# Retirement from the Skidmore College Faculty

Spring 2025

Faculty Meeting

April the Twenty-Fifth

Two Thousand and Twenty-Five

# 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 25, 2025 in recognition and celebration of their distinguished service and achievement.

After receiving his B.S. in Biology from Southern Connecticut State University, David Domozych completed his Ph.D. focusing on phycology, the study of algae, at Miami University in 1981. Following postdoctoral work at Cornell University, David joined the Skidmore faculty in 1983, where he attained the rank of Full Professor in 1994. In only his 12th year at the College, David was awarded the Edwin M. Moseley Faculty Lectureship.

David has made remarkable contributions to the field of plant biology, employing microscopy to explore fundamentally important biological questions: the structure of cell walls, the colonization of land by plants, mechanisms of cell division, and the potential use of algae as a biofuel. His groundbreaking work, evident in over 100 publications in leading scientific journals, has deepened our understanding of the crucial role that cell walls play in the evolutionary pathway of land plant colonization. Among David's numerous contributions to science, the characterization of the freshwater green alga, *Penium margaritaceum*, a close relative of land plants, has significantly enhanced our understanding of plant and algal phylogeny, as well as cell wall biosynthesis and evolution, paving the way for many new research avenues. David's longstanding collaborator, Zoë A. Popper of the University of Galway, states, "his research is supported by unparalleled expertise in microscopy along with a wealth of knowledge that enables him to ask big questions, complemented by his wit and exceptional collegiality." David's irrepressible sense of humor surfaced early in his scientific career. Upon arriving at Skidmore with their infant son, David only half-jokingly remarked that he and his wife, Cathy Domozych, considered naming him "Chlamy Domozych" (after the green algae genus *Chlamydomonas*).

David is the reason we have the Skidmore Microscopy Imaging Center (SMIC), considered one of the best, if not the best, microscopy facilities at any liberal arts college in the country. When David arrived at Skidmore, the "microscopy center" consisted of a single used RCA Transmission Electron Microscope donated by General Electric. David wrote grants and collaborated with the Development Office and others to acquire state-of-the-art transmission and scanning electron microscopes, light microscopes, and confocal laser microscopes. A key element of his success was his ability to work with Skidmore faculty and faculty at other institutions to create a community of scholars who integrate SMIC into their teaching and research and collaborative research with students. For over twenty years, he has never stopped ensuring that the center is well-equipped and continuously improving. To achieve this, David secured over 4 million dollars in funding from the National Science Foundation. He also included funds in his NSF grants to establish the "Adirondack Life Science Camp" for local junior high school and high school students. This camp has evolved into the current "Young Scholars Cell Biology Institute," which hosts approximately 20 students each summer.

David's career-long commitment to SMIC and Plant Biology at Skidmore, along with the key role he has played in putting Skidmore's sciences on the map, can be summed up most aptly by an observation from Geoffrey Chaucer in 1374: "Mighty oaks from little acorns grow." Or, given David's legendary sense of humor and love of baseball, which contribute to his mastery of teaching, an equally fitting observation from Yogi Berra would be: "Little things are big." To quote David himself: "Why watch Shemp if you can watch Curly?" David's approach to science resonates with Skidmore's culture. His scientific microscopy skills showcase an impressive artistic and technical ability to create striking images of his research subjects, typically algae. He frequently receives requests from the journals in which he publishes, asking to feature his images on the covers of the issues that contain his articles.

As an educator, David's philosophy revolves around actively engaging students through hands-on learning and incorporating the latest scientific advancements into the classroom. His commitment to his students is exceptional, and he profoundly impacts their education. Over the past ten years, David has mentored more than 120 undergraduates in his research laboratory, and his publication record

includes over 45 papers co-authored with undergraduates. Kattia Palacio-Lopez, a former postdoctoral fellow in David's laboratory and now a faculty member at the University of Houston, recalls, "I vividly remember the first time I thought I had discovered something remarkable under the microscope. I reached out to David for confirmation, and his enthusiastic response was, 'Oh… you have a spectacular cell here!' That moment and his genuine excitement meant the world to me. I continue to be inspired by his dedication to students."

For the past 42 years, David has anchored the Biology Department's early morning shift. He arrives in the lab most days around 5:30 AM, including many weekends, holidays, and throughout the summer. Long before students and most colleagues arrive, David can be found in his lab, immersed in research, while other so-called early birds trickle in, still clutching their coffee and tea. Between classes, his lab is also the go-to spot to find David. Walking by David's classroom while he teaches, it is fun to pause and listen — he is animated, engaging, and often interjects wit as he develops concepts. Peeking through the door as he teaches an 8:10 AM section of the introductory course 'Molecular and Cellular Foundations of Life', one finds alert and attentive students — no small feat at that hour!

While a driven teacher, researcher, and mentor, David has one extreme soft spot — hounds. A few lucky dogs have won the canine lottery and joined the Domozych household, where they are celebrated and thoroughly indulged. The Domozych dogs have been lavished with affection, preferred toys, food treats, outdoor adventures, and cozy spots to lounge when it is time to chill. If reincarnated, Monica Raveret-Richter has clarified that she would be thrilled to return as a dog in the Domozych household. Monica also says, "David is a perceptive, generous, and supportive colleague. In moments of adversity, he is ready with a kind word, a wry observation that elicits a laugh when you did not know you had one in you, and an offer of support — whatever it takes to give a colleague a bit of light in a rough moment and hope for better times ahead."

Bernie Possidente recalled that one of the most memorable things David ever said to him during his 42 years at Skidmore had nothing to do with plant biology. Yet, it revealed an admirable aspect of David's character that one might never discern from his impressive scientific career. David declared, "You know, one of the most wonderful things in the world is coming home after a long day and seeing your two-year-old son's smiling face looking up at you in the doorway." David sees a bit of that smiling face in each of his students, his colleagues, and whenever he looks through a microscope.

In fall of 1986, a freshly minted PhD at the University of Michigan saw an advertisement in *The MLA Job Information List*: the Skidmore College English Department was hiring a specialist in composition and rhetoric. His letter of application was received on the 23rd of October 1986, and the following fall he took his place as a junior member of the English Department, where he has spent the last 38 years. Over the decades, Michael Marx has left an indelible mark on our department and on this institution as a whole for which we are all immensely grateful.

Michael's hiring was an important thing for the English Department. At the time, he was one of a small handful of faculty members with graduate training in composition and rhetoric—no small matter given that Skidmore was and remains a school with an all-college writing requirement. Much of his scholarship over these early years focused on questions of pedagogy, including the attitudes of students in composition courses, the question of whether research papers should be taught in composition courses, the uses of technology to enhance pedagogy, and the responsibilities of administering writing programs at small colleges. In journals like *Computers and Composition*, *The English Record*, and *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, among others, he synthesized his experiences in the Skidmore classroom and innovated the teaching of composition in ways that would have long-lasting influence on the department and on this institution.

One the most striking things one notices in looking over the expanse of Michael's career is just how central technological innovation has been to his teaching. For example, when Michael joined the faculty, he became the Coordinator for the Computer Supported Writing Room, room 302 in Palamountain Hall. A June 1989 article in *Scope* magazine explained some of the kinds of work that happened in the Computer Supported Writing Room, detailing a section of EN 105 in which Michael's students used computers to write and edit their essays. These essays were sent through the BITnet intercollegiate computer network to students at Babson College, who likewise shared their work with Skidmore students. In 2025 we think nothing of writing with computers, but in the 1980s, Michael was in the vanguard of faculty, and in many ways, he remains so today. He has taught courses on hypertexts (long before that was a term in common parlance), he took up blogs as a pedagogical tool for expository writing when they were still relatively new, and he has even integrated augmented reality for his course "Writing in the Tang." Ben Harwood in IT writes, Michael "simultaneously perfected the art of teaching academic course content and digital literacy." And always, Ben writes, this meant collaboration. "For Michael, collaboration was fundamental to teaching and learning; he worked with staff as true partners, valuing their expertise and contributions just as much as those of faculty."

This note—that Michael values collaboration—is one that appears in many of the testimonials that gathered about Michael's career. Terry Diggory, Michael's colleague for 25 years, noted that Michael was always eager to consult with colleagues about expository writing and to share his expertise. Terry writes that Michael "helped to promote the practice of writing as an essential tool in intellectual inquiry across the college" through a "quiet, unassuming leadership style [that] open[ed] space for collaboration and help[ed] form consensus." Many of us here in this room have witnessed and benefited from this generosity. Michael regularly consults with First Year Experience faculty on the challenges of teaching college writing, leads Special Interest Group discussions on expository writing, and has been one of the most active faculty members to explore the ethics and challenges of AI in college writing.

This knack for collaboration is one of the reasons that Michael has had such an impressive career of service at Skidmore. In 1990, shortly after beginning at Skidmore, he became the Director of Expository Writing—a position he continues to hold. In this role, he has led the college through 35 years of diagnostic essays for incoming students—some 20,000 students—and has been a resource for both faculty and students. As Director of Expository Writing, Michael has been exemplary, whether it has been in sharing knowledge about teaching with rubrics, the pros and cons of contract grading, or the challenges of generative AI. Martha Wiseman, the former Director of the Writing Center, praises Michael's efforts to help faculty "negotiate the often-intricate relations between writing courses and the rest of the English Department's curriculum; between writing courses and the Writing Center; between writing courses and the panoply of courses across the college; and between the Writing Center and the College as a whole." It is likely that nobody has had as deep an impact on any all-college requirement as Michael Marx.

In addition to serving as the Director of Expository Writing, Michael has several times served as the Associate Chair of English, including during the Covid semesters. Barbara Black, who was Chair of English at the time, notes that Michael had the unenviable task of working out a new kind of schedule (including in-person, web-based, hybrid, and HyFlex options), and that he did so, "with characteristic stamina and good cheer" as well as "a steadying sense of calm during that difficult time." Michael also served as the faculty coordinator of LS1 in the old college curriculum. This was a year-round position that involved recruiting faculty from across the college, refining the course and course material each year, and administering the course during the semester itself. Sheldon Solomon, who also held this position for many years, praises Michael's dedication here and across his career to Skidmore students. He writes, "Michael's overriding concern and highest priority in all our interactions over the decades has been the academic, vocational, and psychosocial well-being of [our] students."

Another area of the Skidmore curriculum merits note here—Michael has been a mainstay of the Environmental Studies and Sciences (ESS) at Skidmore for nearly two decades. Hundreds of ESS students have had their introduction to the authors that shaped the current environmental movement through Michael's "Literature and the Environment" course, which he developed in 2006. A long-time member of the ESS Steering Committee and the ESS Personnel Committee, he ultimately became the Director of ESS in 2010. Nurcan Atalan-Helicke writes that "As Director of the Environmental Studies and Sciences Program, Michael's mentorship and leadership showed his deep care for his colleagues, his meticulous attention to detail, and his dedication to excellence in writing. I miss his thoughtful, detailed emails from my early days at Skidmore—and the follow-up questions that always made me think more deeply." In all these roles, Michael guided ESS with a strong commitment to decency, fairness, and a keen eye to upholding, maintaining, and improving academic integrity. Michael was for many current ESS faculty the first point of contact, providing a warm and welcoming reception during campus visits. Karen Kellogg writes that "Michael treated us all with patience, respect, professionalism, and most importantly, friendship. He dedicated ample quantities of his valuable time to mentoring many of us through our academic transitions into Skidmore life, and assisted and guided faculty through professional development initiatives, generous support for research efforts, and defined our department's direction and eventual growth."

This overview really only scratches the surface of the remarkable career that Michael has had at Skidmore in the classroom and beyond. By any measure, Michael has been an exemplary member of our community. He is, writes, Mason Stokes, a model of "models what it means to be a true citizen of the College. In ways big and small, appreciated and unappreciated, he is always doing the hard work that keeps us moving forward." This quality of Michael's collegiality comes across frequently in the words of faculty who've worked with Michael. Former dean and English Department Chair Susan Kress calls him a man of "consummate kindness and compassion, a person of conscience and moral courage." Martha Wiseman praises Michael for always extending "respect universally, making all of us feel that what we have to offer is essential."

Michael, we are humbled by the many gifts that you have given to this institution and to this community over your long career. We wish you all the best in retirement.

Viviana M. Rangil's long career at Skidmore College has greatly shaped our academic community. Over the course of more than three decades, Viviana has exemplified the very best of our institution: intellectual rigor, cultural insight, and unwavering dedication to students, colleagues, and the liberal arts. Her presence has been foundational in affirming the value of humanistic inquiry across disciplines, and she has consistently championed the role of language, literature, and culture in fostering the critical thinking, empathy, and global consciousness that define a true liberal arts education. Viviana has not only contributed to these ideals through her teaching and scholarship, but she has also embodied them in every aspect of her work.

Her scholarly work spans Latin American film, literature, gender studies, food studies, and Latinx cultural production. Viviana's research has always bridged the personal with the political, the aesthetic with the ethical. She is the author of three important books: *Otro punto de vista: mujer y cine en Argentina*; *El cine argentino de hoy: Entre el arte y la política*; and *Comamos y te cuento: Recetas del norte argentino*, an exploration of regional cuisine that blends narrative, memory, and scholarship. In addition to these works, she has published in national and international journals and edited volumes, engaging crucial conversations about identity, belonging, feminism, and cultural expression across the Americas. Viviana has also been a pioneer in the digital humanities, spearheading public-facing, collaborative projects such as *Mercados Indígenas de América Latina* and *Comida Latina*, both of which explore the social and cultural meaning of food in Latin American and Latinx communities. These sites have become

significant pedagogical tools and meaningful spaces of cultural preservation and exploration.

In the classroom, Viviana has inspired generations of students through her depth of knowledge, intellectual generosity, and profound respect for diverse voices and experiences. Her course "Latinidades: Reconfiguring Identities in the U.S." has been particularly significant, offering students a critical lens through which to understand the complexity and multiplicity of Latinx identities in the United States. It has become a touchstone course for many, reflecting her commitment to socially engaged teaching and her talent for connecting literature, film, and lived experience.

Viviana was also ahead of her time in curricular innovation. Long before many of our peer institutions even considered it, she created "Spanish for Heritage Speakers," a course designed specifically to serve bilingual and bicultural students. This initiative addressed a long-overlooked need in language education and also reflected her deep commitment to equity and inclusion in the classroom. Her course honored the lived linguistic experiences of heritage speakers and validated their voices, identities, and presence in the academic community.

Her legacy of service to the college is equally outstanding. Viviana served as Chair of the Department of World Languages and Literatures from 2018 to 2022 and coordinated the Spanish Section many times. Viviana also served as director of Latin American, Latinx and Caribbean Studies program more than once. In all those positions she has always guided with vision, compassion, and thoughtful leadership. She has held pivotal roles on nearly every major committee at the college: the Committee on Appointments, Promotion and Tenure (now Appointments and Tenure Committee), which she also chaired; the Faculty Executive Committee; the Faculty Development Committee which she co-chaired; the Committee on Intercultural and Global Understanding; the Institutional Policy and Planning Committee, the Athletic Council; and vital hiring cabinet committees. Most recently, Viviana participated in the mentoring group for new faculty, reflecting her ongoing investment in supporting colleagues at all stages of their careers. Her service record is not only extensive, but it is a testament to her sense of responsibility, her collaborative spirit, and her belief in the transformative potential of a vibrant academic community.

Beyond committee work, Viviana has always been present for her students, for her department, and for the college. She advised the club Raíces, our Latinx student organization, and served as liaison officer to NYU's Faculty Resource Network for thirteen years. She has been a trusted mentor, a generous colleague, and a strong voice for justice, inclusion, and academic excellence.

As Viviana retires, we celebrate the intellectual, cultural, and personal impact she has had on our institution. Her influence will live on in the courses she created, the students she empowered, the colleagues she supported, and the scholarly conversations she was always ready to shaped.

Gracias por todo, Viviana.

The faculty of Skidmore College wishes to express its profound appreciation and admiration to Dr. Jeff Segrave, an exemplary educator, scholar, community citizen, and administrator, whose extraordinary contributions to the Department of Health and Human Physiological Sciences and the broader academic community have left an indelible mark on the institution. Over an extraordinary career spanning 47 years, Jeff has consistently set the benchmark for excellence in teaching, scholarship, and service, earning the respect and admiration of colleagues, students, and the wider academic community. In fact, Jeff has been awarded the three most prestigious faculty awards at Skidmore for teaching, scholarship and service: the Ralph A. Ciancio Award for excellence in teaching, the Edwin M. Mosley Faculty Lectureship, and the Phyllis A. Roth Faculty Distinguished Service Award.

Jeff is an immensely gifted educator. Since joining Skidmore College in 1978 as an instructor in the Department of Physical Education and Dance, he has

demonstrated an unwavering commitment to academic excellence and student development. Progressing through the ranks to assistant professor, associate professor, and ultimately professor, Jeff played a pivotal role in shaping curricula, mentoring students, and fostering an environment of intellectual curiosity. His passion for interdisciplinary learning is evident in his affiliation with the Department of American Studies and the Media and Film Studies Program, enriching students' educational experiences through diverse perspectives on sport, society, and culture.

A hallmark of Jeff's tenure at Skidmore College has been his dedication to innovative pedagogy and curriculum development. From teaching foundational courses like *Sport and Social Issues* to engaging interdisciplinary seminars such as *Sports Cinema*, Jeff has provided students with rigorous and thought-provoking academic experiences. His contributions to the First-Year Experience and Liberal Studies programs underscores a deep commitment to holistic education, encouraging students to critically examine the intersections of athletics, history, and society.

A prolific researcher and respected scholar, Jeff's illustrious career has been defined by a deep and enduring commitment to scholarship in the fields of sport studies, Olympic history, and cultural analysis. Jeff has published more than 21 book chapters, 76 referred journal articles, numerous public sociology interviews, more than 100 publications of conference proceedings, and many scholarly international and national presentations. His work has shaped and enriched academic discourse through a vast array of publications that have examined sport as a multifaceted social and cultural phenomenon. Jeff has delivered numerous presentations at international conferences, representing Skidmore College with distinction on a global stage and building connections that have enriched the college's academic standing.

His intellectual curiosity and copious output stand as a testament to his passion for understanding and contextualizing sport within the broader framework of history, literature, and philosophy.

Jeff's role as an editor and contributor to key anthologies has provoked significant academic discussions in sport and Olympic studies. His collaborative efforts with Donald Chu in works such as *The Olympic Games in Transition* (1988), *Sport and Higher Education* (1985), and *Olympism* (1981) have been instrumental in shaping foundational perspectives on sport and its role in society. These volumes remain essential references for both scholars and students, illustrating his enduring impact on the discipline.

Jeff's scholarly reach extends across multiple disciplines, as evidenced by his contributions to numerous edited volumes. His recent article, "*The Pre-Modern Olympic Games*" (2024), published by The Olympic Studies Center, reflects his continuous engagement with Olympic history. Likewise, his chapter "*The Olympic Games as an Instrument of Peace and Reconciliation"* (2023), demonstrates his nuanced understanding of sport as a vehicle for diplomacy and global unity.

His scholarship frequently intersects with literary and cultural studies, as seen in *The Wonderful World of Quidditch: An Innovative Model of Gender Inclusivity* (2021) and *The Literature of Tennis* (2019). These works highlight his distinctive interdisciplinary approach, offering unique insights that deepen the discourse within sport studies and contribute meaningfully to broader cultural dialogues.

Numerous journal articles showcase Jeff's analytical depth and ability to engage with a wide range of topics. His studies of sport in popular culture, including "*Sport in the Cartoons of Charles Addams and Gary Larson"* (2024) and "*Sport in Johnny Hart's B.C.*" (2023), reveal his keen eye for the intersection of humor and athleticism. His work on tennis literature, as explored in "*Tennis in Modern American Fiction"* (2023), further cements his reputation as a leading voice in the study of sport within literary contexts.

Jeff's research on the Olympic movement remains among his most significant contributions, with articles such as "*Citius, Altius, Fortius: Pierre de Coubertin and the Emergence of the Serialized Modern Olympic Games"* (2020) offering profound insights into the historical evolution of the Games. His exploration of sport and gender, particularly in "*Challenging the Gender Binary in Sport: The Special Cases of Caster Semenya and Dutee Chand"* (2018), underscores his commitment to

examining critical social issues through the lens of sport.

Jeff's remarkable scholarly career is marked by intellectual rigor, interdisciplinary exploration, and a steadfast dedication to the study of sport and culture. His contributions have made a lasting impression on the academic community, providing invaluable resources for future generations of scholars. As we celebrate his retirement, we honor not just his prolific output but also his role as a mentor, thought leader, and passionate advocate for the transformative power of sport. His work will continue to inspire and inform, ensuring that his legacy endures well beyond his tenure.

Throughout his incredible tenure at Skidmore, Jeff Segrave not only inspired generations of students, but also transformed the campus into a stage for some of the world's most distinguished voices. Due to Jeff's vision and tireless commitment, Skidmore welcomed legendary figures such as Sir Roger Bannister, the first man to break the four-minute mile; pioneering sociologist Dr. Harry Edwards; and education advocate Ernest Boyer. He was instrumental in Skidmore showcasing the insights of sportscaster Bob Costas and trailblazing athlete and activist Billie Jean King; the artistry of pianist Emanuel "Manny" Ax and composer Terence Blanchard; the brilliance of Sir Jonathan Miller; and the energy of Red Sox player and manager Butch Hobson. Even Hollywood legends such as Lloyd Bridges and Dick Van Patten graced the Skidmore stage, thanks to Jeff's efforts. His ability to connect the world with our campus has a dramatic impact and serves as an inspirational and lasting legacy.

Beyond the classroom, Jeff has been an influential and impactful leader in academic administration and governance. He has served as Chair of multiple departments, including the Department of Exercise Science, Dance, and Athletics, and later, the Department of Music. Jeff has skillfully guided faculty and programs with vision and integrity. His tenure as Dean of Special Programs and Director of Athletics reflects an exceptional range to balance academic leadership with institutional advancement. Under his stewardship, programs flourished, fostering a culture of inclusivity, academic rigor, and student engagement.

Jeff's consistent dedication to service is reflected in his extensive record of committee work, including key roles on the Institutional Policy and Planning Committee and the Presidential Search Committee. His leadership in initiatives such as the Campus Campaign Executive Committee and various faculty residency review panels underscores his deep commitment to the growth and evolution of Skidmore College. Notably, his work on CAPT, in collaboration with Ralph Ciancio, led to a significant revision of the faculty standards for tenure and promotion. By receiving the esteemed Ciancio, Mosley, and Roth awards—completing the rare "trifecta"—as well as the President's Award for Leadership and Service, Jeff has not only set an unparalleled standard for excellence in service, but has also inspired a legacy that will continue to motivate future scholars and educators.

An accomplished scholar and mentor, Jeff has also contributed significantly to Skidmore's athletic community, serving as head women's tennis coach and a member of the Liberty League Executive Committee. His leadership in promoting gender equity in athletics and commitment to student-athlete development has enriched both the academic and extracurricular fabric of Skidmore College.

For more than three decades, Jeff has been the heart and soul of our women's varsity tennis program, guiding generations of student-athletes to remarkable success on and off the court. With an exceptional overall coaching record of 384-146, he set a standard of excellence that few can match. Under Jeff's leadership, the team secured multiple conference championships, including 17 NYSWCAA titles; NCAA national team and individual championships in singles and doubles; and countless accolades at the regional and national levels.

Beyond the numbers, Jeff cultivated a culture of discipline, resilience, and sportsmanship that shaped the lives of student-athletes well beyond their playing days. As a mentor, Jeff nurtured talent, instilled confidence, and inspired competitors to achieve their fullest potential. The program produced numerous

All-Americans, ITA Scholar-Athletes, and state champions under his dedicated guidance.

Jeff was not only a coach but also a leader in collegiate tennis, serving on national committees, ranking panels, and directing key tournaments. His commitment to the sport extended well beyond the baseline, influencing the growth and development of Division III tennis at large. Recognized with prestigious coaching honors, including ITA National Coach of the Year and multiple regional coaching awards, he leaves behind a lasting legacy.

As Jeff embarks on this well-earned retirement, the Skidmore College community expresses profound gratitude for his decades of teaching, service, mentorship, and scholarly contributions. His legacy of academic innovation, leadership, and unwavering dedication will endure, shaping the institution for years to come. We wish him all the best in this next chapter, confident that his work will continue to resonate in the lives of students, colleagues, and the broader academic world.

Ronald P. Seyb joined the Skidmore faculty in 1988 after earning his PhD in Political Science from Yale University that same year. Ron's courses on American politics have always been among the most popular in our department. In his last semester at the College, there was such great demand for his course on the United States Congress that he agreed to offer two additional sections of it. Throughout his thirty-seven years at Skidmore, Ron has always been one of Skidmore's most talented *and* devoted teachers.

George Elliot once observed, "There is hardly any contact more depressing to a young ardent creature than that of a mind in which years full of knowledge seem to have issued in a blank absence of interest or sympathy." Even on the eve of his retirement, Ron's interest and sympathy for his students is only matched by his "years full of knowledge." One of Ron's open secrets to fostering a rapport with his students is to stay knowledgeable about popular culture. "Comedy Friday" has long been one the of students' favorite elements of Ron's classes and his students know that his current favorite music genre is "sad girl music." But, to reduce that rapport to Ron's fluency in popular culture is a disservice to Ron. He cares deeply about the attitudes, experiences, and intellectual capacities of individual students and how those things may inform their studies. Ron deftly, subtly, and compassionately brings out their best work. One student spoke for generations of students on an evaluation, "I am tearing up as I fill out this evaluation because I have never had a professor who has made me so eager to learn as Professor Seyb. I feel so lucky to know him."

Ron has devoted a portion of his summer to teach incoming students in the Opportunity Program. Kelli Johnson, Director of the Opportunity Program, notes, "Ron's work with the students has left an indelible mark on our community, both through his contributions to our students' awareness of the world as a teacher and through his work as an advisor and mentor. Many of our students have found a second home in his classroom and office hours; we will all greatly miss running into Ron on campus at all hours of day, just as much as we will miss his emails - those singular epistolary contributions of distinctive artistry, conveying perspicacity and sapiential understanding."

Ron's devotion to his students does not end with their commencement. Ron has also taken his teaching talents on the road. In the past fifteen years, Ron has participated in over thirty events with Skidmore alumni. He has traveled from Seattle, Washington to Naples, Florida and seemingly everyplace in between for lectures, receptions, and more intimate dinners with the members of the larger Skidmore community. Ron has also hosted virtual events, including webinars as well as trivia contests. Carissa Miles, Development Associate to the Vice President of Advancement, insists that there is no one better than Ron and Grace when it comes to writing trivia questions and emceeing events. They are tireless when catching up with their former students. Carissa recalls that Ron has "always been a joy to work and travel with."

Ron's talents have been celebrated by his students and his colleagues. He was chosen by the students as the

commencement speaker in 1991 and again in 2025. The students also chose Ron to deliver the 2012 Ramsey Lecture. In 2005 he was honored by the faculty with the Ralph A. Ciancio Award for Excellence in Teaching.

Ron also uses his talents outside of the classroom and shares his wisdom with the wider community. During the past four presidential election cycles, Ron has lent his expertise and his good humor to the many election-related events sponsored by the Tang Teaching Museum. Ian Berry, Dayton Director of the Frances Tang Teaching Museum, recalls Ron's unparalleled contributions. "Ron has been at the core of our Presidential election season projects for years. Ron brought his specific and overflowing energy and enthusiasm to every gathering. His infectious laugh, his puns, his mastery of connecting current politics and pop culture – always in a perfect blend. His attention and care for his research and teaching helped us all to understand the changing politics that we were living through with clarity and optimism." Ron brought the same clarity to his regular appearances on Albany's NBC affiliate.

And, still, Ron found the time and energy to pursue his research. Ron has published widely on the executive branch of government at both the state and the national level. He has written with clarity and insight on the Nixon, Carter, and Regan presidencies. As an astute observer of the media, Ron also published essays on Walter Lippmann and David Halberstam. The list of articles on American politics that Ron has published is interrupted by a piece entitled, "Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Getting and Keeping a Job at a Private Liberal Arts College, But your Graduate Advisor Didn't Tell You", reminding us that liberal education was never far from Ron's mind. Ron held the Joseph C. Palamountain, Jr. Chair in Government between 2011 and 2016.

Ron also served our students in various administrative roles. Most recently he was the Director of the Bridge Experience and, perhaps most importantly, he has served as the Associate Dean of Faculty for Student Academic Affairs. In that capacity, Ron helped to lead our college during the first challenging and uncertain months of the COVID-19 pandemic. He helped to formulate plans for the students' safety and for their academic success. Looking back on Ron's years as the Associate Dean, "Super Dave DeConno," the Registrar remembers, "Having the opportunity to work with Ron during his time as Associate Dean of the Faculty for Student Academic Affairs was truly a life changing experience. Even though he was the smartest person in the room, he approached every problem with absolute humility and thoughtful inquisition. Like the thousands of students who have had the privilege of taking his classes over the years, I learned a great deal from Ron. My pop-culture references were never more on point than during his tenure as our fearless leader!"

At the end of the day, Ron would emerge from the classroom, students trailing behind him, with his shirt a little untucked from making dynamic gestures and writing swiftly on the board —in days gone by, his pants would be covered in chalk. If asked on a bad day how class was, Ron would say in his self-deprecating manner, "Oh, I'm touching lives." Even the best teachers experience uncertainty. Yet, we — students, colleagues, and alumni— would assure Ron that he has indeed been profoundly touching lives and we are all immeasurably better for it.

The anthropology faculty are pleased to congratulate and honor Sónia Silva upon her retirement. During the last 18 years at Skidmore College, Sónia has been a creative scholar, a talented and giving teacher, and a generous colleague. As a cultural anthropologist focusing on Sub-Saharan Africa, Sónia has drawn on her scholarly interests in ritual, religion, materiality, and social theory to challenge students to embrace diverse cultural perspectives. We are grateful to have been enriched by Sónia's keen intellect and good cheer.

Sónia earned a B.A. (Licenciatura) in social anthropology from the University of Lisbon, Portugal, and an M.A. and Ph.D. in sociocultural anthropology from Indiana University, Bloomington. Before joining

Skidmore, Sónia also completed a research fellowship at the Smithsonian Institution and a curatorial appointment at the National Museum of Ethnology in Lisbon.

In 2007, Sónia was appointed as an Assistant Professor of Anthropology in the former combined Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work. Soon after Sónia arrived at Skidmore, three of the four anthropology faculty retired, leaving Sónia as the program's "senior" cultural anthropologist. Sónia cheerfully shouldered programmatic duties, providing stability and continuity during an unexpected transition. Moreover, Sónia collaborated with new anthropology colleagues to propose and establish a stand-alone Department of Anthropology. Her vision and contributions were central to the department's successful launch in 2012. Since that time, Sónia has helped support new faculty positions and enhanced the department's academic program while also contributing to Black Studies, International Affairs, and Religious Studies.

Sónia has generated an impressive body of scholarship on ritual and religion, art and material culture, and museums. She uses a philosophically sophisticated and ethnographically grounded approach that writes against reification of human experiences. Sónia tackles complex anthropological questions about the social origins of evil, violence, and suffering, and the meaning of witchcraft, oracles, and divination.

Sónia completed two years of ethnographic fieldwork in northwest Zambia, which she presented in her ethnography *Along an African Border: Angolan Refugees and Their Divination Baskets* published by the University of Pennsylvania Press in 2011. Centered on the narratives of Angolan refugees in Zambia, Sónia analyzes how displaced people rely on divination and other cultural practices to respond to ongoing concerns with reproduction, suffering, and death. Sónia interprets the use of baskets and ritual basket making and divination to penetrate inchoate aspects of the cultural lives of Angolans. More broadly, Sónia's analysis of African rituals—often marginalized and stigmatized within Western frameworks—presents the values and worldviews of the people who seek to alleviate affliction and misfortune in everyday life. She reminds readers how divination rituals allow groups to achieve some independence and autonomy in the face of violence, political oppression, and cultural misunderstanding. Sónia demonstrates that ritual and religion, while rooted in tradition, allow people to imagine and create culturally meaningful futures in difficult material social contexts.

Sónia expands on these themes in other publications, analyzing ways people negotiate social boundaries and cultural dynamics in ritual, religion, and museum practices. Her work invites readers to learn about cultural traditions with respect and sensitivity, often challenging dominant Western narratives about knowledge production as she describes in "Taking Divination Seriously: From Mumbo Jumbo to Worldviews and Ways of Life" (*Religions*, 2018). Likewise, in "Art and Fetish in the Anthropology Museum" (*Material Religion*, 2017), Sónia illustrates how museum exhibitions display African fetish objects as art and downplay connections between materiality and transcendence in African religious life. More recently, Sónia highlights a Zambian insight that suffering leads to religious expertise in "Boundary Situations: An Existential Account of Wounded Healing" (2024). She also has embarked on a new book project, *In the Shadow of the Fetish: A Century of African Art in Anthropology Museums*, which explores how liberal museum curators during Portugal's dictatorship skillfully moved back and forth across competing colonial and post-colonial discourses about Africa. Other scholars recognize Sónia's work for offering a necessary counterpoint to longstanding misrepresentation and devaluation of African views of human existence and ways to navigate life's predicaments.

Sónia drew on her interdisciplinary scholarship to craft courses in which students explored humanity with nuance and complexity, avoiding reification. Sónia is a gifted teacher who established supportive and challenging learning experiences that students often described as "engaging" and "exciting." She involved students in the exploration of humanity, considering the interplay of cultural similarities and cultural differences in a responsible, informed, and critical manner.

Sónia has been one of the few Skidmore instructors regularly offering courses on Sub-Saharan Africa, including "Africa in Stereotypes" and "Sub-Saharan Africa from a Cultural Perspective." These courses have challenged students to think critically and ethically, developing better understanding of how power and colonialism continue to shape African cultural practices and discourses.

She was also innovative in her approach to "History of Anthropological Thought," a required course that anthropology majors often regarded with trepidation. Sónia skillfully covered one century of anthropological theory with original texts combined with opportunities for exploration and fun, including projects in which students applied anthropological concepts to study campus life, favorite restaurants in their home towns, and music and dance traditions encountered while studying abroad. She created classroom experiences where students embraced social theory and learned to apply anthropological perspectives to other classes as well as life experiences.

In advanced seminars, Sónia offered creative exploration using textual, visual, and tactile experiences related to the anthropology of objectification, museum studies, and ritual and religion. The seminars have included guided fieldwork activities and object analysis in the Tang Teaching Museum and other museums. Drawing on her fieldwork and museum experiences, Sónia encouraged students to develop projects on meaningful contemporary topics. For instance, this year, 4 senior anthropology majors from Sónia's seminar "Rethinking Materiality: The Anthropology of Stuff" presented Senior Coda projects at the Northeastern Anthropological Association annual conference. The students presented cultural aspects of diverse kinds of "stuff": anime goods, meditation apps, mobile phones, and sound bombs. This kind of advanced student engagement illustrates Sónia's commitment to help students reflect on the worlds they live in.

While being a productive teacher-scholar, Sónia has provided valuable community service as a member of the Committee on Academic Freedom and Rights, the Committee on Academic Standing, the Institutional Review Board, and the Tenure Review Board. She also participated in community affairs as a Faculty Writing Group Leader and Coordinator, an Advisory Board member of the Center for Leadership, Teaching and Learning, and a Skidmore representative for the NY6 Africana Studies group.

Sónia Silva has been a model teacher-scholar, promoting interdisciplinary ways of knowing and respecting human diversity. The department and the college have benefited enormously from having a recognized scholar of African cultures and social theory on the faculty. We wish Sónia well as she continues grappling with anthropological questions while dividing her time between Saratoga Springs and Lisbon. We are grateful to have been enriched by Sónia's kind and gentle presence and her generous spirit.

Today, we not only celebrate the achievements of Peter von Allmen but also the extraordinary legacy he leaves behind—a legacy built on excellence, humility, and a deep and abiding commitment to his department of Economics and Skidmore College.

In his time at Skidmore, Peter has served as more than a professor of economics. He has been a mentor, a leader, a trusted colleague, and a true citizen of the college. He has shaped not only minds in the classroom but also the very structure and spirit of his department—and, more broadly, of this college.

Peter has had a transformative impact on our students. Some students say that his Microeconomic theory class was a turning point for them, a course where everything *just clicked*. One student said they enrolled with hesitation, having heard that Micro was the hardest class in the major. But by the end of the semester, they found themselves so engaged, so intellectually challenged in the best possible way, that they didn't want the course to end. Peter's humor,

energy, and clarity brought the material to life. His personal stories and real-world examples made abstract theoretical concepts feel urgent and human. For many students, it was the class that convinced them to major in economics. Peter has that rare gift: he made students want to work harder—not out of fear, but from inspiration. "I wanted to contribute," said one. "I spent hours outside of class reviewing materials just so I could keep up and engage more deeply. That's when I knew I really cared about this field."

But it isn't just Micro. One of the standout highlights of Peter's teaching at Skidmore has been his Healthcare Economics class—frequently cited by students as their favorite course. Students were not only exposed to economic theory, but invited to grapple with one of the most complex and pressing issues of our time: the U.S. healthcare system. Students described the class as eye-opening, transformative, and deeply impactful. It changed the way they saw healthcare—not just as a system, but as a human challenge shaped by policy, incentives, access, and equity. Peter created a space where tough questions were welcomed, data mattered, and students felt empowered to explore solutions.

Peter also invited students beyond the classroom—into the world of research. Whether studying the economics of sports participation or analyzing the impact of a college's track facility, Peter included students in his research process. One student spoke about the incredible opportunity of working with him on research, describing it as an experience that boosted their confidence and solidified their sense of belonging in the academic community.

But Peter's impact stretches far beyond the classroom. A recipient of 2024 Phyllis A. Roth Faculty Distinguished Service award, Peter has been a model community member volunteering his time to serve the department and campus. Peter has chaired the Economics Department for seven years. During his tenure as chair, he helped rebuild the department during a critical period of transition, hiring six tenure-track faculty and mentoring each one with thoughtfulness, generosity, and care.

Peter's dedication wasn't confined to his department. He has been a pillar of shared governance and campus leadership. He served as Faculty Director of Assessment, chaired the Committee on Educational Policies and Planning, directed faculty development initiatives, and was a key member of the Quantitative Reasoning Working Group. He co-chaired the Institutional Policy and Planning Committee (IPPC) subcommittee on institutional effectiveness, served three terms on IPPC itself, participated in curriculum development, and contributed to numerous faculty and administrative search committees. His commitment to data-informed decision-making and institutional integrity has left a lasting imprint.

All of this in only 15 years. Yes, Peter has been at Skidmore for only 15 years! And he has been chair for seven of those years.

Colleagues describe Peter as earnest and erudite. Someone who speaks the truth—even when it's uncomfortable—but always with fairness and care. One faculty member remarked that Peter always kept students and junior colleagues top of mind, often engaging them directly in the business of the college, encouraging them to lead, and offering quiet support that made all the difference. He has built something strong and lasting, not just through policy or procedure, but through people. Following his footsteps, other department members have become dedicated leaders at Skidmore—IPPC co-chairs, FAB chair, ATC chair and director of Quantitative Reasoning. They are continuing the culture of care, service, and integrity that Peter helped establish.
And let us not forget—he did all of this with a laugh, a story, likely about motorcycles or guitars. That balance of warmth and wisdom is what made him so beloved—not just respected, but deeply cherished.

Peter is truly a rockstar! No, literally. Peter plays rhythm guitar in a six-piece band that performs an eclectic mix of blues, R&B, and rock called Fenimore Blues! They play around 50 shows annually and have a ton of full-band or duo shows lined up for the summer of 2025! Check them out if you have not yet had the chance to!

Peter, today we do more than thank you. We honor you. We celebrate the immeasurable contributions you've made to our department and Skidmore College in a relatively short time. You have been a teacher, a builder, a mentor, and a friend. You have helped students find their path, faculty find their voice, and an entire department find its future.

May retirement bring you joy, rest, and endless adventure —on or off two wheels – journeying towards cherished visits with your first grandchild! You've more than earned it. Congratulations and thank you for everything!