

Faculty Retreat Discussion: January 20, 2009

Following the presentation by Art & Science consultants on the admissions' study, twelve groups of faculty members discussed the following questions:

- What is your understanding of the challenges Smith faces?
- What do you find exciting or promising in today's discussion of those challenges and opportunities? What is your understanding of the opportunities that lie ahead if those challenges are addressed?
- What concerns you in today's discussion of those challenges and opportunities?
- If Smith were to decide to assure every student of experiences and coursework that would prepare her for international leadership, how would the college best go about doing that?

Below are the combined notes from the small group discussions.

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What is your understanding of the challenges Smith faces?

Recognizing the small percent of young women who might even consider a woman's college, we estimated that there might be about 20,000 spots for women at women's colleges each year.

Because so few women consider us, we need to have something clear to distinguish ourselves. What is that exciting, bold, promising and clearly enunciated cohesive new program?

We can't just be business as usual. The status quo is not tenable in the long-term.

Smith needs to be about this, not just a women's college.

The statistic that less than 2% of SAT-taking women would consider a women's college is sobering to say the least.

Should we discuss going coed? Even if we don't make that change, having everyone on board regarding the relative advantages and disadvantages would be critical.

Should we discuss becoming smaller? Even though this wasn't on the table for the admissions report, it merits discussion.

The greatest challenge is that we remain a women's college while only 1.8% of SAT takers report that they would consider a women's college. Widespread agreement at the table that Smith should consider coeducation again (no dissent on this issue). In 5-10 years, do we still imagine that Smith will be viable as a women's college? Will increased 5-College cooperation bring more male students to campus? Should we consider some kind of "Junior Year at Smith" for men?

Another challenge: Retention. For a significant group of students, Smith is their third or fourth choice. Faculty report that these students are very unhappy in their first year at Smith and are not "convinced" that Smith is right for them even after experiencing its benefits. No matter how good the academic program, they dislike being at a women's college.

Challenge: We don't want any solution that would force all of our courses to revolve around the same issue and themes. We need to avoid becoming a "monothematic" college.

Challenge: Among women's colleges, we need to further distinguish Smith. The issue is not simply competition with coed institutions.

Challenge: Everyone is talking globalism. How can we separate from the pack?

Challenge: These ideas were tested with 17-year-olds. But how do we make the ideas resonate for parents as well?

Question: Why is a comprehensive merit-aid strategy "off the table?" Wouldn't more generous merit aid increase yield and make those students happier about being here?

Admissions challenges: the tiny percentage of women who will consider a women's college, the changing demographics away from the population centers in the Northeast, the shrinking number of high school students, the lack of a margin in our applicant pool, the desirability of being able to shape the entering class and to achieve a sustainable discount rate. We also talked about the challenges facing all liberal arts colleges—including the strain on tuition-paying families—and the need to articulate their value to students and parents.

Single-sex identity.

The need for “boldness” flies in the face of the \$20-\$30 million deficit.

The presentation made it very clear that the problem of resistance among potential applicants to Smith as a women's college is real and pressing; members of the group also acknowledged other issues: an eastern location in an increasingly western country; a non-urban location; an already precarious economic situation now worsening, likely to affect both students' need for financial aid and the college's ability to provide it. So: no disposition to question the report's account of the problems we face

There were some skeptical questions raised by some members of the group about the report's argument for the “Global leadership” initiative: is the strong response to the “global” initiative in part related to the more compelling and directive quality of that “all” statement, in comparison to the others (experiential learning, environmentalism)? How unique or distinctive is such an initiative (e.g., one already under way at Connecticut College)? Does the emphatic endorsement of *this* initiative suggest that other elements of the Smith Design are perhaps unneeded, or even counterproductive in a resource-poor economic situation?

Single sex & thin market (or, alternatively, co-education); size of the college & admission challenge; Smith identity and recognition in the broader market (it's not Wellesley); a risk of changing something (global component) & losing your base (open curriculum); relationship between this direction and requirements (e.g., foreign languages); didn't test "open curriculum" in the research (a missed opportunity).

Struck by the number of women interested in women's colleges and how much it has declined and how low it is.

Fewer students are coming from our traditional markets.

Overall pool is shrinking; demographic shifts make recruiting more challenging.

Economic crisis will exacerbate the challenges.

What do you find exciting or promising in today's discussion of those opportunities or challenges? What opportunities lie ahead?

The excellent attendance and engagement of the faculty sends a clear message that people are on board for these discussions.

The consultants' report featured a ringing endorsement of the enrollment operation.

The discussions were permeated with a spirit of hope (particularly with the inauguration sandwiched in-between).

The linkage between alumnae connections and students as a way of leveraging and engaging both was quite attractive.

Moving beyond advising towards mentoring as part of a 4 year development process is compelling. To borrow a catchphrase from a neighbor, how do we create “meaningful lives” or “lives of promise?”

Global leadership has the potential for serendipitous synergy.

Such a program has the potential to excite/interest parents and college counselors.

We already offer an excellent education, and what has been proposed can build on actions that we are already taking—the proposed direction seems promising. It builds on our traditional strengths. The idea of a more coherent curriculum with College-wide support is appealing. Several liked the idea of strengthening our commitment to study abroad and foreign language teaching; they like the idea of students assimilating what they've learned abroad when they return to Smith. Engineering has already moved to some degree down the

proposed path of individualized learning plans and intentional choices about courses of study that are linked to aspirations in the world; they believe it can be done. We could make more use of alums as role models; one thought we should make Rally Day more effective in showcasing the medalists. Advising needs to be a key element of the proposed plan. The plan could help to give much more definition and purpose to the first two years, which should not be simply “pre-major.”

It came from the Smith Design.

Anything that promotes internationalism in the undergraduate curriculum is a promising development.

Having a compelling identifying feature (beyond being a women’s college) would be exciting. (Somewhat like Middlebury, which seems to have carved an identity by promoting just three things it does well: English/writing, languages, environmentalism.)

The international/global leadership theme gives us a coherent guiding principle for the inevitable reductions we will need to make in the faculty.

An international focus recasts Smith’s single-sex identity in a positive way. We could become a beacon for women around the world who seek to experience the empowering education that will enable them to lead change in their communities and nations. Similarly, linking “women,” “international” and “leadership” makes a strong case: women’s leadership is crucial to world advancement. Put another way: Marketing Smith as an international college gives us a case for our identity as a women’s college.

Can be seen as vehicle for creating coherence around the multiple things we’re already doing: study abroad, Praxis, first-year seminars, etc.

The eroding situation of women internationally makes the idea of a women’s global leadership initiative especially valuable.

A real strength of the proposal: the close involvement of alumnae with global/leadership experience.

The curriculum could be shaped in this direction without losing its “openness.”

Such an initiative could lead us toward important pedagogical goals or commitments, like graduating truly bilingual students, and it might open new areas of exploration to faculty.

The College has expanded by accretion; the pruning of some programs might well be a good thing.

Possible partnerships with other, global institutions; resources we have & how to reposition them to reflect new direction/emphasis (build on strengths); opportunity to improve web presence and its appeal to prospective students; need for a theme to enhance "psychological manipulation" of the market; e.g., on web, say more about faculty expertise and interests to reflect international focus.

Possibility of implementing the recommendations is exciting.

Like the idea of a bold initiative.

International women's colleges’ initiative dovetails nicely with this study and complements the recommendations.

Need to do more recruiting internationally.

Should market to parents more, especially internationally and especially full pays.

This would be building on a strength of Smith's; our study abroad programs are strong - we know how to do that well.

More applications would bring more quality students.

We need to invest now to launch a new initiative - this is a compelling message and it will motivate faculty and alumnae.

Similar to the "WPI Plan" - would make us amazingly distinctive.

This would better integrate science students into the global arena and they will be better for it - this would truly give them an experience that's distinct.

This would give us, the internal audience, a sense of who we are and our character - it would give us a sense of what is our promise to our students.

Back in the 70's we only needed to be a college with good students and a good faculty; today is different - we can't be everything to everybody - we need to brand ourselves.

Need to address perceptions - especially for future strength of the college - we need to "name it" and create a structure it so that students can define it themselves.

This allows us to be creative - more creativity means risk taking and that's a good thing - our students will be more creative thinkers.

Leadership can mean "active participation."

The leadership piece is easy because of the history of the college - this would provide historical continuity.

Our size is an advantage - we have more accomplished alumnae leaders to draw on.

The world already comes to Smith and enriches us in a global way; we need to harness our students to take advantage of all that is offered and connect the curriculum to our lecture series, etc.

Must use the word "global" instead of "international;" international sounds too much like study abroad; global means connecting yourself to the rest of the work, including local connections; global is a concept, international is a place.

This is like a "visioning" project.

Our house system already creates many leadership opportunities and we can build on that.

What are some concerns with the proposal?

Will it drive away the students who come for the open curriculum, the poet who wants to carve out her own curriculum with minimal interference? Would we gain enough other students to warrant losing these?

Or, should we examine how "open" our curriculum really is? Do we have data to determine how attractive our open curriculum is for most students looking at Smith?

Has this process of taking "a bold step" worked for other colleges? David said it depends: is the program bold enough or tepid? How wisely are the factors chosen?

Are students really looking for a coed year? Is this right way to offer a coed experience?

What about combinations of internships and a semester abroad?

Is this the right way to teach leadership? Is leadership taught in "lab" groupings, problem solving, theatre productions, and house presidencies? Is leadership a function of excellence in one's profession? Can we teach leadership classes, or is it more project-related? Or is "initiative" a better term?

Why were the two categories of "leadership" and "global" put together when they were tested separately? Might it be dangerous to combine them?

How much of the infrastructure of the current curriculum would have to change? What would make it "authentic?" How can we define it without simplifying the issues or misleading students?

What do we lose by adopting this program? Do we have to lose anything or does most of what we do fit under this umbrella? Does our resistance mirror the resistance to other significant challenges to the curricula in the early 70's, which have enhanced learning? Or is this to be seen as one component of the curriculum, not the ONLY guiding principle?

Can we do this in a distinguishing way? What could we claim to offer that other schools and universities couldn't (our smaller size, the rich resources already in place, our alumnae)?

There has long been a spirit of social activism bred into students here; what has inspired it? Could that be developed? Liberal arts can help students re-think issues and ideas; could this be the basis of this leadership plan?

What about students who want to work in underserved populations here in this country? Would that count?

How can we take much more advantage of our alumnae especially if we adopt this program? We are currently frustrated that we cannot reach them more easily or efficiently.

Partly due to the survey methodology, there was no discussion of Five College cooperation, but this is clearly an area where Smith has a competitive advantage.

Much of the detail in the proposal related to systems, much less to curriculum. Do we need to adjust our open curriculum? Should we think about a writing intensive course, a Q course, global exposure, plus a major?

This may narrow ourselves even further (we could inhabit a niche within a niche).

There is a perception that a not insubstantial chunk of our students are fragile and introverted: would this appeal to them as inquirers (even if they might be likely to best benefit from such a program)? Would they argue that they wouldn't measure up (and self-select out of the pool)?

International is different from leadership. Have these ideas been conflated?

Are we capable of saying that we are focused on 1 thing? The cohesion and shared message appear to be key to success. How do we achieve this while matching to what we are? We need to catch their attention with global leadership, and snag them with our other offerings.

This has to be a real program, with transparent structure.

Parents are important (we hope). Should we consider similar focus groups of parents?

One concern is that the proposed changes are simply marketing and window dressing from which no real change will come; we've done this before. However, the "Smith X Plan," for example, would represent a real change if we adopted it. But those of us with large numbers of advisees couldn't feasibly work through each student's individual aspirations and goals and connect them to a curriculum, not to mention that the plans and goals of most young people change constantly. In response, some suggested that alums might help with the mentoring piece; some kinds of mentoring can be done in groups, not necessarily one-on-one; the new centers could help; others on campus such as librarians, archivists, or museum directors might help with mentoring. The e-portfolio idea could help: not all student reflection needs to be done with the adviser present. Praxis might be another support system: some students receive good mentoring as part of an internship. Another concern is that if we take this direction, we need to present it carefully to prospective students so that we don't alienate those who already come to Smith looking for a high quality traditional liberal arts education.

Would the international emphasis turn some prospective students off?

Would Smith be retreating from its open curriculum?

Does every prospective student want to be a leader?

Can leadership be taught? If so, it belongs in the co-curriculum.

Many students would be turned off by an emphasis on "leadership" or "success." Would "citizenship" be more appealing, and less ego-centric?

Are the centers being displaced by this new idea?

How can we have a flagship program, one that purports to distinguish Smith, and yet be dependent on the five colleges to teach what is arguably its core – languages?

What, exactly, would constitute an international experience in the U.S.?

What are the practical consequences for the curriculum? How would my life as a faculty member be different?

If I have 30+ advisees, how can I fulfill the increased advising this will entail and still perform as a teacher and scholar? Need to address the uneven advising load.

Are there lessons to be learned from engineering – a prior “bold move” that was promised to significantly enhance our appeal and increase applications?

How do we find a match or “marriage” between this marketing message and what actually happens at the college? Is there a danger of marketing driving the curriculum, especially given the age of the survey respondents and the likeliness that their views and sense of themselves might change considerably?

In response to this worry: for this initiative to work, there would really need to be a genuine intellectual investment in it, a sense of excitement for it, on the part of faculty. And there would need to be, in its conception, a clear sense of the political questions that are involved in global engagement, and rigorous preparation of students to engage these questions (international experience as intellectual exploration vs. advanced tourism)

Does this commitment to the “global” threaten the status and value of some disciplines *best* done at Smith, say, in the lab? What do we stop doing in order to do this? In response to this kind of concern: the opportunities for global/international experience might, in many cases, be cut loose from the structure of the major, and take a variety of forms and different degrees of relation to work in the major.

Implementation: Under this initiative, would Smith—as a way of becoming more distinctive—actually be “farming out” a good deal of its curriculum? And would much of our work then be quality control, and guiding students toward programs run by other institutions? There were several responses to this concern: this “farming out” issue might be solved by involving Smith faculty more extensively in a broader range of international experiences (e.g., accompanying a group of students to a foreign university); this would involve flexibility about models for such experiences, a considerable increase in the ease of mounting and organizing such experiences, and perhaps a rethinking of the financial structure of study abroad (e.g., “home school fees”). This more engaged model of global study might open up new opportunities for faculty growth and learning.

“Global” shouldn’t be understood in “presentist” terms; opportunities for historical study or engagement also need to be part of this initiative.

Is the strong response in the survey to this vision of the college a sign that students want more, and more specific, direction than we usually think they do?

A requirement for all? or an option for all? that is, is it required of everyone or an option available to everyone? The idea of having students apply for/select the option; some departments/programs will have a more difficult time adopting international foci/components; leadership dimension needs more articulation.

Might not bring us more full pays.

How does global leadership align with scholarly research?

We need to be careful about how we define global leadership; it can't just be about having an international experience; we need to think of it in terms of capacities; how will we add this capacity to each discipline? How will we integrate the experiences?

“Global leadership” has the capacity to turn into a buzzword or cliché.

How do we make the study abroad experience related to what's on campus? How do we use those on campus resources better?

How do we implement this given our open curriculum?

Faculty are uncomfortable being defined by anything...but it's a necessity

Will this be uncomfortable to alumnae, too?

Faculty need to think of this in tiers and how they might contribute on one tier or another; not everyone needs to do the same thing.

Need to be careful not to diminish the experience of our international students.

How will we define leadership in each discipline? What does it look like? What are the commonalities? How would you go about teaching it?

We must define leadership in such a way that it doesn't mean competing; we must ensure responsibility in leadership.

This will be a shift in how students negotiate the curriculum - faculty will need to reorient themselves with enthusiasm for this to work.

What about the cost for this - especially at a time of budget cuts?

Would investment need to be made in administering the plan - would that fall to on the already reduced faculty?

We have no choice but to move forward but how will we do this if resources are diverted from what we currently do?

The effect on advising is a concern; sounds like it would increase the advising workload

How would the college go about doing this? Where do we go next?

Reconsider Praxis.

Foster connections with alumnae in a more structured way.

We need a common understanding of key terms: what do we mean by *global* or *international*; what do we mean by *leadership*; how do the two main ideas relate? We should think about leadership in relation to confidence and self-awareness, not as wielding power. We could pursue the idea of clusters or concentrations such as the one in museum studies / curatorship. We should ask departments and programs to offer creative responses to this proposal; however, we also need leadership from the top, as we reminded our new Provost-elect.

Maybe run as a pilot, to test its viability.

Important not to bait and switch. Don't promise it if we can't deliver.

It should have a substantial international study experience at its core, whether in the semester, in January, in summer. These experiences need to be serious and rigorous – and ensuring that will require substantial faculty time and involvement. Moreover, we need to attend to students' preparation and re-entry in order to make the experiences meaningful.

We need to wait at least a year to launch this, to see where the markets land.

A focus on international leadership must have the full buy-in of the faculty, who must embrace it not just pragmatically, as a series of advising check-boxes, but as a legitimate intellectual framework.

Need systematic budgetary commitments to our existing leadership programs.

Must make the Smith X Program important, pervasive and defining; in light of that, should it be required?

Can't just be a marketing slogan. Has to be real, connected to our history, and articulated across all aspects of the student's experience.

The potential for leadership development is attractive; how define "international experience?" A dean's level position to guide implementation and fulfillment (especially the combination of leadership & academics); advising is key to pursuit of this opportunity; is it an option or a guaranteed result? Fast track the international center? Possibilities for staff involvement in advising, etc.; rethink study abroad destinations (as are doing) or expand them?

Connect this with first year seminars.

How might this proposal affect various disciplines?

Currently most of the science departments see study abroad as an interruption of the curriculum.

We wondered if a study abroad program needed to be in the junior year?

Or could the experience be for a semester or a summer or even a few weeks?

We noted that more and more European universities teach in English. Is there less of a need for language training?

In economics, many of the majors are international students and therefore might not need a program outside of this country. They also feel that many offerings of programs abroad are not satisfactory; the best are in England.

We wondered if departments would see such a proposal as something to accommodate to or a chance to enhance their program?

Thoughts on a Smith “X” Plan and a global leadership initiative:

International experiences are almost always “coed”. This could help us with the women’s college issue. (Increase recruiting of male guest students in our JYA programs.)

Widespread agreement at the table that Smith should rethink its open curriculum. Success in the global initiative will almost certainly require a more structured curriculum. Much positive conversation about distribution requirements. A foreign language requirement would seem particularly relevant to globalism.

Advising will also be crucial. Any initiative will require a more robust structure of advising support. Students need a physical place they can go to talk about these issues and how they connect with their education. Make use of the new international center for this purpose. Students need an architecture for articulating their place within a global society.

Much excitement about being “bold.” “Global” is an exciting word. “Leadership” is harder to articulate than “global.”

Much enthusiasm about making better use of our alumnae abroad. Can we create a coordinating infrastructure that connects such alumnae to our students? Pair up each entering student with an alumna? Make use of the families of current international students? Such coordination will require new staffing.

Global leadership vs. global citizenship: Bring these two concepts together. Must the former always be active and the latter passive? Citizenship carries a positive sense of responsibility.

The US may not need women’s colleges as it once did, but many parts of the world do. Can our students carry this model to places on the globe where women have not yet gained an educational footing? Partner with Women’s Colleges Worldwide or the Asian Women’s University? Exchanges? Focus on development, human potential.

Smith’s engagement with the world cannot be “English only.” A new global initiative should include opportunities to learn foreign languages intensively—summer study works well for students who can’t fit many consecutive semesters of language study into their programs.

Brainstorming about marketing taglines:

“Offering opportunities for students to discover how they can make a difference.”

Connections, global connectivity: “Smith connects you with the World.”

International voices; allowing worldwide women to find their voices; listening to those voices: “Can you hear me now?”

“Leaders who care.”

The Smith X Program is not bold enough. It’s time to revisit co-education. And do it now, while Smith is still associated in students’ minds with Harvard/Yale/Princeton. On the other hand, for those students who do matriculate, Smith’s all-female status is important. Being co-ed, like every other liberal arts college, would be to

lose all boldness. Moreover, our commitment to women's advancement in science and engineering would be significantly compromised.

Is co-ed an either/or? Couldn't we create specialized programs, like visiting junior year programs that would be open to male students and therefore address some of the social concerns students have? One ready option would be for Smith to host some of the Five College certificate programs, housing those students in a designated Smith house, allowing us to have to admit that many fewer female undergraduates. Questions: would there be demand? Could male students bring their federal financial aid from their home institution?

Partner with a sister institution abroad and exchange students.

The real problem is that we're a women's college, but we may have missed the moment to go co-ed.

What about 5-College cooperation as a strategy to enhance interaction with men? But this would need a serious effort to coordinate scheduling and transportation.

Why not discuss make the college smaller?

Worry about confusion between "global" and "international." We need a concept of global leadership that has a domestic component—e.g. students could do an internship in the U.S. but bring an international perspective through research and critical analysis.

The idea of a sister school is a good idea. This would be a concrete conduit for faculty and student exchanges.

We also need to build on international programs and relationships that we already have.

Advising could be a path and provide a template for students to enable them to evaluate their experiences in courses, internships, independent research. There should be an array of possibilities and options to internationalize any particular major. The advising initiative should include pre-major as well as major advising.

Worry that the idea of global leadership is "presentist." It does not imply historical content. Connecting global leadership to the classics is not obvious. It would seem and it would be contrived. Then it would lose focus and meaning. What would be the fate of departments and programs that do not fit? What about marginalization of these departments?

But isn't history important to global leadership? Isn't our emphasis on critical thinking, public speaking, etc part of global leadership?

Global leadership can be embedded in what we already do.

One challenge is that Mount Holyoke has already launched itself with themes of leadership and global concerns. Would the global leadership theme distinguish us enough?

Smith is already a leader in attracting students from diverse backgrounds. We need to bold—bolder than what is reflected in the Smith Design.

If Mount Holyoke is already going forward with these themes, why don't we work with them?

Can we have a global focus without requiring a second language? How would we implement this?

Why not require 4 years of high school preparation in a second language. (Opposes a language requirement at Smith.)

What about leadership? How would we approach that?

We attract many students who are not interested in leadership. They are geeks who just want to read.

But we need to have a complicated notion of leadership.

What about a series of junior experiences for visiting students at Smith modeled on the math program? Smith could be a place where female students from co-ed schools could come for training in particular fields, perhaps economics. This would be a contribution to women's leadership. We could offer this junior year experience at Smith to women at women's colleges abroad.

Diversity is also an important aspect of leadership development.

Initial Reactions, Enrollment, and Women's College Issues

Faculty expressed a sense that the research findings rang true, particularly with regard to prospective student concerns about attending a women's college. Faculty spoke of their own experiences with student ambivalence toward (or outright resistance to) the idea of attending a women's college. Faculty described their experiences with prospective students choosing to go elsewhere and with current students expressing the desire to transfer based on Smith's identity as a women's college.

Faculty discussed the contrast between student reactions to feminism in name vs. their reactions to the underlying concepts of feminism: students understand and support these concepts but react negatively to the word. Faculty agreed that feminism must be broken down into its component parts to be understood. It was noted by one faculty member that in this regard, "Smith is in a paradox: we can't advertise that which is most valued by our students and faculty," both in terms of Smith's commitment feminism and in terms of the value of a women's college environment.

There was some discussion of student concern about social life, with faculty brainstorming about ways to make co-ed experiences more accessible to students while remaining a women's college. Participants pointed out the importance of making connections with men that were meaningful and not just facilitating attendance at parties. It was noted that global experiences, whether defined as study abroad or as service, could provide a co-ed experience within the context of a women's college.

Faculty expressed some concern about the primacy of marketing as a motive for the Art & Science recommendations, though this was tempered with an understanding of the need for such efforts. The importance of branding was acknowledged by participants, who next discussed the extent to which Smith's position as yet another strong liberal arts college was not sufficiently differentiating. Art & Science was commended for giving us a "brand" we can use to express the way we are different, with the words "brand" and "branding" being used freely in the discussion. In support of the need for "branding," it was acknowledged that doing fifty different things well doesn't work: our work needs packaging to be understood, and, as one faculty member put it, "the level of simplicity they offer is worth latching on to."

There followed a discussion of the challenges of financial aid, the need for merit aid, and concerns that Smith does not get adequate public acknowledgement for the level of access it provides. Faculty were interested in seeing the cost-benefit analysis of further merit aid; it was not clear to all at the table that merit aid would result in a net increase in revenue. There was some discussion of whether we were considering trading off resources between merit aid and the branding efforts recommended by Art & Science. Further, faculty were unclear about the extent to which the Stride program functioned as a merit aid program, and to what degree Smith engaged in other merit offers.

Opportunities and Challenges of the "X Plan"

In turning back to the opportunities and challenges presented by Art & Science's recommendations, faculty were generally supportive of the idea of the "X Plan." Participants praised the idea for offering an opportunity for students and faculty to be reflective about the capacities, and the fact that it could develop into a program that is coherent, universal, intentional, and explicit. Specifically, one faculty member thought the idea of global leadership enhanced the Smith Design by providing a "point" to the capacities: students would be building their capacities not just in service of a fine liberal arts education, but in pursuit of their own development as global leaders.

Some hesitation was again expressed about the importance of marketing vs. the provision of education, but the point was also made that the ideas that were developed were something we already care about: the research was based on the Smith Design, a faculty-generated document. As one faculty member remarked, "it's *our* initiative, it's not telling us to be something we're not, they're not telling us to become a party school."

Another faculty member pointed out that the authenticity of whatever is developed is dependent upon the extent to which the faculty truly adopt and develop the idea of the "X Plan," and that, particularly in the sciences, it is

critical that global perspectives be integrated thoughtfully into existing courses. If Smith's implementation of the plan is simply a marketing gimmick labeling existing programs, it will not enhance the experience of students or faculty. A science course could simply be re-labeled and not enhanced in any meaningful way, an outcome this faculty member described as an effort "in bad faith," compared with a thoughtful integration of global issues and perspectives in a given course. It was noted that the challenge to authentic implementation was to design a plan that could be "broad but not vacuous."

This led to an interesting conversation about how to implement the project in a way that would ensure the "good faith effort" described above. Faculty stressed the need for proactive and thoughtful discussion about how to interpret "global" and "leadership" in the context of a wide range of disciplines. One faculty member noted that "leadership" in particular could mean many things, and, like other groups, our group questioned the use of that word, with the word "engagement" offered as an alternative. Despite this concern expressed by some discussants, others reminded the group that while entering students may have a reductive idea of leadership, we can treat that as an opportunity to expand their understanding of the construct through a rigorous education. As one faculty member put it, "take the rubric that they understand, then teach them what we want."

Implementation Ideas and Challenges

With relative accord as to the value of the proposal for Smith, faculty discussed some of the details of how to implement such an ambitious plan. Most at our table agreed that departments would be an important place in which to locate discussion and in which to develop the concepts of the Smith plan. Individual departments would need to consider existing curricula and determine how, within their own disciplines, the concept of global leadership might be expressed. While this was widely-agreed-upon, faculty also expressed a wish for cross-departmental discussion, so that connections might be forged and creative thinking might be fostered. As one faculty member said, "we're more creative outside our departments." Another faculty member suggested developing small groups of five or six members from multiple departments to develop the ideas presented at the faculty retreat into more detailed proposals. These small groups could connect departmental discussions to the curriculum as a whole, and could provide fertile ground for new ideas and for dissemination of plans as they develop. One faculty member pointed to Smith's history of faculty-developed initiatives, saying, "grassroots is what Smith is really good at." Existing cluster planning was given as an excellent model for encouraging inter-departmental cooperation around a theme, with a simple yet flexible formula that can be applied to a variety of disciplines. It was noted that this exercise could provide a welcome opportunity to create further unities across courses and departments within the theme of global leadership.

Discussion further focused on possible opportunities to use existing "entitlements" to fill out the "X Plan." Faculty members mentioned repurposing Praxis to provide global leadership experiences, and one mentioned that the increased focus of such a move might enhance her students' intentionality around their Praxis experiences. Another faculty member saw an opportunity in the work currently being done with the "Smith Elects the World," event, proposing the possibility of requiring students to make such a presentation after a global experience. The "X Plan" was seen as an opportunity to enhance existing efforts to strengthen advising and to integrate experiences outside the classroom into the academic experience. In this discussion, faculty members reiterated the value of collaboration across departments, and of making curricular connections explicit, as exemplified by the existing Cluster efforts. Faculty discussed the importance of thinking broadly about the nature of global leadership, including

Finally, faculty participants returned to economic realities, expressing some concern that global and international studies were already "on the chopping block" in the face of a bleak financial environment. Participants reiterated their concern that this effort be authentic and "in good faith," and that efforts toward implementation be bold and entrepreneurial. One faculty member pointed out the importance of risk-taking, noting the importance of allowing faculty to take risks in implementation, and tolerating the inevitable failures associated with risk. This faculty member pointed out that risk aversion may lead to solutions that are too conservative. Faculty agreed on the importance of applying proper resources, and some noted that they felt encouraged that initial discussions were not premised upon developing such a plan with existing resources.

Questions

1. Given the dire situation painted by the consultants, why is Smith doing so well in terms of its number of applicants? Several expressed the opinion that the quality of our students has not noticeably declined, and some reported improvements in certain skills. Relatedly, what would be the consequences if we simply ignored the consultants' advice?

Answers: First, we are not doing as well as it might appear. Our number of applications has not increased as fast as at coed institutions. Second, the likely consequence of no action would be a steady erosion in the applicant pool over time, which would decrease diversity, ethnic and economic, and/or decrease academic quality.

2. Given that the prestige of Smith plays such a significant role in our success, how stable is our prestige?

Answer: Perhaps not stably assured without action.

3. What would happen if we doubled merit awards? Wouldn't that increase our net tuition income?

Answer: Yes, it would, but it would decrease diversity, ethnic and economic.

4. How would we know a Smith X Plan is working?

Answer: Essentially if we achieve branding, of the {Chicago, Brown, Reed} variety. Audrey would know from her interaction with applicants whether or not this has been achieved.

Challenges

1. International internships are expensive, they require advising, funds to the host organization, etc... Perhaps 5-College pooling would help here, say, for an orientation program for all students heading to a particular region of the world.

2. Our course topics are already overlaid with so many concerns: writing, ethics, etc.; to lay two more (Global + Leadership) may stretch them too thin.

3. Global trips/connections/internships take a large investment of someone's time to arrange and organize, and ideally should not depend wholly on faculty.

Observations/Ideas

1. It seems difficult to stand out on the Global commitment; e.g., the UC system is heavily invested in this direction. The Leadership axis may be the more distinguishable of the two.

2. There was some disagreement over how much of the Leadership component is already present at Smith, and how much of it could be taught/fostered by the faculty. Certainly understanding all that is currently available (Lewis Leadership, Executive Education, etc.) is a first step.

3. The idea of having 5-College orientations for students heading to a particular region of the world was already mentioned. SIT could be involved.

4. Perhaps a summer study of less-common languages would be attractive.

5. Perhaps the alumnae travel trips could include students, as often there is extra room on these trips.

6. The activities of the CDO could be harnessed, e.g., to help create the ePortfolios. Perhaps every student should graduate with a cv prepared, based on her ePortfolio, etc.

7. Perhaps we could either mimic or somehow connect to the Peace Corps, and Teach for America.

8. Perhaps every student could perform a year-long (8-credit) independent project of her own design, only lightly evaluated (i.e., not evaluated like an honors thesis or a capstone course, but more like a Praxis internship). The project would be planned throughout her time at Smith and incorporate aspects of Global Leadership.

9. Ours must be the only table that did not discuss the possibility of Smith going coed.

Comments on Data and Size

There was general agreement about the magnitude of the challenge and no disagreement with the notion that significant action is required.

1. There were a number of questions about the reliability of the data and the recommendations:

Questions were raised about the staying power of the predictions or recommended changes over time, given changing contexts; i.e., might community service and the local become more appealing as political and economic contexts shift? How do we know that what we develop will be successful in the ways we desire? Some members felt that, while the service-related theme did not test as well, we might explore how to make it more intriguing. But others noted that it did not resonate as well with donors. Others agreed that the same was true for sustainability. In general, many felt that the integration of these three themes was important, not just for student and donor recruitment, but to insure a lasting impact and an intellectual coherence.

Related to this were concerns about student volatility and concerns about “chasing after consumer desires.” Yet we recognized the “ugly reality” that the admissions process is, in fact, dictated by 17-year-olds.

We agreed that these are problems of student perception, in part, and were appreciative of the data and suggestions. Some members wanted more data, more proof that the model’s predictions would be born out. (There was also a specific request for the data on the last two or three slides of the presentation, those data that supported the recommendations, be made available, since these slides were covered so quickly.)

Further, there were substantial concerns about whether we could take action sufficiently quickly, especially given Smith’s generally slow pace of change. We recognized the consultants’ point that if the change did not occur in the next year or two, we would likely not be “first to market” and would receive little benefit.

Many wondered whether, even if we take this imitative and are as successful as the model predicts, what will our NET change in pool be after taking demographic trends into account? Could Arts and Sciences provide these predictions? If the net change is in fact negative, we may need to consider other (bolder) initiatives even beyond this plan.

2. We discussed whether additional steps might be necessary in the short or long term. These initiatives might be going co-ed and shrinking the size of the college. There was interest among all table members in a fuller discussion of these options. We discussed co-education in more depth.

Co-education and Smith’s mission

Given the drop in numbers interested in women’s education and the challenging demographic shifts, is going co-ed on the table? What would its costs and implications be?

Related, how do we understand our mission as a women’s college in the contemporary era, when women have multiple educational opportunities? Further, we worried that because gender equality will continue to increase in the larger society, demand for women’s education will continue to decrease. We wondered at what point, if ever, Smith would need to consider going co-ed seriously.

Several members discussed the need to rethink our mission, which now dates from pre-women’s movement days. Science and engineering are areas in which women still really lag behind men in access, but other fields are much less so. Such a rethinking need not lead us to co-education, but rather to a clearer articulation of the value of single-sex education in the 21st Century.

We agreed that the leadership focus, if framed well, speaks to the benefits of women’s education.

We discussed the ongoing interest in single-sex schools among parents from traditional cultures and abroad who feel that their daughters will be protected or sheltered here.

Other initiatives

We also discussed other possible bold initiatives, such as becoming dramatically less expensive – but agreed that this had substantial negatives, and discussed other institutions (Rice and Carleton) for whom this failed. Instead, we noted, the focus on merit aid would accomplish similar things but without the negative ramifications

for reputation. We also discussed the perception of college-bound girls and their families that Smith is not affordable, based on one member's experience in conversations with such families.

The nature of the initiative proposed

We discussed the specific initiative, as well as its general impact and importance, and its relationship to other previous and current initiatives.

Our current actual position in the global and leadership domains (and the others) is less than what students perceive. We discussed the magnitude of the change that would therefore be required to move us to ALL. We also discussed the need to change students' perceptions of us, to effectively market new initiatives, and to work on our strengths.

There were questions about whether the Smith X Plan would constitute a genuine change, or simply a matter of packaging and metrics? There was some disagreement about whether we already do most of what the Global Leadership initiative would propose, but most agreed that we do not and believed the data that suggest that we are at "some" while students perceive us as being at "much."

One member noted, and others agreed, that because the consultants tested our Strategic Plan, the findings were not surprising. We are being asked to do what we were going to do already, but bigger.

One member noted that there are alumnae who are interested in working with Smith students or interns who should be employed. Because our alumnae are a strength of Smith, we need to use them effectively. There was broad support for the notion of online networking between students and alumnae.

There was concern that because other schools have similar initiatives, we will have to be distinct and radically different.

Engineering and lessons from it

One member remarked that we already tried something bold in the engineering program. Since this didn't pay off in marketing, why would we jump on the next big thing? A member from Eng said that half of the ENG students say they wouldn't have come to Smith without the program, and anticipates that interest in ENG will increase with the new building. At best, though, this is 20 students a year. There was discussion that we did not do the ENG program to improve our market position. Another member pointed out that programs such as ENG provide positive visibility and help maintain our reputation for being innovative and elite – although potential applicants "don't care" about the programs, they are still important to maintaining our position.

International focus

One member commented that innovative international programs are emerging already, noting a request from the Hamburg program to look into whether international students might receive a degree from UH after their exchange period there. He noted that this may sound superficial, but could be a way for the institutions to be out ahead of the competition.

There was general concern about cost, especially given how expensive our JYA programs are. There was discussion about the nature of the international experiences and moving beyond the JYA model. There was also discussion about the universality of international experiences, and how to balance universality and flexibility.

General concerns were raised about the place of local foci and our commitments to our surrounding communities. One member asked how we would think about the student whose focus was poverty or racism in the U.S.

There were concerns about the environmental impact of airline travel and the likely increases in cost over time. There were serious concerns among several members about sustainability and how an international focus involving extensive travel meshed with our sustainability commitments.

Philosophically, members thought we should think about the growing trend toward relocalization, in context of sustainability. While the world may be growing more flat and globally connected, there is a corresponding

trend toward investment in local communities and improving local self-reliance, especially in production and agriculture.

Some thought this could be addressed through a serious focus on leadership which would include local contexts. We had a lengthy discussion of leadership programs, discussing expansion of existing programs under the Lewis Leadership rubric, but noting the costliness of current programs. We discussed the need to be flexible.

In general, there were concerns about cost and about the need to make sure that if we spend a lot of money on programs, they need to be effective, and they need to be marketed effectively so that potential students know they exist. There was a general feeling that Smith's marketing is often too conservative, not expansive enough.

Innovation and departmental involvement

One member noted that the Design for Learning caused consternation within departments because members felt they were not trained to do the elements in the design; however, members pushed themselves and came up with new ideas. This ought to be possible again.