



Strategic Choices

The Strategic Action Agenda: 2008-2009

Recent Accomplishments

Four years ago, Skidmore College approved a *Strategic Plan* that projected a future few schools would dare to envision – a future in which we would realize our “bold promise” to become an institution

that inspires, challenges, and supports the highest levels of excellence for *all* our students, not just for some or even many of them – as evidenced by their achievements in realizing the values of engaged liberal learning while at Skidmore and expressing them throughout their lives. The Skidmore we envision expects that an intellectually rigorous, transformative educational experience will lead to graduates whose achievements at Skidmore will launch them into the next phase of their lives, who are prepared to function effectively in the complex and increasingly diverse world of the 21st Century, and who understand and embrace the responsibilities of living as informed, responsible citizens.¹

This overarching educational objective is matched by ambitions to continue the work of positioning Skidmore as a leading, highly selective national liberal arts college – (Title 6 of the 2007-2011 Strategic Plan)

Ladd Task Force regarding ways to make Case Center a more effective gathering place for students.

- We have included geothermal heating and cooling as well as other environmentally responsible design features in our three largest recent construction projects (the Northwoods Apartments, the Dining Hall renovation, and the Zankel Center), and we have taken other significant steps to improve the sustainability of all our operations (including, most recently, the hiring of a Campus Sustainability Coordinator).

Goal IV – Independence and Resources

- We have implemented a compensation plan that has moved faculty salaries to the median (or above) of our comparison group schools and that also has maintained a competitive market position for other employee groups, while stabilizing expenditures relating to employee benefits. Funds for this initiative were made available by increasing our budgeted Net Fiscal Enrollment (NFE) by 130 students to 2,280 (reflecting what was then our approximate *enrollment* of that same number). This decision was approved by the Board of Trustees in May 2006 following extensive work by the “Optimization” Task Force.³
- We have completed a revised *Campus Plan* (including a stewardship plan for the North Woods). We have begun planning for the replacement of Scribner Village and several other capital projects.
- To-date, we have renovated four of our traditional residence halls (leaving five to be done), in addition to bringing the Northwoods Apartments on line. We have completely renovated the dining hall, and we have considerably upgraded our athletic facilities. At the same time, we have made numerous improvements to academic spaces across campus (including adding new classrooms, offices, and laboratories).
- We consistently have met or exceeded ambitious targets for the Annual Fund and other areas of fundraising. We have brought the current total of the “Creative Thought – Bold Promise” Campaign to more than \$165 million.
- As a result of both fundraising and extremely competent management by the Investment Committee, our endowment was approaching \$300 million until the severe economic downturn and drop in the stock market (especially during August, September, and early October, 2008) reversed some of this progress.

Many observers, both within and outside of the Skidmore community, have commented on our positive momentum. Even more importantly, the vast majority of the indicated achievements directly influence our students’ experience for the better. Those that do so less directly (e.g.,

³Improved retention among upper-class students and continuing strong admissions performance have made it difficult to reduce our actual student population to this targeted level. Our strongly increased selectivity and ambitious projections for “yield” on admitted candidates have brought our projected NFE for 2008-09 to approximately 2,380, based on a projected fall 2008 student enrollment of approximately 2,430.

attaining our targets for the Annual Fund, providing competitive faculty salaries) strengthen our capacity to meet our broad educational objectives.

Our continuing challenge is to sustain this momentum in the face of an uncertain economy and a set of financial realities pertaining to higher education, in general, and to Skidmore, in particular, that will place increasing pressures on our ability to plan and manage our resources even as we continue to seek new levels of excellence. Fortunately, the *Strategic Plan* remains a viable guide for our actions, directing our attention

These and other considerations mean that we will continue to confront significant

chairs and program directors, chairs of governance committees, heads of administrative offices, and officers in the Student Government Association and other student organizations, to name just a few. These persons are called upon to establish the conditions necessary for collective work in pursuit of ends that we could not attain working alone – a basic definition of leadership.⁶

The point to be emphasized here is that one essential responsibility of leaders – no matter where they serve – is to realize the values identified above, especially that of seeing their decision-making in an institutional context and helping those with whom they work most closely to realize

Strategic Action Agenda Items 2008-09

Note: Unless otherwise indicated, the expected date of completion for each of the following projects is June 1, 2009.

Goal I – Student Engagement and Academic Achievement Projects/Action Steps

Ø *Enhance institutional structure to support academic excellence.*

1. Clarify and refine the structure of Academic Affairs.

- Continue to clarify the roles and functions of the Vice President of Academic Affairs, Dean of the Faculty, and Dean of Special Programs. (VPAA)
- Further explore the opportunities created by integrating the Office of the Dean of Special Programs and the Office of the Dean of the Faculty within Academic Affairs. (DSP/DOF)
- Continue to foster and make visible the connections among the Office of the Dean of the Faculty, the Office of the Dean of Special Programs, the Tang, the Library, and other areas of the College – especially as those connections advance initiatives in the *Strategic Plan*. (VPAA)
- Implement structural changes in the Office of the Dean of the Faculty. (DOF)
- Appoint “regular” (i.e., non-interim) Dean of Special Programs. (VPAA)
- Oversee leadership transitions in external degree programs. (DSP)
- Implement structural changes in Special Programs. (DSP)
- Continue process for academic planning. (VPAA)

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dean of the Faculty, Dean of Special Programs (as above).

2. Clarify the mission of the Office of Special Programs and its place in the College.

- Complete work (from Summer 2008) of developing a model for a restructured UWW in accordance with the charge of the UWW working group and resolve the strategic discussion regarding the future of the program.
- Implement next steps of Special Programs Study Group Report for all of ODSP (assess summer programs, construct budget, etc.).

Administrative Responsibility: Dean of Special Programs.

3. Enhance Skidmore’s capacity for academic assessment.

- Appoint Faculty Assessment Coordinator.
- Establish Assessment Steering Committee (subcommittee of CEPP).
- Hire Assessment Research Coordinator.
- Implement new assessment structure.

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Academic Affairs.

4. Establish initiatives to support the academic achievement, retention, and engagement of all students not currently supported by the opportunity program.

- Support cross-divisional working groups to create effective intervention strategies during the first and sophomore years.
- Continue efforts to support Black and Latino males.
- Enhance and support academic achievement for students in the sciences.

Administrative Responsibility: Dean of the Faculty and Dean of Student Affairs.

5. Evaluate recent trends in the yield of admitted students in the first-year class.

Administrative Responsibility: Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid.

6. Achieve fundraising objectives to support Goal I.

- Complete funding for Arthur Zankel Music Center: \$4 million for endowment and launch “seat” campaign to support initial operating costs (\$1-2 million).
- Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum: \$2-4 million for the Mellon match, \$250,000 for Friends of the Tang, and \$250,000 for programs and exhibitions.
- Increase financial support for the sciences: raise \$3-5 million for current and endowed funds and, with Academic Affairs, explore creation of science advisory board.
- Raise \$3-5 million for other academic programs and endowment.

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Advancement.

Ø Increase student academic engagement in the first year.

7. Continue to monitor the First-Year Experience (FYE).

- Review the FYE in London program.
- Develop a sustainable system for staffing the Human Dilemmas cluster.
- Continue Teagle sophomore initiative.

Administrative Responsibility: Dean of the Faculty.

8. Enhance the collaborative programming between the First-Year Experience and the Dean of Student Affairs.

Establish working group to strengthen the residential learning components of FYE.

Administrative Responsibility: Dean of Student Affairs.

Ø Increase support for research and creative activity across the faculty career.

9. Strengthen support for research and creative activity across the faculty career.

- Develop vision and plans for a Center (Center Study Group) to support faculty as teachers, scholars, and citizens from orientation through retirement and beyond. (VPAA)
- Plan for faculty retirements (bridge grant). (VPAA)
- Assess faculty workload by reviewing course release structure, support for academic administrative work, independent studies, and service. (DOF)

- Review sabbatical support and planning in order to enhance financial support for sabbatical leaves. (DOF)

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Academic Affairs.

- Continue review of administrative computer systems and determine desired strategic platform direction by May 2009.

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Finance and Administration, in collaboration with Vice President for Academic Affairs, IPPC, and IRC.

- Continue to develop integrated database to support lifelong connections with alumni.

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Advancement.

Ø *Strengthen the natural sciences to increase the number of science majors and enhance the science literacy of all Skidmore students.*

15. Pursue various initiatives to strengthen the natural sciences.

- Complete Science Plan and identify resources to support it.
- Enhance retention and academic support in the sciences with Student Academic Services.

Administrative Responsibility: Dean of the Faculty.

16. Continue to enhance the visibility of the sciences to prospective students and counselors.

Administrative Responsibility: Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid.

Ø *Increase our effectiveness in helping our graduates plan and prepare for their post-Skidmore lives.*

17. Investigate funding opportunities to dramatically increase available resources for paid internship opportunities for all Skidmore students.

Administrative responsibility: Dean of Student Affairs.

Ø *Strengthen our system of shared governance and our capacity for developing leadership throughout the College.*

18. Continue a community conversation about our goals for shared governance and the effectiveness of our current structures and procedures.

- Cultivate leadership skills and provide leadership development for institutional academic leaders, including department chairs, program directors, and other academic professionals. (VPAA Senior Staff)
- Complete revisions of Part One, Article X of the *Faculty Handbook*. (VPAA)
- With FEC, review function and structure of faculty meetings. (VPAA)

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Academic Affairs/VPAA Senior Staff (as above).

Ø *Take better advantage of the resources and capacity for innovation in the Office of the Dean of Special Programs (ODSP) to support the relevant initiatives identified under this Goal (and others, as appropriate).*

19. Continue to advance the work of the Office of Special Programs.

- Hire UWW Director.
- Hire MALS Director.
- Complete implementation of Oracle in UWW and MALS.
- Restructure 4th Floor operations.
- Institute the Carr Residency.

Administrative Responsibility: Dean of Special Programs.

20. Increase financial support for Special Programs.

- Develop advancement prospects to support new and continuing programs in conjunction with articulated plan for Special Programs.
- Institutionalize advancement opportunities for the Office of the Dean of Special Programs.

24.

- Foster development of links to broader community: e.g., Saratoga Hospital professional development and ESL support; Water Resources Initiatives.

Administrative Responsibility: Dean of the Faculty and Dean of Student Affairs.

Ø *Enhance residential learning.*

30. Evaluate the first-year programming model for the residential halls.

Administrative Responsibility: Dean of Student Affairs.

Ø *Increase support for athletics, fitness, and wellness.*

31. Work toward the implementation of the recommendations from the Health and Wellness Task Force report.

Administrative Responsibility: Dean of Student Affairs.

32. Enhance financial support for athletics, fitness, and wellness.

- With the Friends of Skidmore Athletics, raise \$250,000 for athletics operations and \$200,000 for capital projects.
- Develop and launch fundraising efforts for new equestrian and crew facilities.

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Advancement.

Ø *Develop, broaden, and deepen the College's connections to the local community; enhance our ability to function as a socially and environmentally responsible corporate citizen.*

33. Review alumni and college events practices to identify opportunities to integrate more environmentally friendly practices.

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Advancement.

Goal IV – Independence and Resources

Projects/Action Steps

Ø *Continue to develop institutional capacity for effective planning and proactive internal communication.*

34. Continue to 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.

35. Engage in dialogue with the presidents and senior administrators of Colgate, Hamilton, Hobart and William Smith, St. Lawrence, and Union to explore the possibility of extending the existing four-college consortial arrangement to include two additional schools and develop new forms of cooperation. Work with the Mellon Foundation to secure additional support for this new venture.

Administrative Responsibility: President.

- 36. Develop plans to celebrate, with the campus and other important constituencies, key accomplishments of the comprehensive campaign and the *Strategic Plan*.**

Initiate planning to celebrate, in fall 2010, the successful conclusion of the

43. Continue to implement the Total Comprehensive Compensation Framework.

As we continue to move forward with the Total Comprehensive Compensation Framework goal of bringing both salaries and benefits of all Skidmore employees to the median of our peers (or better), give special attention to areas where current salary levels impede our ability to hire our first-choice candidates. Continue to monitor progress toward meeting targets in relation to appropriate external comparison groups. Explore ways to create long-term funding for salary competitiveness through the Comprehensive Campaign.

Administrative Responsibility: President in collaboration with Cabinet.

Ø Develop and enhance our capacity to manage our physical resources.**44. Continue to address facilities planning for academic space.**

- Plan for classroom and office space. (DOF/VPFA)
- Coordinate Campus Plan with Academic Plan. (VPAA/VPFA)

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dean of the Faculty, Vice President for Finance and Administration (as above).

45. Further develop the Campus Plan – complete the development of a comprehensive facilities planning process.

Continue to develop the Campus Plan first-phase initiatives including defining initial programming plans, analyzing ranges of costs of these plans, and developing initial funding plans for these projects through the Comprehensive Campaign, Special Campaigns, possible debt financing, and the operating budget. Place this work in the context of a comprehensive planning process relating to major capital projects.

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

46. Further develop campus sustainability policies.

Continue to develop campus sustainability policies, plans, and initiatives, and communicate to the community the College's commitment to sustainability.

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Finance and Administration and Vice President for Academic Affairs in collaboration with the President's Cabinet, the Institutional Policy and Planning Committee, and others as appropriate.

47. Continue to address deferred maintenance.

Implement next phase of work to address issues of deferred maintenance. Finalize long-range schedule for completing this work.

Administrative Responsibility

immediate and long-term needs. Ensure effective management for appropriate educational and recreational uses by the Skidmore community and local residents. Communicate the results of this work effectively within the Skidmore community and beyond. Continue work of the North Woods Stewards and Friends of the North Woods in education, development of policies, communication, and enforcement of policies for the woods.

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

49. Complete program planning for the replacement of the Scribner Village Apartments.

Complete program planning for Scribner Village Replacement, with the goal of adding enough rooms to accommodate all returning juniors and seniors, and some sophomores, in apartments. Review other services that appropriately can be included in the new proposed facility, such as additional common spaces for studying (including group spaces), limited aerobic workout facilities, and related. Explore ways to create long-term funding through a Special Campaign, gifts, special fees, and other sources.

Administrative responsibility: Dean of Student Affairs, in collaboration with Vice President for Finance and Administration and Vice President for Advancement.

50. Continue to address facilities needs in Student Affairs.

- Begin a comprehensive review of the space needs for Health and Wellness.
- Continue efforts to address athletic facilities needs, specifically the boathouse, the stables/riding center, and an indoor tennis facility.

Administrative Responsibility: Dean of Student Affairs.

51. Continue work begun by the Case-Ladd Task Force.

Administrative Responsibility: Dean of Student Affairs, in collaboration with Dean of the Faculty and Dean of Special Programs.

Ø Cultivate a broader positive awareness of Skidmore within local, regional, and national populations.

52. Create a stronger sense among alumni of being part of a lifelong community.

Launch a new virtual social networking community.

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Advancement.

53. Create a more personalized experience for each alumna/us.

- Clean up alumni database.
- Continue work of integrating existing college databases to better serve students once they graduate.
- Institute segmented approach to fundraising and develop events targeted at specific constituencies.

- Launch regular survey program.

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Advancement.

54. Broaden base of support and leadership within the alumni community.

- Continue to grow Council of 100 (add 5-10 new net members).
- Expand volunteer base by 10%.
- Reinvigorate Student Alumni Council.
- Launch Homecoming and “Zero-Year” Reunion programs.

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Advancement.

Ø *Develop and enhance the “equity” in the Skidmore name.*

55. Continue to strengthen brand and pride in the College.

- Launch “Global Skidmore” and “Skidmore Science” portals.
- Complete Phase II of “Virtual Skidmore.”
- Focus *Scope* in theme-based fashion around key elements of the *Strategic Plan*.

Administrative Responsibility: Vice President for Advancement.