Shared problems and strategies at Liberal Arts Colleges

For many years, Classics department chairs at liberal arts colleges have convened annually at the meetings of the Society for Classical Studies (formerly the American Philological Association), sharing interests and concerns and strategies. While the number of those who gathered, and the institutions represented, have fluctuated from year to year, the principal topics under discussion have remained the same: e.g., enrollments in Greek, curricular strategies, critiques of the humanities and OF Classics within and outside the academy and how to respond. The limited time allocated to these discussions prompted a small group to propose a summer seminar to facilitate more sustained work. In June of 2016, with the financial support of the deans of faculty at Hamilton, Middlebury, and Skidmore Colleges, and the Classical Association of the Atlantic States, 30 liberal arts college Classics department chairs and program directors from around the US, and the chief academic administrator of College Year in Athens, gathered at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, NY (Skidmore) in June of 2016. The result of this two-day conference is a collaboratively written 50-page handbook for chairs and directors of undergraduate Classics departments and programs, covering such topics as student and faculty recruitment and mentoring; data collection on faculty, students, and alumni; enrollment management; suggestions for working with academic administrators; curricular innovation; and program development and enhancement. This panel will survey some resources and guidance that this partnership has already produced and explore possibilities for future collaboration.

The four panelists, who all teach at a liberal arts college, will each focus on one aspect of this collaboration and on-going discussion of liberal arts college issues: the annual meetings of chairs of liberal arts college classics departments at SCS at which our ideas were first aired; the events at the June 2016 meeting of 31 liberal arts chairs at Skidmore College; the Classics Chairs Handbook which we have developed as a result of the summer 2016 meeting; and the roundtable event on "How to Prepare for Life at a Liberal Arts College" that we ran at the 2017 SCS meeting. Each talk will last for 10 minutes, and we then hope for a lively conversation among the attenders, some of whom will have been present at the SCS meetings, but many others who have not been able to attend either the annual meetings or our Skidmore workshop. Although these meetings have been mainly aimed at chairs, this information will be of use and interest to anyone teaching in a liberal arts college or to graduate students who may well someday teach at a liberal arts college.