

# CREATING PATHWAYS TO EXCELLENCE: THE PLAN FOR SKIDMORE COLLEGE 2015 2025

**OUR CHALLENGE – AND OUR OPPORTUNITY – IS TO CREATE AND EMBRACE A VISION OF SKIDMORE COLLEGE 2025 THAT IS AT ONCE DISTINCTIVE, COMPETITIVE, GROUNDED IN SKIDMORE’S PARTICULAR EXPRESSION OF THE VALUES OF LIBERAL EDUCATION, AND ACHIEVABLE.** Because of the breadth, depth, and interconnectedness of our academic and co-curricular programs, the ways we teach in them, and how we encourage our students to find *Skidmore’s distinctive expression of those values in ways that best meet the needs of our students in the 21*

*st Century.* The time honored outcomes of a high quality liberal education include intellectual freedom and courage, a critical and analytical disposition, the humility required to know that even one’s most deeply held beliefs might merit reexamination, the ability to identify and challenge entrenched assumptions, to write and think cogently, to present one’s views effectively and persuasively orally and in other ways, to access different modes of knowing to develop new insights through both empirical research and conceptual exploration, and expanding one’s cultural horizons and self knowledge. At the same time, just as Scribner Library has changed from a repository of books into a dramatically different workspace that integrates print resources with the new digital universe of research and learning, so too are we committed to develop and implement new and creative pedagogies and curricula that will support our transition to a technology rich college. Doing so will enable our students to take best advantage of the opportunities for learning available to them both here and in their post Skidmore lives. It also acknowledges the fact that our students increasingly come to us having experienced new forms of technologically enhanced learning in their primary and secondary schools – learning experiences that we must be prepared to credit and build upon.

Because the commitment to developing the above noted skills and habits of mind represents the most direct expression of our core educational mission, we place it at the center of our planning. Liberal education has long been regarded as the best preparation for a life of professional success, civic engagement, and personal fulfillment. This realization holds true even more today, especially given the rapidly changing and increasingly uncertain world our graduates will encounter – 12

grounded in the distinctive  
many prevailing trends in

<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, we persist in believing that

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<sup>1</sup>See *Engaged Liberal Learning: The Plan for Skidmore College 2005 2015*, §B. “Skidmore’s Distinctive Identity – the Values of Engaged Liberal Learning,” pp. 5 11.

<sup>2</sup>A more specific and developed expression of these desired educational outcomes occurs in the “Goals for Student Learning and Development” that were endorsed by the faculty, which is included below as Appendix I.

<sup>3</sup>Examples of such trends include an increased emphasis on technical or vocationally oriented degree programs and short term “return on investment,” decreased reliance on full time tenured and tenure track faculty in favor of part time adjunct instructors, the creation of economic efficiencies through larger classes, distance learning and other forms of technologically mediated instruction, etc.





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 *creative imagination*. 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***

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.

relating to race, sexual orientation, gender, and other identity markers, as well as for sexual and gender based misconduct. It also must be a community that has n

**further expect that when potential employers or admissions deans of**

**GOAL I: INTEGRATIVE LEARNING AND EDUCATION – To DEVELOP STUDENTS' CAPACITIES TO CREATE, IMAGINE, AND CHANGE THE WORLD, AND TO ENHANCE THE WORK OF THE FACULTY AS TEACHER**



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

Many parts of our curriculum, of course, already encompass integrative learning. Our decades long interdisciplinary emphasis – epitomized in the Liberal Studies curriculum and carrying through to the current First Year Experience – is a fo

## **Creating**

Our various partnerships – starting with the New York Six – hold the key to yet another integrated and connected experience, and we will explore possible partnerships with other institutions as well. Students should be exposed to the myriad possibilities these partnerships

Evaluate feasibility of establishing a Center for Quantitative Reasoning and a Center for Entrepreneurship.

Ensure the ongoing alignment of Library collections and services with curricular goals of fostering creativity and integrated learning

Partner with other New York Six (NY6) colleges to expand opportunities for Skidmore students to study (in some cases via technology) with NY6 faculty members from those schools or to access programs sponsored by other schools (e.g, study away programs). Explore ways to partner with other institutions as well.

Develop better, more consistent, and more effective assessment mechanisms for determining where and to what extent integrative learning is taking place at Skidmore.

Secure dedicated resources to support the Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery operating budget.

Explore possibility of expanding the Tang Museum, especially as our permanent collection increases.

***Develop new ways to support faculty members across all three dimensions of their work:***

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

Continue the process of renovating and refreshing classrooms to better support pedagogy and technology.

Enhance resources of the Center for Leadership, Teaching, and L

**GOAL II: ACCESS – To Assure Access for All Our Students to an Extraordinary Educational Experience:** *STUDENTS WILL HAVE FULL ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITIES ACROSS ALL THREE PHASES OF THEIR SKIDMORE CAREERS – AT ADMISSION, AS UNDERGRADUATE LEARNERS, AND IN TRANSITIONING TO THEIR POST COLLEGE LIVES. THIS COMMITMENT PROVIDES THE CONTEXT WITHIN IN WHICH WE CAN CHALLENGE ALL OUR STUDENTS TO ACHIEVE EXCELLENCE.*

***Access to Admission***

Consider the following information: A teenager from a family in the lowest income quartile in the United States has a 9% chance of graduating from college, while a teenager from a family in the highest income quartile has a 90% chance. The consequences of that disparity play out

~~can be~~

~~Barriers to Access~~

regarding them as inconsistent with our fundamental values.<sup>11</sup> As we move forward, to ensure  
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Similarly, building courses around open educational resources (OER) and primary sources housed at the Tang Museum and Scribner Library could significan



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 restrictive licensing agreements with publishers. The more that institutions of higher education commit to open access publishing models, the more easily our alumni – both newly minted and past g as F E

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

**GOAL III: WELL BEING – To STRENGTHEN THE INCLUSIVENESS, HEALTH, AND WELL BEING OF OUR COMMUNITY:** WE WILL CREATE NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPING THE SKILLS THAT WILL MAKE SKIDMORE A MORE HELPFUL, INCLUSIVE, AND CREATIVE COMMUNITY.

***A Creative, Inclusive, and Safe Community***

The climate of the Skidmore community establishes the overall context for our students' educational experience – a context that can reinforce or impede their efforts to achieve their educational objectives. It does so as well for the members of the faculty and staff who work at

appreciated. As an educational community in which dialog is highly valued, Skidmore should achieve this outcome by creating new opportunities for frank, honest, open, and respectful conversation among various constituencies in settings both small and large.

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body, and spirit. These habits of well being are directly linked with the capacity of our students

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¾ Create new opportunities to foster practices that enhance wellness and well being of all community

**GOAL IV: SUSTAINABILITY – To CONTINUE TO BUILD A SUSTAINABLE INSTITUTIONAL FOUNDATION FOR EXCELLENCE:** *DEPLOYING THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABILITY BROADLY UNDERSTOOD AS AN ORGANIZING PRINCIPLE, WE WILL INVEST OUR TIME, ENERGY, AND FUNDING IN INITIATIVES TO ENSURE THE COLLEGE'S LONG TERM VIABILITY AND SUCCESS.*

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 we will interrogate include an expansion of our summer conference program and further development of the Skidmore Classic Horse Show, which generates support for the College's financial aid program.

Beyond increasing our resources, we also must enhance our sense of shared purpose in improving our operational efficiency. This means aligning all of our activities as closely as possible with our strategic priorities. It places greater emphasis on effective communication across operational areas (an issue identified in our recent staff surveys) to avoid waste, duplication of effort, and unnecessary delays in accomplishing basic functions. And it means adopting a "limited growth" approach that assumes all or most new initiatives will be funded either by newly identified funds, through partnerships across areas or other collaborations, or by cost reductions or reallocation of resources. We must continue to identify opportunities to share or lower costs through collaborations (such as those we curate

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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

An essential element of our approach must be integrating sustainability into every aspect

use this idea to distinguish us from other institutions. We must, therefore, continue to strengthen our position as the institution where creative thought truly matters, first and foremost through the strategic investments in our community and educational programs outlined above and through a more focused, comprehensive, and persistent approach to how we present ourselves to the world.

We have already taken the first step in this process by creating a new, Cabinet level division of Communications and Marketing headed by a Vice President, who will report directly to the President. This Office has been charged with developing and implementing a complete and exhaustive plan for articulating the College's story to prospective students, the broader world of higher education, our campus community, and our extended community of alumni, parents and friends. It will also develop a series of metrics to measure our success and inform future planning and investments. Lastly, recognizing the power of the campus visit on prospective students, we will construct a new Admissions and Financial Aid building more centrally located on campus that more powerfully reflects the strengths and unique qualities of a Skidmore education.

### ***PRIORITY INITIATIVES in support of GOAL IV: Sustainability***



**IN CONCLUSION**

*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.*

**APPENDIX I**

**Skidmore College  
Goals for Student Learning and Development**

The goals that follow reflect the unique characteristics and synergies of our B.A. and B.S. programs, as well as certain emphases that are deeply engrained in Skidmore's history and culture: