

Faculty Meeting
CEPP Motion on UWW
April 25, 2008

MOVED: That Skidmore College terminate its University Without Walls (UWW) program, and:

- a. that the process of termination extend for a reasonable period of transition to allow currently enrolled students to complete degree requirements;
- b. that during the period of transition, special components such as the Antigua program may be recommended to the Skidmore College faculty for continuation beyond the termination of the general UWW program.

RATIONALE:

1. As a matter of educational policy, CEPP believes that any program leading to a Skidmore College degree should be supported by a significant level of involvement from tenured and tenure-track faculty members of Skidmore College. Though it may be regrettable, it is understandable that UWW has experienced a lack of engagement from faculty due to competing demands and interests, such as: rising expectations for professional accomplishment as a standard for promotion and tenure; increasing emphasis on one-on-one interaction with residential Skidmore undergraduates through mentoring, collaborative research, and supervision of independent study and capstone work; a proliferation of new contexts for teaching, including the First-Year Experience and new interdepartmental and interdisciplinary programs.
2. Demands on faculty time have reached a level at which an individual faculty member's involvement in UWW entails collective costs as well as benefits, which must be carefully weighed against each other. The recommendation in the Draft Report of the Special Programs Study Group that "teaching UWW and MALS students might become part of a faculty member's teaching load" would necessarily place strains on the resources that support the residential undergraduate degree program. Unless new faculty lines are made available, tenured and tenure-track faculty whose normal workload included UWW involvement would have to be replaced with adjunct faculty, with attendant risks to continuity of programs and supervision of academic quality. If new faculty lines were made available, using them to sustain UWW rather than to increase the range and depth of the residential college curriculum seems an unwise educational choice.
3. CEPP acknowledges UWW's benefits to individual faculty development and to diversity of the student population. However, rather than extending the life of a struggling program for the sake of those benefits, CEPP recommends that the college focus on the possibility of integrating into the residential program the most promising areas, such as on-line courses or the Antigua program. Meanwhile, cutting the financial losses currently sustained by UWW will free resources that might be applied directly to promoting faculty development and student diversity in the residential college program.
4. The foregoing considerations have been primary for CEPP, as the faculty committee charged with educational policy and planning, and CEPP believes these considerations should be primary in the deliberations of the faculty as a whole. The current annual deficit of \$300,000 cannot be ignored; this fact has informed but not determined CEPP's recommendation. CEPP acknowledges the extensive study of UWW from a wide range of perspectives that began with the commissioning of the Special Programs Study Group in January 2007, continued with the external review of UWW in the spring of 2007, and led to the recommendation for termination from the Vice President for Academic Affairs in March 2008. In concurring with that recommendation, CEPP also agrees with the VPAA wholeheartedly that the dedication of UWW staff and the achievements of UWW students deserve a place of permanent honor in the history of Skidmore College.