



Carol T. Christ

10th President of Smith College



In 2002, Carol Tecla Christ became the 10th president of Smith College.

Born in New York City in 1944, Christ attended public schools in northern New Jersey. In 1966 she graduated with high honors from Douglass College and went on to Yale University, where she received the Ph.D. in English.

In 1970 Christ joined the English faculty at the University of California, Berkeley. As chair of her department from 1985 to 1988, she built and maintained one of the top-ranked English departments in the country. She entered the university's administration in 1988, serving first as dean of humanities and later as provost and dean of the College of Letters and Sciences. In 1994 Christ was appointed vice chancellor and provost (and later became executive vice chancellor). During her six years as Berkeley's top academic officer, she was credited with sharpening the institution's intellectual focus and building top-rated departments in the humanities and sciences. In addition, she helped shape Berkeley's campus policy in response to Proposition 209, the 1996 California law barring the consideration of race in college admissions.

Christ, who was the highest-ranking female administrator at Berkeley until she returned to full-time teaching in 2000, has a well-established reputation as a champion of women's issues and diversity. Her first administrative position was as assistant to the chancellor on issues involving the status of women. She describes her undergraduate education at Douglass, the women's college of Rutgers University, as formative and has, in the words of a colleague, "an intellectual and emotional commitment to women's education."

At Smith, Christ's administration has been characterized by an energetic program of outreach, innovation and long-range planning, including capital planning, intended to position Smith for optimal success in a changing higher education landscape. She launched a review, conducted by members of the Smith faculty and outside scholars, to determine the distinctive intellectual traditions of the Smith curriculum and areas on which to build. Issued in 2007, *The Smith Design for Learning: A Plan to Reimagine a Liberal Arts Education* builds upon Smith's history of pedagogical innovation, identifying priority areas—among them, global studies, environmental sustainability, and community engagement—for significant investment over the coming decade.

In 2010, Christ launched The Futures Initiative, a year-long strategic-thinking project focused on 2020 and beyond, which examined the college's academic and financial models in the context of trends in higher education. Participants—trustees, faculty and senior campus leaders—engaged questions of demographics, globalization, pre- and post-college education, and diverse pathways toward an undergraduate degree, with the aim of positioning Smith for long-term success.

In the area of capital planning, a number of major building projects have come to fruition during Christ's tenure: the renovation and expansion of the Brown Fine Arts Center; a dramatic new campus center; a renovated Lyman Conservatory; the impressive Olin Fitness Center; new homes for the Poetry Center and the Mwangi Cultural Center; the renovation of Lilly Hall, home of the college's School for Social Work; and the construction of Conway House, an apartment building for Ada Comstock Scholars with children. Ford Hall, a state-of-the-art, sustainably designed classroom and laboratory facility named in recognition of its lead donor, the Ford Motor Company Fund, opened in 2009; it serves as home to the college's pioneering Picker Engineering Program as well as the departments of molecular

biology, chemistry, biochemistry and computer science. Under Christ's leadership, Smith has made significant commitments to environmental sustainability in its curriculum and campus operations, including the construction of a co-generation facility for power and heat and the dedication of the MacLeish Field Station, a 200-acre woodland tract in Whately, Mass., for environmental education and research.

In various forums, including the American Chemical Society, the Chautauqua Institute, the Council for Advancement and Support of Education and the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Hong Kong, Christ has addressed such issues as women's careers, civil discourse, women's global leadership and the future of higher education. Her op-ed articles have appeared in *The Boston Globe*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and the *South China Morning Post*. Over the decade of Christ's leadership, the student body has become notably more diverse and international, reflecting a commitment to educating students who are prepared to assume leadership roles around the world. Christ has extended Smith's global ties, through partnerships such as Women's Education Worldwide, an organization of women's colleges in 20 countries, and the Women in Public Service Project, a founding partnership of the Department of State and the five leading U.S. women's colleges to train a new generation of women to enter the public sector with the skills and passion to address global challenges. In spring 2012, Smith agreed to serve as the academic planning partner for a new liberal arts university for women, the Asian Women's Leadership University, in Malaysia.

While developing Smith's ties across the country and around the world, Christ is equally committed to strengthening relations between the college and its local community. She is a member of the board of directors of the Clarke Schools for Hearing and Speech and Northampton's renowned Academy of Music. She has worked with Northampton's mayor and citizen leaders to address such issues as affordable housing, downtown business improvement and Smith's support for Northampton's public schools. She serves on the boards of the Consortium on Financing Higher Education (COFHE) and the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), is a science education adviser to the Howard Hughes Medical Institute and is a trustee of Sarah Lawrence College.

Throughout her administrative career, Christ has maintained an active program of teaching and research. She has published two books: *The Finer Optic: The Aesthetic of Particularity in Victorian Poetry* and *Victorian and Modern Poetics*. She also edited a Norton Critical Edition of George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* and co-edited the *Norton Anthology of English Literature and Victorian Literature* and *The Victorian Visual Imagination*. She is professor of English at Smith and has offered seminars on science and literature and on the arts. In 2004 she was named a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, in recognition of her contributions as a leader in higher education. In 2007 Yale University Graduate School presented Christ with its highest honor, the Wilbur Lucius Cross Medal, in recognition of her distinguished achievements in scholarship, teaching, academic administration and public service. In 2011 she was awarded an honorary doctoral degree by the American College of Greece for her service to education and public life.

Christ has an avid interest in music. She has studied the piano since childhood and learned to play the viola as an adult.

Her late husband, Paul Alpers, was a scholar of the literature of the English Renaissance. He was a professor of English emeritus at the University of California Berkeley and professor in residence at Smith. Her son Jonathan is a graduate of New York University and lives in New York. Her daughter Elizabeth is a Mount Holyoke College alumna and is pursuing graduate studies.