



Sarah Willie-LeBreton

12TH PRESIDENT OF SMITH COLLEGE



Sarah Willie-LeBreton has served as the 12th president of Smith College since 2023.

She earned a B.A. from Haverford College, and an M.A. and Ph.D. from Northwestern University, all in sociology. She taught at Colby and Bard Colleges before being tenured at Swarthmore College, where she spent 26 years, concluding with her appointment as provost and dean of the faculty.

An accomplished administrator, scholar, and sociologist who studies race and ethnicity and social inequality, Willie-LeBreton is known for her commitment to the liberal arts, strengthening community, and energizing the work of equity and inclusion. She is the author of several dozen articles, essays, reviews, and op-ed columns. Her first book, *Acting Black: College, Identity and the Performance of Race* (Routledge 2003), compares the post-civil rights era experiences Black college alumni at comparable predominantly white and historically black institutions. Her second book, which she edited and to which she contributed, *Transforming the Academy: Faculty Perspectives on Diversity and Pedagogy* (Rutgers 2016), explores the experiences of people with marginalized identities in their roles as faculty and administrators in dominant academic spaces.

Willie-LeBreton has worked with a broad range of groups and organizations to understand social dynamics and develop strategies to help the participants move their organizations toward self-awareness, transformation, compassion, and inclusivity. An applied sociologist, she believes in bringing research and theory to bear on everyday challenges.

In 2025, Willie-LeBreton gave the keynote address at the 40th celebration of Martin Luther King Jr.'s life at Syracuse University; she gave a panel presentation at the National Conference of State Legislators 50th Anniversary Summit on higher education's return on investment; and she was appointed by Governor Healy to her Discovery, Research, and Innovation for a Vibrant Economy, or DRIVE, initiative to invest in the life-saving science and job protection of research and development among universities and technology firms in Massachusetts. In 2026, she gave a panel presentation to the annual Board Chairs & Presidents Workshop for the Association of Governing Boards at which she was also a participant, and she was appointed to chair an accreditation committee for African Leadership University by the New England Commission on Higher Education.

A thought partner in board governance, her board service has included Pendle Hill Quaker Center, Haverford College, Benchmark School, the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation, and the Grand Canyon Conservancy. Currently, Willie-LeBreton serves on the boards of the national Women's College Coalition, the Five College Consortium in Western Massachusetts, the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Massachusetts, and Integrated Impact Group, a private consulting firm. Over the course of her career, she has been active in the Eastern Sociological Society, the American Sociological Association (on whose Executive Office and Budget board she served and with whose Departmental Resources Group she worked), Sociologists for Women in Society, the Association of Black Sociologists, and Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (the largest regional association of Quaker meetings in the United States).

