

Bridging the Arts, Sciences and Engineering at Smith:

Proposal for a Center for Environment, Design, and Sustainability

PART II, From Landscape Studies and interested faculty:

This is a joint proposal from EVS and the LSS group (art, architecture, landscape studies, literary studies, social sciences, and engineering). We believe that the support and development of the nexus of courses, research, and activism about the spaces we inhabit and exploit, should be one of the initiatives to identify and galvanize Smith over the next decades. What we are proposing is a kind of conceptual umbrella, a way of presenting a significant group of courses, projects, and people at Smith who together represent the most exciting way of exploring the culture and the physical qualities of our environment. We might call the ensemble of this diverse and shared study the **Center for Environment, Design, and Sustainability (CEDS)**. The Center would bring together all of us at Smith who engage with the environment in academic, scholarly, and activist ways.

I. Here is what we are doing at Smith now:

1. Smith has all the resources—unique in an undergraduate institution in the U.S.—to position itself as a major undergraduate powerhouse for studies that relate to sustainability, from scientific, engineering, environmental, cultural, policy, and design perspectives (Our libraries, the Museum, the Botanic Garden, and engaged students, faculty and staff at Smith and in the other Valley institutions) .

Our curriculum of studies in design and the environment spans the liberal arts, with the Landscape Studies program linking fine arts and humanities to the social sciences, natural sciences, and Engineering.

2. We note that there is great demand for architects, landscape architects, planners, and designers in every area of our lives, including government, construction, and education. **Our students** with majors in Engineering, Art, and Biological Sciences are taking courses in Architecture, Landscape Studies, Environmental Science and Policy, literature programs and departments, and social sciences, and collaborating with other students and faculty as never before. More students are applying and being accepted to the top Architecture and Landscape Architecture programs and graduate programs in related fields every year.

3. We are developing **sustainability projects across the campus**, from Physical Plant to Dining Services and the Botanic Garden, and students and faculty are increasingly involved with these initiatives, through course-related research and committees.

What next? These people and projects must come together to make minds meet in ways that will strengthen the voice of the College, its students, faculty and staff in the international engagement with issues of sustainability.

II. Here is what we propose for Smith's strategic initiative. We note here that only the proposed faculty position in EVS and the Center directorship are new. The College now has a unique set of programs that produce important faculty initiatives and alumnae in top graduate schools and distinguished careers related to the environment. It is time that non tenure-track and deferred hires be given tenure track status, if we wish to assure the basis and growth of this reputation.

1. We support the creation of a **Center for Environment, Design, and Sustainability**, both a place and a name that would communicate and support the curriculum and other campus resources **that together offer the richest study of the environment in a US undergraduate institution.**

2. We emphasize that a **tenure-track position in Biological Sciences** to replace John Burk when he retires is essential to LSS and to other programs studying the built environment, including Engineering and Environmental Science and Policy.

3. We strongly recommend that the College authorize the raising of an **endowment for a tenure track position in architecture.** This is the pivotal position in our multi-disciplinary initiative that links Art, Architecture, and Landscape Studies to Engineering.

4. We recommend that the **LSS 100 lecture series, "Issues in Landscape Studies," be endowed;** this course sponsors speakers from the valley and across the country, in every related field at Smith; and it draws between 110 and 120 students a year.

5. We urge the College to commit its **support to the Landscape Studies studios, LSS 250 (Landscape and Narrative) and LSS 255 (Art and Ecology).** They are cross-listed, and conceived and taught in close collaboration with the 200-level Architecture studios in ways that reflect the newest direction that the two professions are taking.

6. We support a **tenure-track position in EVS.** As is the case with Architecture, the EVS program has not only survived but flourished-- sending students to top graduate schools and bringing prestige to Smith—thanks to overworked tenured and tenure-track faculty from other departments and programs, and temporary faculty who cannot be asked to take on the growing burdens of planning, administration, and student advising. The future development of the program—and Smith's academic excellence in the study of the environment—depends in large part on such a position.

7. We recommend two support positions, a **Director of this Center** and a **Sustainability Coordinator** to oversee and link Smith's initiatives—faculty and student research, curricular innovations, campus-wide engagement with environmental problems and solutions. Together, these positions would provide continuity in the important discussions that can/should take place between campus operations and environmental literacy.

III. Finally, we propose that the College recognize and publicize these studies in the environment as one of our great strengths that is producing cutting-edge scholarship, innovative teaching, and student graduate work and careers at the forefront of sustainability issues from the arts to the sciences and engineering. We cite the memo “Integrating Sustainability into the Smith College Mission and Campus Life” from the Campus Sustainability Committee to the President: “To be consistent with the College’s educational mission, it is essential that the sustainability mission be woven into the academic fabric of the College.”

Supporting faculty:

Nina Antonetti, Assistant Professor of Landscape Studies
Don Baumer, Professor and Chair of Government
Jeff Blankenship, Lecturer in Art and Landscape Studies
Bob Burger, Professor of Geology
John Burk, Professor of Biological Sciences
Dean Flower, Professor of English
Drew Guswa, Assistant Professor of Engineering
Helen Horowitz, Professor of American Studies
Susannah Howe, Design Clinic Director, Engineering
Linda Jones, Professor and Chair of Engineering;
Barbara Kellum, Professor and Chair of Art
Leslie King, Associate Professor of Sociology
Ann Leone, Professor of French Studies and Director of Landscape Studies;
Kirin Makker, Lecturer in Art (Architecture)
Michael Marcotrigiano, Professor of Biological Sciences and Director of Botanic Garden
Doug Patey, Professor of English
David Smith, Associate Professor of Biological Sciences and Director of Environmental
Science and Policy