

# Greetings from the Director

## Environmental Studies

Being a faculty member or student in environmental studies is not for the faint of heart. As a global population, we face seemingly insurmountable environmental issues – climate change, water pollution, air pollution, loss of biodiversity, compromised agricultural productivity, and more. I'm often asked how I remain positive while absorbed in such daunting challenges on a day to day basis. It certainly helps that I have a stereotypical Midwestern disposition; I fall firmly at the friendly end of the personality spectrum, I tend to view the world through a rosy set of lenses, and yes, I am a bit obsessed with tractors. While these traits are undoubtedly advantageous on particularly rough days, I draw my real strength from the brilliant faculty, staff, students, and community members who compose our growing Environmental Studies (ES) program at Skidmore College.

The 40+ ES Affiliated Faculty members from across campus who contribute courses, research experiences, and advice to the program tirelessly challenge our students to comprehensively analyze complex environmental issues and to develop practical, yet innovative, solutions. These same faculty members help us build an environmentally-focused co-curricular program every year that infuses campus discussions with additional perspectives and engages our students more thoroughly in what it means to be an informed, responsible citizen in today's world. Our growing core of faculty and staff in the ES program has provided critical stability to the program and an improved balance of disciplinary foundation and interdisciplinary immersion, which is the hallmark of our new ES curriculum. In the last year we have hired Cathy Gibson as an Assistant Professor in ES (see page 2), Kim Marsella as our ES

Program Coordinator and Lecturer, and Carol Goody as our ES Administrative Assistant.

As was the case in 2002 when we first implemented the ES major, Skidmore students continue to be the driving force in ES. While we began the ES major with one graduate in 2002 (Jenna Ringelheim, see page 2), our declared majors and minors now number over sixty. Our ES students' accomplishments during their time at Skidmore (see page 3) and in their post-Skidmore life (page 4) are nothing short of remarkable. Most rewarding for me, however, is the willingness of our current students and alums to give back to the ES community at Skidmore. Our alums return to talk with current students, our older students mentor our younger students, and all of our students participate in events that help strengthen the ES program.

### *ES Students, Class of 2008*



The growth of our ES program would have been impossible without strong institutional support. The College administration, faculty, and student body have helped usher in policies and initiatives that have strengthened the ES program directly and created a campus climate marked by heightened environmental awareness. Most recently, the College hired Erica Fuller as our Campus Sustainability Coordinator, and Erica has made Sustainable Skidmore a reality (see <http://cms.skidmore.edu/sustainability/>). The campus greening projects that are part of Sustainable Skidmore provide

valuable learning opportunities for our ES students and enhance the environmental understanding of all Skidmore students as they live and learn on a more environmentally-friendly campus.

In addition to our strides on campus, we have strengthened bridges with the surrounding community through the Water Resources Initiative (see insert) and our enhanced efforts on internship placements. Our community partners provide valuable learning opportunities for students and faculty alike and are just as much a part of our ES Program as our campus constituents.

So, counter to what many might think, rather than a feeling of hopelessness or negativism, most days I am awestruck by the potential of the future. I find it impossible to join a conversation among our students hanging out in our new ES Social and Cultural Research and Resource Center or to sit among our collective ES Program community at our annual Capstone Event (see insert) and feel anything other than excitement and hope. The future is indeed bright, and because of the hard work of many, our ES program is positioned to make significant contributions to that future.

-Karen Kellogg, Director of the Environmental Studies Program



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*Dr. Cathy Gibson*



SKIDMORE COLLEGE

Skidmore College  
815 North Broadway  
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866

*Where Our Graduates Have Gone, 2002-2008*

Classes had ended, but seventeen of Skidmore's seniors were not yet finished with their schoolwork. On Wednesday, April 30, 2008, all of the graduating Environmental Studies majors gathered at Skidmore's tenth annual Academic Festival to present their final Capstone Projects to an audience of professors, students, and Saratoga County community members. These students all began their Environmental Studies experience together in ES105: *Field Studies in Environmental Science* by focusing on the Loughberry Lake watershed. At the end of their Environmental Studies careers at Skidmore, all of the Environmental Studies majors came back together in ES375: *Case Studies in Environmental Sustainability*, which led to their Capstone Projects.

Professor Bob Turner, 2007-2008 Acting Director of the Environmental Studies program, opened the Capstone Event by explaining the goals of the Water Resource Initiative, which aims to understand our water source through a variety of perspectives. Through the WRI, Environmental Studies students focus on the Saratoga Lake watershed as a laboratory connecting the natural world with the social world. Students also have opportunities to partake in summer collaborative research with Skidmore professors, and Environmental Studies majors are required to complete a Senior Capstone Project. These WRI goals help reinforce, as Turner states, "the teacher-scholar model we epitomize at Skidmore College."

