than the stalactites. Which is what has made her such an effective worker in the Writing Center for twelve years—ten as Assistant Director, the last two as Director. She has brought to this Sisyphean task an intelligence, a spirit, a courage, and a warmth that have made her a tirelessly effective advocate for our students’ success.

Martha earned her B.A. from Barnard College and, later, an M.A. in Liberal Studies and Comparative Literature from Skidmore. Prior to accepting a teaching position at Skidmore, Martha was already living the ideals of creative thought that the College espouses, whether as an acting student at the North Carolina School of the Arts, a dancer and choreographer (her middle name is Graham, after all), or during her nearly fifteen years as an editor in New York City.

When she joined the Skidmore faculty—part time in 2003 and full-time in 2005—Martha brought a lifelong attention to the careful manipulation of words on a page, combined with a polymath’s engagement with arts and letters. Over her seventeen years at the College, Martha has taught a wide range of courses, including expository writing at all levels; the Peer Tutoring course, which trains future Writing Center tutors; courses in the reading and writing of the essay; a course in cinematic adaptations of literature; courses in the photo essay and film memoir; an introduction to

poetry; and, most recently, a seminar on Virginia Wolff. She has never been anything but exceptional in the classroom, earning her students' love, respect, and gratitude across all subjects and levels.

Martha is such an excellent teacher of writing in part because she's an excellent writer herself, having published numerous essays and reviews, including four brilliant personal essays in the prestigious *Georgia Review*. One of these is an essay about her father, Joseph Wiseman, a stage actor most famous for playing the villainous Dr. No in the very first James Bond film. In this lovely essay, Martha writes, "The word *transparent* has no etymological relation to the word *parent*; we would be demanding too much of language to expect to see through to a parent's real set of selves. But I continue to look and to dream. I continue to listen for what might have lain hidden beneath the words my father tended and needed to use—others' words. But I can only guess at, or make up, what his own words might have been, what stories he hesitated to tell, what stories could not be told because they had never fully formed for him or in him." A lovely irony, I think: the father, at a loss for his own words; the daughter, expert in finding her own.

So, a beautiful writer, surely. But it was at the Writing Center—now the Philip Boshoff Writing Center—that Martha has had perhaps her most long-lasting impact, training generations of student writers to be student teachers. Peer tutoring is a delicate process, where one is always balanced on the knife's edge of too much help, or too little. How to help a student achieve not *your* idea of what the paper ought to be, but *the student's*? This involves an emotional and an intellectual empathy, and Martha's ability both to model these qualities, and to instill them in her students, has seemed, at times, alchemical.

No tribute to Martha would be complete without hearing from her former colleague and constant friend, Phil Boshoff, who retired two years ago. As Phil writes, "When Mason asked me if I would jot down a few words on the occasion of Martha's retirement, I saw in my mind's eye words with *ex* prefixes. Martha is an exceptional editor, one possessed of the keen eye needed to *exhume* exquisite corpses from the scattered bones of a rough draft, the temperament to *exhort* the student to begin a paper with an *exigency*, to *extend* the reach of a paper to give it a *raison d'être*, to *extract* the "so-what factor." And she *excels* in her comprehensive knowledge of grammar, punctuation, and usage. Want to know why a colon is not placed after a "to be" verb

or the definition of a count noun? Martha has a lucid explanation."

But perhaps it makes better sense to end with a student, since students have been at the center of Martha's life and practice. No one could capture better what Martha has meant to us, and how much she will be missed, than Writing Center Head Tutor Ashley Ramsay has with these words: "I will try to mirror, in my own life, aspects of what made Martha so wonderful: I will be kind; I will be a good listener; I will always seek to understand the person before judging who they are; I will be passionate about everything in which I engage; I will seek to put smiles on peoples' faces; and I will be confident in who I am."

I join Ashley and countless others in wishing Martha a retirement as full of joy, wonder, and impact as her days at Skidmore have been.