



## Reaffirming Our Commitment to Excellence

### The Strategic Action Agenda: 2007-08

The College seeks to prepare liberally educated graduates to continue their quest for knowledge and to make the choices required of informed, responsible citizens. Skidmore faculty and staff create a challenging yet supportive environment that cultivates students' intellectual and personal excellence, encouraging them to expand their expectations of themselves while they enrich their academic understanding.

– Skidmore College Mission Statement

As we begin our third academic year under the current Strategic Plan, it is appropriate that we pause not only to reaffirm the shared values on which it is based but also to question how well we are living up to them where they matter the most – in the experience of our students. Are we doing all we can to help our students realize their potential for “intellectual and personal excellence”? Does our conception of excellence encompass the various dimensions of their lives or just some of them? Do we consistently motivate them to project the highest “expectations of themselves” upon their futures? Have we moved beyond the narrow, dichotomized thinking that situates the two components of a “challenging yet supportive environment” in opposition to one another? Or to ask the question more positively, have we fully embraced the essential complementarity of these two elements of effective pedagogy? How successfully are we preparing our students to live in the increasingly complex, multicultural world they will inhabit as Skidmore alumni? How clearly do we articulate the value of responsible citizenship throughout the College, and how well do we equip our students to realize this value in their lives? How successfully have we incorporated the environment – in all its various meanings – in our institutional planning? These are hardly simple questions. But they point to the larger purpose of our work that can easily become obscured in the quotidian detail of our busy lives. Ultimately, such reflections remind us that, in the words of the AAUP’s “1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure,” colleges and universities exist first and foremost “for the common good.” To the extent that we do live up to the indicated tenets of our mission statement we truly are meeting this responsibility.

Invoking the concept of common good brings together thoughts of our students and the world in which they will live as Skidmore alumni – a world they do not yet know and that is characterized, above all, by the rapidity of change. To describe this world as volatile, uncertain, chaotic, and ambiguous seems, if anything, an understatement. But the indeterminacy of our contemporary situation has both positive and negative dimensions that often interconnect. For example, continuing technological advancements that evoke new forms of creativity can also provide new platforms for amorphous terrorist networks whose organizational structures themselves increasingly mimic the distributed architecture of the Internet. Large-scale economic realignment and international political instability (especially in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia) present obvious challenges along with sometimes less evident opportunities. Continuing

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American higher education confronts unprecedented public skepticism, the world has never been in greater need of the educational values that historically have defined the liberal arts college – values that collectively set the standard for excellence at our type of institution.

The first three goals of the Strategic Plan reference both the values recalled above and the skills that our graduates today require more than ever:

- I. We will challenge every Skidmore student to achieve academic excellence through full engagement with our rich and rigorous educational experience.
- II. We will challenge every Skidmore student to develop the intercultural understanding and global awareness necessary to thrive in the complex and increasingly interconnected world of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.
- III. We will prepare every Skidmore student to make the choices required of an informed, responsible citizen at home and in the world.

Above all, our Strategic Plan sets out a particular definition of excellence for Skidmore. We















2. Develop structure and process for Academic Planning and make significant progress on Academic Plan.

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dean of the Faculty, and Dean of Special Programs in



- To develop leadership opportunities across the College, establish cross-divisional working groups for institutional projects (such as FYE, space





- Assess and support curricular innovation relating to the goals of intercultural and global understanding as identified in the President's document on "Intercultural Literacy."
- Continue community conversations around diversity and global awareness to enhance cross-cultural understanding.

Administrative responsibility: Vice President for Academic Affairs,

Administrative Responsibility: Dean of Student Affairs.

- Working across divisions, consolidate community support for the work of the three diversity positions: The Assistant Director for EEO and Workforce Diversity, the Interim Director of Student Diversity Programs, and the Director of Intercultural Studies.

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Academic Affairs, Vice President for Finance and Administration, Dean of the Faculty, and Dean of Student Affairs.

25. Build upon the progress achieved to date toward

- Articulate a division-wide plan for developing informed responsible citizenship.
- Expand the alcohol and other drug program to include the “my student body” web program, the “BASICS” intervention model, and family education workshops.
- Improve advising for clubs and organizations by developing incentives for increase faculty and administrative involvement.

Administrative Responsibility: Dean of Student Affairs.

28. Assess the predictive value of the admissions ratings for co-curricular involvement and character for participation and citizenship at Skidmore. Assess how well admission ratings of candidates’ non-academic qualities predict citizenship and involvement at Skidmore.

Administrative Responsibility: Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid and Dean of Student Affairs.



of selected areas of the Strategic Plan. [See also #41, below.]

- Analyze the projected program costs for the new Zankel Music Center.
- Based upon the Science Plan, develop a prioritized and sequenced cost analysis of projected enhancements to the sciences. (May 2009)

Administrative Responsibility: President's Cabinet, the Institutional Policy and Planning Committee, and others as appropriate.

33. Improve our institutional capacity to communicate financial information effectively throughout the Skidmore community.  
Continue work of prior years to improve communications and provide fall and spring updates to College constituencies.

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Finance and Administration.

34. Work with the Board of Trustees to complete the planned transition in Board leadership.

Administrative Responsibility: President.

Develop and enhance both our key financial resources and our capacity to manage them.

35. Continue fund- and friend-raising efforts in connection with the "Creative Thought. Bold Promise." Comprehensive Campaign.

- Continue the development of the Annual Fund. Targets: \$6.4 Million; 40% participation. Focus particular attention on the youngest ten classes.
- Raise \$20-25M in new commitments (gifts and pledges) to the Comprehensive Campaign bringing four-year total to \$155-\$160M.
- Raise \$22M in new gifts (both new commitments and pledge payments) in FY08.
- Increase face-to-face visits with alums by 60% to 1,750.
- Increase size of Council of 100 by 33-50% (12-15 members).
- Increase Reunion Attendance by 10-15%.

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Advancement.

36. Attain fundraising objectives in support of Goal I.

- Complete Fundraising for Arthur Zankel Music Center: Target - \$9M. Raise final funds needed for construction and begin fundraising for endowment.
- Reach halfway point toward Tang Campaign Goal: Target - \$3-5M. Bring overall total raised for Tang to \$7-8M.



others as appropriate.  
Develop and enhance our capacity to manage our phys

community and beyond.

- Continue work of the North Woods Stewards and Friends of the North Woods in educational outreach, policy development, communication, and enforcement of policies for the North Woods.

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Finance and Administration in collaboration with President's Cabinet, the Campus Environmental Committee, and others as appropriate.

46. Continue program planning for the replacement of the Scribner Village Apartments.

Continue program-planning work for Scribner Village Replacement with goal of adding enough rooms to allow all returning juniors and seniors, and some sophomores, to live in apartments. As part of this study review other services that are appropriate to include in the new proposed facility, such as additional common spaces for studying (including group spaces), limited student studio space, aerobic workout facilities, and related. Explore ways to create long-term funding through Special Campaign, gifts, and other sources.

Administrative responsibility: Vice President for Finance and Administration, Dean of Student Affairs, and Vice President for

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Advancement.