

CAS Annual Report, 20072008

Members of CAS, 20072008:

Tillman Nechtman, History (Chair)

William Standish, Physics

Rachel Roe-Dale, Mathematics and Computer Science

Beth DeBold '09, Student Representative (appointed in the Spring)

Alison Shultz '09, Student Representative (appointed in the Fall)

Michael Ennis-McMillan, Dean of Studies

Ann H RTd David DeGroot Registrar

Tina Breakell, Program Coordinator, Office of Off-Campus Study and Exchange

Summary of Activities

The Committee on Academic Standing (CAS) met weekly during the academic year, and held two Academic Review sessions, one on 10 January 2008 and a second on 29 May 2008. In addition the committee held a separate end-of-the-year Academic Review session for cases involving graduating seniors on 13 May 2008.

committee elected to leave the language somewhat open, allowing the Dean of Studies to appoint an unspecified representative, to allow the Dean of Studies flexibility with regard to representation at CAS meetings and to avoid having to revise the membership language every time there is a structural or personnel change in the Dean of Studies Office.

The committee also elected to submit a subsequent change in the definition of its membership relative to the Registrar. First, the committee amended the Registrar's title from simply "Registrar" to "Registrar and Director of Institutional Research" to reflect changes to Ann Henderson's role in the administration. Moreover, the committee elected to add language that would allow the Registrar and Director of Institutional Research the same flexibility in appointing a representative to CAS as is afforded to the Dean of Studies.

The CAS operating guidelines note that the committee takes a somewhat broader view of its constituent membership than what is stated in the official definition. This broader view includes (where appropriate) non-voting representatives from the Office of Off-Campus Study and Exchanges (formerly the Office of International Programs), as representatives from these offices often have critical information that assists the committee in its deliberations. Though the changes that were made in the definition of the committee's membership reflect this tradition of a broadly defined CAS, none of the changes altered the voting structure of the CAS.

In reviewing the CAS' operating guidelines on membership, it quickly became evident that the guidelines themselves were in need of a total and systematic review and revision. As such, the committee began to set aside time during each of its weekly meetings to study the guidelines collectively and modify them so that they were in accord with the committee's actual practices and policies. Some of these revisions were minor. The more significant revisions included:

•***Off-Campus Study and Domestic Exchange Policies:*** The CAS found it necessary to review all policies relevant to study abroad in light of the college's new programs for domestic exchange. In most instances, this shift in policy only required that the committee re-word its existing policies to reflect that policies relevant to overseas study are also relevant to domestic exchange programs.

•***Policy on internship application deadlines:*** Dean Ennis-McMillan has been reviewing this matter since the 2006-2007 Academic Year, and, during this 2007-2008 academic year, he submitted a new set of policies and deadlines to the committee that needed to be reflected in the CAS' operating guidelines. In essence, the new policy moves deadlines for internship applications forward on the calendar for each semester or summer session. This earlier deadline allows the Dean of Studies Office more time to process the internships and forward the approved paperwork on to the Registrar's office, which in turn allows students to have a better

•***Academic Grievance Policy***: As the result of an academic/grade grievance complaint from a previous Skidmore student, the committee found itself charged with reflecting on how, if at all, the college might address student concerns about and grievance with what they might construe as capricious and arbitrary grading by any of their Skidmore faculty members. This issue first emerged at the Committee on Academic Freedom and Rights (CAFR) but came to the CAS through the Dean of Studies Office and the Committee on Educational Policies and Planning (CEPP).

In the course of its discussions of this matter, the CAS remained concerned about its place in the process, in large part because the committee's guidelines make it clear that the CAS will (and can) only change a grade at the request of a faculty member and only then in cases where a computational error has occurred with the original grade. Tillman Nechtman, Ann Henderson, and Michael Ennis-McMillan attended a

The 2005 guidelines were scheduled for review in two years. At the end of the 2006-2007 academic year, the CAS accordingly submitted the policies to the CEPP for review. In light of the committee's policy revisions during the 2007-

amount of Ws or for having fallen behind in terms of progress towards her/his degree.

At this time, the committee has included personal leaves of absence in this category, but it has also decided to make it clear in its guidelines that

COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC STANDING OPERATING GUIDELINES

Revised Spring 2008

I. COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

A. Purpose of the Committee: "To formulate and administer policy relating to the academic status of students including matters concerning probation, honors, requirements for graduation, acceleration, and leave of absence; to determine the academic status of each student on the basis of the record, reports of instructors, the opinion of the faculty in the major and any other relevant data; and to give any instructions and advice which seem necessary or advisable" (Faculty Handbook).

(Comment: the primary functions of the CAS are to interpret and apply—"administer"—established academic policies. On various occasions, however, the Committee also "formulates" academic policies, either for its own internal operations or to propose to the Faculty as a voting issue. In the past, for example, the CAS has made proposals regarding honors and probation criteria, plus/minus grading, the handling of "incomplete" grades, minimal standards for continuation, and deadlines for adding, dropping, and withdrawing from courses.)

B. Membership: three faculty members, at least one tenured and none of whom may be a member of the CAFR, appointed to serve three-year terms; the Dean of Studies or his or her designee, the Registrar and Director of Institutional Research or his or her designee, and two students selected by SGA, one junior to be appointed each year to serve a two-year term. (Faculty Handbook).

(Comment: in practice, the CAS has approved somewhat broader representation from the Office of the Registrar, the Dean of Studies Office, and the Office of Off-Campus Study & Exchanges [formerly the Office of International Programs], for staff from these areas often have critical pieces of information to contribute and also have to explain the CAS decisions to the students affected by them. This expanded participation in CAS meetings can occur only with the consent of the regular CAS membership. In any case, the balance of voting rights on the CAS remains exactly as described in The Faculty Handbook.)

C. General Philosophy: The CAS has been given rather broad authority by the Faculty to act for them in the interpretation of policies and deadlines which affect the academic life of students. The CAS attempts to uphold such policies as they were intended by the Faculty, but at the same time attends to unusual circumstances presented by a particular case. When the CAS departs from a particular policy, it tries to recall and anticipate all similar cases and thus attempts, for the sake of fairness, to preserve philosophical continuity in its interpretation of special exceptions. The guiding principle in CAS decisions is to insure the integrity and quality of student academic experience, while at the same time taking various student hardships and confusions into account.

D. **Operating Procedures** Requests from students (and in the case of grade changes, from faculty) are submitted to the Committee through the Office of the Registrar, the

course during the second week of classes may be approved if the student has a valid reason for submitting the drop request late. A drop after this point may be allowed only if there is strong evidence of understandable student confusion over the drop/add process, or some other serious delay beyond the student's control. Usually, however, the CAS allows a W instead of a drop.

(Comment: the possibility that the student may incur an overload fee has no bearing on the CAS drop/add/W decision and is entirely under the authority of Financial Services. Further, students who are lax about dropping or withdrawing from a course may have prevented another student from enrolling in the course.)

2) Withdrawal and Late Withdrawal (W) from a Course: In May 1999, the CAS proposed, and the faculty approved by vote, a policy of 2 withdrawals only per student during the period of enrollment at the College. The policy's effective start date was Fall 1999 for entering new and transfer students. These 2 withdrawals without grade penalty may be used at the student's discretion with each instructor's approval and in consultation with his or her faculty advisor for a variety of academic, personal, and medical reasons. The final grade is registered as a W on the transcript, and the student's official record does not indicate the reason for a withdrawal.

The CAS may entertain a late withdrawal from a course or courses, with strong support from the instructor(s), if the student was experiencing severe emotional or medical distress which significantly delayed or confused the student's ability to exercise responsibility. In certain severe cases, of medical emergency or emotional distress, the Office of the Dean of Studies, on behalf of the student and with CAS approval, may initiate late withdrawals from courses (or even a late drop) and so notify the student's instructors (who may decline the recommendation if they wish, since a W can be granted only with permission from the instructor).

Special Notes on Course Withdrawals (Approved by CAS February 17, 2005)

- Please see the section of the CAS Guidelines below that address "Preapproved Course Load Reductions" (II.A.5) and "Leaves of Absence" (II.C.1) for course withdrawal policies specifically related to personal and medical leaves.
- The CAS will rarely approve such a radical change in a student's course schedule that it effectively makes him/her a part time student (for example, from full-time student to a course schedule with one—or possibly two—courses remaining). CAS believes that Skidmore, as an academic institution and residential college, demands full and energetic participation on the part of its matriculated students. All petitions to seriously limit one's academic course load will require a withdrawal form, a letter from the student, and appropriate accompanying documentation (such as a letter from a medical professional supporting the limited course load).

- Withdrawals taken while participating in an off-campus study program will

hours) must be approved by the CAS. Students with a 3.00 GPA or above are automatically approved by the Office of the Registrar for an overload. For students whose GPA is lower than 3.00, the CAS may approve an overload if the student record shows sufficient strength, and assuming the quality of the student's academic experience would be preserved. Generally the CAS is more lenient with overload requests from final-term seniors, unless the overload would likely diminish the quality of the student's culminating academic experience. Overloads are never approved above 20 semester hours and are not available to first-term, first-year students.

Students studying off campus are subject to the same guidelines except in cases where the program's curricular structure requires students to earn an overload. Students may never earn more than 20 semester hours in a semester.

5) Preapproved Reduced Course Loads: Students requesting reduced course loads as part of an accommodation for an ongoing medical condition must follow the appropriate procedures for applying

3) Extension of Grade of Incomplete: a faculty member may request, through the Office of the Registrar, an extension beyond the normal six-week period for completion of Incomplete course work. Many such requests are routine; in other cases the CAS may consider whether the extension is warranted on academic or other grounds. Sometimes the CAS disallows an extension because of a pending "disqualification" or other important question of the student's academic standing.

C. Leaves of Absence (Personal, Medical, and Unexcused Academic):

1) Medical and Personal Leaves: most requests for medical and personal leaves are routinely handled by the Office of the Dean of Studies and reported to the CAS. A leave is granted when the student is too ill to continue at school and the committee believes it wise to suspend the usual expectations we have for a student so that he or she may attend to the illness or in the case of a personal leave, the personal issues that prevent a student from remaining at the College. Similar to reviewing withdrawal petitions related to medical conditions, the CAS applies an ethic of caring about the well being of the student when considering medical and personal leave requests. When the College grants a student a medical, the student leaves school with the assurance that they will be reinstated without consequence. The College requires documentation of the illness or circumstance and grants the leave for the express purpose of permitting the student to devote themselves to recovering from the distressing condition. CAS will determine the impact of personal leaves on a case-by-case basis.

a) Special considerations: Some requests may need special consideration by the Committee: a) when the student's request would be for more than one continuous year (rarely granted); b) when the student is in academic jeopardy; c) when the request is of an emergency nature and also requires late drops or withdrawals from courses. A student may not be on "leave" and also enrolled in a Skidmore course or courses.

b) Withdrawal requests and Leaves of Absence: If a student is petitioning for more than two withdrawals in a single semester due to medical reasons, the Dean of Studies will recommend in most cases that the student take a medical leave or personal leave without penalty, particularly if the withdrawals will result in the student dropping from full- to part-time status.

c) Medical leave without penalty: The committee will not consider the semester of a medical leave as a failure and will not penalize a student because he or she was ill. Students who are approved for a medical leave for a semester will not be disqualified for then failing to meet continuation standards, even when a student was in academic jeopardy before taking the leave. Likewise, a one-semester medical leave will not be later counted against a student when the CAS is reviewing satisfactory academic progress.

With appropriate documentation, a second medical leave or an extension of the initial medical leave may be approved by CAS without penalty and will not be taken into account when the CAS evaluates a student's cumulative academic progress. As an institution, we expect students to make timely progress towards their degrees, but we also recognize that some illnesses by their cyclical nature have a likelihood of reoccurrence. Similarly, other illnesses may take a while to diagnose and may have a likelihood of relapse or going off medication, especially when the illness is first diagnosed.

d) **Withdrawing from the College after a medical leave:** A student who has sequential or multiple leaves and is unable to maintain satisfactory progress toward the degree may be withdrawn from the College without penalty and apply for readmission once the medical condition has been addressed.

All petitions for a third semester (or more) of medical leave will be reviewed by the CAS on a case-by-case basis, and may be rejected without sufficient documentation supporting the need for the third semester (or more) of medical leave. In those cases, the CAS may recommend that the student withdraw from the College and apply for readmission once the medical condition has been addressed.

2) **Academic Leaves (Unbased)** for students with upper-division standing and 3.00 GPA or better, academic leaves are routinely approved by the Office of the Dean of Studies and reported to the CAS. Academic leaves are granted only for study at institutions that are not available to students through Skidmore's established portfolio of approved domestic off-campus study programs (i.e. National Student Exchange, Washington Semester, etc.). The CAS does review academic leave requests from first-year students and sophomores, however, and from students with a GPA below 3.00. First-year students and sophomores who have not completed the first two years of all-college requirements may be denied a leave until they complete the "Foundation"

Exceptions will be considered by the CAS based on the nature of the leave and the rationale presented by the student.

CAS uses its discretion to pre-approve up to and including as many as eleven credits for students studying at a U.S. institution that is not available through Skidmore's approved domestic off-campus study programs. Any student on a personal or medical leave who wishes to study full time (12 credits or more), will be required to complete an academic leave application and will be subject to the limitations in place for credits earned on an academic leave (see Section II, C, 2 of these guidelines). (4/04) Credits must be pre-approved by the Office of the Registrar.

with its partners, and thus the successful admission of subsequent Skidmore students, are a matter of some concern.

2) Eligibility Standards and Evidence

a) In keeping with the challenges outlined above, Skidmore requires applicants for off-campus study to present the following evidence of their academic and personal preparedness for success in the host program:

- A 3.00 GPA that also demonstrates solid academic performance from one semester to the next across the various disciplines—or, a more modest cumulative GPA but with 3.00 work during the two most recent semesters of study. (Note that nearly two-thirds of Skidmore sophomores and juniors attain a 3.00 or better GPA; thus the 3.00 criterion does not present a narrow window of opportunity.)
- It must also be clear that the student has the academic background and performance levels appropriate for the program to which he or she is applying.
- The student must have met all-college requirements appropriate to his or her year of study or present an acceptable plan for completing such requirements, and the student must have declared a major *prior* to applying to the CAS, unless studying off campus in the sophomore year.
- The student must have a clear academic and social integrity record as determined by the Dean of Studies and the Associate Dean of Student Affairs who oversee integrity issues.

b) The CAS will also consider students who are below the 3.00 requirements described above but whose academic records show a preponderance of B-level work from one semester to the next *or* recent 3.00 performance that convincingly demonstrates growth in

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- The student must have met all-college requirements appropriate to his or her year of study or present an acceptable plan for completing such requirements, and the student must have declared a major *prior* to applying to the CAS, unless studying off campus in the sophomore year.
- The student must have a clear academic and social integrity record as determined by the Dean of Studies and the Associate Dean of Student Affairs who oversee integrity issues.

3) Other Eligibility Considerations for *all* Student Applicants

- Other factors that may contribute to the CAS approval of off-campus study include the student's previous experience with the host culture of the program abroad (or successful experience with other cultures), fluency in the language needed for success in the program abroad, and the academic focus of the program on the student's area of special academic strength (for both U.S. programs and those abroad). These factors may enhance the strength of the application; however, they cannot replace the need for a record of solid academic achievement.
- A student's record of co-curricular and related accomplishments may suggest personal and intellectual qualities that help prepare the student for off-campus study; such evidence may be considered as a complement to the academic record but not as a substitute for solid academic achievement or as an explanation why the academic record is not stronger.

for off-campus study. In meeting its obligations to represent the faculty on such matters, the CAS considers each application on its own merits and in relation to other applications of similar quality.

5) Students Studying Off Campus Outside the Junior Year (Approved by CAS March 10, 2005)

Students who will not be juniors at the time they study off campus will be required to attend a mandatory advising session with an advisor in the Office of Off-Campus Study & Exchanges (OCSE). This advising session will serve as an unofficial interview in which the OCSE advisor will work with the student to determine the student's ability to succeed and also the feasibility of studying off campus during the desired semester. OCSE will use this opportunity to advise students regarding academic issues and regarding program selection. After this initial advising session, students will submit a letter of faculty support (for first-year students, preferably from the instructor of the appropriate Scribner Seminar) and a one page letter explaining why they want to study off campus outside of the junior year. Students will also need to indicate in the letter what their academic plans are for the remainder of their time at Skidmore. OCSE will request a graduation audit from the Registrar's Office. The OCSE will review the materials and meet with students whose materials raise questions regarding students' academic plans or reasons for needing to study off campus in the proposed semester.

Reclassification may be requested by a student or, of necessity, decided by the Office of

in a five-week (or longer) session. All courses must meet for at least 36 hours of class time. Studio art, dance, and theater courses must meet for at least 72 hours of class time. A grade of “C” or better is required for transfer credit. A maximum of 16 credits, including four maturity level credits, may be transferred each summer. The only exception sometimes granted by the CAS is for intensive study of a foreign language during a summer session of at least three weeks duration.

6) **Transfer credits for Other Off-Campus Study** on occasion the CAS may be asked by the Office of the Dean of Studies, the Office of the Registrar, or the Director of Off-Campus Study & Exchanges to review the possibility of giving

which the CAS will consider substituting Skidmore courses for those specifically designated in the Catalog as meeting a particular degree requirement. For example, the CAS occasionally receives requests to substitute upper-level lab science courses for the courses designated in the Catalog. If the appropriate department supports the substitution, the CAS usually concurs.

2) Substitution Request Based on a Documented Learning Disability

The only other substitution requests, thus far, are based on documented evidence of a learning disability. Through a carefully established process, students with a severe learning disability may file a petition with the Office of the Dean of Studies, requesting course substitutions for a particular all-college requirement. The Dean of Studies Office then seeks a recommendation from the academic department most closely linked with the requirement (e.g., the Foreign Language Department for a substitution in the FL requirement, or the English Department for a substitution in the Writing requirement).

Department recommendations for approval or denial of the petition are forwarded to the CAS. CAS makes the final determination for approval or denial of the petition.

3) Foreign Language Requirement Substitution Petition (approved by CAS and added to Guidelines 12/03)

Core requirements are never waived at Skidmore. However, on rare occasion, a student with an appropriately documented disability (who is also "registered" with the Coordinator for Students with Disabilities in the Office of Student Academic Services) may seek a substitution of course work in lieu of the College Foreign Language Requirement. The Coordinator for Students with Disabilities will assist the student in completing the petition. A subcommittee of the Foreign Language Department will meet twice each year (in the fall prior to October 1, and in spring prior to March 1), to examine such requests. The FL subcommittee will then make a recommendation in writing to the CAS who will, in turn, decide to approve or deny the petition. In most cases, the CAS will require the successful student petitioner to take one pre-approved culture course in lieu of a course in a foreign language. Petitions to CAS regarding the FL Requirement must be submitted to the Coordinator for Students with Disabilities in the Office of Student Academic Services

record, the likelihood that the student can be academically successful at Skidmore, and the availability of courses in the student's field(s) of interest (CAS memo Nov. 8, 1988). At certain times (especially as we consider the numbers of incoming and returning students for the Fall semester), the CAS may be limited in the number of students it can consider for readmission. The number of available slots is determined by the Data Group at the College.

Candidates for readmission who originally entered Skidmore prior to Fall 1985, and who have earned fewer than 90 semester hours of Skidmore credit, will be expected to fulfill all-College requirements in effect at the point of readmission.

M. UWW Admission and Pre

should consult immediately with the department chair and the Dean of Studies, who may recommend to the Dean of Student Affairs that the student withdraw from, or be withdrawn from, the class. The Director of Campus Safety may be asked in these situations to interview the student and others who may have witnessed the disruptive behavior. The Director of Campus Safety also has the authority to intervene immediately in any seriously disruptive situation. If the student's withdrawal from the class is the only viable course of action, the student may be allowed to withdraw immediately with a grade of W or WF or be required to do so by the Dean of Student Affairs.

2) Definitions of Disruptive Classroom Behavior:

- a) The student routinely or periodically exhibits language or behavior that makes it difficult for instructional activities to continue.
- b) The student on one or more occasions exhibits language or behavior of such a disturbing, disrespectful, or threatening nature as to make the student's return to class untenable.

3) Procedures:

- a) Whenever the situation allows, the College will try to resolve behavioral conflicts

immediate intervention from the Dean of Student Affairs and/or Campus Safety as

conflict. If the behavior persists, the instructor should immediately contact the Dean of Student Affairs and/or the Director of Campus Safety to discuss the behavior. The instructor should also document the behavior and the student's response to the behavior. If the behavior persists, the instructor should refer the student to the Dean of Student Affairs for further action.

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advised to give the student a written summary

documented record of the student's disruptive behavior and of all interactions he/she has with the student regarding the behavior. (The instructor should not discuss the behavior with the student, not speculate regarding motive or underlying cause of the behavior.)

- b) If the disruptive behavior persists after the first conference, the instructor should

whenever possible, refer the student

consulting with the Dean of Student Affairs and the Director of Campus Safety. The instructor should also document the behavior and the student's response to the behavior. If the behavior persists, the instructor should refer the student to the Dean of Student Affairs for further action. The instructor should also document the behavior and the student's response to the behavior. If the behavior persists, the instructor should refer the student to the Dean of Student Affairs for further action.

c) If an involuntary withdrawal seems necessary, the decision-making process will be as follows (except when, as described above, the case has required immediate intervention by Campus Safety and/or the Dean of Student Affairs): the instructor, the department chair, and the Dean of Studies will interview the student when possible (if this has not already occurred) and make their recommendation to the Dean of Student Affairs (a letter from the Dean of Studies may already be on file as a result of action in (b) above). If the chair is also the instructor of the class, then a tenured, senior member of the department will join this deliberation. A recommendation for course withdrawal requires the concurrence of the instructor and one other member of the consulting team (either the chair or the Dean of Studies).

d) If the consulting team makes a recommendation to the Dean of Student Affairs, the Dean will determine whether the student should be withdrawn from the class or whether a different course of action is more appropriate. Under most circumstances the student will receive a grade of "W" (or a "WF" if appropriate). If the deadline has passed, CAS will deliberate on any petitions for change in status.

P. Policies on Withdrawals, Failures, Transfers, and First-Year Student Deferrals (Vetted by CAS and CEPP, Fall 2007, and Reported to the Faculty, 29 February 2008)

1. Introduction: Skidmore requires all incoming first-year students to be enrolled in a Scribner Seminar during the fall semester of their first year. The heavy mentoring component and emphasis on academic transition make these seminars the keystone of the "First-Year Experience." For a number of reasons, some students will be unable either to complete their Scribner Seminar or to enroll in the fall. This small group includes, (a) withdrawals (due to illness, injury, or medical or personal leave), (b) failures (students who fail the course), (c) transfers, and (d) first-year students for whom the spring semester is their first semester.

The Director of the First-Year Experience (DFYE) in conjunction with the Committee on

Students who seek to withdraw because they are doing poorly in their Scribner Seminar must consult with their faculty instructor and the DFYE to determine 1) if a withdrawal is appropriate, and 2) what action should be taken, if any, to substitute the SSP on the student's academic transcript. In such cases, the DFYE will make a recommendation to CAS, and the committee will make a final determination on the matter.

b) **Failures:** CAS recognizes that students receive failing grades for a variety of reasons. Sometimes, students attempt to do the work but fail to meet the expectations for success. Other times, they do not complete the work, either because they stopped attending a class or because they failed to hand in assignments. In still other instances, failing grades may result because of academic integrity violations. In all such instances, the CAS and the DFYE will consider failing grades on a case-by-case basis to decide if the student in question should be required to repeat the seminar, find a substitution for it, or be permitted to move on without re-taking a Scribner Seminar. CAS will make a final determination on the matter.

c) **Transfers:** All transfer students who have been matriculated at another institution for at least one full semester (12 credits) will be exempt from the Scribner Seminars. They have already made the first-semester transition to college.

The small number of January transfer students who have fewer than 12 credits will take the Scribner Seminar the following fall.

First-year students for whom the spring semester is their first semester of college will take the Scribner Seminar the following fall.

Q. Other CAS Decisions:

The CAS may make other decisions, as appropriate, on questions relating to academic standing and standards and may initiate proposals on these issues with the Faculty.

Revised and updated Academic Year 2006-2007

Last revision: April 24, 2008

APPROVED by the Committee on Academic Standing