INCLUSION IN ACTION
One-Year Update

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What is engagement at Smith?

Conversing and collaborating across on-campus constituencies

Motivating community members to take action

Conversing and connecting outside of a formal structure
Why is engagement important to Smith?

Better serve faculty, staff and students in a collaborative and communicative environment

Better attract and retain high-quality, diverse faculty and staff

Facilitate a stronger and more efficient organization
Understanding barriers are critical to engagement

- Hierarchies
- Time
- Recruitment
- Sense of importance/priority

- Siloing
- Comfort level
- Energy level
- Cluelessness
Hypothesis
Issues/themes considered

Facilitating difficult conversations among faculty and staff

Collaborating across differences – faculty/staff, staff/student, faculty/student

Encouraging story sharing

Navigating conversation across hierarchical boundaries

Experimenting with interactive, tactical engagement
Hypothesis

New low-stakes/low-barrier opportunities to connect may lead to more engagement across differences in the Smith Community

LOW-STAKES OPPORTUNITIES + LOW-BARRIER OPPORTUNITIES =
A SENSE OF BELONGING & A MORE COHESIVE COMMUNITY
Experiment
Three low-stakes/low-barrier experiments designed to facilitate different modes of interaction among diverse campus groups

Experiments included informal and formal conversational prompts
WHEEL!

Tested low-stakes, story sharing in a public, casual setting, using a fun tactical approach

Prototype #1
Tested February 27, 11:00-1:30; 4-6:00p
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MEAL!
Prototype #2 – Tested March 2 (lunch)

Who Are We?

- What do you know about the cultural and racial background of our community here at Smith?
- How many of us come from different countries?
- Which population group (students, faculty, and staff) is most diverse?
- Does an imbalance between these groups lead to tension on campus?
- How can you get to better know someone who has a different background than your own?

Tested difficult conversations around diversity statistics across hierarchical boundaries, campus groups

Diversity statistics were discussed following casual conversation
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GET REAL!

Prototype #3
Staff and faculty meeting prompt - Untested

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- How many of us come from different countries?
- Which population group (Students, faculty, and staff) is most diverse?
- Does an imbalance between these groups lead to tension on campus?
- How can you get to better know someone who has a different background than your own?

Attempted to test feasibility of an all-campus mandated conversation prompt regarding diversity realities

Section 3
Outcomes
WHEEL! MEAL! GET REAL!

- Two of three (WHEEL!, MEAL!) resulted in successful outcomes
  - Approximately 150 members of the Smith community engaged
  - Individuals engaged in casual and sometimes more meaningful conversations
  - New face to face connections, unexpected joy and positive energy created
  - Few faculty engaged
- GET REAL! not successfully executed
Wheel of engagement

Captured approximately 50 engagements

Attracted many who were curious as to what was going on

Engaged more students and staff than faculty during lunch
MEAL!

- 61 registered/44 attendees/20 survey respondents
- Greatest response to personal invites vs. RSVPs via eDigest
- More staff attendees (Engagement Team is staff heavy)

Attendee response to engagement questions displayed at tables (1 of 4 displayed on right)
Learnings
What did we learn?

Smith community is inclined to connect in ways that feel meaningful

Staff and students are receptive to conversational prompts around diversity

Casual conversation around fun topics and opportunities to step out of one’s comfort zone, break down barriers leading to more substantive conversations

Play and fun are not antithetical to being a mature, thoughtful adult
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What did we learn?

❖ Campus-wide communication is a broad challenge that needs re-evaluation, especially from an equity perspective

❖ The support of senior administration is necessary in order to more effectively communicate with all campus constituencies.

❖ Structural barriers exist, making it difficult to engage with faculty.

❖ Experiences designed to draw new people in and show others engaging within a public setting, can help community members conquer hesitation to participate.

❖ Tailored outreach strategies are needed to meet the information/schedule/bandwidth of various groups.
What did we learn?

Creating and testing prototypes in a short period of time required a team effort and collaborative leadership.
Recommendations
As a result of the three experiments, we recommend

- Office for Equity and Inclusion (OEI) should expand on low-stakes/low-barrier activities
  - Small diverse design team (2 students, 2 faculty, 2 staff)
  - 3 to 4 activities/year
  - Wheel could be one of a series of different creative/tactical/guerilla activities implemented to connect people

- OEI, in tandem with the Inclusion Council, should investigate where systemic communication roadblocks that hinder change efforts exist, especially those aimed towards engaging faculty and those who are unwilling to participate voluntarily
We recommend *(continued)*

- Smith College administration should
  - Empower diversity, equity and inclusion efforts by responding to and elevating initiatives
  - Build and maintain channels of communication/collaboration with groups focused on these efforts
- OEI should continue to support cross-group committees designing engagement opportunities and building solutions around diversity, equity and inclusion
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