

# Retirement from the Skidmore College Faculty

Spring 2026



Faculty Meeting

May the 1st

Two Thousand and Twenty-Six

## 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 May 1, 2026 in recognition and celebration of their distinguished service and achievement.



**J**oel Brown: musician, performer, collaborator, teacher, mentor, department chair, colleague, friend. Joel Brown: member of the band of miscreants—oh—I’m sorry—the band of friends and colleagues--Gordon Thompson, John Anzalone, and Dave Maswick--known around town as the Rust Brothers. We all may know Joel as a Rust Brother, but those who *only* know Joel as a Rust Brother really don’t know Joel. A guitarist with a reputation that extends from the Helen Filene Ladd Concert Hall in Saratoga Springs to Carnegie Hall in New York City, to the Abbey Road Studio in London, to the Mikulov Guitar Festival in the Czech Republic, Joel has spent his life musically on the move.

Trained as a classical guitarist with a Bachelor of Music Degree from the Philadelphia College of the Performing Arts and a Master of Music Degree from Ithaca College, Joel is a consummate artist. He has performed as a soloist with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, played recitals with mezzo-soprano Frederica von Stade, and appeared as a founding member of Tritonis, a flute, cello, and guitar trio. As a member of the Finger Lakes Quartet, he has appeared with the Grammy Award-winning Albany Symphony in the world premiere of Evan Mack’s *Forever Wild*, a *concerto* for guitar and orchestra that required Joel and his fellow musicians to make use of artificial harmonics to evoke the sounds of nature.

But Joel has musical interests that go beyond the classical guitar. Not only has he performed alongside Chris Brubeck, and Peter Madcat Ruth as a member of Triple Play, a crossover group that features a blend of jazz, blues, and folk, but he has also teamed up with Brubeck, Bill Crofut, and the London Symphony Orchestra on a CD entitled *Bach to Brubeck*, a recording that, in bringing the work of the great Baroque composer Johann Sebastian Bach into conversation with contemporary musical ideas, produced innovative results. As Bill Crofut explains in his liner notes to the recording, “Joel Brown’s classical guitar represents another textural element in our approach to performing Bach. One night backstage we heard Joel playing the lute prelude and thought it would be wonderful with orchestration. I believe this

is the first time the piece has been arranged and recorded with orchestra.”

For all the accolades Joel has garnered far and wide for his extraordinary musical talent, I would be remiss if I did not mention the important work he has done here at home. Home has a special meaning for Joel. As he notes in his 2005 recording entitled *Christmas Cedar and Spruce*, “Christmas music has always been my favorite part of the holiday season. I still feel a flood of excitement and joy when I think of standing in our little hometown church singing in unison with family and friends.” Joel has spent his career singing “in unison” with his students and colleagues here at Skidmore. After arriving at Skidmore College in 1985 to take up his position as a guitar instructor, Joel quickly rose through the ranks, becoming an Artist-in-Residence, a Senior Artist-in-Residence, and finally a Distinguished Artist-in-Residence. But he still considers himself just a guitar teacher who has taught songwriting, coached the guitar ensemble, and given private lessons in a career that has spanned 40 years, two buildings (Filene Hall and the Arthur Zankel Music Center) and generations of students. As an instructor, Joel has embraced the ethos of teaching music within the liberal arts setting, where he can easily find himself working with Filene Scholars and rank beginners all on the same day. What makes Joel so special as an instructor, however, is his extraordinary ability to teach students what they need to learn. Now, for some, “teaching students what they need to learn” means teaching them more about the music, more about the songwriting, more about the instrument, more about the technique. For others, however, it means teaching the musicians in his charge more about themselves. As one recent student put it, “The most important thing I learned in Class Study of Guitar is that I can actually perform. In public. I can perform in public. I didn’t know I could do that. But I do now.” Joel Brown: the consummate collaborator in the studio, the consummate performer on the stage, and the consummate teacher in the classroom.

In 2020, Joel wrote a new song, “Everyone’s Gone Home,” in response to the COVID Pandemic that had begun to ravage the world. “The inspiration for this song came from the lonely feeling of walking through town and seeing how empty it was,” said Joel at the time, “seeing stores closed that were supposed to be busy and sidewalks empty that were supposed to be filled with people. But it’s also about being home with people who are important to you.” We are delighted

that you have chosen to make your home with us, Joel. As we sing you off into your well-deserved retirement, we thank you for everything you have done for this community. You will always find at home here with us.

**G**race received a B.A. in Economics and Spanish at Bucknell in 1980 and a Ph.D. in 17th-century Spanish poetry at Duke in 1984. She arrived at Skidmore College in 1987 after having spent the first three years of her career as an Assistant Professor of Spanish at the College of Charleston. Since she first walked into a classroom in 1982 as an Instructor of Spanish at Duke University, Grace has only ever wanted one thing: to do right by her students.

*Caminante, no hay camino. Se hace el camino al andar.*

Hired in 2018, and serving as the current chair of Theater, I have had the good fortune to be mentored by Grace through tenure at Skidmore in 2020 and beyond. I am honored to be Grace's colleague. Her record of service and selflessness, her integrity and grit, need more words and minutes than I am allotted. But I think this line from Antonio Machado's poem is fitting. It is part of the title of my first book—and Grace was my ambassador at Skidmore when I interviewed in 2018. She began our talk with a discussion of that poem, one she also loves. She had read my materials. She cared about me and my work. A few weeks later, I was offered the job—and the news that Grace would be the receivership Chair of Theater. And still, I left tenure to come here. Grace was a large part of that decision. In her role as Chair of Theater, Grace cared about us and our work. Many of us can say the same, whether peers, junior faculty, staff or students. She inspires us, permits us, pushes us, and cheers us to make the roads as we walk.

Grace's imprint is palpable throughout the college. In 2021, she received the Phyllis A. Roth Faculty Distinguished Service Award in part for her deft chairing of Theater from 2018 to 2020, in the midst of difficult times in the department and through the first unknown months of the pandemic. Yet, her service goes far beyond Theater. She has served on the Committee of Academic Standing, the Curriculum

Committee, the "Tuesday Group" (now called SAIG), the Honors Forum, and multiple additional committees and working groups.

Grace's commitment to her students and to teaching has been recognized again and again. She received Ralph A. Ciancio Award for Excellence in Teaching in 2012 and honored the class of 2012 as their Elected Graduation Speaker. In 2016, she gave the John Ramsey Lecture, entitled "Why the Dodgers No Longer Dodge: Nothing and the Translation of the East into Western Thought." Grace's passion for the classroom is fueled by an insatiable intellectual curiosity, from interrogating the very concept of "nothing" in her Scribner seminar to mobilizing performance practices into theoretical analyses of 17<sup>th</sup> Century Spanish drama. Her intellectual ferocity spans times, places, and disciplines, as does her passion for the engagement of ideas with colleagues and students alike, be it in summer reading classes with the Opportunity Program, upper-level seminars on her beloved Don Quixote, intermediate Spanish language classes, office hours, or chats in the hallway or on one of the many winding paths that map our campus.

Grace's students are most important to her—she toils for them, revels in their thinking, and cares about them and their work, whatever that work may be. I was flooded with too many testimonies, oodles of words, when I asked a handful of them to write for Grace. I will share two from the great span of Grace's career.

Emma Newcombe, class of 2010, wrote of her first class with Grace and sustained mentoring, including as an assistant professor at Skidmore in 2018. Emma writes: "I have very few people in my life that have so inspired me, and so supported me, for such an extended period of time. But that kind of lifelong support comes naturally to Grace. Even though my degree is in a different field, I can honestly say that I went to graduate school to be the kind of mentor and teacher that Grace was for me. I'm always hoping I'm doing her proud."

Her long-term commitment to students distinguishes Prof. Burton, as does her way of engaging with the humanity of each person in her class. This legacy echoes far beyond Skidmore.

Geoff Hunt, class of 1993, writes: "We had a paper assigned—the specific topic of which was elastic. In the course of hemming and hawing about how

ambitious I should be in my selection of a thesis, the encouragement she gave me ('take a big swing. I won't let you regret it.') remains one of the most impactful moments of support an educator has ever granted me. It's not an exaggeration to say that it gave me the courage to think of myself as an academic, which in turn allowed me to take other big swings when writing my senior theses for the History and Government departments. As an educator for the last 25 years, I've used variants of her supportive admonition and bearing to encourage my own students who are, in many respects, Grace's grand-students."

The sentiments of Geoff and Emma echo through decades of students, each recalling a specific moment in which their Profe. touched and changed their lives.

Thank you, Grace, for all the roads you have encouraged us to walk. It is now your turn to make a new one for yourself.

Catherine Golden arrived on Skidmore's campus in 1986 as a brand-new Assistant Professor. The enthusiastic notes on her application, preserved in her personnel file, indicate that her colleagues knew they had found an ideal candidate for the job. But they could not possibly have predicted how profoundly Catherine would contribute to and shape the department and the college she was joining. One of those colleagues, Susan Kress, reflects thusly on the career of the woman she came to know in the ensuing four decades: "A professor with boundless energy, enthusiasm, and dedication, Catherine is an ideal model of the teacher/scholar/citizen and leaves an indelible legacy at the college." Truly, as Professor Kress notes, we have much to celebrate on the occasion of Catherine's retirement.

Over the course of her long and productive career, Catherine has written and edited no fewer than eight books. Among these are three substantial monographs on Victorian literature and culture, all published with the University Press of Florida. The earliest of these, *Images of the Woman Reader in Victorian British and American Fiction* (2003) offers a transatlantic perspective on representations of nineteenth century women readers, with a notable focus on illustration. The second of these works, *Posting It: The Victorian*

*Revolution in Letter Writing* (2009) describes the wide-ranging social effects of the advent of the Penny Post. Drawing on a wide range of primary sources, the book pays particular attention of the postal revolution's impact on literature and visual culture. The excellence of *Posting It* was recognized by the George A. and Jean S. DeLong Book History Prize and the Vermeil Medal from the Chicago Philatelic Society. The third book, *Serials to Graphic Novels: The Evolution of the Victorian Illustrated Book* (2017) saw Catherine return to the illustrated books that sparked her earliest interest in the Victorian era, and on which she has long been a leading expert. The book traces the long arc of the Victorian illustrated book, examining the changing artistic styles, evolving modes of publication, and enduring legacy of the genre.

As if this sustained scholarly examination of the Victorian era were not enough, Catherine is also an established scholar of the American author Charlotte Perkins Gilman. In publishing two book-length works on Gilman's influential short story "The Yellow Wall-Paper," and in co-editing two other volumes on her life and work, Catherine participated in the important feminist recovery work that brought this major writer back into critical focus and established her as a canonical figure in American letters. Catherine served from 1998-2002 as Executive Director of the Charlotte Perkins Gilman Society and has continued to present and publish on Gilman's work in the ensuing years.

These books alone would constitute a major achievement for any busy teacher-scholar. Yet Catherine has also published dozens of articles and book chapters over the course of her career. Simon Cooke, the editor of *Illustration* magazine, where Catherine has contributed many articles, attests to the quality and importance of these shorter works: "Her writing is of an exemplary standard, the work of an outstanding scholar of great learning. Not only erudite and persuasive, her articles are engaging, uplifting, and overflowing with a generous humanity." As Cooke reminds us, Catherine's scholarship is profoundly public-spirited, as indicated by the many exhibitions, lectures, and invited talks she has offered to the wider community over the years. The breadth and depth of this scholarly output has been supported by numerous research grants from inside and outside of Skidmore. The college has also recognized the importance of her work on two particularly notable occasions. The first was when she was asked to deliver the Moseley lecture in 2012. The second was when she was awarded the

Tisch Chair in Arts and Letters, which she held from 2017-2022.

In addition to being an accomplished scholar, Catherine is also a tremendously gifted and dedicated teacher. As President Conner aptly puts it, “Catherine Golden embodies the Skidmore teacher-scholar. She has impacted hundreds of Skidmore students over the years and her influence on them will be felt for generations.” Her courses, especially those on the *The Victorian Illustrated Book*, the Brontës, Jane Austen, and Victorian Literature and Culture are justly famous among the many students who have passed through the halls of the English department during her career. This legacy of excellent teaching has made Doctor Golden, or sometime just “Dr. G.” as her students call her, an institution in the Skidmore English classroom. Tillman Nechtman, her longtime colleague, friend, and collaborator, captures the extraordinary and inspiring energy that Catherine brings to her teaching: “I have had the good fortune to lecture with Catherine around our region. What a treat. What a task! Teaching with Catherine is like being a lightbulb next to the sun. She radiates both knowledge and energy. Her dedication to the craft of teaching is astonishing.”

Catherine’s teaching has been not only popular and inspiring, but consistently innovative as well. In keeping with her scholarly interest in material culture, she asks her students to take objects seriously, to consider the intellectual and historical dimensions of the things that surround us. As a result, Catherine and her students were making things long before “making” was on all of our minds. Her dissertation advisor Martha Vicinus, in a tribute that also praises Catherine’s scholarship and celebrates their long friendship, writes that “She never neglected the seemingly commonplace artifacts of the past. Students studied not just Jane Austen’s novels, but also how, for example, to create black ink, write with a steel nib, use wax to seal a letter, and other lost skills. She makes the nineteenth century come alive for both students and scholars.” Because of this longstanding commitment, the IdeaLab was a natural fit for Catherine, and in the post-pandemic years she has regularly used it to work on Victorian crafts and projects with her students.

Catherine also routinely invited her students into the archive, teaching extensively in Scribner Library’s Special Collections. Jane Kjaer, the curator of Special Collections, notes that “Catherine has brought many classes to Special Collections over the years, and we

have often observed and been impressed with how her passion for the subject got the students so deeply involved with the material.” She has also, in recent years, extended her interest in visual culture and archival materials into the digital realm. Aaron Kendall, who has worked on digital humanities projects with Catherine, describes how he’s helped “bring her courses on Jane Austen and the Brontë sisters to life through interactive maps that traced the literary landscapes her students were exploring.” It was, he says, “a project to which she brought both deep literary insight and an openness to new tools, all with characteristic grace.”

Outside of the classroom, Catherine has served the college in many capacities, particularly in those matters that most directly affect our students. She has been especially devoted to the Honors Forum and served as its director from 2011-2016. Perhaps her most direct and enduring act of service to the Skidmore community, however, has been in chairing, for more than three decades, the Fox-Adler Lecture Committee. This lectureship, which honors the legacy of Norman H. Fox, brings an artist or a scholar to our campus every year to speak about illustrated works. This series, under Catherine’s customarily careful and indefatigable stewardship, has brought dozens of eminent speakers to our campus, and has strengthened our college’s bonds with the wider Saratoga community. Her long friendship and working relationship with the Fox family is testament to the special way in which Catherine’s care for others is woven into her intellectual life.

This brief overview of a long and illustrious career will inevitably leave important things out. But it would be impossible, even unforgivable, to try to summarize Catherine’s indelible presence at Skidmore without a final word: jam. As many among us know from sweet experience, Catherine is a devoted jam maker, perhaps even a jam sorceress, conjuring an unbelievable array of delicious concoctions in delightful little jars. The jam is very good. So good, in fact, that none other than the president of this college has written actual poetry in praise of its virtues. But, not to torment a metaphor, the recipients of this jam know that the sweetness is not just in the jar. The jam comes, like Catherine’s generous spirit and fierce dedication, as a gift unbidden, but it comes so steadily that you begin to rely on it—perhaps because your children clamor for a particular flavor, perhaps because you’ve simply grown accustomed to Catherine’s deep affection for

her community. Now we are reckoning, as a department and a college, with what it will mean to teach and work apart from Catherine (although we hope there will still be jam!). As Sarah Goodwin, her longtime colleague, puts it: “It is hard to imagine someone more generous, more committed, and also, by the way, more immensely funny, even about deeply serious matters. The life of the mind; the history of our literary worlds; building a community around our shared commitment to these matters and to our students: Catherine has done all of this. Her retirement is the passing of an era.” Thank you, from the bottom of our hearts, Catherine, for sweetening all of our lives for these past forty years. Farewell, but not goodbye. We look forward to many more years of your generous goodwill, intellectual commitment, and loving companionship.

**F**or more than two decades, Paul Sattler has been a deeply respected professor in the Painting and Drawing area in the Department of Art at Skidmore College. A masterful painter of rare imagination, Paul has been a devoted and thoughtful colleague, contributing years of service on committees and through his role as Curator and Director of the Schick Art Gallery from 2012 to 2019. He earned a BFA in Painting and Printmaking from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and an MFA from Indiana University, Bloomington. In 1994, he began his teaching career as an Assistant Professor at Boston University before joining the Skidmore faculty in 1998.

Those of us who have worked alongside Paul know that his classrooms and studios have always been places of serious art making. Students quickly came to understand that painting and drawing, in Paul’s hands, were not simply about producing images, but about learning how to look; carefully, steadily, and without easy answers. Countless students credit Paul with helping them find the courage to pursue painting seriously, to think rigorously about why drawing and painting matter, and to carry that seriousness into their lives beyond Skidmore.

Over the years, Paul developed several important new courses, including *Comix and Sequential Art*, intermediate-level Figurative Drawing and Painting

courses, and the continually offered course *Color*. The *Color* course has met with sustained success as a foundational offering for many students and serves as a prerequisite for numerous departmental courses, including Painting, Photography, Graphic Design, Digital Media, and Printmaking. Paul also created a first-year Scribner Seminar entitled *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Painting*, a course that leads students on an interdisciplinary exploration of how paintings can be experienced and understood through lenses such as music, science, poetry, gender, metaphor, history, psychology, religion, aesthetics, craft, touch, cinema, and color.

Paul’s own paintings embody a sustained focus and an invitation to step into another world, one where time and space operate according to a different logic, and where narrative unfolds with both tenderness and unease. As Paul writes in his artist statement, “I am forever attracted to invented worlds and stories expressed by painters, filmmakers, writers and musicians of the past and present intoxicated by their radiant beauty and challenging content.” His paintings hum with energy and wonder. Viewers are drawn inward, absorbed by dense choreographies of detail, color, and action; scenes that feel at once intimate and theatrical, familiar, and estranged. Paul’s paintings reward careful looking; they ask viewers to linger, follow threads of storytelling, and accept that meaning is assembled over time rather than delivered all at once. His masterful renderings of figures and animals within imagined spaces create richly layered, whimsical, and hallucinatory worlds that celebrate the power of imagination and creative thought.

This careful assembly of ideas, images, histories, and emotions has long defined Paul’s artistic practice. His *Petting Zoo* paintings “an umbrella title for a series of artworks that delve into narrative, myth, and autobiography” are paintings with its animals inhabiting human spaces and psychological dramas, offers deeply personal narratives while touching something universal. These figures stand in for vulnerability, fear, ambition, tenderness, and shame, allowing Paul to explore what it means to be human without resorting to easy moral lessons. The paintings are generous, unsettling, often darkly humorous, and always alive with formal invention.

In his artist statement, Paul further reflects on the diverse sources that inspire his work: “While striving to avoid the moralizing lessons of traditional fables, many of the narratives are personalized imagery

inspired by literary sources including the Grimm Brothers' tales, E. T. A. Hoffmann, and the vast legacy of children's literature. Primary roots of inspiration also reveal themselves unexpectedly; for example, in the charged presence of animals in adult literature by authors such as Hesse, Algren, Bishop, Joyce, Sexton, Balzac, and Poe. A second set of sources derives from visual art, including cinema (Robert Bresson's *Au Hasard Balthazar* and the films of Apichatpong Weerasethakul), painting (Picasso, Paula Rego, Max Ernst, Bosch, among many others), and graphic arts."

Paul has built an exceptionally successful career as an artist that has served as a powerful role model for students. His many honors include a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship, the Wallace Truman Prize, and the Elle Van Dyke Tuthill Endowment Chair at Skidmore College. He has exhibited widely throughout the United States and is represented by Momentum Gallery in Asheville, North Carolina, and Alpha Gallery in Boston.

Longtime colleague Doretta Miller reflects, "As a figurative and narrative painter, Paul provided exemplary images of the human condition that can only be understood and felt through visual art. His legacy will be the many students who confidently take the leap to pursue painting after Skidmore and seek out galleries and museums to engage with and interpret a wide variety of artworks."

As Director of the Schick Art Gallery from 2012 to 2019, Paul extended his teaching through the design and curation of exhibitions. He shaped an ambitious, rigorous, and pedagogically driven program that brought students into direct contact with contemporary artists and complex ideas. Under his leadership, the gallery became a living classroom. Paul curated and co-curated numerous exhibitions, including *Graphite Vision*, *Woven World*, *Charcoal!*, *Specimen*, *Eclectic Earth*, *Craft Matters*, and *The New American Sublime: Landscape and Abstraction by Contemporary American Painters*. Each exhibition was marked by conceptual clarity, material intelligence, and thoughtful installation. Paul was not only a curator, but also a meticulous installer, catalog essayist, moderator of public dialogues, and a welcoming presence for artists, students, and visitors alike.

Within the department and across the College, Paul's service record is extraordinary in both breadth and care. He served on key governance committees,

chaired curriculum initiatives, coordinated painting and drawing facilities, and attended to the often-invisible labor that sustains a department, studio safety, equipment maintenance, and curricular redesign. He approached service not as obligation, but as stewardship, always seeking to make things clearer, stronger, and more humane.

To speak of Paul Sattler's career without acknowledging his kindness would be incomplete. He has been a colleague who listens carefully, speaks thoughtfully, and brings humor and humility to even the most complex conversations. He understands that art and teaching are built on relationships, between ideas, people, and histories.

As Paul retires from Skidmore College, we mark not an ending but a legacy. His influence lives on in the studios he shaped, the gallery he guided, the programs he strengthened, and, above all, the students whose lives were transformed by his teaching and example. Paul has shown us that painting is not only something to be made, but a way of thinking and being in the world. With deep admiration and gratitude, we thank Paul Sattler for his years of service, his faith in students, and his unwavering dedication to the life of art. As Henri Matisse observed, "No real artist ever retires. Art is life." We wish Paul time, space, and continued success as the serious and committed painter he has always been.

**J**ames "Rik" Scarce has been an anchor among the sociology faculty since he arrived in 2003. He has taught a range of elective and required courses including environmental sociology, visual sociology, video ethnography, political sociology, theories of the environment, classical sociological theory, contemporary sociological theory, and introduction to sociology, among others. "Rik and I shared the delivery of our required theory courses for two decades," his departmental colleague John Brueggemann recalled. "I have loved this partnership because we both revere the big ideas of our discipline, and I have learned so much about them from him."

Rik chaired the department for many years, first when it was the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work, and then later the Department of Sociology, guiding the group through an amicable

intra-departmental divorce, external reviews, self-studies, curricular reforms, development of personnel policies, personnel processes, and countless other administrative tasks.

Often plaid-clad and sporting sandals (all four seasons!), Rik's loud cackle rang through the hallways of Tisch as he chatted enthusiastically with colleagues and students on topics as disparate as environmental conservation, anarchism, cycling, running, Newcastle Football Club, Gettysburg, and especially sociology.

As passionate as he is about sociology, he has also been engaged in institutional-level conversations about a range of topics such as deforestation in the North Woods, best practices in student evaluations, and the all-college curriculum.

Rik has made significant contributions to two other academic units at Skidmore as well: Environmental Studies and Sciences (ESS), and Media and Film Studies. Professor Karen Kellogg, who knows the history of ESS at Skidmore better than anyone, said that "Hundreds of ESS students have had their introduction to eco-warriors, environmental sociology, and social theories of the environment through Rik's courses. His unwavering care and commitment to ESS were also demonstrated in his leadership of the department—he was a long-term member of both the ESS Steering Committee and the ESS Personnel Committee, and he helped guide us through self-studies, external reviews, curricular revisions, searches, and all the challenges of transitioning from a small academic minor to a large major."

The inaugural Director of the Media and Film Studies Program, Professor of World Languages and Literature, John Anzalone, commented on Rik's contributions to that new program. "When the College received the Project Viz Grant from Mellon, among the important priorities the steering committee faced was solidifying a curriculum for Media/Film Studies that students could count on finding in a reliable rotation. Rik Scarce answered the call: his contributions to the program were exemplary, fulfilling that need and providing several of the defining elements the program wished to promote."

As a teacher, Rik has consistently demonstrated deep knowledge of his subject areas, passion for the craft, rigorous standards, and devotion to his students. His departmental colleague, Andrew Lindner, pointed out

that Rik has consistently demonstrated "an exacting, patient dedication to the teaching of writing, a refusal to lower the bar when rigor was inconvenient, and a genuine commitment to cultivating in students the independent, critical thinking that is the true hallmark of a liberal arts education."

Max Restifo-Bernstein '25 recalled that "Rik had an attitude of all substance, no bullshit. That first class he discouraged the usage of concluding paragraphs in your essays; why keep writing if you have nothing left to say? He had an affinity for brevity and impact. As an example, he told us that to him, the most powerful words in the entire Bible were: 'Jesus wept.' Jesus, son of God, our savior, a man born to save our souls and carry our sins, wept. From then on, every word I put on the page had to fight for its right to exist."

Students have repeatedly expressed gratitude with respect to Rik's enthusiasm for sociology. While an avowed atheist relative to organized religion, he is a true believer in the transcendent power of the sociological imagination. In addition, his passion and rigor have always been alloyed with kindness. Hanna Nyberg '22 shared this perspective. "I went through some difficult situations during my time at Skidmore, and he showed me endless amounts of empathy and compassion. Additionally, he unlocked my passion for sociology and helped me find my academic voice."

Students have also appreciated the way Rik pushed his teaching outside the classroom, through countless hours of conversation in his office – about assignments, writing, research, ethics, and life. Megan McAdams-Roldan '08 exclaimed, "I am so proud to say that I studied sociology at Skidmore and so much of my interest, especially in qualitative research methodology, is very much thanks to the passion you brought to the field and the fascinating office hours discussions we had. From my first class with you, to our research seminar on the Hudson Valley and having the honor to work as a student assistant my final year - - you never failed to bring energy, unique perspectives, and encourage myself and fellow students to dig deeper and push ideas further."

Rik was famous for his conviction and stubbornness well before he arrived at Skidmore – and those qualities have been evident here ever since. In fact, his stubbornness about his conviction almost got him convicted. He has been cited in numerous social science methods textbooks under the topic of research

ethics. For his first book, *Eco-Warriors: Understanding the Radical Environmental Movement*, Rik interviewed radical environmentalists. When a federal grand jury came looking for his sources, he is alleged to have said, “Get lost, you schmucks!” Federal District Court Judge Fremming Nielsen responded by holding him in contempt of court and locking him up in the Spokane County Jail. Rik was incarcerated for more than five months – an ordeal he documented in a later book, *Contempt of Court: A Scholar’s Struggle for Free Speech Behind Bars*. He never did give up his sources.

“Rik is a passionate person!,” his departmental colleague Jenni Mueller said. “I think of him as someone driven by deep belief and his connection to core values. I’m sure that it has not always been easy to do so, but I have always admired his willingness to ‘stand on business.’ He’s a great role model.”

Associate Professor of Environmental Studies and Sciences A. J. Schneller also admired those qualities. “When I first arrived at Skidmore 13 years ago, I was more than a bit concerned that my tree-hugging, dirt-worshipping, Earth First! leanings would generally be frowned upon... only to learn that a much more radical and seasoned miscreant of a comrade was already squatting on campus in the Sociology Department”.

“Rik is a person of deep principle,” Andrew Lindner noted, “and that quality runs through every dimension of his life as a teacher-scholar.” It has been evident in Rik’s enduring intellectual engagement with the social construction of nature. Three books and numerous articles focus on a range of topics such as salmon in the Pacific Northwest, wolves in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, and the Hudson Valley landscape. A broadly published and widely read scholar in environmental sociology, Rik has nevertheless evinced a kind of intellectual restlessness.

In fact, what is perhaps most distinctive about Rik’s intellectual journey is his commitment to life-long learning. This old dog keeps learning new tricks. He worked in politics and journalism for ten years before joining the ranks of academia. His BA and MA in political science surely broadened his horizons, and clearly informed the first book. Though Rik sadly never took a single sociology course during his undergraduate studies, in a few short years he saw the light and embraced a PhD in sociology.

Well in to his time at Skidmore, Rik became a self-taught video ethnographer and documentarian. He has directed and produced two films: *Sustaining this Place: The Future of the Hudson Region Landscape* and *Impact: Mobility and Modernity Reconsidered*. The latter, which focuses on barefoot running, won the Audience Choice Award at the Austin Indie Fest – and was screened at the Malta Drive-in!

Most recently, Rik has taken up a new battle, or perhaps we should say an old battle. He has been studying to become a Licensed Battlefield Guide at Gettysburg National Military Park. After four years of preparing, Rik was among the few to pass what CBS News called “the hardest test in history” after which he successfully completed the four other stages of the grueling process candidates must undergo and finally became a Licensed Battlefield Guide in June of 2025. Since then, Rik has led more than 130 tours, which included several Skidmore employees, by the way. “Those Gettysburg visitors are so very lucky to have you guiding them and bringing history to life through your gift of storytelling,” his former student McAdams-Roldan declared.

Over the course of his career, Rik has done heavy lifting in the academy writ large, working as associate editor of *Teaching Sociology*, reviewing manuscripts for some 40 journals and academic presses, and conducting several external reviews of academic departments. For Rik, though, scholarly engagement has never allowed him to remain aloof in the ivory tower, as his 40 years of public-facing activities illustrate. This includes numerous magazine, newspaper and on-line articles, radio appearances, invited talks, and participation in various voluntary associations.

Rik cares a great deal about the forest and the trees, both literally and figuratively. The earth, sustainability, ecology, and stewardship are all important to him. The purpose of the academy, the mission of the College, and the vocation of the professoriate have all been in the front of his mind. But he also thinks about the North Woods, and where the Annex should go, the structure of each sentence a student writes, and where a comma should go. Big ideas, administrative deadlines, and everything in between have received his attention. Rik has answered the call and fully embodied Skidmore’s best traditions of the teacher-scholar-citizen ideal. He’s left the place

better than he found it and will be sorely missed by his colleagues. We wish you all the very best, Rik!

**T**he faculty of Skidmore College expresses its profound admiration and gratitude to Professor Denise L. Smith, whose extraordinary career as an educator, scholar, scientific leader, and public servant has brought distinction to the Department of Health and Human Physiological Sciences, the College, and the broader scientific and public safety communities. Over her thirty-six years at Skidmore, Denise has exemplified the highest ideals of academic excellence, mentorship, rigorous inquiry, and service, leaving an indelible mark on our institution and on her fields at both national and international levels.

Joining Skidmore College in 1990, Denise was charged with developing the newly established major in Exercise Science within the Department of Exercise Science, Dance, and Athletics. Over the course of her career, she guided the program through four departmental evolutions, culminating in today's Department of Health and Human Physiological Sciences. Under her leadership, the program has grown in both size and scope, from a single physiologist to a thriving department of five, and from modest beginnings to a major that prepares students for careers in medicine, research, and allied health professions.

In its earliest days, the program operated out of a single shared room that doubled as a teaching and research space and, at times, as a halftime break room for Athletics. Today, the department resides in state-of-the-art facilities within the Center for Integrated Sciences, including multiple dedicated teaching and research laboratories, such as her very own First Responder Health and Safety Laboratory. Denise's vision and persistence were central to this transformation.

A devoted mentor, Denise has guided dozens of students during their time at Skidmore and continues to support many through their graduate studies and professional careers. She has co-authored numerous peer-reviewed publications with her students, and in a testament to her lasting influence, a former student

now serves as a co-author on the sixth edition of her Exercise Physiology textbook.

Denise's excellence in teaching lies in her remarkable ability to balance rigor with compassion and high expectations with unwavering support. She challenges students to exceed their own expectations while equipping them with the tools to succeed. Students recognize both her demanding standards and her deep commitment to their growth. Her teaching has been consistently praised in evaluations and peer observations, reflecting the qualities of an exceptional liberal arts educator: knowledgeable, organized, inspiring, and, in the words of David Porter, she is a 'truly transformational' teacher.

Her work in the classroom is deeply integrated with her scholarship. Denise regularly brings students into the laboratory, creating meaningful research opportunities that extend beyond traditional coursework. As a result, she has published dozens of peer-reviewed articles with undergraduate co-authors and has mentored students at regional and national conferences as well as at collaborating institutions. She is the quintessential teacher-scholar, seamlessly integrating research and teaching in a mutually enriching pursuit of excellence. As one former student aptly remarked, "Denise will be my life advisor."

It is rare to find a master teacher who also leads a prolific, nationally funded research program. Denise has done both with distinction. As Professor and Laboratory Director, she has built a research program of exceptional scope, impact, and relevance, bridging fundamental exercise physiology with applied occupational health science. Her work has positioned Skidmore as a recognized leader in firefighter and emergency responder health and safety.

An internationally respected scholar, Denise has authored or co-authored more than 180 peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, government reports, and influential fire service publications. Her research addresses critical issues including cardiovascular strain, heat stress, sudden cardiac death, carcinogenic exposure, physiological monitoring, and risk mitigation in high-demand occupations. Her work has significantly shaped national understanding and informed policy and practice within the fire service in the United States and abroad.

In 2016, Skidmore awarded her the Tisch Family Distinguished Professorship in recognition of her outstanding achievements. An award that states it be given to *'recognize distinguished faculty members ... whose extraordinary scholarship and teaching have had a significant impact on the students who have studied with them. ...a faculty member who is noted as a leader in his or her academic field and who has influenced his or her students' thinking, values, and understanding of the world.*

Her scholarship has been supported by extraordinary levels of external funding, including numerous competitive awards from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the United States Fire Administration. As principal or co-investigator, she has secured over \$17 million in grant funding to study firefighter health and safety, setting a record for individual funding at Skidmore College.

Denise is also the author of foundational texts in exercise physiology, including *Exercise Physiology: For Health, Fitness, and Performance* and *Advanced Cardiovascular Exercise Physiology*, both widely used in multiple editions by students and professionals around the world.

A defining feature of her career has been the translation of science into practice. As a long-serving investigator with the NIOSH Fire Fighter Fatality Investigation and Prevention Program, Denise contributed to the analysis and prevention of line-of-duty deaths, authoring numerous federal investigative reports that continue to inform national safety standards. She has also served in leadership roles with organizations such as the National Fire Protection Association, the United States Fire Administration, NIOSH, the International Association of Fire Chiefs, and the American College of Sports Medicine.

Her many contributions have been recognized with prestigious honors, including the Paul S. Sarbanes Fire Service Safety Leadership Award, multiple NIOSH Alice Hamilton Awards, the IAFC President's Award, the Bullard-Sherwood Research-to-Practice Award, Skidmore College's President's Award, and the Edwin Mosley Award. Internationally, she has received the Dom Pedro Medal of Honor from the Federal District of Brazil Firefighters and was named Visiting Professor of the Year by the Universidade de Brasília.

In the later stages of her career, Denise extended her impact through national leadership, serving as the inaugural Director of the Data and Research Center at the United States Fire Administration within the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). In this role, she helped guide national research priorities and led the development of the National Emergency Response Information System, advancing real-time data analytics to improve emergency response and public safety nationwide.

Denise's service to Skidmore has been equally distinguished. She chaired the department during its transition from Athletics to an independent academic unit and contributed to numerous key committees, including CAPT, CAFR, IPPC (where she served as vice-chair), and FEC, among others. She also played a significant role in shaping the future of the sciences at Skidmore, including early planning for the Center for Integrated Sciences. In every role, she brought insight, leadership, and generosity of spirit.

The legacy of Professor Denise L. Smith is one of uncommon breadth and significance. Her work has transformed how firefighter health is understood and protected; her scholarship has advanced exercise physiology and occupational health; and her service reflects the highest ideals of scientific responsibility and public engagement. As she enters retirement, Skidmore College celebrates not only her extraordinary accomplishments but also her enduring influence on students, colleagues, first responders, and the countless lives made safer through her work.

With deep respect and gratitude, the faculty of Skidmore College honors Professor Denise L. Smith for a career defined by excellence, impact, and an unwavering commitment to science in the service of others.

**F**or thirty-five years, Shirley Smith has brought intellectual curiosity, pedagogical inventiveness, and a good sense of humor to the Italian section and the Department of World Languages and Literatures at Skidmore College. Having earned her M.A. and Ph.D. from Harvard University with a dissertation on Gabriele D'Annunzio, Shirley arrived at Skidmore in 1990 and

joined what was then the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures. She earned tenure in 1997 and was promoted to Full Professor in 2014. Over the course of her career, Shirley has been a steady and animating presence in the Italian section, serving multiple terms as Italian Section Head and shaping the contours of what it has meant to study Italian at Skidmore for more than a generation of students.

Shirley's scholarship reflects the breadth of her intellectual interests. Her book *Imperial Designs: Italians in China, 1900–1947*, published by Fairleigh Dickinson University Press in 2012, was recognized as the first text in English to deal comprehensively with the Italian colonial experience in China during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Drawing on the letters, diaries, and journalism of figures such as Luigi Barzini, Sr., and the diplomats Salvago Raggi, Varè, and Ciano, the book offered a window onto Italian enclaves in Beijing, Tianjin, and Shanghai that had been largely overlooked in the study of Italian colonialism. Reviewers praised it as a rich, anecdotal, and illuminating contribution to the study of Italian migrations. Beyond the book, Shirley has published widely on subjects as varied as the fiction of Anna Maria Ortese and Francesca Duranti, the humanism of Anna Banti (whose "Lavinia fuggita" she also translated), the spatial poetics of Camilla Salvago Raggi, Italian cinematic representations of terrorism and fascism, and the hybrid cultural geographies produced by Chinese migration to Italy. She has presented her work at conferences across North America and Europe, from Venice and Prague to Montreal and Taormina. Her NEH grant, a Mellon Faculty Exchange, and two residencies at New York University testify to the impact of her scholarly work on the field of Italian studies.

In the classroom Shirley's energies and creativity really shine. She has been a great inventor of courses, designing offerings that open fresh and unexpected angles onto Italian culture. "Britain's Love Affair with Italy: the Grand Tour," "Green Italy: Gardens, Food and Material Culture," "Italian Food, Fiction, and Art," "Sicily Today: Crime, Cannoli, and Cinema," "Italy, Fascism, and Jews," "Sprezzatura: il genio italiano" - the titles alone convey a sensibility that refuses to treat Italian studies as a fixed canon and instead meets students where their curiosity lies. Her courses are known for taking learning out of the seminar room. For example, in Shirley's popular "Green Italy" course, students spent weekly sessions cooking their way

through Italian material culture, and her travel seminars and study-abroad advising have helped students embark on their own encounters with Italy. As a colleague in the Italian section puts it, Shirley has been very innovative and creative in the courses she offered. Her courses engage students' curiosity with original approaches to Italian culture and provided several meaningful learning experiences also outside of the classroom.

That same instinct for engaging students beyond the conventional has defined her contributions to the life of the Italian section itself. She has organized events for students such as the *Serate Musicali* performance, coordinated the *Caffè Italiano*, and hosted Italian Movie Nights. Most distinctively, Shirley launched *Radio Italiana: Onda Sonora* on Skidmore's own WSPN a decade ago and has kept it on the air, giving students and the broader community a public platform for Italian music, language, and culture that extends well past the walls of the classroom.

Shirley's service to the college runs just as deep. She has chaired both the Faculty Development Committee and the Curriculum Committee, served on CAPT (now ATC), and participated in search committees for positions in the Department of World Languages and Literatures. She has advised self-determined majors, read senior theses, supported HEOP tutoring, and participated in summer advising. In every role, she has brought the same combination of seriousness and warmth, institutional memory and openness to new ideas. Colleagues in our department describe Shirley as generous and supportive of junior colleagues. She is eager to listen to new ideas and support new projects. Those of us who have shared hallway chats, department meetings, and dinners with Shirley over the years know that none of this institutional record quite captures her. Shirley is a lively and funny colleague. She'll notice your fashion sense, is quick to laugh, and will ask after your family and loved ones. Shirley wears her affection for Italy on her sleeve and has the rare gift of making the serious work of a small section in a big department feel like a shared adventure. Over the course of her career here, Shirley has modelled the teacher-scholar ideal that Skidmore is built on.

Shirley, we are grateful for thirty-five years of your curiosity, creativity, dedication to Italian at Skidmore. We will miss seeing you on the fourth floor of Palamountain, but we know that the Italian section, the

department, and the College carries your many contributions forward.

Grazie mille, Shirley.

**I**t is with deep gratitude and admiration that we honor Professor Joanne Vella upon her retirement after thirty-eight years of extraordinary teaching and service to the Department of Art at Skidmore College. Since joining the Painting and Drawing area in 1988, Joanne has been a vital, creative force within the department, shaping generations of students while sustaining a distinguished and evolving artistic practice.

Joanne came to Skidmore with a rich foundation as both artist and educator. She earned an MFA in Painting from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and holds two BFA degrees from the same institution, one in Painting and the other in Art Education and Sculpture. Prior to Skidmore, she taught at Iowa State University in Ames from 1984 to 1988, and at Northwest Missouri State University in Maryville, Missouri from 1983 to 1984. Her career has always been marked by a rare balance: unwavering dedication to teaching alongside a rigorous and sustained studio practice.

That balance was further deepened through residencies and visiting professorships, most notably at Studio Art Center International (SACI), where she taught during multiple summers in the early 1990s and later returned as an artist-in-residence in Florence, Italy. Joanne reflects, “Atmospheric qualities of light found in the Italian landscape and glimmering bodies of water from Venice to Florence to Rome and Sicily, as well as the color palette and texture of Italy, its people, and architecture, greatly inform my work.” Earlier in her career, she held residencies at the Des Moines Art Center and received a Yaddo Fellowship in 1989. She earned sustained institutional recognition for her scholarship, including a Pew Grant and nine Skidmore Faculty Research Grants, affirming the significance of her work as an artist-scholar.

Joanne’s paintings are instantly recognizable: large-scale figurative works, often centered on female subjects, situated within naturalistic yet psychologically charged spaces. Water, light, and the moving figure recur as central motifs. As Joanne has written, “The heroic female, woman, in metaphorical settings of water has been the focus of my art for over four decades, from the 1980s to the present.” Her paintings unfold through time, memory, and perception, embodying change rather than stasis: “Paint is viscous and mobile, thought is unfixed, meaning is layered.”

Longtime colleague Janet Sorensen reflects, “Her paintings pulse with the rhythm of their making, the action of a moving hand ever responsive to an open mind and heart. Layers of images emerge as brushstrokes search the depths and sound the surface of her paintings. Golden light floods from within as complex intertwining meanings align. These works evoke a presence so fluid they seem to capture a moment suspended in midair, a transitory thought embodied in water and light.”

This commitment to visual and conceptual searching has earned Joanne numerous accolades, including the Grumbacher Award, the Daniel V. McNamee Memorial Award, the Dick Blick Award, the Abelow Award, and multiple figurative honors. Her work has been exhibited widely across the United States in solo and group exhibitions, including more than sixty juried shows, and has been represented by LARAC Lapham Gallery in Glens Falls and the Drawing Center in New York City.

Joanne’s service to Skidmore College and the Department of Art has been extensive and deeply impactful. She served on the Committee on Appointments, Promotions, and Tenure, the Faculty Development Committee, and the IPPC Subcommittee. As faculty advisor to the Case Student Gallery, she helped double its size and strengthen student engagement with exhibitions. She organized the Skidmore Women Faculty Exhibition in conjunction with the National Women’s Studies Association’s 17th Annual Conference, overseeing installation, programming, and panel discussions. She also created an Art Major Alumni Panel, bringing distinguished graduates back to campus to speak about diverse professional pathways in the arts.

Within the department, Joanne contributed to numerous tenure-track searches, including chairing the Printmaking and Expanded Media search in 2023 and serving on the Drawing search in 2024. She taught for many years in the Summer Six Art Program and brought artists Leon Golub and Nancy Spero to campus for student lectures. She further shaped the curriculum through her Scribner Seminar, *The Seductive Figure: The Heroic and Grotesque as Symbolic Form*, which she taught for five consecutive years, and which inspired many first-year students to pursue the art major.

Yet Joanne's enduring legacy at Skidmore is defined above all by her teaching. Students speak with passion about the intensity, rigor, and care she brought to the studio. Joanne demanded seriousness of purpose: sustained hours of work, disciplined looking, and deep problem-solving. She paired that rigor with generosity and respect, offering critiques that were exacting, honest, and grounded in a belief in each student's developing voice. As one student reflected, Joanne did not simply teach how to paint; she taught how and why to paint, insisting that the struggle mattered and that the work was worth struggling for, at Skidmore and beyond.

One former student shared, "My first experience with Joanne was in Painting I. I left class that day knowing the semester would be something special. I went from wondering what I'd gotten myself into to realizing that I loved painting and wanted to do this for the rest of my life. She has been a mentor, a guide, and a constant source of support. I would not be where I am today without her."

Another wrote, "You will never meet someone quite like Joanne. She is the kind of professor you both love and are lovingly intimidated by because she pushes you further than you ever thought possible, not just in what you paint, but how and why you paint. What makes her truly special is her spirit. She cares deeply about both the art you make and the person you are becoming."

A student who studied with Joanne across four courses and later pursued an M.F.A. at Tufts on scholarship recalled the intensity of her teaching: "During my first year at Skidmore, every Saturday at 9 a.m., I sat beside

Joanne working through a da Vinci drapery study. We broke the image into a grid and rebuilt it cell by cell, retraining my eye and hand under her unwavering attention to detail. It was merciless, but I couldn't turn away from the challenge."

Joanne's influence extended far beyond scheduled class hours. She met regularly with students, guided them toward exhibitions, readings, museums, and courses, and mentored countless individuals through portfolio development, graduate school applications, fellowships, and professional opportunities. Many of her former students now pursue careers as artists, designers, educators, and scholars, carrying forward the values she modeled: seriousness, humility, persistence, and belief in the power of art.

As a colleague, Joanne was equally committed and generous, a thoughtful collaborator in curriculum development and critiques, and a tireless advocate for students and department initiatives. Those who worked alongside her recall early mornings preparing studios, carefully installing student work, and organizing museum trips so students could encounter art firsthand. She consistently went the extra mile for people, ideas, and the mission of art education.

Now, as Joanne steps away from formal teaching, she begins a new chapter of sustained artistic exploration. With more time devoted to her studio practice, we eagerly anticipate how her work will continue to evolve. As the Portuguese painter Paula Rego once said, "What I try to do is describe honestly what I feel," a conviction that mirrors Joanne's lifelong commitment to the figure, to perception, and to painting as an act of emotional and intellectual truth. Joanne Vella has left an indelible mark on the Department of Art, on Skidmore College, and on the many lives she has touched. We will miss her fierce intelligence, uncompromising standards, humor, passion, and deep generosity. We celebrate her remarkable career and offer our deepest thanks for the profound gift of her teaching, her art, and her example. We wish her every joy and continued success as she embarks on this next creative journey.

**T**oday, we honor our colleague, Professor Mark Youndt, on the occasion of his retirement following a long and distinguished career at Skidmore College. It has been 30 years since Mark first entered the classroom as an instructor at Gettysburg College, and 27 years since he joined Skidmore's faculty. Over that time, he has made enduring and far-reaching contributions across the core dimensions of academic life – teaching, scholarship, and service – and his presence has left an indelible mark on the Management and Business Department, our students, and the broader Skidmore community.

Mark would be quick to admit there are two places where he feels most at home: in the classroom and in the mountains. In both settings, he brings a sense of purpose, clarity, and perspective. As a teacher-scholar, he is energetic, collegial, and deeply inspiring. While Skidmore is fortunate to count many outstanding educators among its faculty, Mark stands out for his exceptional preparation, his carefully structured yet flexible approach to teaching, and a classroom presence that is at once relaxed and rigorous. His courses are thoughtfully choreographed, with each session building toward deeper understanding, while still allowing space for spontaneity and meaningful dialogue.

Students quickly recognize Mark's expectations for them are substantial, but they also recognize those academic standards are grounded in a genuine commitment to their intellectual growth. His effectiveness as a teacher is evident not only in what students learn, but also in how they learn: with curiosity, confidence, and a willingness to grapple with complicated ideas. As a result, they leave his courses with a robust grasp of complex business and organizational concepts and with a deep appreciation for critical thinking and disciplined inquiry.

Grounded in his own liberal arts undergraduate education, Mark found at Skidmore an intellectual home – one that perfectly aligned with his values and aspirations. It is clear Mark has long embraced the liberal arts' commitment to breadth, depth, and integrative thinking, so there is no doubt his teaching reflects that dedication in both content and approach. His intellectual range is remarkable. Over the course of his career, Mark has taught strategic management,

strategic human resource management (SHRM), healthcare strategy, leadership, innovation, the natural environment, sustainable food systems, competitive advantage through people, intellectual capital, and knowledge management. This breadth has allowed him to engage students with a wide array of theoretical and practical perspectives while maintaining clear and coherent intellectual frameworks.

His pedagogical skill has been recognized through multiple teaching awards at Gettysburg, UConn, and the University of Vermont. At Skidmore, his selection as the 2017 faculty commencement speaker – an honor reserved for those who have made a profound and lasting impact on students' educational experiences – serves as a testament to a simple, enduring truth: Mark simply loves to teach.

In particular, Mark has played a central and defining role in shaping the Management & Business major and minor curricula at Skidmore. He has taught both our foundational course, MB 107 (Business and Organization), and our capstone, MB 349 (Business Strategy), thereby occupying a unique position at both bookends of the course of study. In this way, he has helped to anchor the curriculum, setting expectations for students early and then reinforcing and expanding them at the culmination of students' academic journeys. For example, in MB 107, Mark has introduced students to the fundamental questions, theories, and frameworks that define the study of business and organizations. In MB 349, he has challenged students to synthesize what they have learned over four years of study, applying analytical tools and critical thinking skills to sophisticated, real-world organizational problems. This dual role has allowed Mark to shape student learning, growth, and development. To that end, he has been instrumental in socializing students to the intellectual culture of the department, mentoring them as they grow, and helping them recognize the broader significance of their studies. His courses are known for having high standards for student learning, practical relevance, and an emphasis on thoughtful engagement with global, domestic, and dynamic challenges.

Beyond the department, Mark has been a valued contributor to the First-Year Experience, where he taught *Human Dilemmas* for years. Drawing on his doctoral studies rooted in the psychology and sociology of organizations, Mark provided a vital space for first-year students to explore the nuances of the human condition. In this setting, he demonstrated

the full range of his intellectual interests, seamlessly bridging the study of organizations with broader philosophical and social questions.

Mark's influence on Skidmore extends well beyond the classroom though. Over the years, he has mentored numerous junior and mid-career faculty, offering guidance that has been both thoughtful and deeply informed by experience. Colleagues consistently describe him as generous with his time, wise in his counsel, and unwavering in his commitment to supporting others. He has answered the call to serve on dissertation committees and mentored the next generation of researchers far beyond the walls and woods of Skidmore. Mark has also modeled what it means to be a faculty member at Skidmore: to be engaged, to be collegial, and to dedicate oneself to the success of the community as a whole. He chaired the MB Department and chaired (or served on) numerous department- and college-level searches (including for Skidmore's Athletic Director and for Skidmore's first Director of Sustainability). His dedication to faculty governance has extended to meaningful years on FPPC, CAPT (the former combined Committee on Appointments, Promotions, and Tenure), the Promotions Committee, and his own five-year term as Sustainability Director for Skidmore. His contributions in these areas have been meaningful and enduring, shaping the culture of the MB Department and our campus in ways that will continue to resonate for years to come.

A distinguished and highly influential scholar, Mark has produced a substantial body of work over his career, with a profound impact on the field of SHRM. His research occupies the critical intersection between business strategy and the management of human capital, focusing on how organizations align their goals, systems, and practices to achieve high performance. In this way, much of Mark's work has entered into the canon of his field, shaping understanding and serving as a benchmark for research in his discipline. Earning grants from the *U.S. Small Business Administration*, the *Society of Human Resource Management*, and the *Institute for the Study of Organizational Effectiveness*, Mark has bridged rigorous academic research with real-world application, engaging with organizations and industries in ways that enhance both theory and practice. As such, his work has consistently demonstrated that careful, systematic research can yield insights of practical significance, informing how

organizations operate and how they think about their most important resource: people.

With over 17,000 citations, Mark's publications are widely read, frequently cited by expert scholars, and regularly incorporated into the core literature of the discipline. Mark is a leading figure who helped define the frameworks of SHRM within strategic management. His prolific output includes the classic monograph, *Contemporary Issues in Leadership* (now in its 7<sup>th</sup> edition) and award-winning research in A/A+ rated journals such as the *Academy of Management Journal*, *Strategic Management Journal*, *Journal of Management*, and *Journal of Managerial Issues*. Beyond publications, his role on the *Journal of Management Studies*' editorial board (*notably one of the most prestigious journals in the discipline*) has allowed him to shape the direction and academic standards of the entire field. Indeed, Mark has been one of the key figures in establishing SHRM as a legitimate and important area of inquiry. His work has helped to define the questions that scholars ask and the frameworks they use to answer them.

In every respect, Mark Youndt has exemplified the ideals of the teacher-scholar. He has been an outstanding educator, a distinguished and influential researcher, and a deeply committed colleague. He has contributed not only through his individual achievements, but through his ability to elevate those around him: students, colleagues, and the broader academic community.

We are deeply grateful for all that he has given to Skidmore. His contributions have strengthened the Management & Business Department, enriched the curriculum, and enhanced the intellectual life of the College. It has been both a privilege and an honor to count Mark as a colleague.