

FACULTY MEETING
November 6, 2009

MOTION

MOTION: CEPP moves that the faculty endorse the “Goals for Student Learning and Development.”

Rationale:

The Goals for Student Learning and Development are the result of collaboration by the Assessment Steering Committee and the Committee on Educational Policies and Planning, and of extensive consultation with other members of the Skidmore community. They articulate an understanding of the Skidmore education that has emerged over the past decade through numerous discussions. They have been synthesized from several Skidmore documents and three nationally-based sets of goals for liberal arts learning, and refined with faculty during three open forums.

In the context of growing critiques of the value of the liberal arts college, Skidmore is increasingly called upon to articulate to our own larger community (alumni, parents, trustees) and to external constituencies our collective understanding of the Skidmore education, as well as evidence of its effectiveness. The Goals help us to communicate how we believe our students are transformed by their experiences here.

The Goals go beyond what happens in the classroom and across the majors. They also speak, for example, to the efforts of Student Affairs; to learning about health and wellness; to career opportunities; and to the benefits of athletics, civic engagement, and student organizations. They reflect the unique characteristics and synergies of our general education requirements, and of our B.S. and B.A. programs. To endorse this document means that we support educational aims that are already well established at Skidmore.

CEPP is asking for faculty endorsement as a way to indicate our support for each other’s efforts across the college, to look beyond our own departments and take an integral view of the Skidmore education. This document does not ask faculty to incorporate every goal into individual courses or even departments.

A yes vote provides a framework for further work by the Assessment Steering Committee to study how the college as a whole is meeting these goals. The Middle States Commission on Higher Education requires us to develop goals for assessing student learning at all levels of the curriculum. Departments are already evaluating whether their students are learning what curricula promise. Some of the general goals in this document have already been the basis of assessments; others will provide starting points for new projects. For example, the FYE is beginning a second round of program assessment, and our Alumni Affairs office is surveying graduates regarding their experiences here. But we do not yet have a coherent framework for assessing student learning at an institutional level. This document both fulfills the accreditation mandate and furthers our ongoing efforts to understand whether our students are indeed learning what we promise as a college.