Moving Forward Together

By this time, you have probably at least heard of Smith’s self-study, or Smith2020: Envisioning Our Future. Approximately 118 members of the Smith community, faculty, staff, students and administrators, are serving on 12 teams whose essential task is to craft a report for the reaccreditation of the college; however, their more compelling mission is to look closely at the college and its various parts and to imagine where we want to be in the year 2020.

This time around, the process of review is very different. First of all, President Simmons has challenged the college to do more with this reaccreditation opportunity, hence envisioning 2020. The other reason this will be a different process is that there is significant staff representation on the self-study teams. Earlier this summer in response to staff concerns about adequate staff representation on teams, Staff Council consulted with Professor Howard Nemser, chair of the self-study. He agreed and a vigorous effort has been made to bring more staff into the process. It is important, however, to note that the Principle questions the teams are reviewing for the self-study relate to students and the academic mission of the college. Therefore, we are delighted that President Simmons has decided to establish another team to focus specifically on staff. The observations and recommendations of this group will be folded into the process as the college plans and sets priorities for the 21st century.

The work that you and Staff Council did in preparing Staff Reflections will provide this group with a starting point.

So, how are you doing? How is the college doing? How can we do what we do better? Who are you serving? Do you need to do everything that you are doing? The questions are endless and the process exhaustive. Between questionnaires and focus groups for the self-study teams and the various planning, training, and retraining sessions going on (BANNER, Windows 95, Word etc.), many are hearing questions in their sleep -- or would if they could sleep. This is a very busy time at the college and it is easy to feel overwhelmed; however, it is also a time pregnant with possibility and hope. MANY PEOPLE ARE LISTENING RIGHT NOW -- I URGE YOU TO SPEAK UP.

Marilyn Woodman, Chair, Staff Council

Reminder!
Staff Council Community Forum
1:30 pm
Friday, November 15th
Sage Hall

WELCOME ANOTHER PILGRIM

"We have to stop now." Doesn’t that sound like your therapist? That was Ruth Simmons’ former Princeton colleague, Eddie Feld, as he wrapped up our first CHRONICLE interview. Actually, he’s Rabbi Edward Feld, Hillel Director and chaplain to Jewish students at Smith as well as those at Amherst College.
Appointed in August, after an exhaustive national search, Feld serves the two campuses on a 60/40 basis with Smith benefiting from the larger portion of his time. This shared schedule has a successful, thirty year history.

Feld is an academic rabbi by choice, although he spent time in congregational work in New York City between his appointments at Princeton and Smith. He says that he can make more of a difference with young people struggling with their search for identity, than he found possible with older, more settled Jews.

Rabbi—Hebrew for teacher—is an apt description of Eddie Feld’s style. He carefully weighs a question, stares at the floor for a long time thinking about it and then slowly presents several possible answers, each one open for further discussion. There are no easy answers if you’re fighting the homogenization of your heritage, he says, “The most important thing I do is to allow a student’s question to grow and to bless their exploration”.

While some of us keep remarking on the common ground among “the world’s three great religions”, Judaism, Christian and Moslem, Rabbi Feld worries about the assimilation of cultures, one into another. He would rather celebrate the uniqueness of each and learn about each person’s inner fire (spirituality) and continue to fight the loss of Jewish culture in the American melting pot.

“Commonality can obliterate separate cultures”, he told a reporter. “The Jewish community in the United States is unsure of its future. A separate identity is critical. What America is going to mean to us as a culture is still an unknown”. We’re Pilgrims here; we’re on the way rather than we HAVE the way”.

Another translation for rabbi is scholar. Eddie Feld is certainly a scholar. His book, THE SPIRIT OF RENEWAL: Crisis and Response in Jewish Life, is indeed a work of scholarship but it is written with a gentle, almost poetic style which gives it a warmth of tone not unlike C. S. Lewis. Feld says that he wrote the book to ‘work through the theological questions at the core of his being’. The intensity of the author is evident in his prose. He helps the reader to ask questions; to think. He doesn’t often suggest easy answers. He says that, “the Jewish experience of our time is paradigmatic for all of humanity and that locating the Holocaust within Jewish history is not a parochial enterprise but is instructive for all peoples”. The cataclysmic tragedy of the Holocaust and how those events forever changed Judaism is the book’s centerpiece.

RABBI EDDIE FELD

He closes with something applicable to us all. “The quest for holiness amid a violent and tragic world is still our task.” Eddie Feld has come to Smith to share in our search. —DICK FISH

Speak Across The Lines That Divide Us

[On the evening of September 4th, John M. Greene Hall was the focus of campus activity as the new academic year was celebrated at Opening
Convocation. The cap stone was President Ruth J. Simmons closing remarks. Her thoughts were meant for us all - those present and the rest of us too. Ed.]

Closing Remarks by President Ruth J. Simmons. . . .

"As we open this bicentennial year of our founder’s birth, let us resolve to remember and to reflect upon the many lessons of Sophia Smith’s life. As you go about your lives this year, I hope you will take care
- to respect and enhance the abilities given to you;
- to admire and aspire to not merely the physically and visually pleasing but even more so the beauty of a life well-lived for its intelligence, purposefulness, goodness, and integrity;
- to test and stretch your intellect by embracing the most rigorous challenges afforded it and to nurture your spirit by embracing, rather than fleeing reflection;
- to love order and tradition not as a means of escaping that which is different but as a means of organizing the ways in which we can fully understand and appreciate that which is different;
- to shun arrogance and smugness which are easy companions to excellence;
- to work constantly at self-discovery not as a means to see or as a result of self-indulgence but as the only true means of gaining genuine love and respect for other beings and the world around us;
- to respect the love that we inhabit and receive as we journey through this life;
- to be prepared to encounter religious and spiritual experiences, for the struggle to comprehend and relate to the mystery of our existence connects us to life at its most beautifully elemental;
- to remember that the kind of person you have CHOSEN to become is as important as the person you were ostensibly born to be;
- to be a resolute actor in the common striving for a better world;
- to be a person who speaks across the lines that divide us, rather than a person who proudly heightens those divisions;
- to struggle mightily to discover those things that can draw us nearer to our neighbors;
- to renew continuously your thirst for doing right and doing good;
- to seek always to prepare and provide for those who come after you;
- to love and protect the natural order of the world even as you strive to make use of it in the service of your health, wealth, and enjoyment;
- finally, never to lose faith that your efforts, however meager or grand, CAN make a difference in the future of the world.

On the opening of this historic year, I wish you all well as you reflect on the beauty and usefulness of our founder’s life and magnificent vision.

Attention:
Bargain Hunters
Staff Council’s Activities Committee is sponsoring a Bus Trip to the Kittery Factory Outlets, Saturday, November 16. Departing from Ainsworth Gym parking lot at 7 am and leaving Kittery, Maine at 4 pm, the cost is only $20 per person. The trip is open to all Smith Employees, emeriti and their guests. For reservations and further information call Judy Biardi or Cindy Rucci at ext. 2923.

EAP and A Healthy Workplace

At the Staff Council meetings I have attended, it is common to hear members lament the difficulties that Staff Council has in approaching our Smith staff as an entity, because it is so very diverse. Staff serve in many different roles, in
different geographic locations, covering several different schedules. Some have easy access to computers and other staff members do not. Some have flexibility in their schedules, but not all. This is a challenge constantly before Staff Council: addressing the needs of many without excluding any of the Staff.

However, this fall we seem to have discovered a theme to which many, if not all, staff members can relate: the unsettling experience of renovation and relocation. Though it seems unlikely in the long-run that anyone would complain about the "problem" of renovation and upgrading, it is absolutely clear that living through a renovation is unsettling and downright stressful. It's hard enough to feel in control when the school year begins but this is especially true when your office has been moved and your files are still "in boxes". Most of the moves have been settled into place and normalcy has returned (though Hatfield still looks a bit unfinished!). We hope that the chaos and attendant stress has lessened for us all.

A "healthy workplace" is something we should all experience. For those who don't even know what an unhealthy workplace is, I recommend you take a look at CDO director Barbara Reinhold's new book Toxic Work. [See review elsewhere in this CHRONICLE. Ed.] In her book she stresses the need to recognize when your work has become "toxic" and steps to take to improve the situation. Interviewed on NPR, Good Morning American and a whole host of other media outlets, Barbara's ideas are receiving a lot of attention nationwide. We're proud to have her on our staff and proud to have innovative ideas about improving the workplace coming from our Smith community. Should you like to read it, Human Resources has 2 copies in their lending library.

Renovation is one stress you may have experienced at work, high staff turnover and changing expectations about your job can be others. Though it can be comforting to know that others share your experience, sometimes that isn't enough to solve the problem.

Staff can experience many stresses in their lives (only some of which are directly related to work), but many of which can affect their work performance and satisfaction. Recognizing this, the Benefits Office at Human Resources has instituted an Employee Assistance Plan. Successful at many other institutions, it appears to be exactly the kind of help we need for those minor but persistent problems which, if ignored, GROW. So remember, help is available. We all want our diverse and exciting Smith Staff to stay healthy! -- NANCY R. BRADY

Just Ask Barbara!

Even if you're not in a 'dysfunctional work situation', CDO director Barbara Reinhold's new book, Toxic Work (Dutton), can help make those sometimes sticky office situations easier!

Just like its author, this slim volume brims with realistic, straightforward methods to make going to work fun, pleasant or at the least, manageable; and if none of the above is do-able, she also shows us how to gracefully "escape" to something better. There are plenty of plain-language quotes, like "The biggest sin is sitting on your ass".

- Florence Kennedy, to remind us that we each have the power to make things better!

Already chosen as a Book-Of-The-Month Club selection, this $24.00 investment in coping strategies, will soon be available in paperback as a feature of the Quality Paperback Book Club.

The list of Smith-connected acknowledgments includes Dr. Les Jaffe, Kathleen Chatwood, Carrie Hemenway, Renee Hill, Jane Sommer, Joan Laird and more.

It's a fun read, with sections like 'What's Pushing Your Buttons?', 'And What If You Are Sometimes a Dragon?', 'Self-Esteem: Don't Let It Get Away!' and check lists and exercises to see where you are. There's the 'Stress Detector' to measure what's happening at work that might be
On My Mind

Well, I finally found an au-current term for Smith employees - staff and faculty. We’re service providers. The students are the user/clients and, except for parents who 'provide' the means and alumnae who provide more millions of means, that’s how we fit into the scheme of today’s PC labeling.

After all, we don’t produce tangible goods. It’s not washers and dryers that parade across the Commencement stage every Spring. Our product is a woman leaving here with more knowledge than when she arrived, or more accurately, it’s her process of growth, intellectual, physical and emotional, that we’ve helped nurture. When she leaves us, she has completed a portion of that growth. And how she gets to that landmark moment is by her collaboration with each of us; directly or not, it’s a joint venture. Everyone here has impact on that work-in-progress and can say so proudly!

So, fellow service providers, have you noticed the opportunities we’ve been given lately? We currently have many ways to participate in the decisions that will help point us, as an institutional community, down the road toward the future. We can attend Community Forums and ask questions, go to the President’s Open Hour and be heard, serve on Staff Council, volunteer for a whole host of campus-wide committees and brainstorm as part of the Campus Climate Working Group. Each of us needs to actively celebrate these opportunities by participating as fully as possible. Rather like the vote, if we don’t use them, we could lose them. — DICK FISH

VOLUNTEERISM
NOT ONLY STRENGTHENS THE COMMUNITY — BUT ALSO STRENGTHENS CHARACTER!

We CAN
Help The Homeless

Over the last several years, a group of Northampton churches have reached out to the homeless and have provided a hot meal and a cot for the night for those who find themselves in the middle of a New England winter with nowhere to go. Not only has this enabled them to survive, it has also let them know that this is a community that cares.

The churches will once again open their facilities to the homeless this winter, but their resources are severely strained. Volunteers are needed to help staff the program. On an average night, 20 people will arrive around 6:30, be served a hot meal, cots are set up and they settle down early for the night. Next morning, after breakfast, they are given a lunch bag and must leave by 7:30.

A paid professional is on site to register guests each evening, answer questions and solve problems. A team of 4 people are needed to serve dinner, clean up, and set up cots. Two people are needed to stay overnight on cots in a separate area, and then a team of 2-3 people are needed in
the morning to serve breakfast and clean up.

Can you help by volunteering one night a month? Or if that is too much, can you volunteer just one evening or night this winter? Any amount of time you can give will make a difference: a 3-hour evening shift to serve dinner, clean up and set up cots, or a 2-hour morning shift to serve breakfast and clean-up, or an over-night shift from 10 pm to 7 am. THERE IS A GREAT NEED FOR MALE VOLUNTEERS TO SLEEP OVER as most of our guests are men. If enough people volunteer, a Smith team will be organized so that you can work with your friends and co-workers.

We need you, won’t you help? Please call 586-2354 and leave you name and number. I will return your call as soon as possible. --YVONNE FRECCERO

CHANNEL 57 NEEDS YOU!

How about a little t.v. exposure? Get the kids to watch public television when you’re not even home. Volunteers are needed to answer phones and record pledges of support during the WGBY-57 December membership drive. Smith t-shirts - which will be worn on-camera - and transportation will be provided. For more information contact Judy Biandi or Cindy Rucci at ext. 2923. Another fun time, brought to you by the Staff Council Activities Committee.

Thank You, Thank You

The Staff Council Activities Committee would like to thank the many members of the Smith Community who so generously contributed funds to the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, in conjunction with the College’s observance of National Denim Day on Friday, October 25th.

During the next 10 years it is estimated that 1.8 million women and 12,000 men will be diagnosed with breast cancer and nearly 500,000 will succumb to the disease. In this first-ever Lee National Denim Day, the Lee Apparel Company asked corporations across the country to participate by allowing employees to wear denim to work on October 25 in exchange for a contribution of at least $5 to the Komen Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to eradicating breast cancer. Each member of the College Community making a donation received a pink ribbon lapel pin and educational materials about breast cancer.

Additionally, members of the Pioneer Valley Breast Cancer Network staffed information tables in College Hall and Wright Hall in conjunction with the observance of Denim Day.

Special thanks go to President Ruth Simmons and Director of Human Resources Jan Keefe, who endorsed this project and forwarded it to our committee. --Cindy Rucci

VACANT STAFF COUNCIL POSITIONS

The Staff Council Nominations and Elections Committee is recruiting two service staff employees to serve on the 1996-1997 Staff Council. If you are a member of Smith College Service Staff and would like to join the Staff Council, please contact:

Sheri Peabody
Office of the Class Deans
x4920, aisvax: speabody

or

Gerri Owen
Physical Plant
x2402, aisvax: gowen
Staff Council Mission Statement

The mission of the Smith College Staff Council is to give members of the administrative, administrative support, and service staff a focused and direct involvement in the governance of non-academic affairs and in the life of the Smith College community.

The Staff Council will ensure participation of the staff in the policy-making process, promote visibility of staff as valuable members of the Smith Community, and facilitate a sense of belonging within the community. The Council will examine policies affecting the employment environment and the community and make recommendations to the appropriate committees and administrators. The Council will actively seek to involve all segments of the College’s diverse staff in the Council’s decision-making.

The Committees are:

Staff Council Committees:
- Personnel Policy Committee
- Communications Committee
- Staff Development Committee
- Finance and Budget Committee
- Activities

Campus-Wide Committees
- Committee on Community Policy
- AIDS Education Committee
- Society Organized Against Racism (SOAR)
- Civil Rights Board
- Other:

Any one interested in participating in this worthwhile organization, please contact either Sheri or Gerri.

It is in everyone’s best interest when all sectors of the College participate in making Smith a worthwhile place in which to work.
The Staff Council Nominations & Elections Committee is responsible for recruiting Smith staff members to serve on various campus-wide committees, as well as Staff Council committees, when positions become available. Our goal is to fill vacant positions in a more timely fashion with the information that you provide on this form.

If you are willing to serve on any of these committees, please complete the following information and indicate your interest by marking the appropriate box (with an X).

Name: ___________________________ Telephone Extension: ___________________________
Department: ______________________ Campus Address: ___________________________

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Thank you for participating.

PLEASE RETURN BY CAMPUS MAIL TO:
Sheri Peabody, Office of the Class Deans, College Hall 23