

Matter The fabric of student experience is woven around this notion. Summer at Skidmore offers some of the jewels in the crown that distinctly identify Skidmore as a place where creativity flourishes. The summer campus hosts a number of prestigious arts insti

into the semesters, bringing artists and scholars into classrooms, lecture and performance halls, the library, the residence halls, the studios, and beyond into the local Saratoga Springs community. Fundamental to the Skidmore curriculum is the belief that a rigorous, creative, and engaged liberal arts education is the best preparation both for a life of continued learning and for a meaningful career, particularly as graduates face the challenges and opportunities of a world of rapid and unpredictable change.

The principal mission of Skidmore College is the education of predominantly full-time undergraduates, a diverse population of talented students who are eager to engage actively in the learning process. The College seeks to prepare liberally educated graduates to continue their quest for knowledge and to make the choices required of informed, responsible citizens. Skidmore faculty and staff create a

personal excellence, encouraging them to expand their expectations of themselves while they enrich their academic understanding.

applied learning, the Skidmore curriculum balances a commitment to the liberal arts and sciences with preparation for professions, careers, and community leadership. Education in the classroom, laboratory, and studio is enhanced by cocurricular and field experience opportunities of broad scope.

Significant developments since our Periodic Review Report have included continuing to achieve fiscal stability in the wake of the 2008 financial challenges; a new leadership structure in Academic Affairs, with a return to a combined Dean of the Faculty/Vice President for Academic Affairs position, and a new DoF/VPAA, Beau Breslin; and a newly consolidated and appropriately staffed Office of Institutional Research. After considerable research and reflection, we have closed our longstanding external degree program, the University Without Walls. We completed our comprehensive campaign, **Creative Thought. Bold Promise**, with a record \$216.5 million. We have continued to increase the diversity and internationalization of the faculty, the student body, and the curriculum. Along with that accomplishment, we have given significant attention to campus climate and new pedagogical demands stemming from our increased diversity. We have completed a major student housing project replacing the outdated Scribner Village with the Sussman Village apartments, bringing approximately 200 more students back to campus from off campus. As noted above, we are laying plans for a new Center for Integrated Sciences, which is a primary focus in our new comprehensive campaign, **Creating Our Future**. Another major new initiative (supported by both a Mellon Foundation grant and a significant private donation) is a multifaceted approach to visual communication and understanding, building on strengths we already have and developing a number of new programs, including a Documentary Studies Collaborative. Finally, we have embarked upon the next cycle of strategic planning to follow our current

Our topic of integrative learning dovetails well with the areas of interest that are emerging from our broadly inclusive first stage of strategic planning. Over the course of this spring, the President's Office has been seeking community input into the areas where all members of the College community believe we should be planning and devoting efforts and resources. Most of the topics that have emerged have been included in our conception of integrative learning from the start: diversity and inclusion, instruction technology, internationalizing the curriculum, science literacy, sustainability, transition to life after college, civic engagement, integrating creative thought more broadly, and academic excellence. Two members of the Strategic Planning Subcommittee of the Institutional Policy and Planning Committee also serve on the leadership group of the Middle States Self-Study. We will continue to cultivate strong links between the strategic planning process and the Middle States process so as to make the best possible use of one of our most precious resources: staff and faculty time.

We anticipate some major developments in the next five to seven years. In addition to seeing plans for our Center for Integrated Sciences come to fruition, we also expect to make some significant revisions to our general education curriculum including a new and creative approach to fostering scientific literacy across our entire student body. We have long had interest in the area of visual resources and visual literacies; we are embarking now on a number of interconnected initiatives related to visual communication, and hope to see more of them realized in the near future. We hope to continue the transformation to a more diverse and inclusive community, improving not only our recruitment but also our support, development, and retention processes, fostering positive changes across the whole community. We aim to continue to collaborate on various initiatives with the New York 6 colleges (Hamilton, Union, St. Lawrence, Hobart & William Smith, and Colgate). And we will complete our current comprehensive campaign **Creating Our Future. The Campaign for Skidmore** with a working range of \$220-240 million; in addition to our Center for Integrated Sciences, other significant items in the campaign include increasing our Annual Fund, building new endowment support for financial aid, a new Admissions and Financial Aid Building, support for the Tang Museum, and increasing the number of students.

formed in early fall 2013, consisting of key representatives from major areas of the College and cochaired by DoF/VPAA Breslin and Faculty Assessment Coordinator Goodwin. The Steering Committee includes two faculty members, staff from throughout the College, and two students. A complete list appears later in this document (one staff member left the College after starting to serve on the committee, and we are in the process of appointing a replacement).

The Steering Committee has planned and vetted this design over the course of this academic year and is prepared to lead the College in the Self-Study process. We have since added our retired Registrar and Director of Institutional Research, Ann Henderson, to the team of people preparing the documentation for the Self-Study. Both institutional assessments and assessments of student learning, engagement, and development are a regular part of our processes, and we are providing a range of pertinent documentation to the Working Groups as they undertake their research this summer and draft their sections of the Self-Study in the fall.

We have chosen to conduct a Self-Study that follows the Selected Topics Model. The topic we have chosen, **integrative learning**, is important to us for a number of reasons:

- x It arises directly from our Mission Statement and thus relates to some of the engagement.
- x It addresses a number of initiatives that are currently under way for which we would plan to gather more information, build a stronger consensus in the College community, and reach some decisions.
- x It relates directly to our existing Strategic Plan (Engaged Liberal Learning: The Plan for Skidmore College 2006-15) and specifically, also, to the strategic planning effort that we began this spring.
- x It both requires and fosters creative thinking, fulfilling the challenge of our hallmark, Creative Thought Matters: new alliances, structures, pedagogies, and spaces must develop to meet new conceptual categories.
- x W project on Integrative Liberal Learning, so this will help us to advance what we are learning through that project.

We understand integrative learning to mean educational experiences that are shaped intentionally to engage students in drawing connections across traditional

Integrative and applied learning is an understanding and a disposition that a student builds across the curriculum and co-curriculum, from making simple connections among ideas and experiences to synthesizing and transferring learning to new, complex situations within and beyond the campus. ... [It] is one of the most important goals and challenges for higher education.

-Year Experience, now eight years old, includes an interdisciplinary Scribner Seminar; and we have developed several new interdisciplinary programs since 2005 alone, for a total of 10 altogether. One of those is our signature program in Intergroup Relations, one of the first IGR programs in the country to offer an academic minor. Roughly 21% of our students either major or minor in an interdisciplinary field, and many more take courses in those programs.

These kinds of interdisciplinary programs have become the norm on liberal arts campuses, and Skidmore is now in good company in offering them. Skidmore also has a strong recent history of creating innovative interdisciplinary spaces. As we have noted, learning that bridges the disciplines takes place in our remarkable new Zankel Music Center, and in the Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery. Since our last Self-Study, we have launched a major initiative to build a Center for Integrated Sciences, a space that will encourage collaborations across the physical and life sciences and among the sciences and other disciplines in its very architecture. We also continue to offer strong support for study abroad, so that approximately 60% of our students study off campus for part of their time here; the Self-Study will give some attention to how we are bridging their on-campus learning with their learning and development off campus. Altogether, we and whether they might contribute more to their integrative learning.

Among our primary concerns will be our general education curriculum. Expanding on our tradition of bridging disciplinary boundaries, our Committee on Educational Policies and Planning (CEPP) has undertaken a substantial review of our general education curriculum with the intent of eventually proposing a new model to the faculty. Among the topics under discussion is the place of interdisciplinary, integrative academic careers, including, potentially, a more intentionally-shaped culmination of their studies and transition into their lives after college. We are also considering a wealth of assessment data relating to campus climate, our existing Cultural Diversity requirement, and our students' scientific literacy--all information that will bear on the ways we reframe our general education requirements, curriculum and pedagogies.

In addition to bridging theory and practice and bridging the disciplines, we aim to 2007 2009 we developed our Goals for Student Learning and Development, we made a conscious decision to include the cocurriculum along with the curriculum in our thinking. Our models and sources for the goals included the Council for the Advancement of

Study to examine how well we are in fact bridging the curriculum and the cocurriculum, for example in fostering responsible citizenship and broad problem solving through civic engagement, service learning, sustainability initiatives, and internships. We have a number of initiatives under way

communicate and function across different social identities that we could investigate and further by building them into this study.

In a much more capacious, conceptual framework, we would like also to consider how best to bridge the traditional model of the liberal arts college with the kind of college we are in the process of becoming. Just as the library as a house of books has changed into a dramatically different workspace that integrates paper with the new digital universe of research and learning, so also our campus finds itself considering new and creative pedagogies and curricula as we make that transition. Part of this process, too, is to consider questions being raised nationally about the value of the liberal arts education in a context that is increasingly digitalized, economically challenging, and globally defined. Our larger framework for our study of integrative learning, then, will be this context and the questions: How well are we bridging tradition and creativity to ensure that our students meet our goals for their integrative learning and development? And what kinds of faculty development and organizational structures will help us do this better?

Intended Outcomes of the Self-Study

Part of the thrust of our proposed Self-Study will be to analyze how well we are fulfilling our mission for our students today. More than that, we would like to consider whether we might be more ambitious in realizing this mission, particularly in the ways our students integrate their learning across traditional boundaries over the arc of their undergraduate years. Our hope is that among the outcomes of the Self-Study in addition to meeting the standards for re-accreditation will be a deeper understanding of our institutional identity and distinctiveness and our shared goals for improvement. We expect that the process will help us to build consensus within the college community about current and future changes. To achieve all of this, we hope to demonstrate not only to Middle States but to ourselves how well we are meeting our goals, and to make recommendations in tandem with the strategic planning process so that we can put what we learn to good use.

In writing this Self-Study, we anticipate that we will address all fourteen Standards of Excellence in an Early Document Review in the fall of 2015. At the same time, we will ask the Working Groups to bear the standards in mind and illustrate in their reports some of the ways that we are meeting the fundamental elements for re-accreditation, particularly for Standards 7, 9, 12, and 14. The formal charges to the Working Groups will include copies of the standards and their fundamental and optional elements, and the Steering Committee will include as well a virtual file of assessments whose results will be of use to each group, so that the work of the group can both make use of and exemplify ways that we meet the relevant standards. The Working Group chairs will be asked to address explicitly, whenever possible, the connections between the standards and the matter under discussion.

Mike Eckmann, Associate Professor of Mathematics and Computer Science
Corey Freeman-Gallant, Associate Dean of the Faculty for Academic Policy and
Advising
Eliza Kent, Professor of Religion
Viviana Rangil, Associate Professor of Spanish
Rachel Roe-Dale, Associate Professor of Mathematics and Computer Science;
Peter von Allmen, Cochair, Professor and Chair - Economics

4. Diversity, Inclusion, and Integrative Learning. Committee on Intercultural and Global Understanding.

WG Members:

Cori Filson, Director of Off-Campus Study & Exchanges

Maria Lander, Associate Professor of Spanish and Director of Latin American Studies

Each Working Group will be provided with the following template for their final report:

Working Group Report:

- A. _____ large and of the questions the group has chosen to address
- B. Analytical, evidence-based discussion of the inquiry undertaken, the nature of the evidence, and the outcomes of that inquiry; the inquiry should both provide an overview and narrow its focus to selected initiatives. It should provide evidence of both strengths of existing programs and areas where we are challenged to do better.
- C. Some e _____ the standards, particularly Standards 7, 9, 12, and/or 14
- D. Discussion of the connection between _____ and those of the other groups, including any collaboration among Working Groups
- E. Broad, high-priority recommendations for improvement that we can aim to implement and will report back on in the Periodic Review Report

Organization of the Self-Study Report

The final Self-Study report will be organized according to the outline below. The body of the report will take its shape primarily from the Working Groups and their recommendations. It will most likely contain five chapters, one for each Working Group topic. However, there are many overlapping areas of concern and we hope to work together closely; we also aim to dovetail with our strategic planning efforts. It may also be possible to organize at least part of the report around key new initiatives related to the Self-Study process.

Skidmore College Self-Study Final Report Outline:

- A. Executive Summary and Certification Statement
- B. Introduction (overview of Skidmore and description of the Self-Study process)
- C. Integrative Learning at Skidmore
 - 1. The five topics: general education review; the FYE, the Sophomore Experience, and beyond college; physical and digital spaces; diversity and inclusion; and responsible communities

