

To: Committee on Mission and Priorities
From: Sid Dalby, associate director of admission
Date: October 29, 2006
Re: Initiatives

I see a few “holes” on campus and suggest the following ideas to help plug those holes.

- **Provide additional support for low-income students from disadvantaged backgrounds**

I worry that too many Smith students are feeling left out and uncomfortable because of money-related issues. We can alleviate the suffering by providing more information and support. Just as we have staff members responsible for counseling international students, students of color, and students with disabilities, I recommend assigning a non-faculty advisor the task of serving as a liaison between class dean, counseling services, Student Financial Services and Women and Financial Independence to develop creative and sensitive programming and support for students on a tight budget who struggle to acclimate to the culture of a wealthy college. I recommend developing an educational brochure for students, using the *Ada Comstock Scholars Handbook*, *What I Wish I Knew before I Came to Smith*, and *Harvard on a Shoe String* as guides.

- **Develop a communication plan for parents of Smith students**

Both the tentative parent of a first generation Smith student and the overbearing helicopter parent of a privileged student could benefit from getting more information about what happens at Smith. Many colleges have a staff member—or an entire office—to work with parents. I recommend assigning a staff member to collate current offerings and information for parents and to initiate other services including an electronic newsletter and a calendar designed with on-campus events listed, tips for parents about issues such as mid-term malaise. I recommend offering relevant workshops for parents at orientation.

- **Continue to strengthen campus wide sense of community**

With 70% of our students living in singles, with office buildings set apart geographically and with academic departments relatively small and self-governing, it's sometimes challenging to make connections across campus. I recommend having an optional host family program, which will be especially useful for low-income, international, Ada and some graduate students. I would recommend including Northampton residents as host families, which could strengthen town/gown relations. I recommend having an annual community breakfast including Northampton leaders and host families. It would be helpful to offer seasonal all-campus meetings to introduce new faculty and staff to the Smith community. Turning move-in-days in the fall to an all-hands-on-deck opportunity for community service could forge a bond among students, faculty and staff.

- **Offer short-term sabbatical opportunities for faculty at community colleges**

To promote Smith's role as a “private college with a public conscience” and to further develop Smith's ties to community colleges where the majority of students of color in the U.S. begin—and end—their college careers, I recommend offering programming, collegial support and housing for one or two community college faculty members.