Embrace Challenges

Kathleen McCartney, 11th president of Smith College, was installed on October 19, to a fanfare of well-wishers and supporters. Board of Trustees Chair Elizabeth Mugar Eveillard ’69 gave Kathy the charter, seal, key, and presidential medal as symbols of the authority and responsibility she now holds. Laying out her vision, goals, and hope for Smith, Kathy proclaimed, “We will embrace challenges as opportunities for change.”

On the day of her inauguration, Kathy McCartney received advice from a panel of five current and former college presidents. The discussion, titled The Future of Higher Education Leadership, featured Lawrence Bacow, president emeritus of Tufts University; Drew Faust, president of Harvard University; Juliet García, president of University of Texas at Brownsville; and Peter Salovey, president of Yale University. It was moderated by Spalding University President and Smith alumna Tori Murden McClure ’85. The discussion was warm and humor-filled, and still managed to convey important information regarding the future of higher education leadership.

All panelists agreed that access to college is more important than ever, and spoke about making college accessible to students from all backgrounds. The panel also discussed the growing use of technology in higher education. (President McCartney was one of four Harvard directors of edX, the Harvard-MIT online learning venture formed in 2012.) About technology, Salovey noted that it can improve classrooms for teachers, and Faust encouraged everyone to think carefully about how the digital revolution would affect what colleges and universities do going forward. In addition to offering insight about leading colleges, the panelists shared their confidence in Kathy with the audience.

Bacow, who oversaw the strengthening of Tufts’ commitments to diversity and access while president, recruited Kathy to the Tufts’ board. He said that Kathy was known for “making the impossible happen,” a sentiment that Faust echoed. Faust said that folks at Harvard would tell Kathy “you can’t do that; the door is closed,” and suddenly Kathy would have made it through that door and opened new possibilities. The panelists shared strategy and encouragement with Kathy and wished her well on her new endeavor.

So, What Does Staff Council Do Anyway?

From the Chair

Since being elected to Staff Council, I have encountered this question numerous times. We are well known for hosting events like the annual cider and doughnuts, but besides food-related events, it’s hard to pinpoint just one thing that we do, because Staff Council does so many different kinds of things. Believe it or not, the Council is constantly at work behind the scenes, acting as a communication network and advocacy resource in addition to our varied community-building efforts. We communicate important changes across departments that affect staff, we answer any questions staff may have regarding almost anything (really, try us—if we don’t know the answer, we’ll contact the correct source for you), and we collaborate with offices to ensure information is clearly distributed.

We are currently updating the website so that it is easier to navigate. While the address will remain the same (www.smith.edu/staffcouncil), we are adding a new page where anonymous questions sent to our email address (staffcouncil@smith.edu) will be posted so that all staff can benefit from the answers we uncover.

Moving forward, the Staff Council Chronicle will exist primarily on our website, with an e-mail version sent once per semester. Paper copies will still be mailed to departments and individuals who do not have access to e-mail on a regular basis.

The Council is working very hard on securing and maintaining staff representation on campus-wide committees, including the Advisory Committee on Resource Allocation (ACRA), the President’s Diversity Council, the Campus Planning Committee, the College Council on Community Policy, the Committee on Mission and Priorities, and the Committee on Sustainability.

Our Personnel Policy Committee meets with Human Resources on a regular basis to address issues that are brought to Council members. One area of concern recently brought to HR’s attention was the winter break recess days for academic year staff and how opening on December 23 would result in staff losing a recess day for winter break. As we all know by now, everyone has been granted that day off, in addition to the holiday week.

As we move into the new year, we invite you to contact us with any questions, comments, ideas, suggestions or concerns you may have. You are welcome to e-mail us, visit our website, or stop by for a chat at one of our monthly tabling events in front of the Campus Center Café. Have a very enjoyable holiday season!

Dining Services spent weeks preparing for the president’s inauguration. Their great service and special displays made the day one to remember. Hats off to Facilities, College Relations, Campus Police, and all Smith staff who helped with inauguration events!
Staff Council Committees

Nominations Committee—Nominations is preparing for the next round of general Staff Council elections in Spring 2014. We are now accepting nominations throughout the year. Look for our nominations box at a future Staff Council campus event, or submit your nomination via e-mail to staffcouncil@smith.edu. 2014 is guaranteed to be an exciting year to serve on Staff Council. Serving on Staff Council is the best way to connect with the greater Smith College community and to enrich your experience on campus, as well as the experiences of your fellow staff members. We look forward to seeing your name and the names of your coworkers on the 2014 Staff Council ballot! For more information, contact Katie Fitzgerald at kfitzger@smith.edu.

Activities Committee—This year the Community Service Office co-sponsored the Winter Gifts Drive with Staff Council. Winter Gifts is an important program of The Hilltown Churches Pantry, located in Ashfield, which serves the hill towns of rural Western Franklin county. The pantry provides emergency food to an average of 200 families every two weeks. The drive sponsored 73 children—18 more than last year. Thank you, Smith staff!

Communications Committee—The fall semester goal of the 2013-2014 Communications Committee was to raise visibility and awareness of Staff Council and the variety of activities in which it engages. The new visual identity, developed early in the semester, has made Staff Council publications (including flyers, business cards, and the new banner) consistent and recognizable. The Committee is excited about the bold new look, and has sponsored monthly information tables in the Campus Center this semester. Staff volunteers answer questions and provide materials about Staff Council, including information on this year’s staff reading program, “Between the Lines.” The Staff Council suggestion box can also be found at the table, as well as recent issues of the Staff Council Chronicle. Tabling will continue in the spring semester on Wednesday, Jan. 22; Thursday, Feb. 20; Thursday, Mar. 20; and Tuesday, Apr. 22, from 11:45 a.m. to 1:15 p.m. each day. Please drop by and say hello!

Hidden Benefits for Smith Employees

The Emerson-Lewis Fund was established in 1921 by the Smith Class of 1901, in memory of two classmates, to assist Smith employees in times of emergency. Though available funds are limited, the fund committee hopes that it may provide timely financial assistance and convey the support of a caring community. Employees (or their supervisors on employees’ behalf) may apply for support from the Emerson-Lewis Fund by sending a letter explaining the circumstances of the emergency, requesting a specific amount, and attaching proof of expenditures. Letters should be sent either to Justina Gregory, Chair, Emerson-Lewis Committee, Neilson Library; or Rebecca Lindsey, Board of Trustees Office, College Hall 205.

Employees with Smith’s Harvard Pilgrim Health Plan, who are 19 years of age or older, can obtain an influenza vaccine from a Harvard Pilgrim-participating flu vaccine pharmacy, including CVS, Walgreens and Rite-Aid, with no co-pay, by presenting their Harvard Pilgrim member card. Under Harvard Pilgrim, if employees obtain their flu shot at their primary care doctor, they will be charged a co-pay fee for an office visit.

Between the Lines

As announced earlier this semester, this year’s “Between the Lines” reading program for staff and faculty, developed by Staff Council’s Diversity Committee, features My Beloved World, the memoir of American icon Sonia Sotomayor—the first Latina and third woman appointed to the United States Supreme Court. Based on feedback from last year’s participants, the program this year consists of two discussion sessions over two weeks in January. These discussions will be in small groups in a variety of locations around campus. Week I (Jan. 8-9) involves a general discussion about the themes raised in the book. Week II (Jan. 15-16) will focus on how those themes relate to staff experiences at Smith. As with last year’s program, the facilitated discussion sessions will be held at three different times (7:30 a.m., 12:00 p.m., and 4:00 p.m.) with the hope that anyone interested can attend at least one session each week. To register for the discussions, go to: http://doodle.com/p2b24binnu9wvm7. For more information about BtL, visit the program website at www.smith.edu/staffcouncil/betweenthelines.html. The kickoff event, “You Be the Judge!” drew 65 people, who stopped by the Alumnae House Living Room to eat pie, chat with colleagues, and learn more about “Between the Lines.” Joanne Benkley's gluten-free blueberry cream pie was victorious in the "best pie" category, followed closely by bean and pecan. Please sign up to share refreshments and discuss this inspiring memoir with colleagues in January.

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Staff enjoy a variety of pies at the “Between the Lines” kick off gathering.

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