# Reaffirm and Realign- Part II
## Strategic Action Agenda 2018-2020
### Year 2 2019-2020

As we enter the second and final year of this two-year Strategic Action Agenda (SAA), the Preface to last year's SAA (included below) remains relevant.  So, I would ask community members to review that section

In addition, last year we began important conversations with both the IPPC and the campus community about the need to revisit the larger question of how the College and our employees can best afford future increases in health insurance cost.  As we all understand, this is not just an issue for Skidmore but represents a national challenge as well.

3. Completing the funding of the Center for Integrated Sciences (CIS) debt service.
   Phase I construction (North Wing) is on track for completion in August 2020.  Last year, we also met the goal of including funds in the FY '20 budget to fully cover debt service for the CIS related borrowing.  This budget line is continuing, so we will not need to devote any additional monies to this purpose in subsequent years.

   Though we were unable to anticipate this development in Fall 2018, last year we made a second

described above.  Whereas it is possible to make short-term adjustments in a budget cycle to eliminate, say, a $3 million deficit without serious disruptions to campus life, it is much more difficult if not impossible to do so in the face of increasingly constrained NTR and larger projected shortfalls.

We must address these issues now, in order to be good stewards of the College and to avoid significant disruptions (e.g., serious budget cuts, layoffs, etc.) in the future.  We certainly will experience significant challenges in future budgets to allocate funds for new programs, the expansion of services and benefits, and more.  We historically have placed great importance in community input in decision-making, both through our shared governance system and through more informal means as well.  As we work to sustain our long-term financial health, any decisions we make must be responsive to our highest strategic priorities centering on our core educational mission, and they must have the benefit of the understanding and input of our community.  Accordingly, this year we will explore additional ways of engaging the broader community in conversations about our long-term financial health and seeking input about various ways we can address the problems before us.  One way to do this is for departments or divisions to invite some of the newer members of the President's Cabinet to a departmental or division meeting, to get to know them and to share ideas about the future of the College.

Regarding the pending Presidential transition, I would be encouraged that Skidmore's enhanced national standing and so many other positive factors in our story will attract an outstanding pool of candidates.  I am confident that the search committee and, ultimately, our Board of Trustees will identify a leader who can help us continue our positive trajectory by bringing new ideas, new vision, and new ways of articulating – and realizing –

## The Preface to the 2018‑19 Strategic Action Agenda

We are now in the two‑year window that will take us to the midpoint of our ten‑year Strategic Plan: Creating Pathways to Excellence, 2015‑25.  Like the 2016‑2018 version, this "Strategic Action Agenda" (SAA) reflects a two‑year implementation horizon developed for the 2018‑19 and 2019‑20 academic years.

Mission and Context
We are a mission‑driven institution, and our educational mission has never been more important than it is today.  Last year's Strategic Action Agenda, "Defending Democracy," referenced the short‑ and long‑ running games that are at play in dealing with our current political situation.  The College decidedly is in the long game of preparing future citizen intellectual leaders, who we expect to make a difference in our world, beginning with their time at the College and most certainly in their post‑Skidmore lives.  At the same time, as a liberal arts college, we need to model the difference we want to see in the world – in the respect we afford one another as a matter of course

The positive side to this rise in the percentage of new students receiving financial aid is that it advances the second goal of our Strategic Plan, "Access," moving us further along toward the College we plan to become – an institution that enrolls increasing numbers of students receiving institutional aid. The negative side is that we now must fund this sharp and unanticipated increase in financial aid. Moreover, even if, contrary to expectations, the Class of 2023 were to require a more historic level of financial aid, the increased aid we have directed to the current entering class represents a four‐year commitment. Compounding this budgetary rise is an anticipated increase in health insurance costs of $300,000. Finally, as planned, we still must identify an additional $500,000 in the budget to complete funding for the $35 million in new debt we assumed last year to help fund the Center for Integrated Sciences.

We initially had decided to address the current year's budget challenges by using the available reserve funds mentioned above, which are the fortunate result of careful financial management over the years and positive enrollment trends.  But we also understand that every dollar spent in this way represents one less dollar that potentially could be directed to the CIS or other strategic purposes.  So I am pleased to report that the now‐completed analysis of the financial aid needed for our returning Sophomores, Juniors, and Seniors reveals that the required amount is considerably less than previously anticipated. Specifically, the savings on financial aid for returning students will be slightly more than the budget overage for the new first‐year class.  Although, this welcome outcome does not alleviate the pressure to fund the health insurance increase and CIS debt service, it eases considerably the immediate demand on our cash reserves for the coming academic year.

Even so, this temporary reprieve does not alleviate the sense of urgency we all must share to make fundamental changes in our budget – both for fiscal year 2019 and successive years. Let me restate this point as clearly as possible: our most recent admissions experience, along with the other factors noted above, must serve as an institutional wake‐up call.  The bottom line is that this year presents a new financial challenge and therefore demands a response different from what we have done in the past. Essentially, we have one year to determine how to realign our budgets to ensure a sound financial foundation for the College in FY '20.  Then we must project this new level of financial discipline into future budget years. This is not a one‐year problem, and it decidedly will require a multi‐year solution.

If one were to review the past ten years of Strategic Action Agendas, one would see a recurring theme of the need to control costs, moderate the rate of increase of our comprehensive fee, and seek new sources of revenue.  This period includes the Recession of 2008, during which we implemented a number of more dramatic cost‐saving measures.  But overall, we have been able to maintain our financial stability, achieve balanced budgets, and frequently realize additional funds, primarily from enrollment.  Many of the cost‐savings and cost‐avoidance decisions – including many difficult decisions not to fund a variety of potentially desirable initiatives – that have been incorporated into annual budgets have not been particularly visible to those not directly involved in the process.  Moreover, during this time, our comprehensive fee has continued to rise while average and median family incomes nationally have remained largely stagnant – meaning that a Skidmore education moves beyond the means of more families each year.  And so far, we have not been able to develop any dramatic new revenue sources. Skidmore's reality also reflects national trends in the higher education sector as a whole.

What We Must Do
In keeping with Skidmore's mission, and in light of increasing demands for financial aid, the critical need to continue attracting excellent students, and growing operating and healthcare costs, we must renew our commitment to increasing our financial aid resources, developing and maintaining attractive academic and co‐curricular programs, enhancing Skidmore's reputation and visibility, identifying cost savings

To meet these challenges we will need to become more sophisticated, as a community, about the strategic factors that are complicating our financial picture and apply that knowledge to the way we do our work. Specifically,

I. <u>Integrative Learning and Education</u>—To Develop Students' Capacities to Create, Imagine, and Change the World, and to Enhance the Work of the Faculty as Teacher‑Scholars: We will invest in pedagogical and scholarly programs and educational strategies that develop the capacities of students and faculty members to achieve, model, and demonstrate excellence as scholarly, creative, and integrative learners. In doing so we are committed to developing and implementing new and creative pedagogies and curricula that will support our transition to a technology‑rich college.

1. Continue the progress towards construction of the Center for Integrated Sciences (CIS).
   - Complete construction of CIS North Wing.
     - ➢ North Wing construction phase begun: summer 2018. [Year 1] Completed
     - ➢ North Wing construction phase 90% completed, scheduled for substantial completion in August 2020. [Year 2] progress
   - Complete construction of Greenhouse.
     - ➢ Greenhouse construction phase begun:  summer 2018. [Year 1] In progress
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- Expand the practice of meeting with prospective faculty candidates and providing post-hiring follow-up regarding opportunities for support, grant proposal development, and transition issues related to research and scholarship transfer. [Year 1] Completed
- Explore reconstituting the Grants Committee in order to: 1) identify strategic needs and areas of opportunity that advance the College's long-term vision and aspirational objectives; 2) identify potential funding opportunities; 3) identify resources necessary for developing credible and competitive applications; 4) develop and submit application(s). [Year 1] In progress
  - Build capacity to compete effectively with peer and aspirant institutions for funding from programs such as HHMI's Science Education initiative, NSF S-STEM, Clare Boothe Luce, NSF Advance, etc. In progress
  - Provide development opportunities for early stage faculty to assume leadership roles in applying for grants of strategic institutional importance. In progress
  - Use Digital Measures to identify opportunities for cross-disciplinary collaborations. In progress
- Launch First Year Experience shadowing program. [Year 1] Completed
- Support, encourage and promote faculty research, scholarship, and creative works through the Tang Teaching Museum's collection-based projects. [Years 1 & 2] In progress
- Explore options for supporting humanistic inquiry. [Year 1 Completed & Year 2 In progress]
  - PDF funding for humanistic inquiry symposium approved for 2018-19. Completed
- Promote the participation of faculty (particularly early career faculty) in professional development opportunities such as the annual Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR) Dialogues meetings to increase the number of grant proposals submitted and funded. [Years 1 & 2] In progress
- Raise $8M in support for faculty development, training, and research. [Years 1 & 2] In progress

5. Continue implementation of the new General Education Curriculum.
   - Ensure that any required revisions to the criteria for the new requirements are finalized and approved. [Year 1] Completed
   - With support from the Mellon Foundation, establish pedagogy clusters to develop courses for the new curriculum. [Year 1 & 2] Completed
   - Revise College Catalog to reflect the new General Education requirements. [Year 1] In progress
   - Support department/program efforts to integrate the requirements for Information Literacy, Oral Communication, Technology Literacy, and Visual Literacy into their curricula. [Years 1 & 2] In progress
   - Create and test an Information Literacy rubric by assessing student work from across the disciplines. [Year 1] Completed

6. Expand opportunities for integrative learning experiences for students.
   - Encourage faculty to continue developing Applied Civic Engagement courses that involve significant partnerships among faculty, staff, students, and community actors. [Years 1 & 2] In progress
   - Enhance awareness of the Tang Student Advisory Council and increase the prominence of its role. [Year 1 or 2] In progress
   - Explore the feasibility of developing certificate programs in areas such as Documentary Studies, Civic Engagement, etc. [Year 1 or 2] In progress

- Use academic technology to support creative pedagogies, enhance student engagement, and promote more flexible teaching spaces. [Year 1 or 2] In progress
- Continue to leverage our Project Pericles affiliation to expand opportunities for students to engage in integrative learning experiences through programs such as the Debating for Democracy Workshop (at Skidmore 12/1/18), D4D Letter to an Elected Official Competition, and Periclean Faculty Leadership Program. [Years 1 & 2] In progress

7. In partnership with the Lucy Scribner Library, identify economical options for reconfiguring spaces in the Library to create more inclusive and inspiring work spaces for Skidmore students and faculty. [Year 1] In progress

8. Secure $2M in spendable and endowed support for career development programming and experiential learning beyond the classroom. [Years 1 & 2] In progress


II. <u>Access</u>—To Ensure Access for All Our Students to an Extraordinary Educational Experience: Students will have full access to opportunities for educational excellence across all three phases of their Skidmore careers—as admission, as undergraduate learners, and in transition to their post-college lives

9. Increase financial aid budget to support meeting our enrollment targets and maintain our institutional commitment to need-based financial aid. [Years 1 & 2] In progress

10. Secure $8.4M in spendable and endowed support for financial aid [Years 1 & 2] In progress

11. Strengthen collaboration and coordination between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs to increase retention and enhance student academic support.
   - Working with the Office of Academic Advising, the Opportunity Program, and Student Academic Services, develop a more proactive advising model to help assist "at risk" students. [Years 1 & 2] In progress
   - With the assistance of the Enrollment Management Group, analyze the recent retention study and develop strategies and interventions to improve the persistence and success of under-served populations. [Year 1] In progress
   - Evaluate software applications, the course management platform, digital communications, etc., to ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). [Year 1 & 2] In progress

12. Based on the outcomes of the Retention Study and analysis of the Opportunity Program (OP), the Enrollment Management Group will develop integrated plans for improving retention in identified areas of need. [Year 1] In progress

13. Support institutional enrollment goals.
   - Increase transfer enrollment target by 20%. [Year 1] To be re-evaluated
   - The Enrollment Management Group to develop initiatives to support the expanded recruitment and enrollment of students [Year 1 Completed & Year 2 In progress]

- Continue personalized engagement with African American applicants applying for financial aid to facilitate completion of their required financial aid documents. [Years 1 & 2] In progress
- Admissions, Financial Aid and Budget offices will evaluate and recommend financial aid modeling to support student enrollment goals and Skidmore's continuing commitment to need-based financial aid. [Year 1] In progress

14. Transition to Slate, an admissions/enrollment solution, encompassing CRM, outreach, travel management, online applications and online reading. In progress

15. Improve the provision of clear, effective, and accurate information by the Office of the Registrar and ensure that the office is able to provide user-friendly academic resources, such as the following:
    - A secure electronic transcript delivery service for current students and alumni. [Year 1] In progress
    - Electronic diplomas. [Year 1 or 2] Completed
    - A registration planning tool for students and advisors. [Year 1] Postponed
    - Improved report writing tools with the ability to pull live data from the student system. [Year 1] Completed
    - A transfer articulation database that provides transfer-credit-equivalency information to potential transfer students and

21. Move Social Justice space concept to fruition, including developing the program and renovating the space in Case Center.  [Year 1]

28.

- Review budgeting process to identify $2 million in cost savings across the College. [Year 1] Completed
- For new Major Construction Projects and New Initiatives, continue the discipline of providing full funding for these including a provision for an initial endowment fund to support the increased operational costs resulting from the project. [Years 1 & 2] Completed
- Update deferred maintenance needs and review funding plan. [Year 1] Completed
- Examine key Operating Budget parameters and cost-drivers in order to develop a long-term cost-containment plan.  [Year 1] Completed
- Increase revenues from fundraising. [Years 1 & 2] Completed
- Complete identification of funding in operating budget for CIS debt service.  [Years 1 & 2] Completed

32. Complete hire and on-boarding of new Vice President for Finance & Administration and Treasurer.  [Year 1] Completed

33. Continue training for managers and professional development opportunities for staff in FY '19 and FY '20.
    - Focus on quality of work, retention, and work/life balance. [Years 1 & 2] In progress
    - Continue to support the Staff Advisory Group. [Years 1 & 2] In progress

34. Enhance the assessment of institutional effectiveness as called for in the most recent Middle States review.
    - Implement the Institutional Effectiveness Subcommittee, approved in Spring 2018, including identifying divisional representatives to serve on the committee. [Year 1] Completed
    - Support the newly-hired Institutional Effectiveness Specialist, housed in the Office of Institutional Research. [Year 1] Completed
    - Continue the work of establishing and supporting institutional effectiveness measures and structures that are institution-wide and pervasive. [Years 1 & 2] In progress

35. Continue to implement the *Campus Sustainability Plan*
    - Work with key stakeholders in responsible functional areas to give tangible shape to Goal 5 of the Campus Sustainability Plan ("Engagement") by developing key metrics, agreeing on primary responsibilities, and identifying actionable steps to achieve our vision of a campus that embraces the principles of sustainability in both our strategic and operational decision-making. [Year 1] In progress
    - Make meaningful progress toward identifying a major renewable power project(s) or other pathway(s) that will enable us, when implemented, to achieve our 60% renewable power goal.[5]  [Years 1 & 2] In progress
    - Make meaningful progress toward developing an agreed-upon pathway for achieving our 25% sustainable food goal.[6] [Years 1 & 2] In progress
    - Complete the second STARS (Sustainability, Tracking, Assessment, and Rating System) report and leverage this report in our institutional communications, especially with Admissions.  [Year 1] In progress

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[5] The Campus Sustainability Plan calls for this goal to be achieved by 2025.
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- Conduct a comprehensive, campus-wide sustainability literacy assessment to measure and track the community's understanding of sustainability principles.  [Years 1 & 2] In progress
- Assess the feasibility of improving IT efficiency and lowering demands on resources by reducing the number of printers in use on campus and creating a laptop loan program to decrease the number of computers purchased by the College.  [Years 1 & 2] In progress
- Develop interactive forms that allow students, faculty, and staff to complete and submit applications and other workflow documents entirely online.  [Years 1 & 2] In progress
- Examine the feasibility of developing a proposal for offsetting the carbon footprint of study abroad.  [Year 1] In progress
- Work with the Sustainability Office, the IPPC Campus Sustainability Subcommittee, and the Faculty Director of Civic Engagement to develop Applied Civic Engagement courses that address sustainability. In progress

36. Use major campus events as moments of focus, celebration, growth and promotion.
    - Upcoming milestone anniversaries of institutions that have helped to shape the College's

- Develop new plans for increasing school spirit among members of the student body and finding concrete ways to express that spirit.  [Years 1 & 2] Completed

41. Consistently track, measure and refine activity across web, social, email and digital promotions.  Strengthen and demonstrate the connection between Communications and Marketing efforts and the impact on College targets, such as Admissions recruitment and enrollment goals, as well as alumni engagement and College fundraising goals
    - Integrate all digital communication efforts with the HubSpot system. [Year 1 &2] Incorporate other systems in use to maximize efficiency and minimize costs. To be Reevaluated
    - Integrate all digital admissions communications within Slate. In progress
    - Establish a regular reporting schedule. [Year 1] Completed
    - Enhance data sharing and results analysis in collaboration with campus partners. [Year 1] Completed

42. Help increase engagement among young alumni and establish a sustained, digital communications approach.
    - Define personas for representative young alumni groups.  [Year 1 & 2] Completed
    - Develop ongoing digital outreach to build community and increase a sense of pride as a yodnual 10.yr1.32eor 1a2.8yr1ys1a2.8y10.ystio(r1.32en).44a1a2.8y32eolic1a2.8yr1y32ela1a2.8yc1a2.8