

Skidmore College
Retiree Initiative Planning Group (RIPG)
Annual Report 2025-26

As always, our events and activities are guided by our mission of supporting retirees and strengthening their connections with one another and with the college.

Membership

We welcomed a new member to the group: Barb Casey, recently retired from engagement and stewardship in Advancement. She proposed that RIPG send a welcome card to new retirees each year, and she kicked off that initiative in the spring.

We added two other active Skidmore employees as special liaisons between RIPG and the college. Along with our longtime Human Resources colleague Laura Goodwin, we welcomed David Cohen from academic affairs and Alison Hart from advancement. David is also our administrative liaison to the Association of Retirement Organizations in Higher Education. Alison, focused on strengthening the ongoing bonds with the now-retired faculty and staff members whom many alumni remember fondly, has begun inviting new retirees to meet her for coffee and discussion.

Also this year Terry Diggory announced that he will step down as RIPG's convener in May 2027. The group will be meeting and deliberating about how best to identify a new person or persons to take on that role.

Communications

RIPG sent out periodic emails to retirees, to keep them informed of RIPG-hosted events and other matters. The Communications and Marketing Office helped us keep the retiree website updated.

Terry Diggory worked with the Information Technology Office to repair and relaunch our Skidmore retirees' chatroom on the college website.

Events

RIPG hosted a full slate of social and educational events for retirees and others. As

always, some events were organized or funded in partnership with other offices, and some were held as online Zoom events to include wider audiences. A total of 150 individuals — 106 retirees plus 44 family members or other guests — took part in this year's events (Ann Henderson keeps RIPG records).

- Wine, Cheese, and Chat (organized by Pat Poirier, with Sue Rosenberg), 6/5/25, attendance 57. This year's RIPG grant-winner's presentation was a concert by a contingent of the Ballston Spa Community Band.
- Retiree sharing (led by retiree Mary Monigan), 7/29/25, attendance 28. This arrangement to facilitate information exchange among retirees outside of a formal event focused on dental-insurance options for retirees.
- Subsidized-ticket SPAC outing (organized by Ann Henderson), 8/20/25, attendance 48. The Philadelphia Orchestra's performance included Beethoven's Fifth and other works.
- Discussion program, four Mondays in September 2025, attendance 12-13. A comprehensive and interactive forum, "Let's Talk About Aging" was led by emerita sociologist Susan Walzer and RIPG's Deb Fernandez.
- Fall Luncheon (organized by Terry Diggory and Laura Goodwin), 9/11/25, attendance 52. President Marc Conner gave an update on the state of the college, and Student Affairs' Julia Routbort Baskin led attendees on a tour of the newly opened McCaffery-Wagman Tennis and Wellness Center.
- Bus trip (organized by Gove Effinger), 10/29/25, attendance 42. The group this year went to New York City, with the highlight being a performance of *Ragtime* at Lincoln Center.
- Presentation "Preparing for a House Sale," 11/13/25, attendance 16. Retiree and real-estate agent Kristen Drabek shared tips and information about planning for relocation or downsizing.
- Yoga coaching with Deb Fernandez, four Mondays in January 2026, attendance 12-15. The "Motion is Lotion" sessions focus on exercises important for older adults.
- President's Reception (organized by Terry Diggory, with the President's Office), 3/4/26, attendance 42. President Marc Conner gave remarks about the state of the college and introduced Daniel Konstalid, the new VP for finance and administration.
- Artificial-intelligence art presentation (organized by Susan Kress), 4/14/26, attendance 30. Sarah Sweeney, of Skidmore's art faculty, shared her project "Conversations with My Deepfake Dad," in which she explores grief and family relationships by using AI voice-cloning to generate conversations with her late father.

Association and Outreach

Skidmore is a member of the Association of Retirement Organizations in Higher Education, and RIPG members have been active in its programs to promote connections that further increase retirees' value to their colleges/universities, communities, and professions. Susan Kress this year finished her 13-year term on the AROHE board of directors.

RIPG's Age-Friendly Initiative subgroup, including both RIPG members and other retirees (Paty Rubio, Sharon Arpey, Susan Kress, Barry Pritzker, Ron Seyb, and Joanna Zangrando), continued studying the larger movement toward more age-friendly campuses. Their work has included contacting other higher-ed institutions (e.g., the NY Six consortium) to learn about their activities and practices. They are also in discussions with the director of the Saratoga Senior Center to explore potential collaborations.

Retiree Development Grants

- Faculty (in coordination with Skidmore's Faculty Development Committee):
 - * Debra Fernandez (dance), art exhibition mounting supplies
 - * Deb Hall (art), "New Explorations" art project
 - * Mary-Elizabeth O'Brien (German), "girl trouble" in East German films, 1948-78
 - * David Vella (mathematics), life membership in Mathematical Association of America
- Staff:
 - * Ginger Ertz (Tang Museum), supplies for Project MoonCatcher
 - * Karent Ernst (president's office), insurance for Ballston Spa Community Band

Retiree Oral Histories

Lynne Gelber worked with fellow faculty retirees Sue Bender, Leslie Mechem, Michael Arnush, and Sandy Welter on the college's Retiree Oral History Project. This year seven new interviews were posted online featuring Michael Arnush, Judy Halstead, Murray Levith, Roy Rotheim, Barry Pritzker, and Jeff Segrave.

Retiree Library

Paty Rubio, Joanna Zangrando, and Susan Kress recommended several new books of interest to retirees, for acquisition by Scribner Library with RIPG underwriting the purchases. See <https://libguides.skidmore.edu/retireelibrary>.

Other Activities

In October 2025, following a proposal by Susan Kress, RIPG resolved to formally honor geriatrics nurse, scholar, author, and innovator Terry Fulmer '76 upon her retirement as president of the Hartford Foundation.

Mike West led the group's monitoring of the college's strategic planning effort and advocacy for naming retirees as key community members. He also requested the inclusion of a retiree representative in the college's review of providers and options for retiree health insurance.

When Skidmore's online "In Memoriam" site was found to be lacking some retiree obituaries, Terry Diggory gathered and sent the missing information to Communications and Marketing with a request that the obits be posted.

Budget

After the college made some adjustments to RIPG's budget both before and during the fiscal year, Susan Kress and Terry Diggory met with Kelly Patton-Ostrander in Financial Affairs, who helped sort out the issues and agreed to manage our budget going forward. In the end our resources for FY2026 totaled \$16,916, which included \$6,200 from endowment and \$8,716 from college operating funds. Early in the fiscal year, working from a starting budget of \$14,500, we opted for an in-house guest speaker with a small honorarium and kept a firm ceiling on grant amounts, library purchases, and events catering, in order to close the year in the black.

Summary

RIPG continues to organize popular outings and presentations, support faculty and staff professional endeavors, record college history, and strengthen connections among retirees and between retirees and the college. 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 resources and benefits for retirees, Google “Skidmore Retirees.”

Acknowledgments

RIPG sent “Thoroughbred Thanks” to many Skidmore employees who assisted with a wide range of retiree activities this year, including Marcia Allman, Jim Calhoun, and Kelley Patton-Ostrander (budgets and accounting); Bonnie Bertrand and Carrie Imbrogno-O’Dell (food service, catering); Megan Bove (Surrey-Williamson Inn); Dung-Lan Chen (Scribner Library); Monica Das and Debbie Peterson (Faculty Development Committee); Julie Delay (HR); Kathy Jo Mooney (IT); Jesse O’Connell (documentary studies); Jeanne Sisson (president’s office).

Members of RIPG

Barb Casey, David Cohen (Academic Affairs liaison), Lori Dawson, Terry Diggory (convener), Gove Effinger, Deb Fernandez, Lynne Gelber, Laura Goodwin (HR liaison), Alison Hart (Advancement liaison), Ann Henderson, Susan Kress, Pat Poirier, Barry Pritzker, Sue Rosenberg, Paty Rubio, Mike West, Joanna Zangrando