

# First Steps

## Strategic Action Agenda 2016-2018

We are now in the first year of implementing our new *Strategic Plan: Creating Pathways to Excellence*, and as we continue this work, we remain mindful of the recommendations that emerged as part of last year's Middle States reaccreditation process. By design, the goals and initiatives identified in the *Plan* and the Middle States recommendations are complementary. This Strategic Action Agenda (SAA) departs from past practice by setting out a two-year implementation horizon for the highest priority initiatives. In addition, it is organized on the basis of the four goals identified in the *Plan* and not in relation to administrative divisions of the College.

Now is the time to embrace a new sense of dedication to our common purpose. As the *Strategic Plan* makes clear and as our current experience confirms, Skidmore is positioned to achieve a set of objectives that would not have been imaginable just a few years ago. At the same time, external pressures can place any college or university at risk. Our best response to this complex situation is to move forward with initiatives that will add to our strength, enable us to support our students in achieving ever higher levels of academic excellence, attend to the health and wellness of our community in new ways, and solidify our position as a leading liberal arts college. Let us work together and share in these efforts as we continue our positive momentum.

**I. Integrative Learning and Education—To Develop Students' Capacities to Create, Imagine, and Change the World, and to Enhance the Work of the Faculty as Teacher–Scholars:** *We will invest in pedagogical and scholarly programs and educational strategies that develop the capacities of students and faculty members to achieve, model, and demonstrate excellence as scholarly, creative, and integrative learners. In doing so we are committed to developing and implementing new and creative pedagogies and curricula that will support our transition to a technology-rich college.*

**1. Continue the progress towards construction of the Center for Integrated Sciences (CIS).**

- Complete construction document phase. [Year 1]
- Begin permitting process. [Year 1]
- Complete plan for interim space arrangements, in conjunction with campus-wide space utilization study (done by external consultant). [Year 1]
- Complete permitting process. [Year 2]
- Begin construction phase. [Year 2]
- Using support from Arthur Vining Davis Foundation grant, pilot program for the Schupf Idea Lab. [Years 1 & 2]

**2. Continue fundraising to achieve target identified in CIS funding plan (\$15M).**

- Develop and launch new CIS fundraising initiative, secure \$5-10M in commitments. [Year 1]
- Secure \$5-10M in commitments – complete CIS funding plan. [Year 2]
- Continue to seek naming gift. [Years 1 & 2]

3. **Complete process of General Education Curriculum review.** Committee on Educational Policy and Planning (CEPP) is the leadership group for this project. [Year 1]
4. **Develop enhanced partnerships between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs.**
  - Map divisional goals of Student Affairs with *Strategic Plan* and Academic Mission. [Year 1]
  - Re-envision a residential program that includes learning outcomes and new opportunities for faculty-student interactions and engagement. [Year 2]
5. **Explore the possibility of creating an Africana Studies (or Black Diaspora Studies) program or a Race and Ethnic Studies Program.** [Years 1 & 2]
6. **Enhance faculty development opportunities, mentoring and peer feedback for faculty members.**
  - In addition to enhancing our existing faculty development efforts, the Center for Leadership, Teaching, and Learning (CLTL) and the Dean of the Faculty's Office will partner with Department Chairs and Program Directors to develop a model peer observation policy based on best practices. [Year 1]
  - CLTL to partner with the Retiree Initiative Planning Group to explore options for utilizing retirees as mentors for faculty and staff. [Year 1]
  - The CLTL to offer course development stipends to increase course offerings on social justice issues. [Years 1 & 2]
7. **Continue to use Office of the Dean of Special Programs (ODSP) scholar/artist residencies and summer institutes to create integrative experiences for undergraduate students, partnering with academic departments, the Center for Leadership, Teaching, and Learning (CLTL), and other programs.**
  - Implement ODSP/CLTL proposal for combined semester-long residency for a current faculty member and a guest artist/scholar. [Year 1]
  - Offer more creative summer learning opportunities for undergraduate students through on-campus jobs in ODSP, providing living and working arrangements that are economically feasible. [Years 1 & 2]
  - Promote summer programs to undergraduate students as professional development opportunities. [Years 1 & 2]
8. **Continue fundraising for additional academic Campaign objectives.**
  - Secure \$1-3M in commitments for The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery endowment. [Year 1]
  - Secure \$1-2M in commitments to support the John B. Moore Documentary Studies Collaborative (MDOCS). [Year 1]
  - Secure \$1-3M in commitments for Tang Teaching Museum endowment. [Year 2]
  - Secure \$1-2M in commitments to support MDOCS. [Year 2]

**II. Access—To Ensure Access for All Our Students to an Extraordinary Educational Experience:** *Students will have full access to opportunities for educational excellence across all three phases of their Skidmore careers—at admission, as undergraduate learners, and in transition to their post-college lives.*

9. **Continue active program for recruitment of faculty from historically underrepresented backgrounds; increase our efforts around retention.**
  - Objective: continued success in hiring faculty members of color; increase success in hiring African-Americans. [Years 1 & 2]
10. **Advance development of program and planning, and identify funding for a Social Justice/Multicultural Center.**
  - Form working group under auspices of the Committee on Intercultural and Global Understanding (CIGU). [Year 1]
  - In context of previous planning for Case Center and space utilization, consider spaces in Case Center and possibly elsewhere. [Year 1]
11. **Work with College divisions to continue the focus on the recruitment, retention, and quality of the experience of employees.**
  - Devise plans to increase the pool of candidates who are people of color, address historical barriers, and support leadership efforts to improve campus climate. [Year 1]
  - Reinvigorate diversity and inclusion policies, practices, and programming in the Divisions (bias response, workshops, training, and professional development). [Years 1 & 2]
  - Increase collaboration among departments and across divisions. [Years 1& 2]
  - Develop new plan for more active recruiting of employment candidates in the Albany, Schenectady, and Troy areas. [Years 1& 2]
12. **Complete the first year of The Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery’s 3-year Mellon project on diversity and the collection.**
  - Hire a Mellon Collections Specialist, provide faculty stipends, complete conservation, video documentation, artist dialogues and community projects with our collection. [Year 1]
  - Recruit and hire a Malloy Curator who will also further our diversity goals. [Year 1]
13. **Produce an updated Retention Study by the Enrollment Management Group, specifically looking at international students, domestic students of color, first-generation students, students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, and men.**
  - Complete study. [Year 1]
  - Based upon the outcomes of the Retention Study, develop integrated plans for improving retention in identified areas of need. [Year 2]
14. **Conduct institutional and demographic research in support of expanded recruitment of prospective students.**
  - Continue focus on enrollment of underrepresented cohorts in the entering class. [Years 1 & 2]
  - Integrate new “Prior Prior Year” federal policy [meaning the College will use

financial data from two tax years prior to students' enrollment] into institutional financial aid budgeting and packaging. [Year 1]

- Research national geographic growth regions for significant numbers of relocated employee populations from the northeast and, if appropriate, develop a recruitment plan in response to this data. [Year 1 & 2]
- Admissions and Communications and Marketing to collaborate on producing new Admissions marketing materials designed for “digital natives.” [Year 1]

**15. Develop and implement an additional admissions application platform (The Coalition Application.)** [Year 1]

**16. Review institutional Americans with Disabilities (ADA) compliance (both facilities and pedagogy).** [Year 1]

**17. Continue to enhance outreach and programming in Career Development Center.** [Years 1 & 2]

**18. Continue efforts to make summer courses accessible to all students.**  
[Years 1 & 2]

**19. ODSP to partner with Admissions to position summer programs as important avenues for recruiting high-achieving and underrepresented high school students.** [Years 1 & 2]

**20. Continue fundraising for additional academic Campaign objectives relating to access.**

- Secure \$2-5M in new endowment commitments for financial aid. [Year 1]
- Secure funds to provide 20-30 Summer Educational Experiences – Beyond the Campus (SEE-Beyond) experiences and career internships. [Year 1]
- Secure \$2-5M in new endowment commitments for financial aid. [Year 2]
- Secure funds to provide an additional 20-30 SEE-Beyond experiences and career internships. [Year 2]

**21. Increase participation of alumni of color in regional college events.**

- Increase participation by 20%. [Years 1 & 2]
- Develop additional programming of particular interest to alumni of color and LGBTQ alumni. [Years 1 & 2]

**III. Well-Being—To Strengthen the Inclusiveness, Health, and Well-Being of Our Community:** *We will create new opportunities for developing the skills that will make Skidmore a more healthful, inclusive, and creative community.*

**22. Complete hiring for open positions providing support for diversity and inclusion initiatives.** [Years 1 & 2]

**23. Continue progress with prevention and education regarding sexual and gender-based misconduct.**

- Hire a permanent Title IX Coordinator who will report directly to the President to oversee compliance with relevant laws and policies (including Americans

with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance. This person will work directly with Deputy Coordinators and investigators to respond to complaints and lead prevention and education efforts. [Year 1]

- Hire a replacement for the Associate Director for Equal Employment Opportunity and Workforce Diversity. [Year 1]
- Support efforts by Student Government Association (SGA) to raise awareness within the student community and the larger College community of sexual and gender-based misconduct. [Year 1 & 2]

**24. Chief Diversity Officer to advance and strengthen College’s efforts related to equity and inclusion.**

- Meet with individuals and groups of all constituencies: students, staff, faculty, alumni, parents, and Saratoga Springs community members. [Year 1 & 2]
- Continue advancing the recommendations of the Committee on Intercultural and Global Understanding (CIGU), Middle States recommendations, and other groups and committees, and previous reports. [Year 1 & 2]
- Support students’ efforts to raise awareness of bias and discrimination – and counter their effects – both on campus and beyond. [Year 1 & 2]
- Build the Inclusion Liaisons group, involves divisional representation and provides another team focused on diversity and inclusion efforts. [Year 1]
- Continue pilot staff book reading and discussion group with an additional two sections for staff members and follow-up gathering for all three sections. [Year 1]
- Partner with divisions to provide training and engagement opportunities. [Year 1 & 2]

**25. The President’s Office to initiate and sponsor a 3-part community dialog series relating to the *Strategic Plan: The Nature of Dialog Itself; Institutional Values Relating to the College’s Investment Portfolio; and Diversity and Inclusion.* [Year 1]**

**26. Establish College-wide leadership group to develop and implement health and wellness initiatives. [Year 1]**

**27. Complete advanced concept design phase for expanded and renovated Fitness Center, new Tennis and Recreation Center, and new Hockey facility.**

- Identify architect and approve plans. [Year 1]
- Develop and launch plan to secure an additional \$15M in support of expanded and renovated Fitness Center, and a new Tennis and Recreation Center. [Years 1 & 2]

**28. Analyze campus health and wellness data.**

- Partner with external consultant. [Year 1]
- Develop new messages and programs as needed. [Years 1 & 2]

**29. Decide on “smoke-free campus” initiative; develop and implement plans. [Years 1 & 2]**

**30. ODSP to strengthen local community partnerships, including with arts organizations, schools, and social service organizations through collaborative outreach.**

- Determine best ways to deploy available resources to support local arts organizations; use support as a lever to create internships or job opportunities for our undergraduate students. [Year 1]
- Increase community awareness of ODSP programming. [Years 1 & 2]
- Foster additional opportunities for outreach programming involving Skidmore students and summer program participants. [Years 1 & 2]

**31. ODSP to continue to build awareness of Arthur Zankel Music Center's Ladd Hall as a major regional performance venue. Secure funding to create high profile events.** [Years 1 & 2]

**IV. Sustainability—To Continue to Build a Sustainable Institutional Foundation for Excellence:** *Deploying the concept of sustainability, broadly understood, as an organizing principle, we will invest our time, energy, and funding in initiatives to ensure the College's long-term viability and success.*

**32. Continue to make significant progress towards the goals in the five focus areas (Energy, Food, Waste, Lands and Grounds, and Engagement) of our *Campus Sustainability Plan*.** [Years 1 & 2]

**33. Make all of our sustainability efforts, including our geothermal systems, more visible and more a part of the ethos of Skidmore by improving our communications and tapping more recognition opportunities.** [Year 1; year 2]

**34. Commit to completing the STARS (Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, and Rating System) report.** [Year 1]

**35. In collaboration with the IPPC, issue an annual review of investment decisions relating to the Task Force on Divestment recommendations and Board of Trustees Response.** [Year 1 & 2]

**36. Establish a structure throughout the divisions of the College to enhance institutional effectiveness through regular planning and assessment.**

- The Assessment Subcommittee of the Institutional Policy and Planning Committee (IPPC) has focused on student learning outcomes. In light of the Middle States recommendations, that group should evolve into a broader "Institutional Effectiveness" subcommittee where all divisions are represented. [Year 1]
- Continue to create and strengthen strategic alignment among major institutional planning initiatives, both within divisions and across the College. [Year 1 & 2]
- Create and strengthen a culture of assessment both within divisions and across the College; sunset programs that do not meet stated goals or are no longer needed. Bring added visibility to these efforts. [Years 1 & 2]

**37. Admissions will utilize national demographic and census data to identify and cultivate regions with high proportions of families with incomes enabling them to pay for a Skidmore education.** [Year 2]

- 38. Determine resource needs (e.g., housing, dining, counseling services) based on size of student body.** [Year 1]
- 39. Revamp divisional structure in Student Affairs to mitigate risk, provide space for strategic planning and implementation, and provide additional layer of process for student appeals.** [Year 1]
- 40. Maintain the fiscal discipline of balanced and fully funded budgets.**
- Manage Operating Budgets, Capital Budgets, New Major Construction Projects, and New Initiatives. [Years 1 & 2]
  - Continue to balance the operating budget while holding increases in the comprehensive fee so that our fee is not greater than the median of our peer group. [Years 1 & 2]
  - Maintain and fund the Total Compensation Framework Plan for faculty and staff. [Years 1 & 2]
  - For new Major Construction Projects and New Initiatives, continue the discipline of including a provision for an additional endowment fund to support the increased operational costs resulting from the project. [Years 1 & 2]
  - Review endowment spending rate, given projected muted investment performance in the intermediate term. [Year 1]
  - Review funding for deferred maintenance. [Year 1]
  - Develop a long-term cost-containment program tied to projections of key budget parameters. Limit the growth for the internal financial aid discount rate to one percentage point annually. [Years 1 & 2]
- 41. Manage summer programs to generate more revenue and make a positive financial contribution to the College.**
- Attract new conference business, increase enrollments in selected summer arts institutes, raise more funding from individuals and institutional grants, create new programs, and continue to assess the viability of existing programs. [Years 1 & 2]
- 42. Expand training for managers and professional development opportunities for staff.**
- Focus on quality of work, retention, work/life balance. [Years 1 & 2]
  - Continue to support the Staff Advisory Group. [Years 1 & 2]
- 43. Engage a space planning consultant to undertake a study of space utilization across campus and to develop an overall campus space plan.** [Years 1 & 2]
- 44. Complete the formation of the new division of Communications & Marketing to reflect an emphasis on Skidmore's external reputation.** Increase national and international media awareness of Skidmore with a primary focus on unique and newsworthy stories that reflect such strategic plan goals as integrative learning, science, sustainability, access, diversity, wellness, and creativity.
- Hire a permanent Vice President for Communications & Marketing. [Year 1]
  - Focus both communications and marketing initiatives on the primary goals of attracting top students and faculty and increasing philanthropic activity, especially around the goals of the *Creating Our Future Campaign* and the *Strategic Plan*. [Year 1]

- Complete the first stages of a redesign of the Skidmore public-facing website in a way that reflects the strategic plan but also improves the user experiences with better content and navigation and mobility. [Year 1]
- Establish and lead a robust “intranet” or portal, that moves thousands of internal college web pages and sites off the public-facing site and helps more securely and intuitively connect students, faculty, and staff members to the information they need. [Year 1]
- Better inform the campus, alumni, and trustees about national news coverage of Skidmore and relevant issues affecting higher education. Increase emphasis on value and successful outcomes for Skidmore graduates including career, entrepreneurial, internship, and graduate school opportunities. [Years 1 & 2]
- Emphasize diversity/inclusion successes and goals across all facets of communications and marketing. [Years 1 & 2]

**45. Begin the multi-year process of assuring that all aspects of the Skidmore identity are compelling and consistent.**

- With the guidance of external consultants, develop a compelling graphic standards system that assures consistency across all platforms – website(s), print materials, wayfinding, wordmarks, logos, and other elements that represent the College’s identity. [Years 1 & 2]

**46. Build upon the collaboration among Communications, Campus Safety, Student Affairs, and other offices to significantly strengthen crisis response effectiveness through additional training, planning, and preparation.** [Year 1]

**47. Meet fundraising goals leading to the public launch of *Creating Our Future* Campaign.**

- Increase number of staff visits to 2000 per year. [Year 1]
- Raise \$6.9M for Skidmore Fund. [Year 1]
- Secure \$20-25M in new campaign commitments. [Year 1]
- Raise \$7.1M for Skidmore Fund. [Year 2]
- Secure \$20-25M in new campaign commitments. [Year 2]

**48. Increase alumni participation in college events.**

- Increase participation of young alumni in regional college events by 20%. [Years 1 & 2]
- Increase participation of alumni of color in regional college events by 20%. [Years 1 & 2]

**49. Increase alumni participation in fundraising.**

- Increase alumni donors by 10%. [Year 1]
- Increase alumni donors by 10%. [Year 2]
- Increase Legacy Society Members by 50. [Year 1]
- Increase Legacy Society Members by 50. [Year 2]
- Increase Presidents Society Members by 10%. [Year 1]
- Increase Presidents Society Members by 10%. [Year 2]