

Interim Report of the Advisory Committee on International Study (ACIS)
to the Committee on Educational Policies and Planning (CEPP)
February 6, 2006

The Advisory Committee on International Study (ACIS), constituted in the fall of 2004 by CEPP, was charged with submitting a report during the spring semester of 2006. Given the progress ACIS has made and CEPP's workload, the members of the Advisory Council thought it prudent to provide CEPP with an update on its work since its inception. Of primary concern is the future of ACIS: although the Committee is slated to sunset at the end of the AY 2005-6, its members wish CEPP to consider making ACIS a permanent subcommittee, comprised of appointed faculty and representatives from the Office of International Programs.

History

In the fall of 2003 CEPP created a Subcommittee on Study Abroad and Diversity (SADS: www.skidmore.edu/classics/cepp-sads.html). CEPP charged the SADS "to design mechanisms to strengthen and enhance Skidmore students' interaction and engagement with perspectives of the "other" – that is, to develop opportunities beyond current curricular requirements for students to learn about other cultures in both domestic and international spheres, and to assimilate other cultural perspectives into their own global outlooks" (Final Report: www.skidmore.edu/classics/cepp-sads-finalreport.pdf). The faculty and administrative members of SADS examined the current role of study abroad in the Skidmore curriculum and proposed a series of changes to the institution's approach to diversity in and internationalization of the curriculum. The discussions included consideration of a proposal from the Office of International Programs for the creation of a list of approved programs for study abroad, and of ACIS. The relevant sections of the SADS report follow:

The Subcommittee reviewed the proposal from Cori Filson, director of the Office of International Programs, "to create a 'short-list' of approved programs on which our students may participate ..., [to work] with each department to choose programs that academically and geographically meet the needs of students within their majors and minors, and to identify programs that have been fully reviewed by the department and approved for credit in that academic area In this way we would enhance integration between the programs overseas and the programs here at Skidmore and, therefore, foster greater faculty confidence in the credits students earn overseas. This system also would cultivate increased faculty familiarity with programs, thereby allowing for more informed advisement and, again, greater confidence in the programs abroad." The model developed by Cori in this report restructures the tuition fees students

pay to participate in study abroad programs, and the Subcommittee recommends that CEPP endorse Cori's proposal. The implementation of this proposal promises to address in substantive fashion, and in short order, the shortcomings of the current administration of off-campus study at Skidmore College. The establishment of a short list of approved programs will ensure closer attention to where students go and what they study by allowing the kind of oversight essential to quality control. Articulated standards for accepted programs will also facilitate addition of new programs to the list and the eventual elimination of any that fall short. Student choice will be more focused, but will not be limited because a petition mechanism will be available for programs not yet approved.

The redesign of the financial structuring of study abroad the proposal recommends has great merit, as it will enable any student on an approved program to carry the entire financial aid package during the term(-s) away from Skidmore. In addition, funds generated from this new arrangement will enable faculty development in the international study/diversity areas of the curriculum, such as travel to program sites and course planning and development, among others. However, we recommend in the strongest terms that CEPP ask the administration for a specific percentage of any such funds to be earmarked for faculty development purposes, and not simply directed to the general fund.

The proliferation of interest among students to spend a semester or year away from Skidmore requires enhanced faculty participation in helping our students select the appropriate program and in advising OIP, on behalf of the faculty, as to which non-Skidmore abroad programs deserve endorsement from the institution. The Subcommittee proposes the creation of an Advisory Committee on International Studies (ACIS) to work both with the OIP and with our academic departments and programs, whose faculty will periodically review the curricular and co-curricular offerings of abroad programs and suggest modifications to the list of approved abroad programs. ACIS will provide faculty and the OIP an opportunity to collaborate on shaping policies and protocols pertaining to study abroad, and so should include the Director of OIP as chair, the Directors of Intercultural Studies and International Education, who together in consultation with the Committee on Faculty Governance will give ACIS its shape and charge. For example, ACIS might assume the responsibilities pertaining to study abroad currently under the purview of the Committee on Academic Standing. The Subcommittee also proposes that each academic department and program appoint one faculty member – preferably not department chairs – to serve as the departmental or program coordinator for study abroad. These coordinators will work with the ACIS (and some will most likely serve on it) to review and refine the list of approved programs.

SADS endorsed both the creation of an Approved Programs list, and of ACIS, in its final report. Subsequently, CEPP authorized the creation of ACIS in the fall of 2004, with some changes from the original proposal: at the request of the director of the Office of International Programs, CEPP selected one of its faculty representatives to chair the Advisory Committee; since the positions of the Directors of Intercultural Studies and International Education were not yet in place, the remaining members of ACIS were selected from the faculty, with attention to disciplinary distribution and study abroad expertise; the Director and Senior Program Coordinator of OIP both joined ACIS as well.

Charge

ACIS' charge, approved by CEPP in the fall of 2004, is to "serve in an advisory capacity for the Office of International Programs as Skidmore implements a new structure for overseas study." The plan for re-structuring emphasizes closer integration of the academic programs on campus with the programs our students attend overseas. With this in mind, Skidmore is moving to a "Partner Program" list. The list will be developed in conjunction with the departments and programs to ensure coordination between course work completed overseas and major/minor/graduation requirements at Skidmore. More importantly, Skidmore strives to develop a stronger link between students' academic and co-curricular work before and after study abroad and their work while abroad. The goal is to embed overseas study into the students' overall educational experience at Skidmore.

The Advisory Committee, consisting of faculty members appointed by CEPP for a two-year term, and the director of OIP, will be charged with (in order of importance):

- developing guidelines for vetting and approving "Partner Programs" that meet academic and administrative quality standards
- determining the appropriate policy regarding transfer of credits from "Partner Programs"
- determining the appropriate policy regarding GPA from "Partner Programs"
- reviewing, evaluating, and possibly revising current policies governing overseas study
- developing mechanisms for evaluating "Partner Programs" that allow us to maintain quality and variety in the portfolio made available to students
- developing mechanisms for more thoroughly and formally preparing students for overseas study, and integrating their experiences into the classroom upon return
- determining the long-term need for a permanent advisory committee to OIP.

Membership

- 2004-5: John Anzalone (FLL), Marie Alice Arnold (OIP); Michael Arnush (chair; Classics; CEPP), Sue Bender (Anthropology), Cori Filson (OIP), Jim Kennelly (Management & Business), Monica Raveret-Richter (Biology), Pete Stake (Studio Art)
- 2005-6: Marie Alice Arnold (OIP); Michael Arnush (chair; Classics), Sue Bender (Anthropology), Cori Filson (OIP), Deb Hall (Studio Art; CEPP); Jim Kennelly (Management & Business), Kate Leavitt (Studio Art), Monica Raveret-Richter (Biology), Patricia Rubio (FLL)

Approved Programs

The academic year 2004-5 saw the development of guidelines and policies for, and a list of, "Partner Programs" (renamed "Approved Programs"; all documents attached):

- "Criteria for Approving Overseas Approved Programs"
- "Approved Programs Lists" (Master Lists by Field of Study; Country; Region)
- "Policy Questions and Decisions by ACIS"

ACIS shared the "Criteria" with both CEPP and Academic Staff, and then began the long process of vetting programs. Members of the OIP staff worked with each academic department and program to develop a list of programs that fit the criteria for students' academic aspirations, and departments' and programs' curricular and co-curricular expectations. First OIP and the department/program (usually via a faculty liaison), and then ACIS, reviewed each study abroad program; the materials under review were solicited from the host institutions and provided responses to the "Approved Programs Lists – Program Review" questions and concerns (attached). Altogether, ACIS recommended to CEPP 124 programs spread across the globe, addressing the interests of virtually every academic department and program at the College¹; CEPP subsequently approved the list, which included Skidmore's own programs in Beijing, London, India, Spain and Paris.

The Approved Programs provide remarkable opportunities for Skidmore students to expand their intellectual and curricular interests on an international level; however, ACIS recognized that there may well be other programs not on the list which might also appeal to students and provide a high caliber of curricular and co-curricular exploration. Accordingly, ACIS developed a petition process for overseas study ("Overseas Petition Process for Programs Not Included on Skidmore's Approved

¹ As of January 2006 the following departments and programs had not yet finalized their lists of Approved Programs: Dance, International Affairs, Latin American Studies, and Physics.

Programs List"; attached), and 18 students petitioned the Advisory Committee for study abroad at other, non-approved programs ("ACIS Petitions 2005-2006"; attached). ACIS approved 17 petitions, some of which were due to over-enrollments at Skidmore's own programs as well as some of the Approved Programs.

Agenda Items for 2005-6

During the fall semester of 2005, ACIS refined the petition process and goals, and reviewed petitions; began to establish guidelines, procedures, a provisional budget and a schedule for assessment visits of Approved Programs by faculty and/or OIP staff; initiated discussions of the short- and long-range financial impacts of the Approved Programs; briefly considered, and then passed on to CEPP, guidelines for faculty-led short-term programs (CEPP subsequently formed a subcommittee on Short-Term Programs, which includes representatives from ACIS, CC, CEPP, OIP, the Dean of Faculty and the Office of Special Programs); and laid out an agenda for additional issues that require consideration.

- recommend a plan to prepare our students for study abroad, and re-integrate them into the Skidmore community and classroom when they return to campus; in the case of the London FYE students, recommend a plan to prepare and support them for study in the UK, and then integrate them into the on-campus community when they come to Skidmore in the spring;
- clarify the relationship between ACIS and the recently created task force on diversity, in terms of the institution's goals for study abroad (articulated both in the Strategic Plan for Skidmore and the Middle States Self-Study);
- establish which sets of data we need to collect on study abroad (e.g., retention, achievement, diversity, gender, etc.) and provide recommendations aimed at eliminating inconsistencies in the data collection;
- recommend a plan for management of the growth of study abroad, particularly in light of the implementation of the Approved Programs list; conduct a cost/benefit analysis of the expressed goal of having 60% of our students study abroad, including studies of the anticipated impact on campus enrollments, the role of short-term programs in that goal, and the staffing necessary to support such growth;
- recommend which office(s) would be appropriate to manage summer study abroad programs;
- recommend a plan to assess the learning outcomes for a Skidmore student spending a semester overseas;
- conduct on-going, systematic reviews, evaluations, and possible revisions of current policies governing overseas study;

- conduct on-going, systematic reviews of existing and newly-proposed Approved Programs;
- devise a process for departments and programs to add new Approved Programs;
- consider a summer Approved Programs list.

The members of ACIS anticipate that the complexity of the issues raised in this agenda will require on-going consideration beyond the spring semester of 2006. In addition, the OIP staff has benefitted from ACIS' advice on the management of faculty and student interest in study abroad. Accordingly, the faculty representatives and OIP staff request that ACIS receive permanent status as a subcommittee of CEPP, still subject to CEPP's purview. Finally, ACIS intends to supplement this report during the summer of 2006 with additional assessments of the impact of Approved Programs: on enrollment patterns in academic majors, on the institution's finances, and on the institution's priorities as articulated in the Strategic Plan.²

² One of the priority initiatives in support of Goal II in the College's Strategic Plan is "to raise the percentage of Skidmore graduates who have had such experience to 60% (www.skidmore.edu/planning/goals/goal2.htm).