

Strategy into Action: **Strategic Action Agenda 2025-2026**

Context and Review of last year's (2024-2025) Strategic Action Agenda (SAA). The 2024-2025 SAA had four major areas of focus: 1) completing our new **Strategic Plan**; 2) continued collaborative progress on aligning our **Strategic Resources with our Strategic priorities**; 3) continued progress on our many areas focused on **building an inclusive community**, including our Racial Justice Initiative, our *In It* programming, and a wide array of initiatives across community programming and support; and 4) our ongoing efforts to prioritize and protect **freedom of speech, academic freedom, and full support of speech and expression** across the college community. We fulfilled each of these goals and successfully moved Skidmore forward across all four of these institutional priorities, setting us up for further success in 2025-2026.

Creative Futures: The Skidmore Strategic Plan, 2025-2030 was approved by the Board of Trustees at their May 2025 meeting. The result of nearly two years of robust, collaborative community engagement, including multiple forums, discussions, surveys, white papers, and committee discussions, the *Plan* features six major foundations with associated aspirational themes and key initiatives that build upon each foundation:

- Foundation 1: Creativity and Academic Excellence
- Foundation 2: The Skidmore Student Experience
- Foundation 3: The Opportunity of a Skidmore Education
- Foundation 4: Building the Inclusive Community
- Foundation 5: Sustaining our Environmental Future
- Foundation 6: Sustaining Skidmore's Long-Term Financial Future

Grounded in our core values and inspired by the motto *Creative Thought Matters*, the *Plan* is a full-throated statement of Skidmore's character and fundamental principles, as well as our vision for our future, despite the significant headwinds in higher education. It is a document to which we will turn repeatedly for guidance and direction in our commitments and goals. Parallel to our strategic planning efforts was our year-long focus on **Strategic Resources**, working to align our long-term projected revenues with our ongoing operational expenses while continuing to fulfill the mission of the College. We attained another year of balanced budgets, while undertaking a series of collaborative efforts with our entire community, including augmenting for the year the membership of the Institutional Policy and Planning Committee's (IPPC) Subcommittee on Budget and Finance to maximize collaboration and transparency; engaging an external consultant to help us identify resource optimizations and cost-saving opportunities; and building into the *Strategic Plan* the major sixth foundation on financial equilibrium, to help us focus on ongoing planning and prioritization upon this vital cornerstone of sound institutional stewardship.

Simultaneously, we continued our focus on **our campus community** and all the efforts and initiatives that go into the sustaining and strengthening of that community. The Racial Justice Initiative (RJI) laid an important foundation for building a more inclusive campus community, fostering dialogue, reflection, and collective action. Through the RJI, we honored history and leadership with the unveiling of Linda Jackson-Chalmers' '73 portrait and robust Black History Month programming. We supported local partnerships in celebrating Martin Luther King, Jr. Day,

Juneteenth, and Pride Month. We bolstered belonging and development through student, staff, and faculty participation in the Consortium on High Achievement and Success (CHAS) conference, which Skidmore hosted, and the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education. As we move forward, we are building on this foundation through a People, Practices, and Programs model—centering the individuals who make up our community, the strategic and everyday practices that sustain inclusion, and the programs that bring us together in common purpose.

In many ways our focus on **Speech and Expression** dovetailed with these efforts to strengthen our inclusive community; for freedom of speech and openness to many ideas and perspectives is perhaps the most vital part of an inclusive and supportive campus community. Over the last year we continued to lean into the areas of greatest contestation and controversy on college campuses: we continued our focus on the Middle East conflict, especially with a range of faculty-led interpretive programs; we fostered an intense engagement with the national election, ensuring access to a range of viewpoints; we looked to our overall policies and practices in this area; and we engaged in a range of national leadership roles and organizations, including Citizens and Scholars, the College Presidents for Civic Preparedness, Project Pericles, the Council of Independent Colleges and Universities, and the American Association of Colleges and Universities, including drafting and signing on to their statement in opposition to improper federal government overreach in higher education practices. We should be collectively proud of this good work across campus.

These achievements of the past year have prepared us well for another year of focused attainment of our top strategic priorities. We have arrived at 4 priorities for the 2025-2026 year, beginning with **the implementation of several initiatives of the *Plan***. We seek in this first year of the five years of the *Plan* to focus in particular on the following: a) **the Student Residential Experience**, particularly the development of the “Residential Curriculum,” including applying principles of Universal Design for Learning, and our preliminary planning for renovations to the Residence Halls; b) **preparing Students for Careers** in the rapidly-shifting global marketplace; and c) ongoing efforts to champion **Academic Freedom** where all points of view are welcome and encouraged, including exploring the possibility of endorsing the University of Chicago principles of free expression.

Second, in alignment with this effort, we will continue our work toward realizing the goals of the *Plan*’s “**Foundation 6: Sustaining Skidmore’s Long-Term Financial Future**.” This is the cornerstone for everything we intend to achieve in the coming years at our college. The long-term ongoing success of Skidmore depends upon the continued prudent stewardship of our resources and maintaining financial equilibrium, in which annual revenues and expenses balance. The external consultant’s project is an aid in these efforts, helping us see areas for possible efficiencies, reductions, and savings. In the coming year, we will: continue to practice collaborative and transparent budgeting practices; continue the long-term forecasting of our financial status, addressing negative forecasts and reducing projected deficits; implement the most impactful recommendations through our shared governance processes; and work to align our fiscal planning to the ever-changing realities of enrollment management.

Third, maintaining and strengthening **the inclusive and welcoming community of Skidmore** continues to be a major priority for our college. As our *Plan* points out, “our vision remains

steadfast: to cultivate a community that reflects the pluralism of the nation and the world, that is inclusive and welcoming, in which all can find their place and feel this community is theirs. Building the community of care means supporting the *people* who value our shared humanity, the *practices* that sustain our inclusive community, and the *programs* that bring our campus together in common purpose.” This includes broadening the Racial Justice Initiative to focus on the work of the *Plan*’s “Foundation 4: Building the Inclusive Community,” expanding Human Resources’ professional development opportunities, enhancing accessibility efforts throughout campus, introducing the People, Practices, and Programs model to the community, and [celebrating 10 years of In It](#) as we deepen our commitment to “Our Interconnectedness to Our Past and Present,” including work on the creation of a land acknowledgement.

Finally, **fourth**, this is the culminating year of our **MSCHE reaffirmation of accreditation**, a major institutional collaborative undertaking. Skidmore College is accredited via peer review by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE). We are in the midst of [our Self-Study process](#) for the MSCHE. Over the past year, we organized working groups, drafted the full report, and built the evidence inventory. This year, our focus turns to sharing the draft with the community for feedback, incorporating guidance from the chair of our evaluation team, and preparing for the full peer evaluation team visit in the spring. These steps will ensure Skidmore successfully completes the accreditation process and demonstrates our institutional strengths and readiness for the future.

In sum, we are focused on four guiding priorities this academic year, which all find articulation in prominent ways in our new *Strategic Plan*. Through our attention to such key strategic initiatives as the residence hall project, career preparation, and speech and expression; focused and collaborative progress on attaining institutional financial equilibrium; cultivating and supporting an inclusive community of care; and completing our institutional accreditation, we will progress through a year of significant institutional attainment and strengthening, preparing us well for the years to come as we continue to thrive as one of the top liberal arts colleges in the land.

Reviewed by the Institutional Policy and Planning Committee, September 19, 2025

Reviewed by the Extended Cabinet, September 25, 2025

Reviewed by the Middle States Reaccreditation Steering Committee, September 25, 2025

Endorsed by the Institutional Policy Planning Committee, October 3, 2025

Endorsed by the Strategic Planning Committee of the Board of Trustees, October 16, 2025

Approved by the Board of Trustees, October 17, 2025