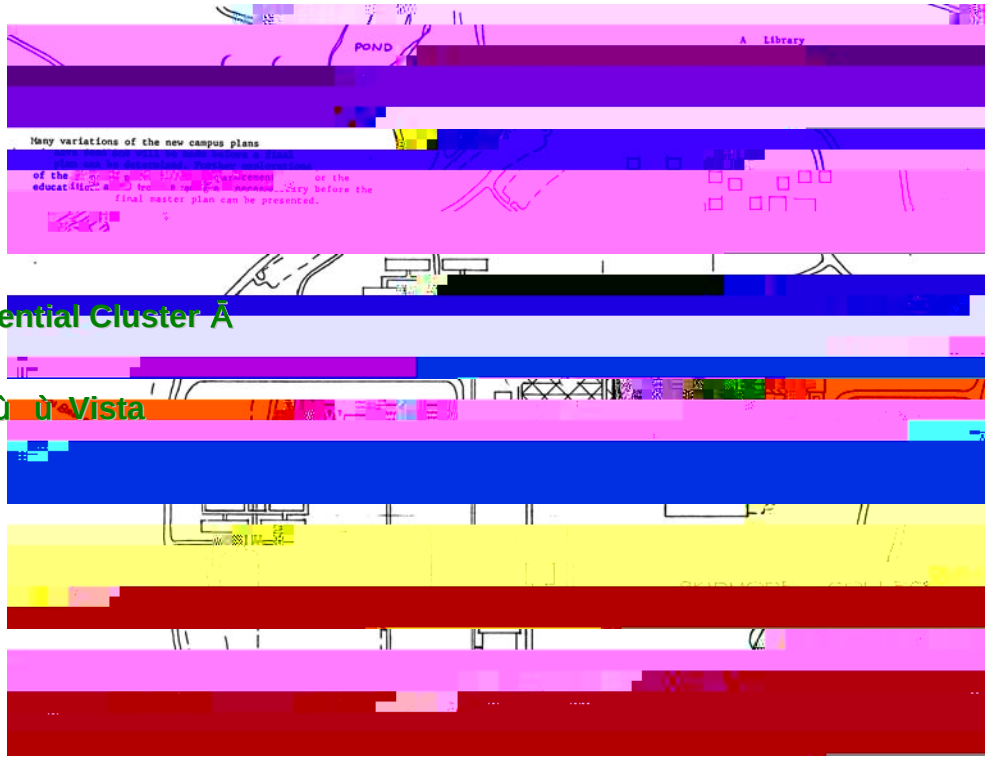
In October, 1961, the Skidmore Trustees voted to build a new campus. Much has been written of this rebirth, which need not be retold here. Instead, in this report, we will look at some of the lessons to be learned from this initial and another more recent plan for the campus.

The Trustees selected O'Neil Ford from San Antonio to be the architect and he chose Samuel B. Zisman to be his campus planning consultant.

Although we found no direct evidence, we believe Zisman based his Skidmore plan on Thomas Jefferson's plan for the University of Virginia. Jefferson's campus was well known among planning professionals as one of the most innovative in the new nation. Jefferson flanked his magnificent library with two parallel rows of five pavilions, each housing students and teachers in a single academic discipline. The Library looked down the long, grassed mall framed by these pavilions and their connecting colonnades, and out to the mountains in the distance.

This early Zisman sketch for the Skidmore campus is very similar to Jefferson's layout: a library flanked by two parallel rows of student residences, with an open vista. In this proposal, Skidmore's dining facilities were decentralized with four dining halls each serving four small residences. Only later was a single dining hall introduced, closing the vista. (The same thing happened to Jefferson's campus, with the vista lost to a dining hall, built much later).

Zisman's pedestrian circulation was similar to Jefferson's. In professional jargon it is called a racetrack: two parallel walkways with open space between and dominated by an important building at one or both ends.

Whether our speculation about Jefferson is true or not, one thing is certain. Like Jefferson's plan, Zisman's plan for Skidmore's core was based on humanistic values and was well suited to serve the mission of the college.