Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment Annual Report
2018-2019 Academic Year

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This report is authored by Peter von Allmen, Ph.D., Professor of Economics and Faculty Director of Assessment, Amy J. Tweedy, Ph.D., Institutional Effectiveness Specialist and members of the IPPC Sub-Committee on Institutional Effectiveness.

Assessment of the Assessment

A proposal was drafted in 2016 proposing a new assessment model for Skidmore College that expanded an institutional focus on assessment beyond the academic departments. This proposal was, in part, sparked by informal feedback from the Middle States self-study team. The proposal recommended key changes including reconfiguring an existing vacated position into a position specifically with an institutional effectiveness focus. In addition, it was proposed that a current governance sub-committee on assessment would be retitled the IPPC sub-committee on Institutional Effectiveness and the membership would be changed to include representatives from each division across the college. Further, the faculty position responsibilities and title were updated to reflect the needs of the current assessment climate. Finally, it was determined that this sitting faculty assessment representative would officially serve as member of the faculty Committee on Educational Planning and Policy (CEPP).

After careful conversation with Cabinet and IPPC, the proposal was approved in spring 2018. The refocus of a governance committee and dedicated resources reflected an institutional commitment to a more coordinated and consistent culture of assessment across the college. IPPC's operating code was updated to mirror the approved committee structure.

Institutional Effectiveness Specialist

Dr. Amy Tweedy joined the Skidmore community in September 2018. As the Institutional Effectiveness Specialist (IES), Amy works collaboratively with the college community to support and document data-informed decision-making across the College, thereby providing a strategic and comprehensive institutional perspective that tells the institution's story. Her focus is to support the College's mission and advance Skidmore's vision and goals by facilitating effective and useful assessment of administrative and educational support functions across all divisions and areas. Amy co-chairs the IPPC's Subcommittee on Institutional Effectiveness (SIE) along with the Faculty Director of Assessment (FDA). She works in tangent with the FDA to provide leadership and expertise for student learning outcomes across academic departments. Amy also serves as the Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) to our regional accreditor, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

Faculty Director of Assessment

Dr. Peter von Allmen began as the Faculty Director of Assessment in January 2019. Dr. von Allmen is a Professor of Economics and holds the David H. Porter chair. Sarah Goodwin previously served as the long-standing Faculty Assessment Coordinator (FAC) who left the position in the spring of 2018. Crystal Moore, Associate Dean, served as the Interim Faculty Director of Assessment in the fall 2018. The position title was changed to reflect an expansion of responsibilities.

The Faculty Handbook was updated to incorporate the Faculty Director of Assessment as a member of CEPP. The Department Chair and Program Directors' Handbook was also updated to reflect the change in staffing as well as changes to the process for submitting annual reports.

IPPC Sub-Committee on Institutional Effectiveness (SIE)

The Institutional Policy and Planning Committee (IPPC) operating code was revised to incorporate the new sub-committee on Institutional Effectiveness during the spring of 2018. The committee's charge was revised to include a broader college perspective. In addition, the membership was updated to include representatives from each division within the College.

The SIE committee was populated in late 2018 with each Vice President nominating a representative. The committee moved from meeting three times a year to meeting monthly and held its first meeting in December. During spring 2019, the committee engaged in training on the basics of institutional effectiveness, writing learning outcomes, and selecting institutional metrics. In addition, the committee (re)familiarized themselves with the College's strategic plan and strategic action agendas. Finally, the committee reviewed multiple examples of institutional dashboards. For the 2019-2020 academic year, the committee will revise the Institutional Assessment Plan. As part of that revision, the committee will propose campus-wide expectations and processes for assessment.

Academic Departments Assessment

As has been the case for many years, Department Chairs and Program Directors (CPDs) were asked to complete an annual assessment project. Unlike previous years, in which department and programs were free to pursue assessment on whatever aspect of their programs seemed more appropriate, CPDs were asked to complete a fairly tightly prescribed project for 2018-19. In 2022, the college will transition to a new set of General Education requirements. One element of these new requirements is to explicitly task departments and programs with ensuring that students achieve competence in four literacies (plus writing, which already had an "in-the-major" component): Information literacy, technological literacy, visual literacy and oral communication. In the fall, a faculty panel presented how they were engaging in the literacies from their particular disciplinary perspective. The IE Specialist worked in collaboration with the Dean's Office to plan and prepare sample learning outcomes and assessment projects as aligned with the literacies.

CPDs were asked to work in two stages. In the first, each program/department developed a set of learning outcomes for each literacy and then mapped those outcomes to specific courses (due in March), noting where each outcome would be introduced, reinforced, and ultimately mastered. After completing the outcome – course maps, the next step was to articulate specific learning activities and potential modes of assessment. An important goal of this exercise was for programs and departments to identify gaps in their curricula in time to make appropriate changes to either individual courses or to requirements before the implementation of the new requirements. Below, we provide some additional detail on the process.

Determining the learning outcomes. Within each literacy, we suggested that each program/department begin with the question: within each literacy area, what would you like your students to learn? For example, what does it mean for a music major to be technologically literate? Of course, the answer to this question would be quite different for a psychology major or a history major. The goal, in short, is to develop a succinct, specific set of competencies that you would like your majors to obtain before they graduate. As noted in the CEPP document describing the new curriculum, by embedding a set of requirements in the major, faculty in each discipline may determine for themselves how their majors understand, comprehend, experience, and relate to specific conventions within their discipline.

Course mapping. The second step in this process was to map these competencies to specific courses. For example, the economics department agreed that technological literacy included the ability to use statistical software to apply basic statistical techniques. Students learn to use the STATA statistics package in required statistics course. As noted above, developing competency may take place in one course or across multiple courses. The only constraint was that a student could not navigate around necessary coursework and still complete the major.

Learning activities. Once Programs and Departments decided in which courses the students should obtain a given competency, the next step was to develop (or simply note if they already exist) the learning activities within specific courses that will lead to the competency.

A critical part of the mapping process is to ensure that any learning outcome mapped to a given course is identified on the syllabus as one of the learning goals for the course. Doing so ensures that it is foregrounded to students and closes the loop on the planning process.

Assessment plan. The final step in the process was to provide a plan for how each literacy will be assessed. CPDs were asked to ensure that assessment be direct if at all possible (i.e. a direct examination of student work related to the learning outcomes.) Importantly, assessed work should be maintained in an archive for future reference.   CPDs were given a set of sample rubrics for each literacy to assist in this process (Details here: https://www.skidmore.edu/assessment/programs/index.php).

Overall, the response rate from programs and departments was outstanding. Every department and program except one turned in part I of the project and all but three turned in the final report. This represents a significant increase in the response rate from previous years. In an effort to maintain this high response rate and also maintain focused effort on the new curriculum, programs and departments were offered the opportunity to work on information literacy assessment in 2019-2020. This requires no additional work on their part but has two important potential benefits. First, it may make the work of the CPDs easier as the Faculty Director of Assessment (FDA) can facilitate idea sharing as each program or department goes about their work. Second, it may allow for college-wide level analysis by the FDA that may inform the work of the curriculum committee or CEPP. At least seven departments plan to participate. In addition, another five departments plan to focus on oral communication assessment.

Campus Climate Survey

One of the pillars of the Skidmore strategic plan is well-being whose goal is to foster a creative, inclusive and safe community.[1] In alignment with this institutional commitment, Skidmore College administered a Diversity and Equity Campus Climate Survey in the spring of 2019. The survey was developed by the Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium (HEDS) whose members are predominantly private, liberal arts colleges[2]. In an effort to provide benchmarking regionally, the survey is also being administered at some of the other New York Six Colleges. For example, St. Lawrence administered the survey in the spring of 2018.

The Committee on Intercultural and Global Understanding (CIGU) led the administration of the survey. The committee is currently co-chaired by Joshua Woodfork, VP of Strategic Planning and Chief Diversity

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[1] https://www.skidmore.edu/planning/
[2] https://www.hedsconsortium.org/heds-diversity-equity-campus-climate-survey/

Officer and Jennifer Mueller, Director of Intergroup Relations Program (IGR) and Assistant Professor of Sociology. Members of CIGU worked in collaboration with Student Government Association, Dining Services, Facilities, Academic Affairs, Residence Life, Student Life and Engagement, Institutional Research and Communications to raise awareness within the community and encourage participation from all members of the community.

The IE Specialist will work in collaboration with CIGU in the 19-20 academic year on analyzing the results and creating an action plan.

Website

The Coordinator for Institutional Research and Assessment worked closely together with both the previous FAC and IES to update the website to represent the current structure and generally refresh the webpage. This included changing language which was previously largely focused on academic outcomes assessment to an institutional effectiveness framework. The page housing archived department and program assessment reports was simplified and divided into pages for older (2013 and earlier) and newer (2014 and later) reports. A section was added to house Student Affairs assessment reports that follows the same format as Academic Affairs. The Academic Affairs pages were updated to provide instructions and materials for the 2018-2019 assessment activities. The SIE committee information, function and membership were also added. Accreditation information that had been housed on multiple separate pages was consolidated into one central page, and information about individual program accreditations was organized and updated.

Hosted Hobart William Smith on Assessment

Skidmore hosted a group of Hobart Williams Smith faculty and administrators this week to learn more about our approach and commitment to assessment. As part of an academic affairs committee, members conducted a scan of comparable institution websites on assessment and were impressed with what was clearly a visible and organized process at Skidmore. The group met with various constituents including Sarah Goodwin as the founder of the assessment program, Peter von Allman, Faculty Director of Assessment, Crystal Moore, Associate Dean, and Amy Tweedy, Institutional Effectiveness, a group of faculty, the IR staff and representatives from Student Affairs. In the closing conversation over lunch in D-hall, the overriding sentiment was appreciation for the staffing structure in place to support outcomes assessment, the dedication of faculty to the assessment process demonstrated and documented through annual projects, and relief at the range of departmental engagement with assessment projects. In other words, that a robust culture of assessment was not about achieving perfection, but rather a continued effort to keep learning. As such, it was a pleasure to connect with NY6 colleagues and learn about their experiences and systems, as well.

 A special thank you to Crystal Moore and Brooke Toma for making arrangements.

Professional Development

Assessment Network of New York Annual Conference.
The Assessment Network of New York held their Annual conference in the spring of 2019 in Saratoga Springs. The Conference theme was "*Stepping Up for Social Justice: Assessment in the Service of Equity and Inclusion.*" Taking advantage of such close proximity, all of the senior Student Affairs staff

attended the conference along with the FDA and SIE. In addition to opportunities for networking, the conference offered opportunities to expand ideas for incorporating assessment at Skidmore College. Speakers included Dr. Tia Brown McNair, Vice President, Office of Diversity, Equity and Student Success from the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) and Dr. Idna M. Corbett, Vice President of Institutional Field Relations from the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE).

Middle States

The Faculty Director of Assessment and the IE Specialist both attended the 2018 MSCHE annual conference. In addition, the IE Specialist attended Peer Evaluator Training in preparation for serving as a member of an accreditation team.

AAC&U

The Faculty Director of Assessment attended the AAC&U Conference focused on general education. This was especially appropriate given the College's adoption of a revised general education curriculum.

Analysis of Student Evaluation of Teaching (qSET)

In 2012-2013, the college-wide student evaluation was revised and approved with the provision that it be reviewed. In 2019, CEPP partnered with the Office of Institutional Research to gather and analyze five years of qSET data. The specific information obtained, from the form itself and other sources, were: academic division, course level, course start time, reason for taking course, other course characteristics, student, course student composition, % of class female, instructor, employment status. CEPP also sought to determine whether there was agreement between the sub questions in each category and the overall questions. Finally, they were curious if teaching evaluations were changing over time. To summarize, they aimed to determine:

1) if certain student, course, or instructor characteristics influenced qSET scores at Skidmore
2) if there was congruity between sub-question and overall question qSET scores
3) if qSET scores are changing over time

The initial results of the analysis were shared at the April 26th faculty meeting with a commitment to further analysis and creating an action agenda in the 2019-2020 academic year.

In addition to a quantitative analysis of student evaluation data and as a benchmarking exercise, CEPP invited Dr. Ginger Clark from the University of Southern California to share their experience rethinking and revising methods for assessing teaching effectiveness and student learning.

Counseling Center Service Model

In the 2017-2018 academic year, the Counseling Center hit "all-time highs" in the number of students seeking support, the number of therapy appointments provided, the number of third-party consultations conducted, the number of same-day emergency appointments offered, and the number of after-hours on-call contacts received. We also witnessed an increase in the average level of distress students reported at their initial appointments with the Center. Examining the data we've collected at the Center over the last 14 years, we identified a steady increase in the demand for our services, with an average increase of 6+% per year over the time we've been tracking utilization. While our staffing has

grown over the years, demand for services has outpaced supply and we've found it increasingly difficult to keep up.

This summer, we compared our in-house data to national trends and discovered that our experience isn't unique. Counseling Centers across the country have been seeing steady increases in the number of students seeking their services over the last decade or more. While enrollment has grown at many colleges and universities in recent years, utilization of on-campus mental health services increased at a rate *5x faster* than increases in enrollment between AY 09-10 and AY 14-15. In fact, the average increase in utilization over that period was 30% – a number that closely resembles our own growth in demand. Counseling Centers report seeing more students coming in with histories of anxiety and depression, previous psychiatric hospitalizations, incidents of non-suicidal self-injury, and suicide attempts.

Recognizing that our demand issues are unlikely to go away, we spent last summer and fall exploring potential changes to our service delivery model that might help us to continue providing assistance to as many students as possible *without* increased wait times, reductions in our session limit, or the need for additional staffing. We networked with other counseling center directors, reviewed the professional literature, discussed our challenges and possible solutions with colleagues in and outside of the Center, and surveyed students about some of their service priorities and preferences. The result is a new system for how we will seek to meet our student mental health needs.

Starting this fall, we will initiate a "stepped care" service model. The goal of the model is to better match resources to students' immediate mental health needs. Many of our students will engage in "one-at-a-time" individual therapy appointments, designed to help them better understand their most pressing concern and develop a set of practical strategies for dealing more effectively with the problem. Others will attend 3-session skill-building workshops, or engage in a brief course of focused meetings with a campus wellness coach. Those at increased risk for suicide will receive weekly therapy appointments using an empirically supported approach called the CAMS. Students who are hesitant to seek services in person will find an increased set of self-help resources on our website. And, finally, students interested in receiving more ongoing support will be provided with tailored referrals to local clinicians who have experience with their area of difficulty and who participate in their health insurance plan.

While the new model will undoubtedly undergo some adjustments as we put it into practice, we're hopeful that students will continue to experience the Counseling Center as a responsive, supportive "first stop" resource for their mental health needs.

Assessing CIS Funding

The Office of Finance and Administration conducted an assessment of the funding and construction of the Center for Integrated Sciences. After struggling with how to complete the project, the college has found a path to complete all three phases with available funds and in a way that creates efficiencies that should ultimately cut down on escalation costs. The original project was broken down into four phases, north wing, east wing, new Dana and old Dana. The total project cost, including endowment, was at $158 million dollars and to date we have funding sources of $98.8 million including: bond borrowing of $35 million; pledges and gifts $47.9 million; investment earnings $900,000; $15 million of funds set aside from surpluses and budgeted debt service. The only phase that is currently fully funded is the north wing. We are looking to reduce project costs and find additional funding sources while ensuring that the College's financial resources remain strong throughout this process.

To keep costs down as we move forward, we are committed to completing all of CIS by 2025. A key element to this timeline is consolidation of east wing and new Dana into one phase, and the ability to bid out the work allowing us to get costs estimates and award a contract earlier than anticipated passing the risk of escalation from Skidmore to the general contractors and the subcontractors. We have also looked at value engineering, LEED certification and reviewed incremental operational costs. The final result of the project cost is now $127 million and instead of four phases there are now three phases.

Work continues on the north wing and we hope to begin site preparations for the Annex in the fall. The CIS committee meets weekly to make sure construction is progressing as planned.   The Dean's office is working with faculty to finalize plans for lab needs, classroom needs, and requests for common space uses and furniture configurations. The Purchasing Department is working on pricing out furniture and equipment. The CIS committee will continue to meet weekly for the foreseeable future.

CIS webpage: https://www.skidmore.edu/cishub/index.php. This webpage offers CIS news and construction updates.

Student Book Exchange

In March 2019, SGA created and administered a survey to all students asking about their experiences with buying and using textbooks as college students. Six-hundred sixty four (over 25% of) students responded to the survey, with representation balanced among class years and academic areas of the college. Seventy five percent of students report spending $299 or less per semester on books, with 35% spending between $100-$199. Most students reported spending less than $100 on additional non-textbook course materials, with art supplies most cited as the highest additional expense in this category. It was telling that 231 (60% of the respondents to the question) students expressed that they would be willing to contribute to a work group addressing affordable course materials at Skidmore.

The survey was an outgrowth of a college-wide committee that has been investigating the use of Open Educational Resources (OER) on campus. Open Educational Resources are educational materials designed and licensed to be freely available on a global scale. The committee expended its scope to include Affordable Course Materials (ACM), the ways in which educational materials can be offered at reduced prices or be included as part of subscriptions available through the library. In short, we are looking to reduce the overall cost of textbooks by utilizing a variety of resources.

Three main themes are evident in the results of the student survey. First, the cost of textbooks and educational materials is on all students' minds. Second, students are concerned about buying required texts that are not fully utilized – or not utilized at all. Third, students expressed frustration regarding the SkidShop's textbook buy-back program.

In response to these main themes – specifically, the first and third – the Student Government Association developed a program, given the working name of the Student Book Exchange Library, to help defray the cost of course materials, in collaboration with the Lucy Scribner Library, the Give-and-Go program, and the SkidShop. This program encouraged students (and faculty) to donate their books and textbooks at the end of the Spring 2019 semester, as opposed to selling them back to the SkidShop or otherwise getting rid of them. These books were then sorted over the summer and made available, for free, to students in the Fall 2019 semester. Approximately 1,500 books and textbooks were donated to

the program, 1,250 of which were catalogued online after being sorted. In its first semester of operation, over 75 books were lent to over 50 students, saving students an estimated $3,500. This program is expected to grow in the future as it becomes better known to the student body and its operation is streamlined.

Admissions

The Admissions Office implemented Slate- a comprehensive CRM that allows for email and text communication with prospective students, event management, travel planning, on-line application reading and admissions reporting. Some of the first year impacts are listed below.

- Increased our capacity to communicate in targeted ways with prospective students
- Significantly decreased the amount of manual data entry
- Enabled us to notify applicants on-line of admissions decisions approximately two weeks earlier

Communication/Marketing- Branding

Following the formation of the Office of Communications & Marketing in 2015, one of the first challenges before the new division was to develop formal brand standards. After a comprehensive environmental scan and review of past documentation, it became clear that Skidmore's previous, ad hoc graphic and visual guidelines had very little utility or application to the campus community at large. In addition, aside from the College seal and wordmark, most departments were not directly supported in or encouraged to align their communications with a "centralized" look and feel. These conclusions served as the catalyst for the creation of the first "official" Skidmore College brand standards.

Why is this important? Consistent and clear communication to the College's key audiences is essential to establishing and reinforcing Skidmore as a leader in the liberal arts and sciences. Put another way, to tell our story effectively we need to know that our messages not only resonate with the intended audience but also with each other and with the College's strategic priorities — that is the essence of building a "brand."

Beginning in 2016, the Office of Communications partnered with the Office of Admissions on a new "viewbook" design and the Office of Advancement on a messaging platform for the "Creating Our Future" fundraising campaign. With the roll-out of a completely re-designed Skidmore.edu website in the Spring of 2018, the three pillars of a formal visual and editorial standard were complete.

Focused on the "Creative Thought Matters" positioning statement developed to support Admissions recruitment over a decade before, the "new" College brand sought — above all else — to illustrate creativity as a concept that thrives in the intersection of different ideas, in the challenge of commonly held concepts and in the pursuit of personal and professional passions by Skidmore students and alumni alike. In essence, telling Skidmore's story is to personify the value of the liberal arts and sciences.

Anchored in Skidmore's "heritage" colors of green and yellow, tangible representations of the new brand standards were quickly established throughout campus or anywhere the College community gathers. Throughout the '18 / '19 fiscal year, everything from campus signage to event materials to name-tags and even banners display on Broadway in Saratoga Springs were carefully and consistently designed to align the perception of Skidmore.

Most recently, the hire of an Associate Director, Brand Communications and the move of the Skidmore Shop into the Communications' division solidified the "Skid Shop's" role as a clearing house for branded merchandise and apparel, and as an ambassador for Skidmore out to the broader community. In addition to a whole new line of products, the team there developed a "pop-up" shop that travels to events selling Skidmore items and promoting the College as a top choice for potential students and employees alike.

For review of the complete Skidmore brand standards manual and access to other design resources, visit: skidmore.edu/brand

Agenda Items for 2019-2020 Academic Year

The IPPC Subcommittee on Institutional Effectiveness (SIE) has committed to revising the Institutional Assessment Plan. The current version expires in 2019. As part of this endeavor, the committee will propose expectations for departments across the college in the areas of assessment.

In addition, a subcommittee has formed to review surveying alumni from a college-wide perspective. One outcome of the committee will be the revision and restart of the alumni learning census. This survey was previously administered by the Office of Alumni Relations & College Events. The survey served as an indirect assessment of the goals for student learning and development. In other words, did alumni feel they had achieved the College's overall expectations of a liberal arts education and were they finding having these skills valuable? Representatives from the Career Development Center, Office of Alumni Relations & College Events, and Academic Affairs will conduct an audit of current survey activities, determine needs, and work together to utilize resources effectively.

Another subcommittee of the SIE has also formed to brainstorm options to promote attention to the values of the institution in College planning and decision-making. The subcommittee will develop a proposal for IPPC's consideration.

The FDA and IES are collaborating on an analysis of high impact practices at Skidmore College. The cross-divisional project will include a review of what students are currently engaging in which practices, if engagement in these practices do result in higher graduation and retention rates and finally, question the extent to which they may be substituting for one another as students choose among various options?