

**Shaping the Future of Smith  
The Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels  
Los Angeles, CA  
March 21, 2006**

Approximately 35 alumnae from a variety of classes attended this evening event held in the reception room of the new cathedral in downtown Los Angeles. Club president Lois Thompson '66 introduced Carol and thanked her for spending time with so many alumnae that day in so many different parts of the Los Angeles area.

Carol opened her remarks by explaining the strategic planning process and the importance of alumnae as well as faculty and student input to the process.

Alumnae had a variety of responses to Carol's question about the distinguishing characteristics of Smith. One 2005 alumna emphasized the importance of the house system, the breadth of curricular options, and the importance of quantitative reasoning skills. Carol confirmed that statistics indicate most students feel least confident about their quantitative skills.

Several alumnae praised Smith for giving them a curiosity for learning engendered by a freedom to explore various areas of study. Another alumna added that she appreciated the fact that she was made to delve deeper into her studies than she ever had before.

Several alumnae from the '70's mentioned their membership in an international business organization on campus that required them to make cold calls, sales presentations, and to motivate others. They appreciated the real-life experience they had with this group. Carol agreed that opportunities for this kind of association, as well as independent work in the real world, were extremely positive for students.

One alumna suggested that the college unite all learning/curricular initiatives around the idea of preparing leaders. This effort would require quantitative skill development, environmental literacy, and other necessary qualities for leaders. In thinking further about this, another alumna added that the specific skills for leadership would have to be clearly defined. The importance of faculty feedback/advising was highlighted as a critical component. A fellow alumna added that it was important that students learn how to be good team members in addition to being leaders. Knowing how to apply one's skills confidently and appropriately is the key.

Carol described the senior design project in engineering as one way students can do just that and said that this kind of capstone experience was significant enough to merit consideration in other areas of departments and majors.

Several alumnae spoke to the importance of alumnae mentors to work with students. Others added that they would like the opportunity to connect with other alumnae professionally as well as with students. Carol mentioned that the college and the Alumnae Association are looking at additional ways of alumnae engagement, including professional networking opportunities, reunions for alumnae in specific professions, and lectures and coursework online. She added that pilot programs with alumnae in the media and sciences have elicited extremely positive response from alumnae.

The conversation shifted to questions about personal development and how the college was helping students develop balanced lives. Carol mentioned the Narratives of Success project launching next year thanks to a gift from an alumna which will address just these issues. She agreed wholeheartedly with alumnae that it is very important to help students develop perspective that would give them the resilience to navigate all they face in life.

One alumna asked about the future of the extraordinary libraries at Smith given the technology now available to students. Carol responded that this is a very hot topic for faculty at Smith and described the orientation program for students about special resources, ensuring that they know what is available to them and how to use it.

The final comment of the evening came from a young alumna who praised her Bridge experience at Smith. This helped her understand all of the resources available to her at the college and made her feel much more comfortable in a very unfamiliar situation.

Carol thanked the host and the attendees for their participation.