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Looking Forward
From Pres. Carol T. Christ

Over the next eighteen months, Smith will be engaged in creating a strategic plan for the next decade. We begin from a position of strength, with a talented student body, an excellent faculty, and dedicated staff. Our new plan will build on the momentum of the last strategic plan and its related fund-raising campaign, whose initiatives have propelled the college forward in recent years; some of these include the Brown Fine Arts Center, the Campus Center, Praxis, and the Picker Engineering Program.

Why plan now? The admission picture for Smith and for other liberal arts colleges has become increasingly competitive, as students broaden their choices. Responding to this trend requires reflection, focus, and reinvestment. The budget flexibility created by our recent financial planning provides the foundation for a meaningful planning process.

Did you know that the college supports staff involvement with Staff Council by extending release time to attend Council/Committee meetings and events held during an individual’s normal work hours, as long as you schedule that time in advance with your supervisor?

- Staff Council Representatives receive up to 30 hours paid release time each fiscal year.
- Staff who serve on a Staff Council committee receive up to 20 hours each fiscal year.
- Staff who wish to attend Council meetings may use vacation, personal or make-up time.
- All staff are granted release time to attend two Community Forums planned by Staff Council which occur during your normal work hours.

For more information on Staff Council, or to obtain a copy of the Charter, contact a Staff Council representative (listed at www.smith.edu/staffcouncil/members.php) or Human Resources.

In addition, we will be able to include findings from the Common Ground project into our deliberations. Finally, we have the opportunity to integrate the college’s ten-year re-accreditation, scheduled for 2007, with this process.

In the coming semester, faculty, staff, and students will have forums to identify and discuss the priorities that they feel are most critical for Smith. By spring’s end, my hope is that we can articulate six to eight critical issues. Over the subsequent academic year, we will work to develop, analyze, and prioritize initiatives, resulting in an action plan for achieving our strategic vision.

The Committee on Mission and Priorities will serve as the steering committee for the planning process. Ruth Constantine, Trish Jackson, and Diane Tsoulas are staff members of that committee. From time to time, I may also appoint ad-hoc working groups to explore issues in detail. As staff, you have such a rich and deep experience of the college; I look forward to hearing your views about future priorities. In the meantime, I wish you all happy holidays.
From the Chair

Positively Smith

What’s wrong with Smith College?

Wow, what a way to begin, eh? Since the elimination of a number of positions, there has been no shortage of opinions among staff about Smith and our work environment. Those opinions tend to focus on the negative. You know what I mean. You could call them the water cooler conversations – talk about the way it used to be done or lamenting that we all are working longer hours with less staff (which I believe is true). The lists are long and the opinions are strong. I get caught up in it just like everyone else. I am also not naïve. I know that the world we live in today is not the same as it was ten or fifteen years ago. There is more uncertainty and fear about our future and that has spread to our college community as well.

That is why I wanted to share two recent positive experiences that fly in the face of all that negativity. They were so full of life-affirming energy that it made me honored to work at Smith. I share them not to obscure our critical examination of campus morale (this is a very real issue) but because they have reacquainted me with some of core reasons I chose to work at Smith College in the first place – a sense of community that I have lost sight of lately.

The first was convocation this fall. As Chair of Staff Council, I was asked by President Christ to say a few words on behalf of staff. The President spoke, as did Smith faculty and students. Two thousand students dressed in the most outrageous outfits you can imagine stood and screamed for the better part of an hour. The noise and energy were deafening. In fact, most of the faculty on the stage wore ear plugs. Believe me when I say the speeches were secondary to the real event. I experienced a room so full of potential it was fit to burst – an incredible sense of idealism that anything was possible. Their enthusiasm proclaimed that the future was theirs. Every student there was going to go out and make the world a better place. It was moving. It was the kind of moment when I remembered why I was here, with clarity so simple, it made me laugh. I was here to make certain they could change the world.

The second event was the Employee Recognition ceremony this past October. Normally, I don’t go. In fact, in the past fifteen years I think I have been maybe twice. I felt obligated to go this time since I was being acknowledged for my fifteen years of service. I also felt I needed to be there as Chair of Staff Council. Like Convocation, the real event was happening between the lines. There were speeches, staff stood up, and everyone applauded. I’m still not sure what those buttons were all about. No, the real event for me wasn’t the ‘administration’ recognizing the staff and our longevity. The true staff recognition was seeing the way that our fellow staff members recognized each other – clapping, hooting, and cheering for each other. It was another moment that demonstrated the strength of our Smith Community in a wholly positive manner – inclusive of everyone. I felt respected by my co-workers and I, in turn, respected how hard we all work because we take pride in our jobs. It made me sorry that I had not attended all those other years.

I'd like to believe that Staff Council is indicative of the positive kind of community that I know we all want for ourselves and for each other. I invite your continued participation as we maintain our community and discover ways to make it better.

What’s wrong with Smith College? That is a question that we will always be asking. I think it is in our nature. It is a good question to keep asking. What is right about Smith, though, will never change. It may get lost in the shuffle from time to time, but it is what keeps me going. I am changing the world, one student at a time.

Sam Rush, Staff Council Chair

Did you know that Staff Council meetings are open to all staff? The one hour meetings begin at 2 p.m. on the first Thursday of each month. If you would like to host a meeting for approximately 25 people, please contact Sam Rush at srush@smith.edu or at ext. 3249.
Letter to the Editor

One of my favorite parts of the Employee Recognition ceremony is when we acknowledge the many employees who have completed significant years of service to the college. I know that at first blush, one might see this as a tribute to sheer commitment – a result of persistence and nothing more. Yet, I like to recognize the value those employees represent to the college. Smith College would be a vastly different and, arguably, less wonderful place if it had a much higher rate of staff turnover. What it means to the college to have committed and talented employees is vast. These are the people who know how things are done now and have been done in the past, who bring a sense of history and context to all that we do. Administrations come and go, but the staff may well stay. They are also the ones who mentor the much-needed “new” employees and bring them quickly and easily into the community. In fact, they ARE that highly valued community. As established employees, they know their own jobs, perform them well, are well-connected to the many departments that make up our workplace, and provide lots of suggestions to new staff about how to get things done and whom to ask for help. A happy, seasoned and well-trained workforce might be better than the best employee handbook. It’s no wonder that Human Resources wants to recognize them. Smith wouldn’t be the same without them!

Nancy Brady, Campus School

Did you know that the new employee van tour is open to all staff? Generally, HR holds new employee orientation on the last Wednesday of each month, followed by an hour-long campus van tour. While the van winds through campus, your tour guide shares:

- General facts, for example, there are 5 miles of pipe distributing steam to campus.
- Historic facts, such as Drew Hall (CDO Office), built in 1715, is the oldest building on campus.
- Fun facts, like which famous member of the class of 1934 pelted housemates with jelly doughnuts?
- Even a few ghost stories: Do you know who is haunting Lawrence House?

If you would like to reserve a seat on the bus, please contact HR’s Avril Russell at ext. 2271.
The Staff Council Activities Committee is pleased to announce its first ever “Holiday Hoopla” to take place on Friday, December 16, from 12-1:30 p.m. in the Carroll Room, Campus Center.

“It’s important for staff to have these kinds of fun gatherings to connect with others around campus. I’m excited to share my craft and especially to see everyone enjoying each other’s company!” Sabrina Marsh, Activities Committee Co-Chair

Craft Demonstrations
Sabrina Marsh (Admissions) will make snowman pins. Joyce Roske (Physical Plant) will show how to create photo album covers. Jaynie Barnes (Clark Science Center) will be decorating gourds with beads. Fran Vilbon (Dining Services) will give a food-garnishing demonstration.

Cookie Swap and Contest
We're bringing back the cookie swap with a new twist by adding a cookie contest. “We will still have the swap for those who bring in cookies, and those who wish to, may now have their cookies included in a contest,” says Rick Rubin. Cookie Swap participants should deliver three dozen of their favorite cookies plus 50 copies of their recipe by 12:15 p.m. Three cookies from each “batch” will be used in the contest. Judges have been selected from across campus, including Tim Bruso (Physical Plant), Erika Herring (Dining Services), Scott Morin (Controller’s Office) and Maureen Mahoney (Deans’ Office). The winner will get a prize AND their cookie will be included with their name in dining services menus (e.g., “Kathy Zieja’s Lemon Drop Cookies”). To register for the cookie swap, please contact Sue Beaumier via email at sbeaumie@science.smith.edu or at ext. 3806.

$1.50 Staff Appreciation Lunch Special
While Staff Council is providing light snacks, desserts and beverages for first 200 attendees, the Campus Center Café offers all comers a slice of pizza and small soda for $1.50!

LIVE music, including a performance by the Smith College Noteables.

For more information about the “Holiday Hoopla” please visit the Staff Council website at www.smith.edu/staffcouncil or call Sabrina Marsh, ext. 2505 or Rick Rubin, ext. 2318.

“This event is not intended to replace the President’s holiday party from several years ago, but to give staff a chance to get together during the work day and relax with other members of the community.” Rick Rubin, Activities Committee Co-Chair

Staff Social Hour
Thursday – January 19, 2006 4:30 - 6:00 p.m.
Carroll Room, Campus Center

Come celebrate the New Year and enjoy the company of your colleagues from around campus.
SAVE THE DATE and don’t be late!

MARDI GRAS BENEFIT EVENT

Saturday – February 18, 2006
7:00 – 11:00 p.m.
Campus Center, Carroll Room

On February 18, 2006, Staff Council will host a Mardi Gras event to benefit victims of Hurricane Katrina. The event will include music, dancing, mouth-watering munchies, cash bar and a fantastic “Smith Staff’s Stuff” auction. Mark your calendar and make a date to mingle with colleagues and raise money for an important cause. This is an adult-only function and you may bring a guest. More details will soon be released through E-digest and on the Staff Council website www.smith.edu/staffcouncil.

Tickets for this event will go on sale January 3, 2006, for $10.00 per person. Purchase tickets by stopping in at the Campus Center main office or email staffactivities@smith.edu. There are a limited number of tickets available, so plan ahead! 100% of the ticket sales will benefit hurricane survivors in the New Orleans area.

REQUEST FOR DONATIONS

Smith Staff’s Stuff Auction
To be held during the Mardi Gras benefit on February 18, 2006

Please bring in your gently- or never-used items that are cluttering up your closets and crawl spaces. Consider donating your time, talent or services through a gift certificate. Items will be sold to the highest bidders in both live and silent auctions. 100% of the proceeds will benefit hurricane survivors in the New Orleans area. As the date draws nearer, visit the Staff Council website at www.smith.edu/staffcouncil for information on donation guidelines and when and where donations will be collected.

Meet the Mardi Gras benefit planning committee

Tamra Bates, Campus Center
Sue Beaumier, Clark Science Center
Lou Bouley, Neilson Library
Patrick Connelly, Campus Center
Catherine Diduk, Admission
Connie Dragon, Physical Plant (retired)
Sharon Fagan, Student Affairs
Daryl Jett, Clark Science Center

Linda LaFlam, Physical Plant
Merrilyn Lewis, Advancement
Sabrina Marsh, Admission
Janice McDowell, Advancement
Rick Rubin, Dining Services
Mike Washut, ITS
Rebecca Washut, Advancement
Robin Wood, Physical Plant

We need more helpers! If you are interested in joining the planning committee for this event, please contact Sabrina Marsh, smarsh@smith.edu. It’s a great way to meet staff from all areas of the Smith community.

Other Activities Committee events coming this winter:

Beer-making and -tasting
Annual book exchange
and more...

More information coming soon on the Staff Council website www.smith.edu/staffcouncil.
Bi-Weekly Payroll (Implementation July 2006)

The college will move to a bi-weekly (every other week) payroll system for faculty, administrative staff, and administrative/academic support staff effective July 1, 2006. Union staff will not be transitioning at this time.

A committee representative of the Smith community has been charged with ensuring employees’ ideas and thoughts are incorporated in the planning and implementation, including information gathered from focus groups with faculty and staff held last spring. The Bi-Weekly Payroll Implementation Advisory Committee has the following membership:

- Judi Marksbury, Director of College Relations (chair)
- Debbie Cottrell, Associate Dean of the Faculty
- Kevin Kerwood, Human Resources Manager
- Karl Kowitz, Associate Director of Business Operations, Physical Plant
- Trish Rockett, Payroll & Disbursements Manager
- Linda Shaughnessy, Administrative Assistant, Music Department
- Bill Sheehan, Chief Accountant
- Frazer Ward, Assistant Professor of Art
- Kathy Zieja, Director of Dining Services

The advisory committee will be communicating with employees about this change. The committee will be providing a list of Frequently Asked Questions, personal budgeting presentations, and opportunities for employees to ask additional questions and share their thoughts. Members of the committee look forward to working with Smith employees to make the transition to a bi-weekly payroll system as seamless as possible for all. [Excerpt from Controller’s Office News and Notes, Biannual Newsletter – Fall 2005]
Holiday Shopping Safety Tips

for Adults and Children

According to The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, crowded malls and shopping centers pose a very real danger to children, especially during the holidays.

Follow these tips when shopping with your children and make your holidays a happy and safe one.

General
• Always supervise your child when in a public facility. Leaving your children in toy or specialty stores puts expectations on the store personnel to supervise your children. They are not trained in this role and it is not a function of their employment.
• Consider the risks with leaving children alone at public facilities such as video arcades, movie theaters, or playgrounds.
• Establish a pre-designated spot, such as the sales counter of the store or the mall’s information booth, in case your younger children become separated from you.
• They should NEVER leave the store/mall or go to the parking lot to look for you or your car.
• Teach them how to use a public telephone; locate adult sources of help within the mall or a store; and, for older children, go to the restroom with a friend.
• Ask your children to check with you before they go anywhere.

Younger Children
• Accompany younger children to the restroom.
• Make certain your younger children know to stay with you at all times.
• Teach your younger children to look for people who can be sources of help, such as a uniformed security officer, salesperson with a nametag, the person in the information booth, or a uniformed law-enforcement officer.

Older Children
• When you allow your older children to go to the mall without you, suggest that they go with a friend. It is more fun and much safer.
• Older children should check in with you on a regular basis while they are out.
• Make certain a clear plan is in place to pick up older children, including where, what time, and what to do in case of a change in plans.

What issues do you think Staff Council should be exploring in the year ahead?

Send your comments to:
srush@smith.edu
or
Sam Rush
Theater Dept.
Ext. 3249

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The Staff Council Chronicle is available on tape or electronic format by contacting Disability Services at ext. 2071.