

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER

SKIDMORE COLLEGE
Government Department

Spring 2006

Letter From Department Chair

Beau Breslin

Dear Government Majors, Minors & Alumni:

When reviewing the Chair's letters of the past, I have noticed a certain similarity in tone and structure. The tradition, it seems to me, has always been to try to mention at least one success from each of the nine members of our faculty. Often the letters of the past have noted the accomplishments of particular students or alumni, but rarely it seems have we isolated one or two faculty members for special commendation. There is, of course, good reason for this practice: the faculty in the Government Department are engaged in extraordinary projects that are having a real impact on the lives of our students, the College itself, and on the entire profession of political science. But, as with all traditions, there comes a time when one needs to strike out on one's own and break the mold, to do something slightly different. That time has come.

The college awards only two major prizes to its faculty: the Ralph A. Ciancio Award for Excellence in Teaching and the Edwin M. Moseley Faculty Lectureship. The first prize is given every year to the College's most inspiring instructor, the member of the faculty who has demonstrated excellence on the basis

of "teaching rigor, effectiveness, motivation, knowledge of subject matter and overall dynamism." It is the highest teaching award bestowed on a member of Skidmore's faculty. Previous recipients have included Professors Tad Kuroda (History), Greg Pfitzer (American Studies), Carolyn Anderson (Theater), and John Anzalone (Foreign Languages and Literatures).

The second award, the Moseley Lectureship, is given each year to a member of the faculty for her/his "outstanding scholarly achievement, artistic accomplishment, academic research, and/or creative work." According to official college publications, "the award acknowledges an exemplary level of scholarship and achievement that sets a standard for academic excellence at Skidmore. It is the highest honor that the Skidmore faculty can bestow on one of its own."

The bottom line with these two awards? The Ciancio Prize acknowledges the finest teacher at the institution, while the Moseley Lectureship recognizes the College's finest scholar.

For the first time in the College's illustrious history, two members of the same department are holding these awards simultaneously. Professor Ron Seyb is this year's recipient of the Ciancio Prize in Teaching Excellence, and, it was recently announced, Professor Roy H. Ginsberg is now the current occupant of the Moseley lectureship. The awarding of the prizes to

these two most deserving teacher-scholars did not come as a surprise to their colleagues in the Government Department. Indeed, Professor's Seyb's reputation in the classroom is legendary, and Professor Ginsberg's abilities as a scholar are virtually unmatched. Yet it is the combination of awards—the fact that they were both given to members of the same department at the same time—that I think is most noteworthy.

It seems clear that this embarrassment of riches is further confirmation that the Government Department is doing something right, that individually and collectively we not only take seriously our mission to educate today's students and produce interesting research, but that we are largely succeeding in that mission. We are placing articles in the very best political science journals, contributing to important edited volumes, and completing a number of book manuscripts. In addition, we are educating Skidmore's students at an increasingly high rate and with increasing degrees of effectiveness.

Certainly, we still have much work to do. Members of the department are deeply invested in the continuous improvement of their courses; they are equally interested in the broad dissemination of their scholarly ideas. The sentiment around the department seems to be that if we ever arrive at a point where we are completely satisfied with the overall product of our work, we will inevitably languish. And that's the type of department I want to be a part of. Ours is a department that constantly strives for excellence, and, as a result, I suspect that we will never reach the point of complacency. I think this is especially true given that we have the Ciancio and Moseley award winners to help show us the way.

Professor Roy H. Ginsberg Honored with Prestigious Faculty Lectureship

Nate Coleman '06

The singular talents of Professor Roy H. Ginsberg in the field of International Politics have not gone unnoticed by his colleagues, who have recently awarded him the annual Edwin M. Moseley Faculty

Lectureship, called “the highest honor the Skidmore faculty can bestow on one of its own.” The award, named for Dean Edwin Moseley who came to Skidmore College in 1961, is recognition for the unique academic achievements, accomplishments and remarkable body of work Professor Ginsberg has been generous enough to share with Skidmore students and faculty.

In speaking of this honor, Professor Ginsberg demonstrates the humility and passion that both his students and colleagues recognize. “This award symbolizes Skidmore faculty's commitment to the teacher-scholar model of undergraduate education—that is that classroom teaching and published scholarship are symbiotically linked, and that the more there is a seamless quality between the two the better.” Students of Professor Ginsberg are quick to point out the value of his distinctive professional experience, which includes countless books, articles, grants and an impressive service record in both lecturing and consulting. His recently published material includes the book [The European Union in International Politics: Baptism by Fire](#), released in 2001.

Professor Ginsberg's unwavering dedication to the quality of the academic environment at Skidmore is apparent as he discusses the meaning of the award: “The more faculty are engaged in the life of their professions, the more they remain current in their fields and are able to enliven their teaching with what is important and new in the subjects they teach.” Professor Ginsberg declares himself “humbled by the honor the award bestows on a Skidmore faculty dedicated to expanding and sharing knowledge in and outside the classroom.”

President Palamountain once said of Edwin Moseley that “it is difficult to conceive of what Skidmore would have been without [his] unique contributions.” This same sentiment can surely be echoed when speaking of Professor Ginsberg. His new book on the history, law, economics, and government of the European Union will be published in December, and will be the subject of his Moseley Lecture in February 2007.

Survey Says:

Student Perceptions of Academic Rigor

Julianna Koch '06

Department meetings, SGA academic council discussions, and the faculty and administration of the college as a whole are grappling with the concept of academic rigor. Yes, the question of how to make the academic environment more challenging has certainly permeated the college. But what does academic rigor mean to students? Do they find Skidmore courses challenging? What do they even consider challenging? These were the questions that sparked Department Chair Beau Breslin's idea for a survey of government majors and minors. Questions on assignments, class structure, and effort were posed to majors and minors in order to create a picture of what students find challenging. Sixty four students responded.

The survey reveals that while students had many similar answers, defining what makes a course challenging depends on the student. While a large amount of writing was the most frequent answer to this question, with twenty six responses, the options of difficult exams, a lot of discussion, and projects that required leading a discussion, teaching, or participating in a simulation each received twenty five responses. Eighteen students replied that a lot of reading made a course most challenging. With respect to the design of a class, forty two students responded that discussion courses were more challenging than lectures. But when asked if calling on students randomly during this discussion was a good way to make sure that everyone is doing the work, students were evenly split thirty two to thirty two.

Students believed that they learned or remembered more in classes that had only a midterm and a final with no assignments in between rather than those with small assignments due regularly. However, forty two respondents found that turning in regular assignments made a course more challenging. Whatever the definition of a challenging class, student responses suggest that they do enjoy challenging courses. Thirty six students responded that their favorite classes had been with professors who expected a lot. Not one single student indicated that he/she had enjoyed easy

classes the most.

A challenge, then, does not deter students. But what compels them to prepare for class or engages them most in course material? As expected, virtually all students responded that they put different amounts of preparation time or effort into different classes. The source of this disparity was often the interest of the student in the course. Yet, students also devoted different amounts of time to courses based on the number of assignments in the class, the expectations of the professors, and the difficulty of reading or writing assignments. Students were deterred from reading for a class when it was too easy. They felt compelled to read when they wanted to show the teacher they understood the material through participation, thought it would help them get the most out of a class, believed it would affect their grades, or found a particular professor and course engaging. By contrast, students were less likely to do the assigned reading when they did not like the course or professor, or found the reading to be redundant or boring. The most common reason cited for not reading was the lack of time.

The survey suggests that there are ways to make students put greater effort into courses to the extent that a professor controls the number and difficulty of the assignments. However, a student's interest in a course and a professor also matters. In this respect, the survey offers little advice on how to compel students to become more engaged in a class. Interest cannot be forced. Ultimately rigor is hard to define, even among students in the same department. This survey has at least opened the process to students and has yielded some information that will likely be helpful in the quest for academic rigor.

Shared Governance

Cheryl Jacobs '06

For the past year, I, along with SGA president and fellow government major Petria Fleming '06, have served as a student liaison on the Institutional Policy and Planning Committee. This committee, chaired by President Glotzbach, is the main administrative governance body for the college. As someone who has

been involved in SGA since my freshman year, joining this committee in my senior year seemed like a nice culmination to my student governance career at Skidmore.

Made up of members of the administration, faculty, students, and staff, the body is charged with representing the interests of the campus-at-large. This year, some of the highlights of the committee's work include updating and initiating elements of the strategic plan, reviewing the middle states report, passing the FEC (Faculty Executive Committee) motions, and offering our input to the president and the other vice presidents on issues concerning the overall administration of the college.

The body is also divided into several sub committees and ad hoc committees. Among these sub committees are Student Affairs, Admissions, Campus Environment, the Intercultural and Global Understanding Task Force and Budget and Finance. I am a member of one of the ad hoc committees--the Optimization Task Force. This group has been meeting since the end of last semester (late November) to address the growing size of the student body. (The committee has recently recommended that IPPC and the community focus its efforts on maintaining our current enrollment of 2,280 students. Further work will now begin on how to best incorporate the extra enrollment dollars into the overall school budget.) My experiences working on these decisions have shaped my understanding of all the different elements that go into addressing school wide issues such as the optimal size of the student body.

Overall, this committee has afforded me the opportunity to understand the college on an entirely different level. While I serve as a student representative, many of the issues that IPPC deals with were unknown to me before I joined. I have learned about many of the intricacies involved in running a large organization such as a college. This experience has allowed me to put some of my classroom knowledge to action. The bureaucratic nature of decision-making in any organization, from the federal government to a small liberal arts institution involves lots of time and effort. Good organizations make

difficult decisions only after every constituency has had a chance to make its voice heard. The way in which President Glotzbach coordinates all of these groups is astounding, and has been an invaluable addition to my college education at Skidmore. Unlike other schools, I am grateful that Skidmore afforded me this chance to serve such an important role in decision making. I encourage my peers to get similarly involved on one of the many Willingness-to-Serve positions within SGA.

Faculty and Department News

Julianna Koch '06

Traveling seems to be the theme of this semester in the Government Department. **Professor Bob Turner's State and Local Politics** class will venture to Albany on March 31st to meet with Chief Justice Judith Kaye of the New York State Court of Appeals, the state's highest appeals court. The class will also meet with Assembly Minority Leader James Tedisco and, hopefully, with Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno. **Professor Natalie Taylor's American Political Development Class** may travel a little further South to Hyde Park in April. Students from **Professor Kate Graney's UN class, HI298**, will attend the United Nations Association of the USA's Members' Day at the United Nations on April 1st. The event will feature UN experts discussing Reform of the UN and what progress has been made, the impact of HIV/AIDS on Africa's development and achieving the Millennium Development Goals, and the new UN Peacebuilding Commission.

Professor Beau Breslin traveled solo, however, to Princeton where he gave a lecture as part of the university's Public Law Speakers Series on March 2, 2006. As I write this, **Professor Aldo Vacs** is delivering a paper at the 2006 International Congress of Latin American Studies Association in San Juan, Puerto Rico on Regional Integration and the Chilean Way to Globalization. **Professor Roy Ginsberg's** work is on regional integration in another part of the world. His book entitled *Demystifying the EU: Enduring Logic of Regional Integration*, comes out in December 2006. **Professor Steve Hoffmann** is keeping busy by attending seminars in Washington on the controversial India-US Nuclear Energy Agreement. Not to be left out of these adventures in travel, **Professor Ron Seyb** will

likely do some traveling of his own during his full year sabbatical, which begins in June.

In addition to taking trips, the Government Department is also receiving some visitors. The department is currently engaged in a "Self-Study" and will be subject to an external review in late March. This process occurs once every 10 to 15 years. Last time it was undertaken the department received a new faculty line for the area of social movements, which is a position currently held by **Professor Natalie Taylor**.

Skidmore meets West Point

Allison Leader '07

Last October, I represented Skidmore at the 57th annual Student Conference on United States Affairs (SCUSA) at West Point. Designed to bring together students from across the globe, the three-day event pairs "regular" college students with Military Academy students to debate global politics. This year's theme, US Responsibility and the Global Community, focused on US global dominance and the need to manage the interests, opportunities, and ethical responsibilities accrued by the United States during its rise to global leadership.

While the political debate at West Point was riveting, the greatest lesson that SCUSA taught me was how limited the knowledge of the average college student is when it comes to the structure and nature of the military and military service. Throughout my progressive education, I have boasted my anti-military and pro-diplomacy positions. However, the modern day co-existing realities of terrorism, genocide, and seemingly endless ethnic and territorial conflicts, support the need for an organized and powerful military infrastructure. Until the SCUSA meeting, I knew little more about the military than its purpose – and indeed as I learned at West Point, this is common. While I have yet to formally poll the matter, I believe that on average most of my peers who envision their futures as politicians, diplomats, international journalists etc, know only the basics about the American armed forces. In contrast, I would argue that

while the average USMA student knows a great deal about political science and world history, he or she most likely knows little about the workings of a liberal arts education, or the progressive lens through which we have analyzed identical information.

It was only after struggling to adapt to the schedule, meals, and constant activities that encompass the day of a West Point cadet that I realized I had overlooked an important point in my assumptions about the benefits of attending the SCUSA conference. Yes, delegates attend SCUSA to create a set of student-designed policy proposals to be sent to the White House. Yes, technically we were together to teach and learn from each other. Yes, we were expected to educate each other on the details of the genocide in Darfur or the status of women in Putin's Russia. But in reality, we were learning how to deliberate, compromise, and flat out disagree with individuals who were equal to ourselves in knowledge, but whose perspectives on the issues were potentially explosively different. Whether we were debating Hamas' growing role in Palestine or the best way to get a good night's sleep in the West Point cots didn't make a difference - what mattered was that we were talking.

Indeed, it is students like the delegates at SCUSA who will be making policies, protecting territories, and shaping the global community in the future – and the ability to communicate, deliberate, and even argue with individuals with political opinions and educational backgrounds different than our own had already begun. I realized then that these skills of conflict resolution and compromise will be a necessary tool in our futures.

Canadian Bacon

Kenny Olmstead '06

Canada is often the brunt of many a joke among friends and family in the United States. I too have fallen into this trap of stereotyping the great white north as second class relative to the U.S. I recently attended a conference at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs that focused on U.S. - Canadian relations and it was an eye-opening experience on a topic I had never studied before.

Once I got over the slightly intimidating fact that all the air force cadets came to each session in their dress-blues, I began to learn about many issues that both unite and divide the United States and Canada. The issue that came up the most was lumber tariffs. At first I thought what every good government major would think about this issue: "great....trees." But as it turns out lumber tariffs are a major issue that sours relations between the U.S. and Canada. The Canadians are afraid that the United States lumber industry will far outstrip its Canadian counterpart. As a result the country has filed suit in the NAFTA courts to prevent the U.S. from putting the Canadian lumber industry out of business. The recent Canadian elections had a tinge of anti-Americanism to them that worried some politicians in the U.S., and the rhetoric seemed to indicate there is a larger rift between the two countries than previously thought.

Despite this trend, the consensus is that the rhetoric is just that, rhetoric. The disputes that Canada and America get into are the natural product of the close relationship the two countries share. In the end the United States and Canada share the world's longest open border and rely on each other for many economic benefits. In combating terrorism the U.S. and Canada have collaborated to try and cut down on the number of dangerous persons entering either country along the largely unguarded border.

The most important point I took away from the conference was that the lack of emphasis on Canada in most international relations courses is misleading. I believe the reason for this is that U.S.--Canadian relations are congenial and are not as conflict ridden or flashy as many other parts of the world. This is the triumph of the relationship between U.S. and Canada and should not be discounted; the two countries have created a stable relationship that is devoid of any

Each year the Government department selects and sponsors student delegates to attend the West Point Conference and United States Air Force Academy Assembly.

violent conflict and one that will likely endure for generations.

Perspectives on Washington D.C.

Taylor Leake '07

Washington D.C. is best known as the seat of the federal government, but there is another side of D.C. that is often overlooked. D.C. has a great wealth of non-profit organizations, and it is a wonderful place for anyone looking to do community development, service work, or a host of other great things. For this semester, I am lucky enough to experience D.C., both by taking a seminar on "Transforming Communities" through the Washington Semester Program at American University, and through working for Food & Water Watch, a new national consumer advocacy environmental group.

A great way to get into this world of nonprofits is to intern while in college. American University has a great program called the Washington Semester, ideal for Government majors, but great also for anyone considering going into foreign relations, economics, or business. The program is a combination of an internship for two days a week and an intensive seminar the other three. The combination, for me, has been perfect. It has allowed me to apply what I have learned in a nine-to-five work environment to my coursework and vice-versa. It is a unique way to confront the problem of feeling like school has no connection to the outside world.

The Washington Semester program charges students with finding their own internships. This seemingly daunting task, as it turns out, is a piece of cake. During the summer, thousands of students flood our nation's capitol to intern on the hill and wherever else they can find. But during the school year, the city has only a few local schools and a few internship programs to keep up the same level of work. Because of this, I had several choices for my internship. I ended up choosing between a poverty prevention advocacy program, and an environmental organization that worked on factory farming, food sovereignty, and food safety issues. Not only was finding an internship easy, but it was great experience in job searching, and interviewing.

The seminar also provides a unique experience in education. Coming to an exciting city like D.C., the last thing you want to do is sit in a classroom all day. At the Washington Semester, the three day a week seminars are planned around speakers and site visits, using the city like a huge classroom or laboratory. Classes are organized around themes like “American Politics”, “International Business and Trade”, “Justice” and “Peace and Conflict Resolution”. Along with site visits in the city that inform students further on their topics, such as trips to local courts, Capitol Hill, non-profits, and organizations, the program brings speakers to the classroom who often have a much better way of teaching a certain topic than the professor.

If you are considering working in government, or in the nonprofit world, you should consider the Washington Semester program, or another internship program. Washington D.C. is a unique and fascinating place. More importantly, I could not ask for a better classroom.

Model EU Travels to Prague

Josh Hutchinson '06

This January, fifteen Skidmore students attended the Model European Union conference in Prague. Each year, this conference meets to simulate the procedures of the European Union, and dozens of schools from several European countries, as well as a number of American schools, send delegates. The model EU conference concentrates on an important issue that is facing the EU; this year's theme was immigration and asylum reform. Skidmore represented the United Kingdom, Cyprus, and several Ministers of the European Parliament from Eastern Europe. The conference alternates between being held in the United States and in Europe: last year it was in New York near Buffalo, the year before it was held in Tilburg, The Netherlands.

When the 2006 conference met to focus on immigration and asylum policy we had to decide on problems that are new to the EU since its 2004 expansion into Eastern Europe. This year's host, the Czech Republic, is one of these new members.

Delegates at the conference role-play by assuming the identity of a real person, and act as them for the duration of the conference. Roles include Head of Government, foreign minister, and justice minister.

Unfortunately, the Model EU did not have a successful outcome this year. The conference got deadlocked on what in reality was not a contentious issue at all. The deadlock resulted in the European Parliament walking off in a huff from the all-important conciliation session that would have written the final document. By the time they returned from their self-imposed cooling-off period, it was too late, and the final document was torpedoed. This was partly the result of the Parliament's fit of self-importance, but more fundamentally it was the result of what happens all too often in the European Union—each committee that met decided on a final document, and each of those final documents was vastly different from the others.

Despite the failure to come to a successful conclusion at the conference, the Skidmore delegation tried to keep a brave face. After the conference, Skidmore students used their time in Europe to visit Vienna, certain enticing parts of the Swiss Alps, and the city of Prague. The highlight of every visit to Prague is the Prague Castle, which sits atop a hill and is visible from every part of the city. An amalgam of architecture, but notably Italian Renaissance, the castle has played host to historical events throughout Prague's history, from the first two defenestrations of Prague (1419 and more famously 1618, though there have also been subsequent defenestrations as people get thrown out of Prague windows frequently) to many of the important events during the Velvet Revolution (1989). Also emblematic of Old Town Prague is its Astronomical Clock, which was first constructed in 1410 and almost destroyed by the Nazis. The clock is once more in operation, although it was not working during our visit. When working, the clock presents a fascinating show every hour on the hour, with skeletons, the twelve apostles and Father Time all coming out of the clock and shakin' a little booty.

All in all, it was a great experience for each student involved and the conference, despite its lack of conclusion, was productive and informative.

Tanzania Bound

Carlos Serrano '06

Let the world change you...and you can change the world. Everyday when I wake I thank god for the experiences that I have encountered at Skidmore. Being a student at Skidmore has allowed me to immerse myself in two distinctive cultures: the Iberian cultures of Spain and the tribal Swahili culture of Tanzania. Last year I had the opportunity to study abroad in Spain and this spring break I will be traveling to Tanzania with the IA travel seminar.

Learning about these cultures has been enlightening and the experiences have opened my eyes to the difficulties of competing culture. The Iberian and Swahili cultures have similar political problems as autonomous regions in their respective countries. During my time in Spain last year I witnessed the diverse cultures that reside within the Iberian coast. I visited Catalonia and Galicia, two autonomous regions that have a different sense of nationalism and even language than the country of Spain. Like the Basque country of Barcelona, Galicia elects their own president and creates their own laws. Just as Catalan was the main language in Catalonia, the core language in Galicia is Gallego.

The cultural and language differences between these autonomous areas of Spain were obvious. I felt that I was in a different country because the Gallego and Catalan cultures were so distinct. I witnessed the tension that cultural differences can cause within the borders of a country.

Tanzania, I have learned, is going through a similar struggle. In the independence movement of 1964, the nation of Tanganyika and the Muslim island of Zanzibar entered an agreement to become the state that is now known as Tanzania. Within this large country, however, there are many different cultures including as many as 150 tribes. Because there are so many tribes of roughly equal size they have been able to coexist peacefully. The exception is the Massai tribe, which consists of about 15% of the population. This gives rise to the potential for tension with the smaller tribes.

As I write this I am two days away from embarking on my journey. I don't know what to expect from this trip because there is so much culture within each region of

the Arusha and the Swahili coast. The IA Travel Seminar, taught by Professor Christopher Whann and Professor Gerald Erchak has provided us with the background to inform our trip. For example, the mainland is separated into four different societies; cattle herders, farmers, hunters, and fishers. Tanzania and Zanzibar have immense ecological diversity within their culturally diverse borders.

The trip will give us an opportunity to link our course work to our first-hand experiences in Tanzania, a feat which is rarely possible in a course. With the background from class and the experience of the trip combined I hope to complete a project about cash crop economics that have plagued Tanzania and their current energy source of Hydroelectricity. This topic gives rise to both economic and political issues. For example, Tanzania's economic decisions were influenced by international institutions, specifically the World Bank and IMF. This situation, then, is both economic and political. With respect to domestic politics, there is tension over voting fraud between the ruling party in Tanzania, called the Chama Cha Mapinduzi, or CCM, and the CCM in Zanzibar which holds a smaller majority.

These issues brought up by both the seminar and the trip are truly interdisciplinary experiences. Cultural division that parallels my experience in Spain, the implications of international institutions on economic policy, and the complexities of domestic government and politics in a culturally diverse country are all tied together in this one seminar. This unique approach to learning has enhanced my experience as a student at Skidmore and created new links among my past academic work in different departments with real life experiences. Through these experiences, I have gained a much greater understanding of the course material, but more importantly, of the place of culture in the world.

March Madness

How to Pick a Team the Political Science Way

Is March Madness just too much for you to handle? Too much work to decide which team to pick? Are you just really indecisive? Without running any regressions, interpreting the Constitution, consulting with Locke, or

holding diplomatic negotiations the department has devised a simple way to match you with a team: choose their alma maters and favorites.

Are you in awe of the Constitution or a fan of Professor Breslin? Then you better back his alma mater Penn, or his other favorite, Alabama. Do you prefer studying India with Professor Hoffmann? It doesn't matter, you should still root for Penn. Would you rather support Professors Graney, Turner, and Whann? Consider Wisconsin your new team. Are you more inclined towards political thought? Professor Burns' alma mater, Boston College, is for you. Suddenly homesick for the Midwest? Professors Natalie and Flagg Taylor need your help supporting Ohio State and Illinois. Tired of winter yet? Professor Seyb's favorite, UCLA, is your best bet. (Of course, you will have to choose wisely because Professor Burton will be rooting for Bucknell and Duke.) Too busy thinking about "football" and Latin America to worry about basketball? At least you can join Professor Vacs and support Pitt. Wish the EU had more basketball? Follow Professor Ginsberg's lead and root for Bradley or George Washington. Go forth and choose wisely.

Closing Thoughts **As SGA President and Government Major** Petria Fleming '06

On speech night for SGA's biggest election, I threw Dan Moran (now our SGA President Elect), a tough question (out of love). I advised Dan, "An SGA President is three things: an administrator, a people manager, and most importantly, a critical thinker. Being a critical thinker is the *hardest* role to play. Dan, do you think you could be a critical thinker?" Dan flustered at my obnoxious question. I would have done the same last year.

Many argue that managing people is the roughest thing to do. My brother used to joke that the problem with managing people...is people. By age 22, I've had the opportunity to play that role. Hopefully, I'm a competent manager, but you'll have to ask my Executive Committee if I'm a meanie. Management and administration is a certain art that one finesses through experience. Yet, thinking critically is the hardest thing I have to do.

There has always been a strong correlation between SGA President and the Government Major. SGA is a little governmental microcosm. While knowing about checks and balances, international relations, and economic development is important, I'm more thankful that the Government Major has forced me to think critically. When I'm reading the Middle States report or something from CEPP or serving on IPPC, none of my SGA experience or the facts I've learned as a Government Major matter. What matters is my ability to think philosophically about the values of Skidmore College. For example: What does *diversity* mean at Skidmore? Should diversity matter? How do we define excellence? Does excellence mean personal best? Is there a sense of honor at Skidmore? Does Skidmore have a code of values? What are they? These are hard questions (that I assume) have hard answers. If you don't start with these questions, everything you create will be meaningless or arbitrary. Asking such things takes a certain willingness to question one's own beliefs and the beliefs around you. I am constantly striving to be a critical thinker. I struggle with asking hard questions every day.

Last year, I was convinced that I would go into public policy. Activism was my future. I've even had a few internships in Chicago with education finance reform. Along the way, I started to notice something about public policy. I worked with the nicest organization in Chicago. They used statistics and facts to back up their policy points. However, the most knowledgeable people there could not make a strong claim as to why their education finance policy should take priority over health care, human services, or economic development in the state budget. That kind of argument is a theoretical one- and the most important argument to make. Instead, every non-profit produces statistics on why their programs work the best. The game becomes arbitrary. Public policy becomes a game of power, not of values. The art of thinking has been lost in public policy. No starts with that question, "Why?"

So I'll close with giant thanks and gratitude towards the Government Department. The ability to really *think* will stick with me forever. I'm glad that this department has taught me that critical thought matters first, before creation. Thanks.

