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News from Staff Connection

April, 1990

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## Report on 12/89 Meeting

Our third campus-wide meeting gave Smith employees another opportunity to meet and get to know each other and identify and discuss issues of concern.

People introduced themselves and the meeting opened with a presentation of Staff Connection's Mission Statement. Attendees broke into four groups and discussed ways in which Staff Connection could meet its goals. The following ways to encourage staff to become involved were suggested:

- Continue the Staff Connection newsletter and encourage articles/letters from staff
- Expand existing activities groups and encourage staff to come up with new ones
- Organize an all-college staff picnic
- Vary the scheduling of Staff Connection meetings—hold some during the lunch hour as well as at the end of the day
- Have Steering Committee invite individual groups (for instance, the housekeeping staff, everyone who works in College Hall etc.) to meet
- Establish a phone tree to let staff members know when meetings are coming up
- Invite any interested faculty to join in Staff Connection activity groups.

After refreshments, the same focus groups discussed quality of work life issues. Some of the issues people felt needed addressing were:

- Paid maternity leave for clerical staff
- Greater equity between sick leave benefits given to administrators and clerical staff
- New staff orientation.....
- Telephone "hotline" for staff where questions for information about college policy or rumors can be answered or referred.
- Lack of staff input into college policy
- Lack of staff awareness about faculty structure and responsibility
- Flexible staff hours
- Child care and sick child sick leave

- Publication of members and goals of all campus committees
- Making Faculty Club more receptive to all staff
- Extending spousal benefits to employees' significant others/partners
- Recognition from college of promotions, excellent work etc.

The focus groups were asked to give the Steering Committee some guidance about which quality of work life issues were most important to those present:

- Staff Connection Steering Committee should have a working relationship with Office of Personnel Services
- Child care is needed
- Quality of work environment (air, light, VDTs, etc.) should be improved
- Paid parental leave should be available for all staff
- Spousal benefits should be available for employees' significant others/partners
- Staff orientation is needed.

—submitted by Chrissie Bell

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## What Staff Connection Is

Staff Connection is an organization open to all Smith employees (except those who hold faculty rank). A steering committee coordinates the group's work based on ideas from all staff members. The group is sponsored by the Committee on Community Policy.

Our mission is to provide an opportunity for Smith staff to get involved in decreasing isolation on campus through better communication, helping one another feel more connected to the Smith community, and improving the quality of work life.

Current steering committee members are:  
Chrissie Bell, Nan Clark, Katherine Gannett, Scott Girard, John Graiff, Louise Mold, Lucia Page, Susan Smith, Emily Weir, and Mary Lou Wittig.

## Staff Profile: Sharon Rust

Campus Security are not just people who unlock your door or boot your car. According to Sharon Rust, the Director of Campus Security, the Smith College Campus Security Department Officers are a group of dedicated, hard-working professionals who are committed to the ideal of quality campus security at Smith. Many of the officers who are members of the Campus Security Department here have been employed by the college for a number of years and are invested in the concept of a secure campus for all; staff and students alike. It's not as if they're waiting to go on to some other branch of law enforcement; they're committed to the idea of a quality campus security force here. All department members are Special Police Officers and have full police powers on campus property, including the power to arrest. In addition, department members are Hampshire County Deputy Sheriffs and are CPR and First Responder certified. They have taken a variety of specialized training courses including rape certification, field sobriety testing and Identikit. Since September, In-Service training seminars in domestic abuse, suicide prevention, and sexual harassment have been conducted. By the end of 1990, all officers will have taken a 96-hour Reserve Intermittent Basic Training Course or its equivalent.

Ms. Rust's philosophy is that "as the times change, so should the department". With that in mind, the In-services began this past fall and there have been implementations in the Campus Security Department to take a proactive rather than a reactive approach to crime and safety on campus. Department members of the department have held successful sessions in several departments that dealt with crime prevention and the engraving of valuables. Special measures have been established to deal with unusual circumstances. There is currently a pilot program underway in which officers volunteer their time working on a crime prevention unit. One of the outgrowths of this program was publication of the blue flyers, "It Can't Happen Here", which circulated to students before Spring Break and were meant to educate people about the security of personal items left on campus during the break.

According to Ms. Rust, campus security is a community issue. She would like to see better communication between Campus Security and other departments on campus. "In an academic setting, we tend to be tunnel-visioned and Smith is no exception. We may fail to remember that we are part of a five-thousand-person-plus community here and that everyone must be aware and cooperative. We tend to want to get on with our job and are not as aware as we might be of, say, a suspicious person wandering in a campus building.



We tend not to remember it that there are not just Smith people on the Smith campus. People should think "When I see something that doesn't seem right, I should call someone and let them know", says Ms. Rust. That someone is the Campus Security Department; they are responsible for investigating complaints of suspicious and/or unwanted persons and should be called if such a situation should arise.

In September, Sharon Rust became one of a slowly-growing number of women directors of security for colleges in the area; both Mt. Holyoke College and M.I.T. have women serving in this position. Ms. Rust believes that this number will continue to grow as more qualified women applicants apply for such positions.

Ms. Rust's own qualifications are impressive. Prior to arriving at Smith College in 1977, Ms. Rust had already lived, worked and studied in the Boston area for ten years. While at Northeastern University, she worked through the Coop Program with the Boston Police Department, getting first-hand experience in every department; she also worked as a paralegal in the office of a criminal trial lawyer. Since coming to Smith College, she has worked in the Campus Security Department, first as a Patrol Officer, then as the Night Shift Supervisor. Later she was appointed Night Supervisor (second in command to the Director of Campus Security) and served as Acting Director from July 1989 until September 1989 when she was appointed to her current post as Director of Campus Security. Since assuming her duties as Director, things have not been quiet for Ms. Rust. She cites Barbara Bush's campus visit as an example. Asked how she would like to see things change on campus with regard to security, Ms. Rust responded "I'd like to see less factionalism and have more departments look at the 'big picture' with regard to safety and security and the prevention of crime for the campus as a whole".

What is the most difficult part of her new job as Director of Security? Answers Ms. Rust with a wry smile, "Being tactful".

## Staff Connection Action Survey

Staff Connection was created as an organization of, for, and by the Smith College staff. The steering committee of Staff Connection would like to add your ideas to the staff "wish list." *Please fill out the survey and return it to Emily Weir in Pierce Hall 28.* Comments gathered at past general meetings will also be considered when planning activities and programs, but feel free to mention again things that were raised at a meeting. Results will be published in the next newsletter, and the Steering Committee will pursue the issues found most pressing by staff.

### Current Involvement [check as many boxes as apply]

I had never heard of Staff Connection before receiving this newsletter.

I have heard of Staff Connection but never attended a meeting.

I have attended at least one meeting.

I have attended at least one "interest group" meeting (i.e., softball, lunch bunch, computer users group, etc.)

I am interested in meeting other members of Smith's staff.

### Action

The *single* most important change I would like to see is:

Here's how Staff Connection might address this:

Two other areas which could help improve my working life are:

### Structure of Staff Connection [check as many as apply]

I think Staff Connection should be primarily social.

I think Staff Connection should be primarily an advocacy group that attempts to bring about change for Smith employees.

I think Staff Connection should be *both* a social and advocacy organization.

I would like Staff Connection to sponsor regular all-staff meetings.

How often should these meetings be held? \_\_\_\_\_

If you would attend meetings, please indicate whether you would like to have these sometimes or always: [circle all that apply]

-informal discussions:                      sometimes      always  
-workshops on specific issues:            sometimes      always  
-strategy planning sessions:            sometimes      always

### Opinion

The best thing about Staff Connection so far is:

The worst thing about Staff Connection so far is:

### Future Involvement

I would like to volunteer to:

talk to someone about what activities I could help with

head or organize a Staff Connection activity group

sit on the Staff Connection steering committee

assist the steering committee on a specific project

write an article for this newsletter

other (please specify)

### Comments

Thank you!

## Recycling Update

Although there have been some problems, Smith College is on its way to recycling in earnest. The Campus Recycling Committee has been meeting since last Fall in an effort to set up a viable program on campus. The situation was complicated for the committee when the city announced mandatory recycling for commercial and institutional users effective April 1, 1990. At that point, the group had to switch from the goal of identifying components of the Smith waste stream, to getting a real program set up to comply with the April 1, 1990 deadline. It hasn't been easy; there have been some problems along the way including poor communication to Physical Plant staff. Complicating the situation is the fact that at Smith, we are recycling things differently than Northampton residents do because Smith's recyclables are not eligible to go to the MRF in Springfield as are private household recyclables. One of the goals of the committee is to have a building representative for each building on campus to oversee the institution of recycling in that building. Building representatives met on March 28 to discuss the recycling process. Building representatives are still needed for several academic buildings and houses on campus. If you are interested, please call Tom Russell at x 2400. The primary thrust of the recycling effort at Smith at present is paper waste. Containers have been distributed to some buildings for the separate disposal of trash, office scrap paper, computer paper, newspaper and corrugated cardboard. Questions about recycling should be directed to your building representative; if you have none, contact a member of the committee, or volunteer to be a building representative!

## Child Care Update

The ad hoc Committee on Child Care, the third such committee to be created in the past 10 years, was established by President Dunn in August at the recommendation of the Planning and Resources Committee. The mandate for this group, whose membership is taken from service, clerical, administrative, faculty and student portions of the Smith community, is "to prepare a feasibility study on child care at Smith for infants through Campus School age." Since its inception, this committee has been very aware of the problems that people on campus face with regard to child care. Some problems the committee has discovered include the gaps in child care available for certain ages of children (it is particularly hard to find day care for youngsters between 12 and 18 months, for example), the inequities in pregnancy/parental leaves, and the affordability of childcare.

In an effort to get a clearer picture of Smith's child care needs, the ad hoc committee has hired an outside

consultant to assist it in creating a questionnaire which will go to all employees of Smith on April 18. The questionnaire is divided into sections for all staff to respond to regardless of their child care needs. The responses will be reviewed by Smith and the consultant, Workplace Connections, with the exception of the comments section, which will be seen only by Workplace Connections staff. The consultant will forward synopses of the comments to the college to protect the confidentiality of the respondents. In order for the committee to make the best recommendation possible, it is important for all of us to return the portions of the questionnaire which pertain to us by May 3.

Focus groups, facilitated by staff from Workplace Connections, will be available on April 24 and 25 for staff and students who have child care issues to discuss. These group sessions will run all day on both days and will last about an hour; they are limited to 20 participants per session. The more input that is gathered by the committee, the better for all staff the final recommendation will be. People with questions or comments regarding child care are invited to contact any of the following committee members:

Lucinda Williams x 2923

Kathy Bates x 2363

Ann Nichols x 2668

## New England Staff Association

I would like all staff members to know about the New England Support Staff Association (NESSA). This organization grew out of a pre-conference workshop held by the New England Association of College Admission Counselors in 1986. Ronald Ancrum, Director of Admission at UMass/Boston, and Grace Bartini and Frank Williams, formerly of the College Board, "recognized the need for support staff professional development, and together they began to work on a program which touched on [various] office issues..." During the 1987 conference the Support Staff Conference had its official start. The 1988 Support Staff Conference planning committee realized that, since it was no longer affiliated with NEACAC, a new name had to be found for the group; and so, NESSA came into being. Theresa L. Sidiropoulos, the co-chairperson of the 1989 NESSA Conference, describes the organization as one "for support staff, where members can share their concerns their concerns and their accomplishments with others in the same field. It's nice to know that you are not alone."

Staff members who would like to know more about NESSA or who would like to be added to the organization's mailing list should contact Theresa Sidiropoulos at (401) 863-2338.

## Staff Profile: Nan Clark

"There was always something inside me that I wanted to say," declares Nan Clark, a newly published author and housekeeper at Wilson House. Nan wrote stories as a Northampton grammar school student, and penned a few poems as a student at Emerson College, from which she graduated in 1950 with a degree in radio and English. She began writing seriously about two years ago after joining a writers' workshop led by acclaimed children's author Jane Yolen. Nan says Yolen has been her mentor; she inscribed one of her books for Nan: "From one writer to another." Nan says she was touched and inspired by the gesture.

Nan's story, "The Doggondest Dissapearance," appears in the winter issue of *Small Farmer's Journal*. It's a mystery story about a farmer and his mischevious dog. Each summer day, she unplugs her telephone, warns family members not to disturb her, and writes for three hours. Most of her story ideas are drawn directly or indirectly from her own life. Nan is also working on a romantic novel for adults, and may return to a book she started nearly two decades ago.

As fond of writing as Nan is, it must take a back seat to cleaning during the school year. From 8 to 4:30 every weekday for 14 years, she's been busy with house-keeping duties. "I enjoy the students, and they like me," she says, noting that they call her "Mrs." Clark as a sign of respect. Students ask her advice on everything from raising plants to the best place for a haircut. Although loathing cleaning up after parties (which she says usually takes an entire week!), she enjoys "the congeniality of being with young people." Over 60 herself, Nan proudly rattles off a string of children (3), grandchildren (1), stepchildren (5) and even step-grand and step-great-grandchildren. In addition to raising their own children, she took in 12 foster children during the 1960s and 70s—some unmarried mothers and some newborns awaiting adoption.

Her husband, Merwin, has retired from his carpentry job at Smith and now works their 12-acre Chesterfield farm with a team of oxen. Both are developing a maple sugar bush, which they may begin tapping next year.

This curly-haired grandmother is one year away from retirement herself, but plans to be busier than ever with her writing and a variety of handcrafts. Nan also sings with the Country Squires band, which entertains at elder centers, and lends her alto to solos at the West Cummington Congregational Church. "It's marvelous to have something exciting to do after age 60," she says. "It's important to have things to retire *to*, not just *from*."



Nan Clark



## Gardeners' Group Plans 1st Meeting

The "Smith Gardeners' Group" will hold its first gathering on Wednesday, April 25, in the Bodman Lounge of Helen Hills Hills Chapel from noon to 1 p.m. Bring a brown-bag lunch; coffee and tea will be provided.

Richard Munson, director of the Smith botanical gardens, will talk about seasonal gardening activities, and is delighted to answer questions concerning outdoor gardening.

Come meet other interested gardeners. All are welcome! R.S.V.P. ext. 2756.

## Take Me Out to the Ball Game

Over 40 faculty and staff expressed an interest in Staff Connection's softball group this spring! Some of them will be playing on a Smith College team in the Northampton recreational softball league from May through July. If you are interested in attending the games to cheer them on, you may contact Debbie Bradley, Richard LoebI or Beverly Cotnoir for a schedule. Take me out to the crowd...

## Open Forum

This newsletter offers a place for staff to share their concerns and opinions with other staff members. If you've ever felt that no one was listening to you, take some time now to write a brief letter to the editor or editorial and send it to Mary Lou Wittig at Lilly Hall.

\* Letter Policy: All material must be submitted with your name, but need not be printed with it. Please clearly indicate if you do not want your name printed.

\* Please note that the opinions presented in Open Forum are those of the authors and not necessarily those of Staff Connection itself.

To the readers:

Finally, a place to share feelings about Smith," my" Smith, the way that I see it. For three years a frustration has been building inside and I haven't had an outlet for it until now. What I see are people feeling victimized by "the system" and unable or unwilling to attempt to bring about change. Maybe there are others on campus who feel the same way and feel that working with others maybe, just maybe, we can get together and affect positive change.

I believe communication is the key to avoiding frustration on the job. Being a custodian on third shift doesn't leave much opportunity for communicating with those whom my work has an immediate impact on. Sometimes this may be considered a blessing, but over all, it leads to misunderstanding and resentment. To know what those people who use the space during the day expect, and consider important as far as cleaning and what the maintenance priorities are for a given space would be very helpful in planning work time. Instead, when something goes wrong, a secretary, administrator or faculty member decides to flex a muscle and fire off a biting memo about how they perceive I/we are performing our duties. This sets off a rattling of the chains of command resulting in more memos, more expense and more misunderstanding. Is this really any way to keep the ship afloat? My guess is that 80-90% of cleaning done in academic buildings on campus is done between the hours of 3:30 p.m. and 7:15 a.m. (the work hours of the second and third shifts). So our work remains a mystery to most people working at Smith.

All we need to communicate is a little initiative and to decide we are willing to communicate with others on campus. We need to realize that it doesn't matter if

you are a professor or a custodian, a student or administrator, what is seriously needed here is communication.

Staff Connections is an opportunity to voice your opinion and shed a little light in your corner of the campus, to let the rest of us see that without you here things would be different and that without a doubt your being here does make this a more fulfilling and equal place to live and work.

—submitted by Scott M. Girard

To the readers:

As a clerical staff member in a high traffic office, I manage to accumulate a reasonably large amount of compensation time. Upon talking with staff people from other offices and buildings, there seem to be differing practices in the use, accounting of, and repayment for hours earned as comp time. For instance, in our office we receive comp time for any hours worked over the regularly scheduled 35 up to 40 hours. Anything over 40 hours is counted as time and a half, and that extra money earned shows up in the next paycheck. Working a 50-hour week would give me five hours of comp time and 10 hours paid at time and a half. This comp time can be used to take time off during the day, but only when scheduled well ahead and at the convenience of the office schedule.

I had always assumed that this was a standard practice for all staff and that there should be no variation between offices as to how this was recorded on time sheets, paid out, etc. Apparently this is not the case, however, as I found when I noticed that a friend of mine seemed to have an exceedingly flexible schedule. I asked her how she arranged her schedule in such a manner at very short notice and she stated that she was using the comp time she had saved up. This would not have been an unusual remark except for the fact that in her office no one puts their comp time on their official time sheets. They merely keep a running tab on their own and take it when they find it to be convenient. This is encouraged by their supervisor and taken to be a matter of fact in that office. I personally find this to be a highly irregular and potentially unfair system in that, since that time is not officially accounted for, the employee could be refused time off that was actually earned or unpaid for a large amount of accumulated hours.

Another item that I find objectionable is that, when we work a holiday, we do not receive time and a half. Since we are working over our *scheduled* work week, are we not entitled to having those extra hours paid at time and a half? I have many questions for which I would like answers; anybody game?—Submitted by Susan M. Smith

## Open Forum (continued)

To the readers:

I would like to comment on the rumors I've heard about a new policy of delayed hiring. What I've heard is that department heads are supposed to delay replacing all staff vacancies for three months or more. I'm worried about the implications of such a policy.

My first question is, why haven't all staff members been told about it? Do all departments have to comply? Does this mean that existing staff are expected to do another person's job for three months (or longer) before a new staff member is hired? Will they receive extra pay for doing another person's job as well as their own?

In addition to this, clerical staff in some departments have been told not to work any overtime (over 40 hours per week) and to cut down on compensatory hours worked. At certain times of the year everyone in our office routinely works more than 35 hours a week. How are we supposed to take on another staff member's job and not work overtime? Has the administration also built into this new policy that we don't have to get our work done on time? If not, it seems to me that the college administration is certainly out of touch with the demands on some college departments.

(Name withheld upon request)

## Attention, Faculty Club Members

What's in a name? Well, when it comes to the Faculty Club, neither you nor I nor any other member of the non-faculty staff is in its name, at least for a while longer. All that could change this spring when the Faculty Club executive board polls the membership on its choice of a name.

Last year, when membership in the club was extended to all Smith staff, some members suggested a name change to more accurately reflect the new constituency. Then, at a sparsely attended meeting on this past March 29, club members tabled a motion to change the name to "The Smith College Club." Individuals expressed concern that removing the word "faculty" would imply that the club, which is subsidized by the college, was not supporting the academic mission of the institution by providing a meeting place for college-related discussion over meals. Others said "The Smith College Club" might be understood to include students in its membership.

Nevertheless, at a time when the college community is working hard on issues of inclusiveness, some of us felt a need to change the name to one that was more welcoming to all members of the Smith faculty and staff. In addition, since the Faculty Club is in a rather precarious financial position and in need of increased patronage, any reasonable change that would be more inviting to potential members and guests could only benefit the organization.

As there were so few members in attendance at the meeting, no one felt comfortable making a decision about the name change without more input from the membership at large. In addition, some who were in favor of keeping the old name argued that the poor turnout at the meeting might indicate a general lack of interest in making a change. If you do think it's important, and we hope you do, *please watch for the ballot this spring and cast your vote.*—Submitted by Mary Reutener