

Retiree Initiative Planning Group (RIPG) Annual Report 2024-2025

We are pleased to present our Annual Report demonstrating that Skidmore retirees, now totaling 465 members, positively impact our communities and contribute to the greater good. We provide value to our College, professions, and to each other in the areas of philanthropy (resulting in donations of \$700,000 in the prior Campaign), advocacy on behalf of the institution, volunteerism, and institutional knowledge and commitment. Volunteerism includes service not only to Skidmore, but to other institutions and organizations such as the Association of Retirement Organizations in Higher Education (AROHE), Albany Med Health System including Saratoga Hospital, Saratoga P.L.A.N, the Ballston Spa Community Band, and other organizations.

We are delighted to report that we have had another very successful year. A summary of key activities is provided in this report. Of particular interest are the many excellent events and speakers offered throughout the year, and our White Paper for the *Strategic Plan*, “Strategic Advantages of Enhanced, Mission-Specific Participation in the Life of the College by Older Members of the Skidmore Community” (see below). Importantly for many retirees, the College announced Healthcare Benefit Plan cost increases and plan design changes summarized at the end of this report.

As always, 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. The Office of Communications continues to keep the retiree website updated. This past fall an updated Retiree Brochure was published. Laura Goodwin, the retiree contact in HR, now offers this brochure to all new retirees

2. Events:

- Wine, Cheese and Chat, “Phil Glotzbach Presentation”, June 6, 2024.
- Saratoga Performing Arts Center, NYC Ballet, “Contemporary Choreography”, July 11, 2024.
- Lake George, “Lake George Cruise”, September 27, 2024.
- Fall Luncheon, “Retiree Luncheon”, October 23, 2024.
- Age Friendly Supporters, “Surrey Gathering for Age-Friendly Institution Working Group and Supporters”, October 28, 2024.
- Claire Nisen, Class of 2010, Zoom Presentation on “Aging Solo,” November 4, 2024.

- Penny Jolly Tour, “Growing Up in a Renaissance Palazzo,” Hyde Museum, December 8, 2024.
- Debra Fernandez, “Motion Is Lotion,” (Yoga), January 5, 13, 20, 27.
- Retiree Reception, President Marc Conner, “Update on the College”, March 19, 2025.
- Terry Fulmer, Class of 1976, past Board member, President of the John A. Hartford Foundation, and an expert in aging issues presented, “You Deserve Age-Friendly Care. Demand Age-Friendly Care and Here Is How”, March 24, 2025.

3. Budget

The RIPG operating budget for FY 25 was retroactively adjusted from \$12,916 to \$10,916 on 3-5-25 because of an accounting error. We were able to make cuts in various areas so as to finish the year with just a small deficit (\$32.42). It should be noted, however, that, despite greatly increased numbers of retirees, our operating budget fund from the college is less now than it was a decade ago, when we first started receiving such monies.

4. Grants:

Grants this year were awarded as follows:

- John Anzalone (World Languages and Literatures) Purchase of scholarly works on The Great War
- Lisa Aronson (Art History) Research for Biography: "Dora the Anarchist"
- Michael Arnush (Classics) Novel: "The Tattered Satchel"
- Karen Ernst (President Office/Advancement) Ballston Spa Community Band Support
- Ann Henderson (Registrar & Institutional Research) Purchase of Native Trees and Plants to Rehabilitate a Gopher Tortoise Habitat
- Penny Jolly (Art History) Curatorial Project: Growing Up in a Renaissance Palazzo
- Barry Pritzker (Advancement) and Sue Bender (Anthropology) “Jill Sweet Project to Digitize Archive Materials”
- Linda Simon (English) Biography of Isadora Duncan

Those interested in RIPG’s grants program can find more information about faculty and staff grants at [Grants for Retirees](https://www.skidmore.edu/faculty-development/committees/fdc) (skidmore.edu) 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.

5. Advocacy:

RIPG's IT Subcommittee continued to advocate on behalf of retirees. There is still work to be done in securing access to certain licensed data bases, restoring the Chat Room and in improving Media Services support for retiree events.

6. The Retiree Oral History Project (ROHP)"

RIPG's Lynne Gelber, along with Sue Bender and Sandy Welter, continued to interview retirees this year and link those interviews to our website. Retiree interviews added (or in the process of being added) to the website include Joan Berenguer, and Penny Jolly

More than fifty interviews are now archived on our web site: Skidmore Retiree Oral History Project · [Skidmore Saratoga Memory Project](#). The group continues to discuss ways of bringing these interviews to the attention of a wider audience, especially alums. An article in the Fall 2024 *Scope Magazine* issue detailed the origins of the project and highlighted some of the interviews that are of interest to various constituents. The article can be viewed online at <https://digitalcoll.skidmore.edu/record/6055?ln=en&v=pdf> (p. 8)

7. Resources:

RIPG continued to add 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. Paty Rubio and Joanna Zangrando oversee purchasing retiree library materials. If you have a recommendation for the retiree library, please be in touch at prubio@skidmore.edu We very much welcome suggestions.

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. 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. AROHE also offers free and excellent programs each year such as, "Cyber Fraud and Personal Security Insights Virtual Workshop".

Summary:

In all, the total of those individuals attending events was 164 with Skidmore retirees (101, a 15% increase over last year), retiree guests (36) and 27 others taking advantage of RIPG-sponsored events, grants and activities during 2024-2025, with more corresponding with

us about these events and indicating their interest. (Ann Henderson keeps our records of attendance.)

We welcome expressions of interest in serving as a member of RIPG or giving 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 www.skidmore.edu/retirees

Members of RIPG (2024-25):

Janet Casey (Academic Affairs Liaison)
Lori Dawson
Terry Diggory (Convener)
Jeanne Eddy
Gove Effinger
Deb Fernandez
Lynne Gelber
Laura Goodwin (HR Liaison)
Ann Henderson
Susan Kress
Pat Poirier
Barry Pritzker
Sue Rosenberg
Paty Rubio
Mike West
Joanna Zangrando
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Acknowledgements:

We are very grateful indeed to Janet Casey (Academic Affairs Liaison) who this upcoming year will be on a much-deserved sabbatical, and Laura Goodwin (Human Resources Liaison), who attend our meetings and championed retirees in numerous ways.

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

Marcia Allman (Accounts Payable)
Jen Barthelmas (Budget)
Bonnie Bertrand (Food Services)
Megan Bove (Surrey Coordinator)
Jim Calhoun (HR Liaison for Finances)
Dung-Lan Chen (Retiree Library)
Julie Delay (Director of Human Resources)
Sean Duffy (Web Manager)

Patty Folts (Financial Reports)
Alison Hart (Advancement) Carrie Imbrogno-O'Dell (Supervisor of Catering)
Jesse O'Connell (Assistant Director, MDOCS)
Michelle Osgood (IT)
Jeanne Sisson (President's Office)
Tim Wientzen Faculty Development Committee (FDC oversees Emeritus Awards)

We are also appreciative of those serving on the Retiree Initiative Planning Group who completed formal contributions this past year on behalf of the college: Jeanne Eddy and Janis Petroski.

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APPENDIX A

Strategic Advantages of Enhanced, Mission-Specific Participation in the Life of the College by Older Members of the Skidmore Community

White Paper submitted as part of Skidmore's strategic planning process by the Retiree Initiatives Planning Group (RIPG), November 2024

Strategic Theme Focus:

- Creativity and Academic Excellence
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- Endowment for Need-based Financial Aid

Our world is aging. The higher education community, and Skidmore College in particular, are well positioned to provide innovative leadership regarding this demographic trend in ways that are grounded in, and enhance, the College's educational mission. This initiative recognizes older citizens as an asset and welcomes them to participate in the full range of College life, including teaching and learning, research, public policy development, health and wellness, and development. Elements of this initiative might include:

1. Facilitating the participation of older adults in all the College's core activities, including educational and research programs;
2. Promoting intergenerational learning; see numerous studies which speak to the benefits of reciprocal sharing of expertise for learners of all ages;
3. Widening access to online educational opportunities for older adults to ensure a diversity of routes to participation;

4. Increasing undergraduates' understanding of the productive contributions by older adults that add to economic growth, support social progress, and increase society's complexity and richness,
5. Enhancing access for older adults to the College's range of health and wellness programs and its arts and cultural activities;
6. Fostering collaboration with constituencies both on and off campus that represent the interests of the aging population.

This strategic initiative confers numerous benefits on all members of the Skidmore community, including undergraduates, faculty and staff, and retirees. It intentionally builds on existing programming at Skidmore, including academic departments/programs (such as HPPS, Social Work, and SEE-Beyond), volunteerism and other community-oriented programming, Skidmore's orchestra and chorus, numerous programs within the aegis of Special Programs, and the Office of Advancement. Regarding the latter, incorporating Skidmore's retirees and older external community members more intentionally into the life of the College, further engaging this constituency and building new connections with students and graduates, would likely provide enhanced support for Skidmore's fundraising efforts.

Demonstrating to both internal and external audiences the importance of focusing on this important (and rapidly growing) demographic raises Skidmore profile, especially regarding academic excellence and DEI. Skidmore has repeatedly affirmed its institutional commitment to both as top strategic priorities. Moreover, attending to the needs of faculty and staff after retirement supports community strength and stability by demonstrating to the Skidmore community, and to those who are being recruited to work here, that this institution is a good place to work and has a strong commitment to its employees and their well-being up to retirement and beyond.

The moment is ripe for Skidmore to take the lead among liberal arts colleges in New York and, indeed, the nation, in addressing issues of aging and ageism in its academic curriculum and its cocurricular programs and in proactively demonstrating the benefits of a fuller integration of its older constituents into all aspects of the life of the College. For these and other reasons which could easily be elucidated, this is a highly worthy (and likely relatively inexpensive) goal for Skidmore's next strategic plan.

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APPENDIX B

Healthcare Benefit Plan Changes Effective January 1, 2025

The College notified retirees in October participating in the United Health Care Plan of cost increases of 24% and plan design changes, with adding a medical deductible of \$300, adding a prescription drug deductible of \$250, and increasing the Primary Care Physician copay from \$15 to \$20, and increasing the Specialist copay from \$30 to \$40.

Retirees on the PPO, EPO and HDHP plans were notified also in October of cost increases of 6% with HDHP deductibles increasing to \$1,650 individual/\$3,300 family; PPO and EPO emergency room copay increases from \$100 to \$150; adding hearing aid coverage at 20% coinsurance every 3 years at an in-network provider; Prescription copay Retail increases from \$10 Generic/\$25 Brand Preferred/\$40 Brand Non-Preferred to \$10/\$30/\$50; Mail increases from \$25/\$62.50/\$100 to \$25/\$75/\$125; and prior authorizations implemented for medication prescriptions.

These changes by the College were made as the initial proposed rate increases were a potential of 40% without changes. It was noted these costs increases for retirees, many on fixed income, were and remain challenging.