

Retiree Initiative Planning Group (RIPG) Annual Report 2021-2022

The retiree community at Skidmore thrived this year. Retirees were able to gather in person on a few occasions, as COVID-19 protocols relaxed, but we also continued our Zoom programs, which are attractive to those who live far from campus or find the campus difficult to navigate.

Our events and activities are guided by our mission of supporting the connection of retirees with one another and with the college.

1. Communications:

RIPG members sent out periodic emails to retirees to keep them informed of events and other matters pertaining to retirees. Amy Ballesteros from the Office of Communications kept the retiree website updated.

2. Events:

RIPG hosted or promoted a variety of events this year:

- Concert: Saratoga Chamber Players (6-27-21, retiree attendance promoted)
- Cruise: Lake George (10-6-21)
- Talk and Q & A: President Marc Conner (Zoom, 11-4-21)
- Lecture: Penny Jolly, “Haunted Nativities: Uninvited Guests at the Birth of Christ” (Zoom, 12-10-21)
- Interview: New Yorker cartoonist Roz Chast in conversation with Beck Krefting and Susan Kress (Zoom, 2-11-22)
- Lecture: Mehmet Odekon, “Covid, The Elderly, and the US Economy” (Zoom, 2-22-22)
- Financial Planning Webinar: David Carboni, “What Should Trigger an Estate Plan Review” (Zoom, 3-16-22)
- One-on-One Financial Planning Sessions: David Carboni (Zoom, 3-17-22)
- Reception: President Marc Conner (in-person, 4-7-22)
- Social/Educational Event: Wine, Cheese, & Chat, featuring talks by retirees Bill Brown and Betty O’Connor (in-person, 5-26-22)

In addition, Sarah Goodwin has hosted a monthly (open-to-all) Zoom discussion group on “Race and Racism” since July 2020 that includes readings proposed by group members. Please be in touch with Sarah (sgoodwin@skidmore.edu) if you would like to learn more about the work of this group.

3. Grants:

RIPG was able to revive the grants program this year.

In Fall 2021, John Anzalone received a faculty grant to support his project, “Fashion Plates: The French Fashion Illustrators of The Great War.”

In Spring 2022, Pola Baytelman received a faculty grant to support her music project, “In Search of My Jewish Roots,” and Penny Jolly received a faculty grant to support her curation of an exhibit at the Hyde Museum, “Growing Up in a Renaissance Palazzo.”

Those interested in RIPG’s grants program can find more information about faculty and staff grants at [Grants for Retirees \(skidmore.edu\)](https://www.skidmore.edu/retirees) The Faculty Development Committee (FDC) makes decisions about faculty grants on behalf of RIPG. A committee chaired by Sue Rosenberg of RIPG, and including representatives of RIPG and HR, oversees staff applications.

4. Advocacy:

A. IT Issues

A number of issues relating to IT emerged this year, especially after the implementation of Okta. RIPG formed an IT Subcommittee (Mike West, Ken Hapeman, and Sue Rosenberg) to advocate on behalf of retirees.

- Many retirees were concerned that the designation “@retired” was now part of every retiree’s email address, a disadvantage for those wishing to remain professionally active. Thanks to the work of the subcommittee, that designation has now been removed.
- Retirees are now also able to purchase an Office 365 license for \$30 through the Skidmore web site.
- Access to the Retiree Directory (closed to retirees for most of the year) was recently restored.
- There is still work to be done in securing access to certain college data bases and in gaining media services support for retiree events.

B. Campus Planning

Retirees were not included in the initial calls for collaboration in updating the Campus Master Plan, an oversight we have tried to address by reminding key offices of the college email lists that include retirees. Thanks to RIPG’s Subcommittee (Mike West, Ann Henderson, Paty Rubio, and Joanna Zangrando), we did enter the conversation belatedly and informed the group involved with campus planning of our needs.

- RIPG had sent memos to Cabinet members in 2013 and 2014 outlining a need for space as follows:

To build community we believe it is important for retirees to have a dedicated space on campus just as our alumni do. We need a space for RIPG meetings, for drop-in coffee and conversation opportunities, for browsing in our planned retiree library, and for retiree programs. We would also like to have access to a few dedicated offices for retirees. The Library currently has few carrels available, and some retirees who wish to continue their scholarly or professional pursuits do not have facilities at home . . . We recognize that space is, as ever, at a premium, and so want to be on the radar as priorities are established for spaces that are, or might become, available. We should also say that we are more than happy to consider any proposal for space the College might present to us.

However, it is important to point out that all but one of the Cabinet members addressed in these memos have now retired or transitioned to other positions.

- This year, the new subcommittee requested a meeting with the Campus Master Planning Task Force and reiterated the need for dedicated space for retirees (for meetings, programs, quiet study) of 1,500 - 2,500 square feet, pointing out current and future options for retiree space, such as the first floor library renovations now being planned, the addition to Case Center, the possible addition to Colton House (a suggestion from the planning firm Ayers Saint Gross), and a possible Surrey addition. The subcommittee noted that retirees were excluded from consideration for Pine Cottage, Pine Cottage Annex, and the new Skidmore Annex building opened in 2020, all of which would have been excellent possibilities for our use.
- The subcommittee also requested consideration of an earlier report on Community Housing (campus-based retiree housing), part of a study from the 2007 Campus Plan: *A Vision for the Future* prepared by former CFO Karl Broekhuizen at the request of then President Phil Glotzbach. This report was placed on hold by the College Administration and Board of Trustees at that time, but, since then, many colleges have embraced college-based retirement communities to meet the needs of retirees and to increase revenue to the college. The subcommittee clarified that they were not recommending that this project be undertaken as a priority but that an updated study be conducted to see if it merits inclusion in planning efforts, particularly as this Campus Master Plan effort is to cover the next decade or longer.

Finally, the subcommittee requested that these two recommendations be included in the “Project Prioritization: Benefit on Investment” analysis and the Master Plan. While the Task Force supported the recommendations in principle, they pointed out that these recommendations also would require support from the Master Planning Steering Committee, President’s Cabinet, IPPC, and the Trustees of the College. The Skidmore College Master Plan issued this past June includes the recommendation on the updated study on community housing. Although there are references in the report to the request for retiree space, that request is not included in the list of 29 near, mid-term, and long-term projects—and it is not yet clear whether the college will act upon this recommendation.

C. General Support for Retirees

Terry Diggory and Susan Kress met with Joshua Woodfork, the cabinet member responsible for matters of diversity and inclusion, to outline areas of support needed for retirees. They followed up with a letter summarizing the discussion and noting actions to be taken.

5. The Retiree Oral History Project (ROHP)

RIPG’s Lynne Gelber, along with a small committee, continued to interview retirees and link those interviews to our website. Retiree interviews added (or in the process of being added) to the website include Kathy Carter, Jim Kettlewell, Dave Marcell, Paty Rubio, Rose Vero, and Sue Van Hook.

6. The Age-Friendly University Global Network

The mission and principles of this international network (as well as the list of colleges and universities that have already signed on) can be found at this link: <https://www.dcu.ie/agefriendly> RIPG is exploring the feasibility of a proposal that Skidmore might join this network.

7. Resources:

- Free access for retirees to the college's Encore Program continued this year.
- RIPG added close to 40 items of interest to retirees to our library collection this year. To take a look at what is available, visit [Retiree Library Home - Retiree Library Collection - LibGuides at Skidmore College](#)

8. National Visibility:

The website of the Association of Retirement Organizations in Higher Education (AROHE) [AROHE - Home](#) features the story of Skidmore's Retiree Library Collection as well as many other best practices either initiated or adopted by RIPG—such as our staff grant program, our continuing project to interview retirees (Retiree Oral History Project), our In Memoriam project, our field trips, etc. This year, Susan Kress was co-chair of the Program Committee for AROHE's first virtual national conference, and Skidmore was featured in a webinar outlining the advantages for retiree organizations of writing an annual report. RIPG members Sharon Arpey, Janet Casey, Ann Henderson, Susan Kress, and Mike West participated in AROHE events. If anyone wishes to receive membership benefits (free for all Skidmore retirees), with full access to the website and regular news bulletins, please let Susan Kress know at skress@skidmore.edu

Summary:

In all, 158 Skidmore people and their guests (64) took advantage of RIPG-sponsored events and activities during 2021-2022, a big jump from the Zoom-only attendance last year (70+)—with more corresponding with us about these events and indicating their interest.

We welcome expressions of interest in serving as a member of RIPG, offers to give a lecture or presentation, as well as advice about future programming or resources for retirees.

For information about current resources and benefits for retirees, please visit our website at [Skidmore Retirees](#)

Members of RIPG:

Sharon Arpey
Janet Casey (Academic Affairs Liaison)
Terry Diggory (Convener)
Gove Effinger
Lynne Gelber
Laura Goodwin (HR Liaison)
Ken Hapeman
Ann Henderson
Susan Kress
Patty Poirier
Sue Rosenberg
Paty Rubio
Mike West
Joanna Zangrando

Acknowledgements:

We are very grateful indeed to Janet Casey (Academic Affairs Liaison) and Laura Goodwin (HR Liaison), who attend our meetings and champion retirees in numerous ways.

We also thank the following people. Without their support we could not sustain our programs and carry out our mission:

Amy Ballesteros (Web Manager)

Jen Barthelmas (Budget)

Bonnie Bertrand (Food Services)

Megan Bove (Surrey Coordinator)

Jim Calhoun (HR Liaison for Finances)

Dung-Lan Chen (Retiree Library)

Faculty Development Committee (FDC oversees Emeritus Grant Awards)

Patty Folts (Financial Reports)

Bri Herman (Former HR Liaison for Finances)

Marcia McConnell (Accounts Payable)

Jesse O'Connell (Assistant Director, MDOCS)

Michelle Osgood (IT)