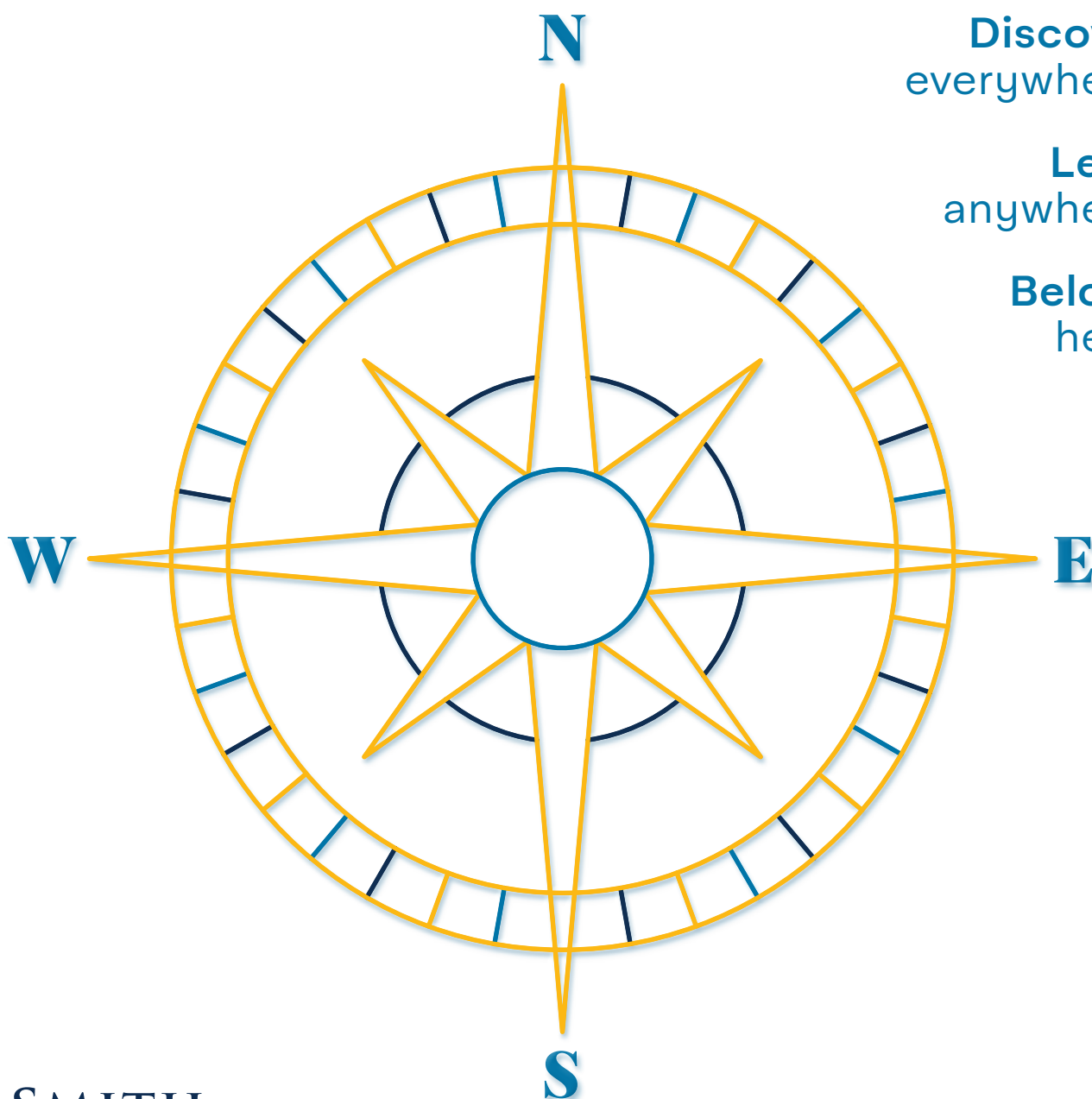


Compass 2035:

A Strategic Plan for Smith College



Discover
everywhere.

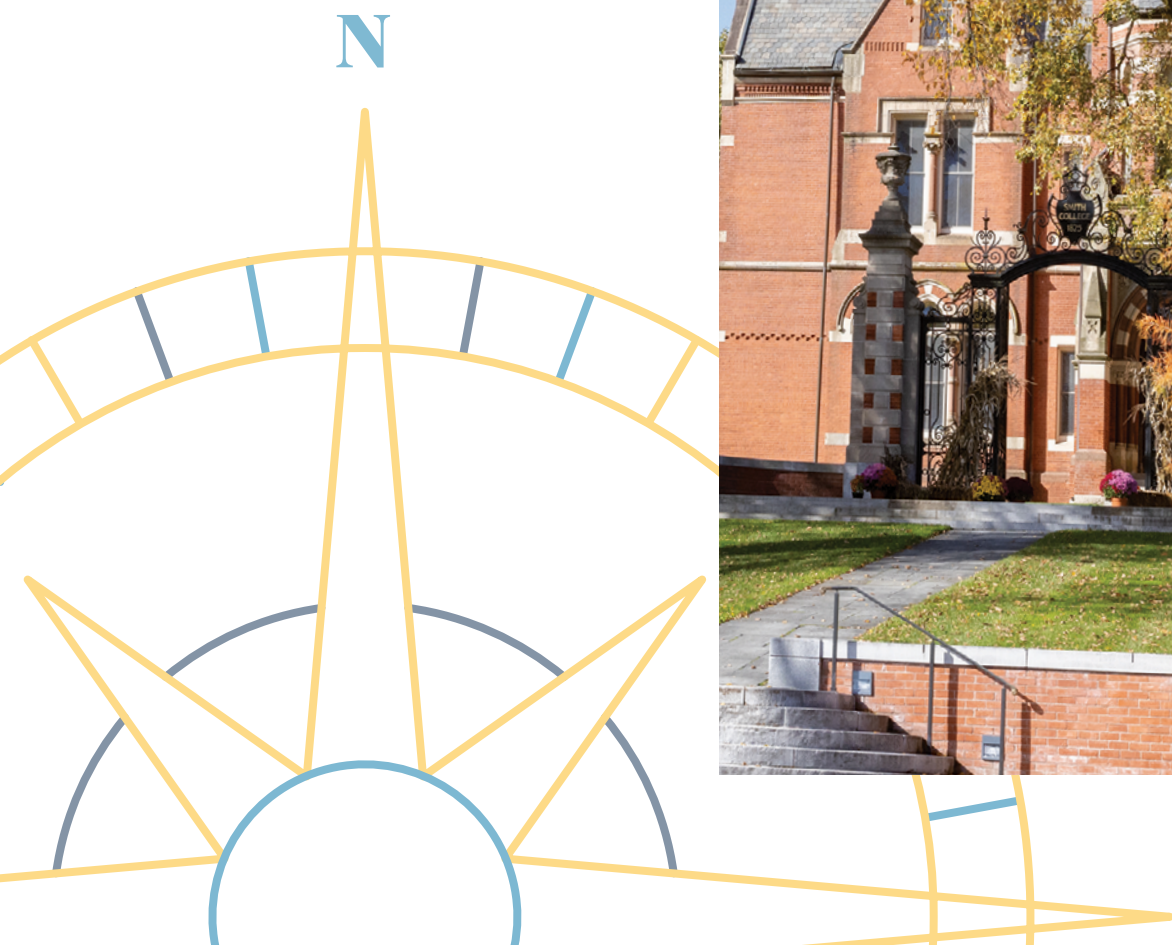
Lead
anywhere.

Belong
here.

SMITH
COLLEGE®

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Letter From the President



Dear Friends,

This year marks Smith College's 150th anniversary, a moment for both reflection and renewal. While we can only guess what Sophia Smith imagined when she penned her final will and testament in 1870, we know that when Smith opened its doors in 1875, few women were encouraged to pursue higher education or to imagine bold futures for themselves. Sophia Smith understood that education transforms lives and liberates potential; she believed that the world needed the minds, hearts, and voices of educated women. A century and a half later, we celebrate her vision as Smith College—one of the largest women's liberal arts colleges in the United States—continues to expand opportunity and deepen understanding across generations.

The values that have defined the college for the last 150 years—intellectual exploration and rigor, inclusive leadership, deep care for one another and for the world, and a commitment to sustainability, belonging, and well-being—are now being reaffirmed in Smith's new strategic plan, called *Compass 2035: A Strategic Plan for Smith College*. As humanity wrestles with unprecedented complexity and pervasive polarization, Smith College remains clearly committed to the mission of educating women with the goal that students from all backgrounds and experiences better understand the world and are able to contribute to it in meaningful, positive, and impactful ways.

Students graduate from Smith with a strong sense of agency and responsibility and a foundation for courageous leadership in, and service to, their communities and beyond. They leave campus grounded in a liberal arts education that allows them to bring their intelligence and their ability to collaborate to bear on the knottiest problems of each generation with energy and creativity.

The faculty, staff, students, trustees, and alums of yesteryear have bequeathed to us an inspiring legacy. Smithies, and the extended Smith community, are part of something enduring and significant. We share a vibrant intellectual environment that shapes—and is shaped by—the faculty and staff who make their scholarly and professional lives here and the students who pass through its gates. More often than not, each of us who is a part of Smith College comes to depend on it and, in turn, become dependable citizens of it.

Together, we do more than imagine a better world—we build it. *Compass 2035* draws on our founding mission, our rich history of innovation, and our powerful network of thinkers and doers to chart an ambitious, hopeful course for the decade ahead.

I look forward to turning these aspirations into action alongside each of you.

Sarah Willie-LeBreton
President

Introduction to Smith College

Smith’s strategic plan is powered by our mission and values, and by a long-standing belief that education can transform lives and strengthen communities. These principles, affirmed by the Strategic Planning Steering Committee and the Smith College Board of Trustees, anchor *Compass 2035* and shape our vision for the decade ahead.



Mission

Smith College educates women of promise for lives of distinction and purpose. A college of and for the world, Smith links the power of the liberal arts to excellence in research and scholarship, thereby developing engaged global citizens and leaders to address society’s challenges.



Values

- Smith is a community dedicated to learning, teaching, scholarship, discovery, creativity, and critical thought.
- Smith is committed to creating an inclusive, equitable, and accessible educational community founded on the free and open exchange of ideas.
- Smith educates women to understand the complexity of human experience and world cultures through engagement with humanistic, social scientific, and scientific ideas.
- Smith creates global citizens, committed to participating in the communities in which they live and to stewarding the resources that sustain them.



Who We Are

Smith College provides an exceptional liberal arts education that prepares students to think deeply, live intentionally, and lead collaboratively. The college combines the intimacy of a residential community with the reach of a small university, offering premier academic and cultural resources that include libraries, archives, an art museum, and a botanic garden. With approximately 2,500 undergraduates and 300 graduate students, Smith is one of the largest women's liberal arts colleges in the country and one of the most globally connected.

Smith College's story began with Sophia Smith, the first woman in the United States to endow a college for women. Though she had little formal education, she possessed a clarity of vision—to use her estate to fund a college that would become “a perennial blessing to the world,” where women's power for good would be “incalculably enlarged.” That vision still animates the institution she created.

Smith provides a preeminent academic experience distinguished by a rigorous liberal arts curriculum and exceptional faculty and staff. With 65 departments and programs and the flexibility of an open curriculum, Smith encourages students to design their own curricular and co-curricular journeys while developing critical-thinking and communications skills, creativity, and global awareness. Small class sizes and an intimate campus environment foster close collaboration with faculty who are accomplished scholars and dedicated teachers and mentors. Though primarily an undergraduate institution, Smith offers degree-granting graduate and postbaccalaureate programs. Students have the opportunity for advanced study in the arts and sciences as well as professional and interdisciplinary training. As we anticipate the needs of future students, our goal is to continue to offer graduate programs that provide an unmatched educational experience while simultaneously enhancing the excellence of the undergraduate curriculum. Beyond the outstanding classroom experience,



signature co-curricular programs—such as the Praxis internship program and STRIDE research fellowships—combine academic theory with real-world experiential learning, preparing graduates to make meaningful contributions across disciplines and professions.

Located in Northampton, Massachusetts, Smith offers a vibrant residential experience with a global reach. Living into Sophia Smith's vision of a college "of and for the world," the college has long been recognized as a leader in international education. Its Paris Junior Year program was launched in 1925—the first such program from a women's college in the nation—and it set a standard that endures today. Each year, hundreds of students study abroad, many pairing internships with their coursework, while the Smith campus comprises students, faculty, and distinguished scholars from across the nation and around the world.

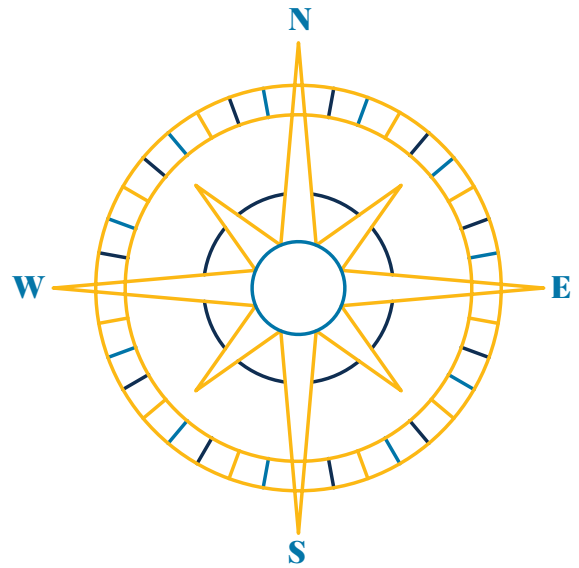
Today, Smith continues to cultivate trailblazers and visionaries. Its undergraduate and graduate alums work across disciplines to build a more inclusive, sustainable, and just world. More than 54,000 Smith graduates lead as scientists, public servants, policymakers, business leaders, nonprofit executives, artists, inventors, entrepreneurs, journalists, physicians, and educators addressing the complex problems of our time.

Building on Sophia Smith's vision, the college continues to evolve. In recent decades, Smith has produced more than 300 Fulbright fellows and launched the first undergraduate engineering program at a women's college. It has become a force in Division III women's athletics, with nationally ranked basketball, rowing, and volleyball teams and Academic All-American athletes across our varsity sports teams. Smith has become a national model for access and affordability, expanding its no-loan financial aid program and introducing The Next 150 Pledge starting in the fall of 2026, which provides free tuition for all undergraduate students from families making up to \$150,000 annually. And Smith's leadership extends to sustainability, with a commitment to become carbon neutral by 2030 through a major geothermal energy project that will reduce campus emissions by 80%.

Even as we celebrate these accomplishments, we look ahead. The challenges facing higher education today—mischaracterizations of the liberal arts and the value of higher education, the rising cost of access alongside a growing wealth gap, and the accelerating pace of technological change—are significant. At Smith, these are not obstacles but catalysts: opportunities to reaffirm our mission, draw inspiration from our traditions, and continue to evolve in ways that prepare our students and our institution for the future.

Guided by the values that define us and the goals that galvanize us, *Compass 2035* sets the direction for the decade ahead and serves as a critical tool as we prepare our students and our college to thrive with purpose, care, and a vision for a better world.





Discover Everywhere, Lead Anywhere, Belong Here

Smith is charting a bold course for the future with *Compass 2035*—a strategic plan that strengthens the college’s capacity to prepare every student for a life of purpose. Through a transformative liberal arts education, Smith nurtures intellectual development, analytical acuity, and curiosity among its students. Our residential liberal arts experience develops the whole student—mind, body, and spirit—by inviting students to explore questions that matter, practices that sustain growth, and ideas that spark imagination. Smith alums leave campus with more than a degree, they carry with them a sense of direction that helps them navigate a complex world with confidence.

Compass 2035 ensures that every Smith student has the tools, mentors, and experiences to chart their individual path through college and beyond. The plan’s four goals—reimagining learning and discovery, connecting education with purpose and leadership, strengthening a culture of well-being and belonging, and securing the college’s future—will guide the college over the next decade. A Smith education not only supports the success of the individuals who have been students here, it contributes to the collective good through our partnerships and volunteer endeavors with the city of Northampton, in the region of western Massachusetts, throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and in the wider world. Together, the goals represent a compass for Smith as we chart a course to honor our history, build on our strengths, and innovate with imagination and courage for the years ahead.

How We Will Use This Plan

Compass 2035 will serve as Smith's "true north" for the next decade—steady in its purpose, yet flexible enough to respond to change and embrace opportunity. Its role is to keep the college focused, nimble, and united around its mission and priorities.

In practice, *Compass 2035* will guide how Smith directs its energy and resources. This new collegewide discernment practice will help promote efficiency, encourage collaboration, and ensure that resources are directed to the highest priorities. Each department will be encouraged to use the plan as a reference point in its own planning and daily work, so that institutional goals are reflected across the college.

Ongoing engagement with the campus community will remain central to the process, fostering transparency and shared ownership of the college's momentum and learning along the way.

In early 2026, Smith will develop an implementation plan to guide how the goals of *Compass 2035* are prioritized and phased in. This plan will also define how we measure progress and ensure that *Compass 2035* remains adaptable, responsive, and aligned with the college's mission.

Discover Everywhere, Lead Anywhere, Belong Here

provides a throughline that centers the focus of *Compass 2035* on strengthening community, navigating change, and advancing our mission.

➤ **Discover Everywhere** reflects the journey of curiosity across disciplines, cultures, and experiences that is inherent in a Smith education.

➤ **Lead Anywhere** invokes the confidence and agency that students learn at Smith and carry with them out into the world as alums.

➤ **Belong Here** grounds us in the heart of Smith's inclusive, vibrant campus and alum community.



Goals

Compass 2035 defines four interdependent goals that fall into two broad, interconnected domains: Academic Experience and Campus & Community. These domains articulate Smith’s ongoing vision and, together with the initiatives that follow, ensure that Smith remains both an exceptional place to learn and a thriving place to live and work.



Academic Experience (Goals 1 & 2)

Goal 1:
Inspire and support academic excellence, exploration, and discovery.

Goal 2:
Prepare students for fulfilling careers and a lifetime of leadership.

Academic excellence and exploration lie at the heart of the Smith experience.
Our open curriculum, exceptional faculty and staff, unique cultural assets, and vibrant co-curricular opportunities encourage students to center exploration in their Smith experience by asking bold questions, pursuing ideas across disciplines, and discovering their unique paths of inquiry.

Smith’s approach to education connects learning to purpose.
From the first-year experience through senior year, students receive integrated academic and career guidance that links intellectual exploration to practical experience and professional growth. Through classroom and experiential learning, research, global and study away programs, partnerships with

alum networks, and collaborative leadership opportunities, students learn to translate curiosity into transformative action.

Faculty and staff are central to this work.
Smith will keep the college at the forefront of the liberal arts by continuing to invest in the growth of our faculty and staff at all career stages and by supporting ongoing excellence in teaching, innovation, and mentorship. As artists, scholars, researchers, and practitioners, the people who work at Smith bring real-world depth to every engagement with students in every space on campus.

Campus & Community (Goals 3 & 4)

Goal 3:

Foster well-being, belonging, and resilience across our community.

Goal 4:

Strengthen institutional sustainability to ensure the college's enduring contributions to the world.

Community well-being is the foundation of institutional sustainability.

When students, staff, and faculty flourish, Smith flourishes. Rooted in this belief, the college embraces the concept of transformative inclusion—the understanding that every member of our community shapes the institution even as they are shaped by it. To strengthen well-being, belonging, and resilience across our community, we will build upon beloved traditions and create new shared moments of connection and joy.

Sustainability—both human and institutional—remains at the core of Smith's future.

Financial and environmental stewardship go hand in hand, supporting long-term stability while advancing the college's commitment to climate responsibility. Through innovative strategies in operations, facilities, and resource management, Smith will continue to pursue the technologies that are environmentally responsible for our collective health, well-being, and sustainability. Smith will also develop a collegewide discernment practice to help ensure that college resources are directed to our highest priorities.

Connection and Continuity

The goals of *Compass 2035* are deeply intertwined. Academic excellence depends on community well-being; belonging and resilience make exploration and collaborative leadership possible. Together, the key initiatives emerge from the goals and mark the beginning of *Compass 2035* in action. Building on Smith's historic strengths and propelling the college toward the vision set forth in this plan, *Compass 2035* positions Smith to meet the future with confidence—advancing an institution that endures and a community that thrives.



Key Initiatives

The strength of *Compass 2035* lies in the connections among the initiatives that advance its four goals. Each initiative reinforces the others, forming a framework that is bold, purposeful, and enduring. Together, they define the work ahead.

Smith will:

1 Ensure financial accessibility for every admitted undergraduate student by:

- › continuing to meet the full demonstrated need of all undergraduate students; and
- › empowering students to participate fully in the Smith experience by expanding funding for all of the programs and services that enhance the experience and persistence of our students.

2 Expand student opportunities for exploration and discovery across all four years by:

- › strengthening the first-year scaffolding so that students' academic and co-curricular lives are more seamlessly integrated in the residential setting, providing every student with a sound foundation for their college journey;
- › ensuring all students have access to the deep engagement experiential learning opportunities that lead to improved persistence and achievement;
- › embedding career readiness and leadership development into every student's Smith experience, with a focus on closing equity gaps and building connections with alums; and
- › increasing awareness of and access to curricular and co-curricular experiences that prepare students for global citizenship, engaged leadership, and meaningful careers.







3 Ensure faculty lead in connecting research, teaching, and curricular innovation by:

- › investing in their development as researchers, creatives, and teachers at every stage of their careers;
- › expanding scholarship and research opportunities for faculty and increasing faculty-student collaborations across the college, including creating new initiatives and resources for faculty who want to work with students in the humanities and social sciences;
- › balancing and adapting faculty workload expectations to best support efforts across scholarship, teaching, and service; and
- › aligning spaces for teaching, learning, and exploration with current and emerging pedagogical and research needs.

4 Cultivate strategic partnerships to expand Smith's reach by:

- › forging new coalitions with colleges, universities, and other organizations regionally, nationally, and globally to expand curricular opportunities and affirm Smith's role as an educational innovator and generous neighbor in the region; and
- › connecting on-campus learning with off-campus experiences, preparing students for study away and local community engagement that deepen and enrich their education.

5 Foster well-being, connection, and joy for all by:

- › elevating and reimagining spaces for athletics, recreation, and wellness;
- › strengthening mental health resources and accessibility supports;
- › expanding culturally diverse arts programming; and
- › designing spaces for reflection and connection that inspire discovery and purpose.



6

Embrace transformative inclusion in our community by:

- › investing in sustainable, community-oriented dining that nourishes bodies, builds connections, and reduces waste;
- › aligning campus planning with the values of inclusivity and belonging;
- › celebrating and renewing Smith's traditions to make them more inclusive and resonant with current students while preserving lasting connections with alums; and
- › creating shared moments across groups to strengthen communal bonds.

7

Advance institutional leadership in emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI), with discernment and integrity by:

- › developing new modes of teaching and research to guide current understanding of AI's social, cultural, educational and environmental impacts;
- › expanding student, faculty, and staff experimentation with and training in innovative tools and resources;
- › preparing students for life and leadership by teaching them ethical principles for the rapidly evolving digital world; and
- › using technology to deepen insight into institutional operations and to strengthen decision-making.

8

Secure Smith's future as a lasting institution by:

- › adopting a collegewide practice to direct resources to the highest priorities, enhancing collaboration and reducing duplication;
- › investing in faculty and staff through policies, support systems, and training that sustain fulfilling careers and strengthen our mission-driven culture;
- › advancing Smith's leadership in environmental sustainability through the integration of decarbonization, responsible resource use, resiliency, and adaptation across all operations; and
- › reimagining the uses of underutilized buildings and spaces to promote efficiency, sustainability, and community vitality.





Process and Concurrent Initiatives

Strategic Planning Process

One year after Sarah Willie-LeBreton began her tenure as Smith's 12th president, the college launched an 18-month strategic planning process designed to engage the entire community in envisioning the college's future. The effort, supported by Wellspring Consulting, reflected the college's commitment to collaboration and transparency.

More than 4,000 faculty, staff, students, alums, and trustees contributed their ideas and feedback through small group discussions, working groups, standing committees, and online surveys. A steering committee with broad representation guided the process, with additional input from the Smith College Board of Trustees.

At every stage, the plan was shaped by the voices of those who care deeply about Smith's identity, history, and future.

In fall 2024
and spring 2025,
60-plus
listening sessions were
held that engaged
322 Smith community
members.

We received
288
responses
to open-ended
online feedback
forms.

A Smith-wide
survey administered
in early
2025 garnered
3,988
responses.

Concurrent Initiatives

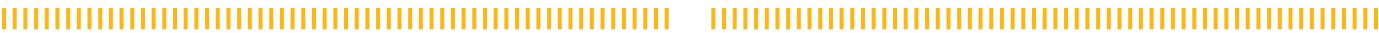
As strategic planning winds down, we feel confident that many of the ideas raised by the community during this process have been integrated into the plan and are already taking shape. For example:

- ▶ McCartney Hall—the new home of the Lazarus Center for Career Development and the Wurtele Center for Collaborative Leadership—has been completed, which allows their combined programs to help students scaffold their career planning.
- ▶ The Campus Use Plan (CUP)—developed alongside *Compass 2035*—represents the first major step in translating several of *Compass 2035*'s priorities into action. Aligned closely with strategic planning goals, the CUP guides the college's building and landscape ambitions, shaping key capital investments. By improving and expanding indoor and outdoor spaces used for teaching, learning, scholarship, and well-being, the CUP outlines greater accessibility to spaces that can be used for intellectual reflection and social connection.
- ▶ The Next 150 Pledge—which expands financial aid by providing free tuition to all students whose families earn up to \$150,000—continues to center the financial accessibility of a Smith education.
- ▶ The Athletics Working Group, convened earlier in 2025, provides community input and fosters shared understanding around proposed renovations to Ainsworth and Scott gymnasiums to ensure that our varsity athletics and club sports remain highly competitive while creating an inclusive facility for health, wellness, and recreation accessible to all members of the campus community.
- ▶ Smith's geothermal energy project is entering its third and final phase and remains on schedule for completion by 2028. Launched in May 2022, this bold initiative will reduce the college's carbon emissions by 80% and enable Smith to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030—furthering its long-standing leadership in environmental sustainability.



Strategic Planning Leadership and Contributors

Smith College is grateful to Wellspring Consulting for their partnership in facilitating the strategic planning process. Their guidance supported the steering committee’s work in synthesizing community input and shaping the framework for *Compass 2035*.



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