

regarding the size of the population of residential students." This study was intended to "build



suggest that as much as an additional \$2.8 million would become available to the operating budget. This strikes us as beneficial to our students in meeting their needs; advantageous to our support staff and faculty as well, since more dollars will be available to address these needs without further stretching such precious human resources as our time; and by creating the opportunity to advance the goals of our strategic plan more expeditiously than would otherwise

student ratio has remained approximately the same at 11 to 1. Changes in academic program and student expectations have placed increased responsibility on faculty and staff, e.g. FYE, mentoring, engagement in collaborative research, scholarly productivity, and other aspects of the strategic plan. All of these have and will increase the academic quality of our programs and should be supported by the operating budget.

As we undertook our work, the optimization task force has been guided by a few underlying questions: how do we make sure that we are providing a quality educational experience for our students; how can we maintain or improve our selectivity for incoming students; what resources are needed to support the students we currently have, and how would these resources need to be adjusted if we had fewer or more students; how do we appropriately plan our enrollments and project our budget in ways that are aligned with the mission of the college and our strategic plan?

In formulating our recommendation, the subcommittee examined a number of issues as we attempted to project the consequences of recommending to IPPC for its consideration one of the three enrollment models outlined earlier. The subcommittee does not recommend returning to our previous target of 2,150 students since this would lead to several years of retrenchment at a moment where the College is doing well and moving forward on many fronts, including quantity of applications, admissions, gains in retention, and improving quality of student academic accomplishment. Moreover, the loss of revenue accruing from such a cut back would not only preclude us from meeting our critical needs but would also drastically stall the implementation of a strategic plan that has been enthusiastically endorsed by our community. The subcommittee also briefly considered the possibility of adding 100 students beyond our current enrollment of 2,275. And while the increased revenue from such an addition would surely help us to make even greater strides in realizing the goals we have outlined as a community, it would come with other costs-as yet undetermined costs that we believe must be interrogated more deliberately with greater input from the community. The subcommittee does agree that the possibility of eventually increasing our enrollment warrants careful study in the coming years and with significant consultation throughout the community. We intend to discuss with IPPC how such a study might be structured; but for now at least, we do not recommend growth beyond our current enrollment. . Moreover, the subcommittee recommends reserving dollars as a contingency fund to help contain unintended enrollment growth while allowing programs and services to continue moving forward even if student enrollment drops in one year or another. We could thus

there are many competing needs. Providing the academic support needed to deliver programs to our students is surely a priority, and has already been discussed in a very preliminary way.

The subcommittee deliberated a number of important questions:

(1) What staffing needs are currently going unmet in providing academic services for our 2280 students? But such needs must be measured against other pressing costs. For example, what amount of financial aid might be needed to insure access to a Skidmore education among those students wishing to attend the College from the more than 6,000 applications we have been receiving over the last few years?

(2) We also recognize that we have a large constituency of non-residential students and learners whose participation in our academic programs throughout the entire calendar year forms an integral part of our curricular and co-curricular commitments. Accordingly, how can we identify the wherewithal to allow members of the faculty and staff to contribute fully to these academic opportunities as we rethink the overall scope of academic affairs on this campus? How can we provide the time for faculty and staff to take on more independent study supervision, and engage more regularly in collaborative projects with our students? And similarly, how should we provide the time needed for faculty and staff to make informed choices about participating in the shared governance structure so basic to our culture?

Skidmore community. In so doing, we believe that Goal. IV of the *Strategic Plan - Independence and Resources* ("We will preserve Skidmore's independence by developing the resources required to realize our aspirations") is well served.

The Optimization Subcommittee is confident that we as a community have the resources required to provide our students with an even better experience than we can currently offer. We are also confident that IPPC will represent the College wisely in working through the challenging choices that are ahead. Finally, we look forward to our discussion with IPPC Friday morning, and later in the day at the February Faculty Meeting.

Thank you.