







our institutional autonomy but also to position our graduates to succeed in meeting their personal life goals throughout their post-Skidmore lives.

*Our Distinctive Institutional Imperative: Creativity*

What is sometimes forgotten in the history and rhetoric of liberal education is the importance of *creativity*. For some time, Skidmore has explicitly recognized that the attributes our students require to successfully navigate our increasingly complex world necessarily include *creativity*.

This realization is hardly unique to Skidmore. *But because of our heritage as an institution rich in the visual and performing arts, and because of our proficiency in working at the intersections of disciplinary boundaries where creativity frequently flourishes, the College is uniquely positioned to distinguish itself by embracing creativity in its broadest sense: as the capacity both to imagine and to do that extends across all disciplines and fields of human endeavor. We will make this realization the primary lens through which we bring the priorities discussed below into focus.*

We define *creativity* as the capacity to deploy one's imagination in posing questions, investigating ideas, identifying problems, and inventing solutions. This conception is at once inspirational and utilitarian, combining both pragmatism and hope. It entails both the flexibility of mind needed to envision new possibilities and the capacity to map a path to realize them. These abilities encompass the full spectrum of human undertaking. For *any* notable human achievement involves some act of imagination that transcends what has been done before. Thus the concepts of *creativity* – most especially, *creativity* excellence – and *creativity* are intimately and inextricably interwoven: every significant academic achievement requires its own creative moment. If our students are to attain the level of excellence that we celebrate, they must do more than simply repeat what their professors have told them, or what has previously been realized or done. Rather, they must develop the independence of mind required to make their own distinctive contributions through the work they undertake.

Achieving excellence, of course, requires more than just creativity. It takes discipline, persistence, and rigorous thought; it also requires collaboration – either synchronous collaboration with one's contemporaries or the asynchronous collaboration with one's

or novel. Helping our students learn how to realize their ideas and connect them with the world engages them actively as learners and reinforces the importance of the work they do.

This moment represents a unique opportunity for Skidmore to assert its distinctive commitment to preparing students for today's world: empowering them to develop new career paths, imagine new fields of study and endeavor, and thereby to model creativity and imagination as core elements of a liberal education. It is also a unique moment for our professors to model the type of innovative thinking and teaching that higher education needs so badly. Cultivating and celebrating creativity is, in short, not just a phrase; it is our institutional imperative. Enabling our graduates to navigate the world creatively is Skidmore's special responsibility and one that, in its execution,









disciplines, moments, and sites – drawing upon everything the College offers to create the meaningful and ongoing process that is their Skidmore education.

awareness of the multiple social, cultural, and political perspectives we find in the world; cultivation of one's creativity and narrative imagination so one can empathize with those in a situation one has never directly experienced; the capacity to talk respectfully in contexts marked by difference, and the like<sup>5</sup> To do this, we need to increase our own capacity, as an





*Provide digital/IT resources for the development of new approaches to integrative learning and enhancing connectivity.*

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First, we will collectively assume responsibility for assisting our students to become more adept at describing to external audiences the skills and knowledge they have mastered in the course of their liberal education. The world needs first-rate thinkers now more than ever, and those thinkers disproportionately come from liberal arts colleges like Skidmore. But we must help our students become more adept in conveying to others the value of this unique and transformative educational experience. Once again, open access provides one key to this effort, in two senses. On the one hand, students need access to library resources after they graduate, but they currently lose those privileges once they are no longer enrolled, mainly due to

Explore ways to expand participation by all entering students in pre-orientation programs. [Additional funding required in annual budget: approximately \$220K.]

*Strengthen programs that enhance access to academic opportunities for all students.*

Expand the Summer Educational Experiences – Beyond the Campus (SEE-Beyond), SSFIAP (Skidmore Summer Funded Internship Program), and Collaborative Research programs to ensure that all students engage in at least one such experience prior to graduation. Establish fund raising goals to support these initiatives [requires increasing endowment by \$50M].

Increase our commitment to open educational resources (OER) in order to ensure that Skidmore students have access to sources without needing to pay out of pocket.

*Develop new creative ways to position Skidmore graduates to take their initial steps into their post-College lives and enhance ongoing career support for all graduates.*

Assist students in establishing goals for their first year out of college, while encouraging them to work with the Career Development Center beyond graduation to make continuing and effective progress along their unique career paths. Establish metrics to track outcomes. Use that information to further enhance programs to assist students in making the transition from their undergraduate careers to their later lives.

Set and achieve targets for percentage of students in each graduating class who have made use of the Career Development Center; identify and track outcome targets associated with this activity.

Archive high-quality student research in Skidmore's institutional repository, so that it will be preserved and made available to scholars from around the world far into the future, and so that it can be used by our graduates to demonstrate past accomplishments.

Strengthen affinity networks (e.g., SkidBiz, Visual Arts) and establish new ones to further engage alumni and people from Skidmore.





body, and spirit. These habits of well-being are directly linked with the capacity of our students to tolerate uncertainty, anxiety, distress, and confusion in the interests of intellectual growth, creativity, and emotional maturation. Thus attention to well-being and inclusion is not an “add-ons” to our strategic vision, but rather it relates to the very foundations of the intellectual and personal growth we seek to foster at Skidmore.

This conversation also includes considerations of athletics and physical fitness. In recent years we have enhanced both our athletic facilities and fitness programs. But we know that more needs to be done in these areas. We have developed an \_\_\_\_\_, and over the course of the next ten years, we will continue to seek the funding necessary to implement its initial stages.

We will create multiple opportunities on campus for our students to learn and practice such healthy habits and responsible behaviors. We will establish strategic links between their academic and co-curricular well-being, resiliency, and balance – challenging them to grow and transform across multiple individual, academic, and interpersonal dimensions in their four years on campus. We will acknowledge the ways in which our student’s lives are negatively affected by alcohol and substance abuse, mental health issues, and by sexual and gender-based misconduct. We are committed to taking an inclusive, public-health-based approach to these issues to understand existing structures and tendencies within our various populations and use that understanding to foster positive change. The College’s smoking policy (implemented in 2014) represents one attempt to create a more healthful campus environment, but enforcement of this policy has been inconsistent at best. We need to renew our efforts to implement the current policy, and we need to decide whether to take the next step toward being a smoke-free campus.

These objectives represent just one more m

Continue to support Pilot Staff Advisory Group; review the structure and effectiveness of the Group in Spring 2017.

*Create new opportunities to foster practices that enhance wellness and well-being of all community members.*

Monitor and, as needed, make changes to ensure that the College benefits package for employees makes health and wellness a more prominent objective; incorporate wellness assistance and incentives into health insurance.

To promote strategic alignment of well-being initiatives across college divisions, convene a group of campus leaders to form a well-being collaborative to plan, seek funding for, and implement a comprehensive plan to promote campus-wide well-being (e.g. explore ways to increase effectiveness of the campus Smoking Policy and determine whether to make Skidmore a smoke-free environment). Enhance opportunities for members of the campus community – most especially students but also members of the faculty and staff – to pursue activities relating to physical fitness and overall health.

Holistically address sexual and gender-based misconduct through implementation of an inclusive public health approach that involves all campus constituencies.

Develop new ways to leverage the relationship between campus athletic facilities, the health of students and employees, and the success of our student

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exceed the \$500 million mark over the next decade through market increases and giving. Lastly, we must identify additional, reliable streams of income to buttress our financial position. Areas



base, expanding our programming for alumni in their first five years, and broadening efforts to support the career needs of alumni throughout their lives.

But in a broader sense, we must change how we operate to enhance both planning and communication and seek new levels of both transparency and “strategic alignment” in how we do our work across the College – meaning that all of us within the Skidmore workforce must take responsibility for understanding both our strategic objectives and how our actions and decisions influence our ability to achieve them. We need to find new ways to encourage people not just to seek to follow rules in a narrow sense but to use their judgment to achieve excellence in the work they are responsible for completing.

### *Managing our Natural Resources*

As outlined in the recently endorsed *Environmental Sustainability Plan* for Skidmore, “we endeavor to enact environmentally responsible practices, grounded in economic and social equity, and through our actions to have a positive impact on our community and planet.” The

plan sets challenging goals in the areas of energy, food, waste, lands and grounds, and engagement, and we talk not only about environmental sustainability, or our impact to natural resources, but we embrace the more comprehensive definition of sustainability that speaks to the interconnected spheres of the environment, the economy, and society.

We envision a Skidmore that truly embraces the principles of sustainability in all of its institutional decision-making, and this means that every purchase, project, and, when appropriate, policy should be viewed, in part, through the lens of sustainability. Positioning sustainability more prominently in our decision-making will continue to transform our physical campus into one that immerses all of our students, staff, and faculty members in a living and learning environment characterized by practices that embody institutional values. In order to fully realize this vision, we must be even more intentional about making visible the work we are doing around sustainability in our operations at Skidmore. This includes not only enhancing the communications about the outcomes of our work but also making more transparent various decision-making processes themselves.





initiative are Artists in Residence, Writers in Residence, Teaching Professors, and other long-term non-tenure-line positions).

Explore making an explicit commitment to open access in various venues.

*Managing our Human Resources –*

*Across the duration of this Strategic Plan, the Skidmore community will strive to cultivate creativity in service of integrative learning, inclusive excellence, access, well-being, and sustainability.* In pointing the way for the College to achieve Goals identified above, this represents the convergence of our aspirations and the imperative to push the boundaries of creativity and imagination. These Goals set out a ten-year vision for the College. During this time, additional action steps will be identified as part of our ongoing institutional strategic thinking – especially in the process of developing annual “Action Agendas” (a practice that was integral to the success of the previous      ), as well as in a formal review at the five-year midpoint. But at the heart of this work stands our ongoing commitment to the values of liberal education that animate our Mission, to the specific values of                                      and                                      , and above all to the success of our students.

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**Skidmore College**