

Engagement in Action Team

INCLUSION ACTION One-Year Update

Erin Cohn, Betsey Cronin, Monica Dean, Jessica Drawe,
Stefanie Frazee, Jonathan Hirsh, Gaby Immerman,
Queen Lanier, Thomas Lark, Anna Mwaba, Stacey Steinbach

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Introduction



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

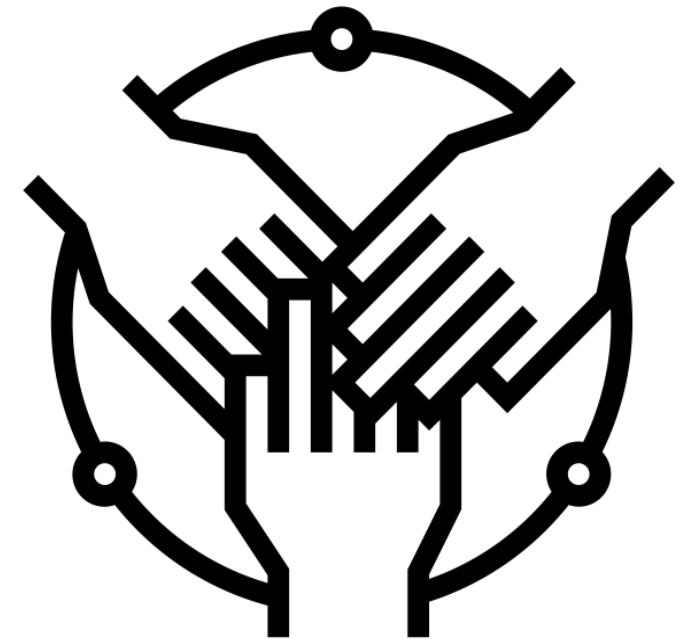
Experiment



WHEEL! MEAL! GET REAL!

Three low-stakes/low-barrier experiments designed to facilitate different modes of interaction among diverse campus groups

Experiments included informal and formal conversational prompts



Created by Ninejipip
from Noun Project

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



The Inclusion in Action Engagement Team invites you to

engage with us

WHEEL!

Visit the Wheel of Engagement!
Campus Center Walkway
February 27, 2020, 11a.m.-130p.m.; 4-6p.m.

MEAL!

Join us for free lunch and conversation about equity and inclusion at Smith
March 2, 2020, Carroll Room (RSVP at http://bit.ly/EAT_RSVP)

GET REAL!

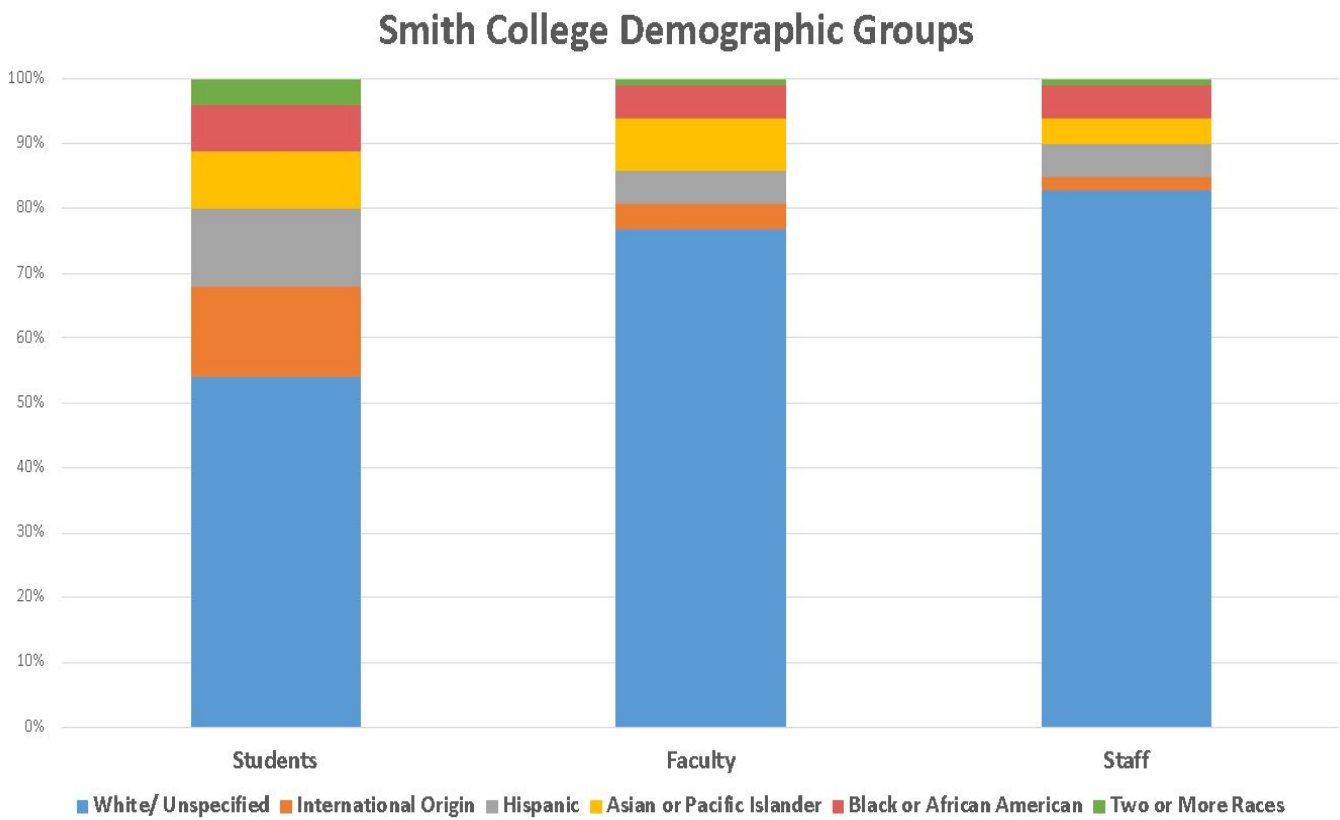
Think and talk about the ethnic diversity of Smith College at your next team meeting (watch for details coming soon via email)

MEAL!

Prototype #2 – Tested March 2 (luncheon)

Who Are We?

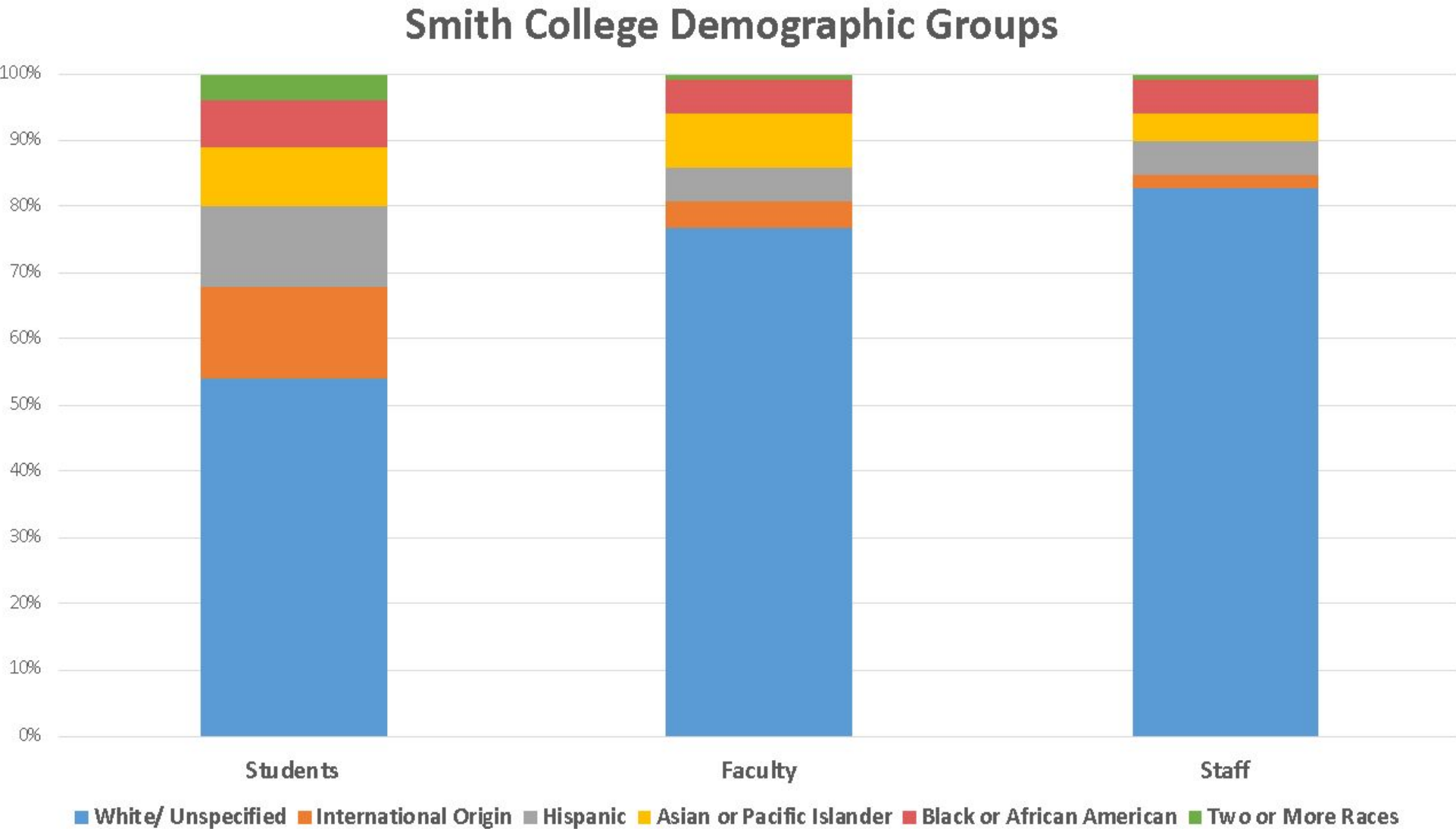
- What do you know about the cultural and racial background of our community here at Smith?
- How many of us come from different countries?
- Which population group (Students, faculty, and staff) is most diverse?
- Does an imbalance between these groups lead to tension on campus?
- How can you get to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

GET REAL!



Prototype #3
Staff and faculty meeting prompt - Untested

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?

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

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

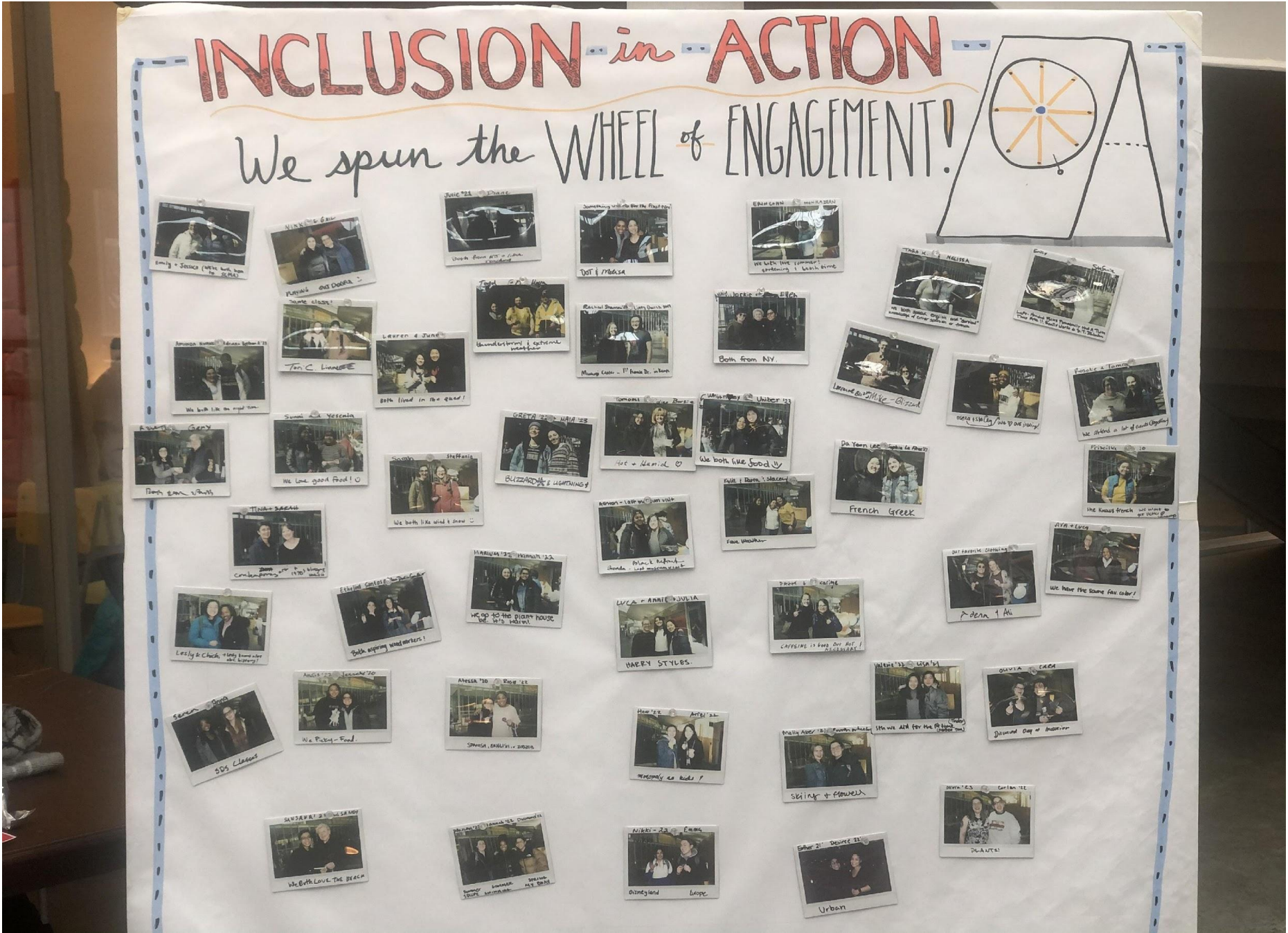
Wheel of engagement

Captured approximately 50 engagements

Attracted many who were curious as to what was going on

Engaged more students and staff than faculty during lunch

Prototype #1
Tested February 27, 11:00-1:30; 4-6:00p

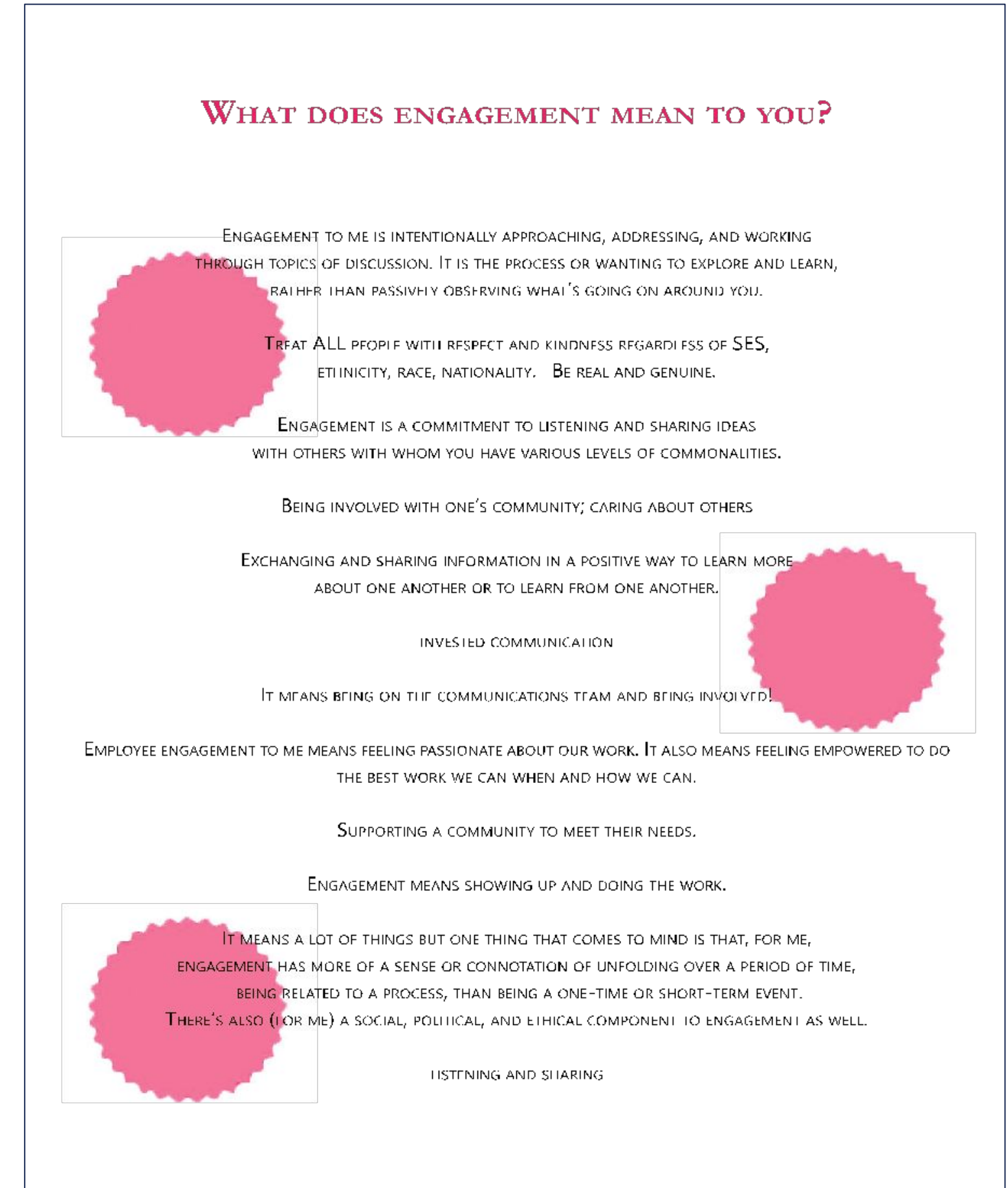


MEAL!

- ❖ 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)

Prototype #2 – Tested March 2 (luncheon)



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



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

Acknowledgements



Shout-out to the Team

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Stefanie Frazee
Coordinator, Outdoor Adventure Program and Exercise & Sport Studies Instructor

Jonathan Hirsh
Director of Orchestral and Choral Activities

Gaby Immerman
Experiential Learning Specialist, Smith College Botanic Garden/Senior Laboratory Instructor, Department of Biological Sciences

Queen Lanier
Assistant to the Vice President for Equity and Inclusion



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Thank you.

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