

# THE CREATIVITY IMPERATIVE

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**§ Strategic Plan** charts a path forward for the college and it takes seriously the need for certain foundational knowledge to adapt to changing circumstances that will impact the world. Those skills are the focus of our education. Indeed, what we hope to achieve through inquiry, to identify and challenge the status quo, to present one's views effectively and to explore new modes of knowing, to develop and explore one's side of the

### ***Our Institutional Imperative: Creativity***

We define *creativity* as the capacity to deploy imagination and originality 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 envisioning new possibilities and then mapping a path to realize them. The assertion that *Creative Thought Matters* encompasses both these dimensions – declaring not only that creative thought is important but also that ideas, if they are to “count,” must be made material and have an effect in the world. Creativity is linked inescapably with the independence of mind required to formulate a new approach to a particular problem or to reimagine an entire domain of knowledge. It is equally important to help our students see that creativity involves discipline, persistence, improvisation, and the ability to draw collaboratively upon the wisdom of the past

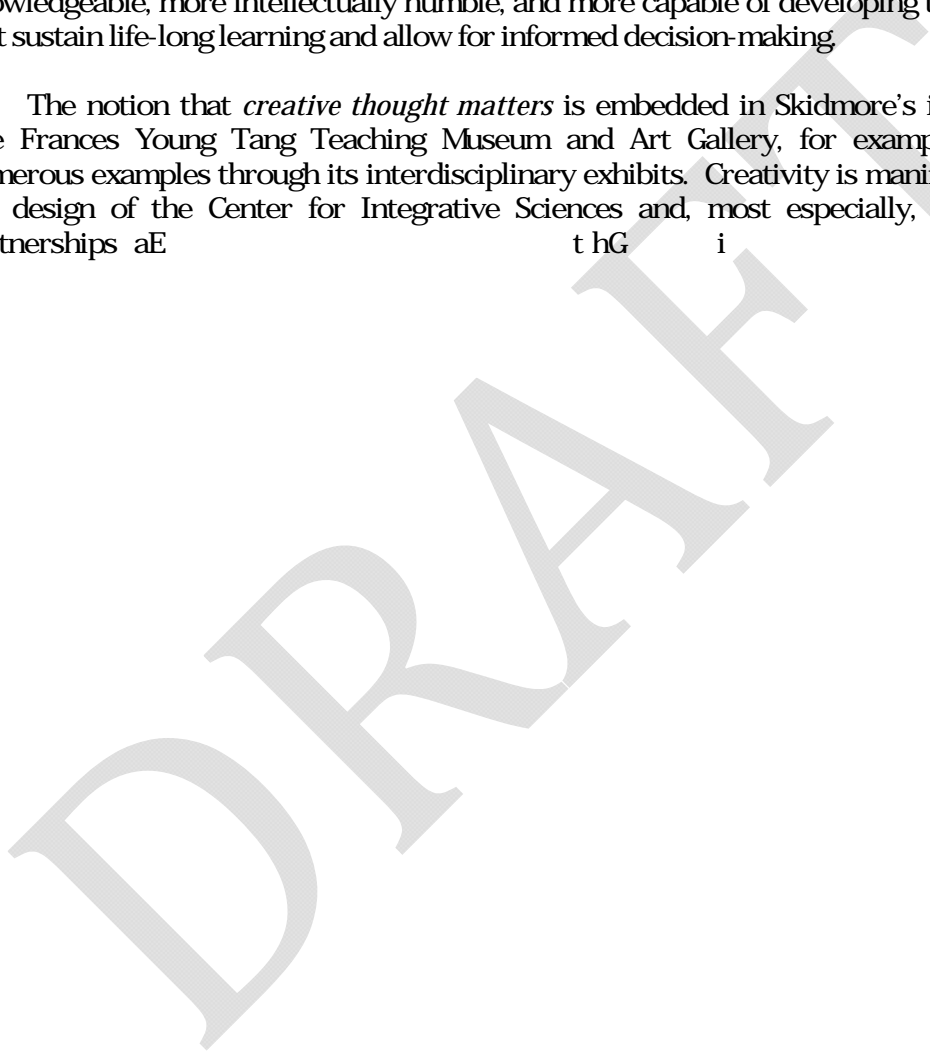




**GOAL I: TO DEVELOP OUR STUDENTS’ CAPACITIES TO CREATE, IMAGINE, AND AFFECT THE WORLD:** *WE WILL INVEST IN PROGRAMS AND EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES THAT DEVELOP OUR STUDENTS’ CAPACITIES TO ACHIEVE AND DEMONSTRATE EXCELLENCE AS ENGAGED, CREATIVE, AND INTEGRATIVE LEARNERS.*

As we embark on the next decade of Skidmore’s journey, we steadfastly continue to believe in the intellectually rigorous and transformative potential of a Skidmore education. We are committed to creating a distinctive educational environment in which students encounter varying ways of thinking and knowing, and novel ways of relating to one another and to the world. If we are successful, students will emerge from their Skidmore experience more knowledgeable, more intellectually humble, and more capable of developing the habits of mind that sustain life-long learning and allow for informed decision-making.

The notion that *creative thought matters* is embedded in Skidmore’s institutional DNA. The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery, for example, has provided numerous examples through its interdisciplinary exhibits. Creativity is manifested throughout the design of the Center for Integrative Sciences and, most especially, in the curricular partnerships aE t hG i p h a hi h

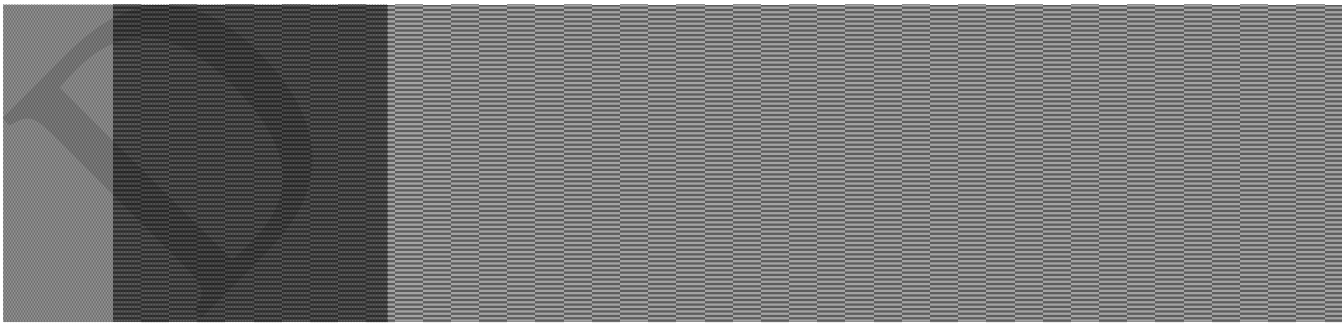




students to have access to experts at other NY6 schools and beyond. Strategic partnerships, and the creative possibilities they present, must become an essential component of our shifting mindset.

Above all, Skidmore will retain a sharp focus on our students – on helping them reach the highest levels of achievement possible in the work they do with us, and encouraging them to carry a commitment to the pursuit of excellence with them when they graduate. We will challenge them to think more deeply and intentionally about how the ideas, hypotheses, and theories, and data they encounter in one course can animate and inform the topics they explore in other courses. We will encourage them to apply the lessons around leadership and collective action that they learn on the athletic fields or when organizing peaceful protests and to their residence halls and, later on, to graduate studies and their workplaces. We will work with them to integrate knowledge and experience, to help them make the connections between what they learn at the College and what they want to accomplish across a life of productive work – serving them and their communities well into the future. In the end, our students are responsible for doing their own work, making their own connections across the different disciplines they have studied and the co-curricular experiences that have enriched their college careers, and then applying what they have learned. But the College will be more intentional in supporting them in this transformative project of seeking a liberal education that will enable them to make creative thought matter across the full arc of their lives.

















decision-making processes themselves. Visibly modeling how to make such institutional decisions will demonstrate the skills, knowledge, and complex considerations necessary for making enlightened decisions and help promote more sustainability-oriented behavior in people's lives, most especially our students' lives. In other words, we have a significant opportunity to leverage our efforts to create a deep living and learning environment around sustainability on campus; the changes we – students, staff, faculty, administrators, and alumni – help make on our campus will be carried forward to the various communities in which we live.

Sustainability-related efforts already permeate the curriculum as well, and, as we have already experienced, there is a rich feedback loop inherent in our sustainability work. Often ideas that are developed in our sustainability-related courses feed changes to our campus operations, and modifications to our campus often serve as case studies and research opportunities for our courses, hence fostering curricular and pedagogical innovation. It should come as no surprise that the lines between student experiences related to sustainability—

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<sup>4</sup> AAC&U definition. See also “Interrogating Integrative Learning” in *Peer Review*, vol. 16, no. 4 (Fall 2014-Winter 2015).

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Martha Craven Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997) and *Not For Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

<sup>6</sup> As part of our Creative Community Conversations, we will also create opportunities for members of our community. b Q b

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