Celebrating 20 Years of Staff Council
Staff Council Needs You!

Staff Council is a vibrant and diverse collection of representatives of the Smith College staff. We provide a place of communication between the staff and the administration, as well as opportunities to gather as a community. There have been many representatives who have dealt with tough topics over the last 20 years, and while working together has not always been easy, it has been both rewarding and worthwhile. Staff Council should be a place where problems can be safely presented and then moved up to the proper place for solution. It is a place for ideas, and while we can't fund or implement them all, my hope is that we will always continue to give voice and respect to those ideas. But we can't do this alone—Staff Council needs YOU! Why not think about running in the next election? What about coming to a committee meeting to check us out? Who knows, the next great idea may be yours!

—Donna Safford
Staff Council Chair 2012-present

Blue Jay by Sabina Knight

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What is Staff Council?

"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 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 actively seek to involve all segments of the College's diverse staff in the College's decision-making process."

Mission Statement,
Staff Council Charter

In 1991, elected staff delegates attended the Staff Council Convention. The charge of the convention was to draft a staff council charter acceptable to staff and the president. After many drafts and much discussion, the Smith College Staff Council was born with its first elections held in 1992. Over the years, the charter has been revised to change elected membership to 25. It has introduced staggered two year terms, and reduced the number of original standing committees to five (Steering, Nominations & Elections, Communications, Activities, Personnel Policy). The committees are an exceptional vehicle for dealing with community issues and are composed of elected, appointed and general members.

Staff Council has been involved in the two most recent presidential searches. In 1994, Staff Council was invited to offer staff input in the search process for President Ruth Simmons. Shortly after her arrival on campus in the summer of 1995, members expressed a desire to President Simmons for staff representation on policymaking committees. In 1996, President Simmons asked Staff Council to recommend a staff member for appointment to serve on the Advisory Committee on Resource Allocation (ACRA). Since then, Staff Council has continued to make strides toward further inclusion on college committees, including building planning and project committees, CCOG, mission and priorities, and hiring searches (for a new Human Resources director and an ambassador). In 2001, two staff members (one who happened to be chair of Staff Council) were invited to serve as full members on the search committee for the new president of Smith College. Staff Council has worked in partnership over the years with the college to encourage such changes as flexible work schedules, discounted child care coverage, family sick leave, long-term care insurance, employee recognition programs and improved college-wide communication about issues that affect employees. We on the Council look forward to continuing this work with President Carol T. Christ to improve the life of the college.

Over the last three years Staff Council has unanimously voted to return to its roots by promoting diversity as one of its organizational priorities. We have organized specialized diversity problem-solving/leadership group training for all members. With training, the Council is in a unique position, as a cross-departmental staff group, to act as a resource and partner in building a truly diverse, respectful, engaged and productive Smith community. This is part of the leadership role of Staff Council.

This is just a short history of Staff Council. The current members celebrate its history and welcome and look forward to working with the Smith community to create a positive future for staff and for the college.

This article was written by Scott Girard, Cindy Rucci, Amy Holch, Bill Sheehan and Paty Kimm.
We Owe a Debt of Gratitude to the Pioneers

In preparation for this retrospective issue, I had the opportunity to review electronic and physical archives of the Chronicle and learn about its amazing history. I learned that Staff Council was initially called “Staff Connection” and was established as a working group during the presidency of Mary Maples Dunn. Some say it started out on a “rocky road.” Others attest that it was created by the College administration to quell the idea of “union organizing.”

In the early years, staffers reported on news from Staff Council committees and on such topics as the Ad Hoc Committee on Child Care, Staff Council’s role in discussing job benefits with the College, and lively standing-room-only Council-organized community forums. Its quarterly newsletter was known as “Connecting.” Staff profiles included stories on employees of Public Safety, RADS (Residence and Dining Services), and the Office of Institutional Diversity.

It was Staff Council’s advocacy that prompted staff representation on College-wide policy-making committees. I smiled and chuckled as I caught glimpses of pictures of long-time employees in their younger, more outspoken years. Staff Council’s goals were to improve overall communication among staff and give staff a voice in the affairs of the college. Those objectives have not changed.

As Smith staff, we owe a debt of gratitude to the tireless commitment of early Staff Council leaders and dedicated Chronicle editors who captured historic moments. In this special edition that celebrates Staff Council’s 20th anniversary, we’ve featured a few pioneers and pulled together a sampling of past articles photos and artwork to remember staff contributions. We hope you will recognize how far we have come and how much further we have to go. As President Dunn would have put it, we have attempted to “accomplish what can be accomplished, and pass onto others that which cannot.”

—Kim Alston
Managing Editor 2011-present
Congratulations to Staff Council

As a founding member of Staff Council, I am thrilled that Staff Council has not only persisted but has also provided Smith staff with a legitimacy that was only dreamed of in its infancy.

Staff Council had humble beginnings. In 1989, a group of seven women staffers calling themselves “Staff Connection” gathered after participating in a college-sponsored Equity Institute seminar on multicultural organizational development.

Our group organized community-wide forums, prepared surveys so staff could share concerns and ideas, and produced a newsletter called Connecting—a call to arms for staff involvement in college affairs tempered with opportunities for staff to get to know each other better through activities such as playing softball, gardening, and sharing potluck dinners. Compared to today’s Staff Council Chronicle, Connecting was quite outspoken. Staff had been keeping their feelings to themselves for a long time and suddenly there was a place to share them. President Dunn encouraged Staff Connection to participate inside the existing committee structure of the College—trying, I think, to stop the group from going too far out on a limb.

When Staff Council was instituted in 1992, Kevin Skelly, a cook at the college who had joined Staff Connection the previous year, became its first chair. In the first Staff Council newsletter, Kevin wrote about the time and effort it took to set up the Council:

“Every month we have met in small committees, met in our large full Staff Council meetings, met informally, met and met and met. We have discussed, argued, tuged and pulled over questions about our internal mechanisms, our place within the community, our relationship with the rest of the staff, our image, our legal status, everything.”

I hope you agree that the work done at the beginning of Staff Council was worth the effort. The Council has endured and is now firmly established within the structure of the college—a place for staff.

—Chrissie Bell
Founding member of Staff Connection 1989-1992
Founding member and Vice Chair of Staff Council 1992-1993
Member of Staff Council 1999-2001
It Was an Exciting Time!
Serving on the first Staff Council twenty years ago was an honor and an exciting time to be involved in something totally new for Smith. It was remarkable for administrative, support, and service staff to meet and work together to improve communication and interaction among all staff and to have a means by which staff could voice their concerns. Over the years, Staff Council has developed as an effective means of promoting issues of personnel policy, diversity, and staff training. I’ve always felt that the highlights have been the morale-building activities that bring staff out of their offices to socialize with their peers.

—Kathy Yarnell Staff Council Member
1992

It Was a Privilege to Represent Staff!

Q: What was it like creating staff council that first charter year?
A: It was a privilege to be chosen to represent staff. Creating the charter enabled the staff to have a voice—to show upper administration that staff was a valuable resource even without a Ph.D. The president at the time was open to the idea of a staff council. There was some resistance in the beginning; the former Associate VP of Human Resources told me straight out that this was nothing more than a grassroots effort simply to be compared to the collective bargaining units.

Q: How has staff council changed over the years?
A: Originally it was not called Staff Council; unfortunately I’m too old now to remember what the original name was! Today it appears to be mostly an activities/event planning committee. It is satisfying to see that Staff Council still exists; my hope is that it still has a voice and is making a difference in the administrative process.

Q: What are your most vivid memories?
A: The charter members were able to secure a seat on the CCCP to be filled each year with a Staff Council member, which still stands today.

—James (Jay) Lucey
Staff Council Delegate 1991 Staff Council Member 1992-93
Past Profiles of Smith Staff Members, Art Work, and Photos Featured in the Chronicle

Profiles of Smith

Staff Profile: Sharon Rust

Campus Security are not just people who unlock your door or boot your car. According to Sharon Rust, the Director of Campus Security, the Smith College Campus Security Department Officers are a group of dedicated, hard-working professionals who are committed to the ideal of quality campus security at Smith. Many of the officers who are members of the Campus Security Department here have been employed by the college for a number of years and are invested in the concept of a secure campus for all, staff and students alike. It’s not as if they’re waiting to go on to some other branch of law enforcement; they’re committed to the idea of a quality campus security force here. All department members are Special Police Officers and have full police powers on campus property, including the power to arrest. In addition, department members are Hampshire County Deputy Sheriffs and are CPR and First Responder certified. They have taken a variety of specialized training courses including rape certification, field sobriety testing and Identi-Kit. Since September, in-service training seminars in domestic abuse, suicide prevention, and sexual harassment have been conducted. By the end of 1999, all officers will have taken a 96-hour Reserve Intermittent Basic Training Course or its equivalent.

Ms. Rust’s philosophy is that “as the times change, so should the department”. With that in mind, the in-services began this past fall and there have been implementations in the Campus Security Department to take a proactive rather than a reactive approach to crime and safety on campus. Department members of the department have held successful sessions in several departments that dealt with crime prevention and the engraving of valuables. Special measures have been established to deal with unusual circumstances. There is currently a pilot program underway in which officers volunteer their time working on a crime prevention unit. One of the outgrowths of this program was publication of the blue flyers; “It Can’t Happen Here”, which were circulated to students before Spring Break and were meant to educate people about the security of personal items left on campus during the break.

According to Ms. Rust, campus security is a community issue. She would like to see better communication between Campus Security and other departments on campus. “In an academic setting, we tend to be tunnel-visioned and Smith is no exception. We may fail to remember that we are part of a five-thousand-person-plus community here and that everyone must be aware and cooperative. We tend to want to get on with our job and are not as aware as we might be of, say, a suspicious person wandering in a campus building.

We tend not to remember it that there are not just Smith people on the Smith campus. People should think “When I see something that doesn’t seem right, I should call someone and let them know”, says Ms. Rust. That someone is the Campus Security Department; they are responsible for investigating complaints of suspicious and/or unwanted persons and should be called if such a situation should arise.

In September, Sharon Rust became one of a slowly-growing number of women directors of security for colleges in the area; both Mt. Holyoke College and M.I.T. have women serving in this position. Ms. Rust believes that this number will continue to grow as more qualified women applicants apply for such positions.

Ms. Rust’s own qualifications are impressive. Prior to arriving at Smith College in 1977, Ms. Rust had already lived, worked and studied in the Boston area for ten years. While at Northeastern University, she worked through the Coop Program with the Boston Police Department, getting first-hand experience in every department; she also worked as a paralegal in the office of a criminal trial lawyer. Since coming to Smith college, she has worked in the Campus Security Department, first as a Patrol Officer, then as the Night Shift Supervisor. Later she was appointed Night Supervisor (second in command to the Director of Campus Security) and served as Acting Director from July 1988 until September 1989 when she was appointed to her current post as Director of Campus Security. Since assuming her duties as Director, things have not been quiet for Ms. Rust. She cites Barbara Bush’s campus visit as an example.

Asked how she would like to see things change on campus with regard to security, Ms. Rust responded “I’d like to see less factionalism and have more departments look at the ‘big picture’ with regard to safety and security and the prevention of crime for the campus as a whole.”

What is the most difficult part of her new job as Director of Security? Answers Ms. Rust with a wry smile, “Being tactful.”
Profiles
Profile of a Colleague—Jayne Mercier

Job at Smith: Administrative assistant for several academic programs, under the umbrella of Interdisciplinary Studies (Archaeology, Ancient Studies, Jewish Studies, Public Policy, Urban Studies and the Study of Women and Gender), as well as the Smith College Faculty Council. I’m also an Ada Cornstock Scholar, graduating this year (yay, class of 2010!), with a major in Sociology and a minor in Public Policy.
Favorite part of job: Variety; the people, tasks, other departments I get to interact with. It really is a truly interdisciplinary position...always something new. Love it.
Favorite place at Smith: The trails along the river, Olin Fitness Center, and the Botanic Gardens.
Work before Smith? 25 years in the hospitality industry. If you’re from the Valley, there’s good chance I waited on you at least once.
Favorite TV Show: History Channel, Big Bang Theory (that’s Dr Sheldon Cooper to you); and I have an absurd amount of crime dramas on the DVR right now—Law and Order, Criminal Minds, etc.—just waiting for the time to watch them.
Favorite Music: Eclectic, not much I don’t like. On my Shuffle right now?: Nanci Griffith, the Stooges, Detroit Cobras, the Dead, Train, Sugar, MIA, Colin Hay, Al Green.
Favorite Food: Everyone thinks it’s chocolate, but it’s really salad.
Really. Okay. FINE—it’s chocolate.
Favorite Book: I’ll read anything you put in front of me, and audio books. While it doesn’t fit neatly into the categories here, I’m a HUGE fan of radio drama/audio theatre—I used to love to listen to CBS Radio Mystery Theater as a kid (E.G. Marshall’s narration was always creepy perfection) —so I’m grateful for the resurgence of sonic storytelling in the last decade or so, programs like This American Life, WNYC’s RadioLab, The Moth, so many others. I could listen for hours.
Movie: Anything with Hepburn, Tracy, Cary Grant, Jimmy Stewart (I think it’s the clothes); and their peers, but I’ll also confess to sitting through That Thing You Do every time it comes on—like Lenny.
Three little known facts about yourself: I used to play the glockenspiel. I can still do a round-off back handspring. I make a mean chicken saltimbocca.

Haikus
by Eric Sean Weld

He who makes his way
Blindly and simply forward
Will always finish

The present moment
Has come and gone already
While I’m thinking

Once on our knees
We have little choice but to
Stand and walk again

Karen LeHouiller and Jan Morris
**Goddess imparts wisdom**

by Mary Martineau

Who recently made a lasting impression on the young minds of Holyoke's Lynch Middle Schoolers? It was our very own Goddess of Space, aka Alumnae House Events Coordinator and Secretary/Receptionist, Jonelle Dennis. A guidance counselor asked former Alumnae Association colleague, Elisabeth England '91, now teaching seventh grade at the Lynch Middle School, for Career Day speaker suggestions. She especially wanted to bring in a speaker who had a career without a four-year degree and who would be willing to speak to the students. Elisabeth immediately thought of Jonelle, whom she described as "the major domo of the Alumnae House."

Jonelle thought it would be a great idea to bring along some Smith souvenirs for the students. Collaborative efforts filled "This is About Smith" bags with an array of goodies including latte mugs with the Smith logo from the Alumnae Association, a new campaign video, tattoos, pins, those infamous fluorescent pink and green sunglasses (a huge hit) and hats from Campaign Marketing; "floating pens" from the Alumnae Fund; the "Great Moments in Smith History" timeline poster from the Admission Office; and some very colorful pads and pencils from the Office of Institutional Diversity. A big thank you goes out to Joyce Allen who pitched in to help stuff the bags. Since Jonelle wasn't going empty-handed, she enlisted the help of Steve Monteiro, our former "man in the white house," to get a college van and drive her to the school. Steve was tremendous help in loading the van with gift bags for the 75 students with whom she would be speaking.

As soon as Jonelle began her discussion, she dazzled the crowd with her magic. She worked the room like a pro, tossing goodies to the students when they participated (a trick she apparently learned from our own fearless leader, Karin George). The kids really identified with Jonelle when she explained that she had grown up in Holyoke, and that the Holyoke Boys and Girls Club is now located where her family home used to sit.

In addition to career information, Jonelle provided these students with a glimpse into another world just a short drive down the road. None of the students had ever visited Smith, and only three students had ever been to Northampton. Jonelle handed out campus maps to everyone and proceeded to talk about her favorite Smith places. Their eyes grew big like saucers and they sat in rapt attention hanging on to her every word as she tantalized them with images of the Smith campus and its vast treasures. She described the beauty of Paradise Pond, the waterfall, the boathouse, the indoor swimming pool, Lyman Plant House, Brown Fine Arts Center and the construction of the student center. When Jonelle described the housing system, the kids were eager to learn about some of Smith's traditions like candlelight dinners and Friday afternoon teas.

In Elisabeth England's thank you letter to Carol Christ, she wrote the following glowing review: "Jonelle was a wonderful speaker, and held usually rambunctious children in the palm of her hand when she spoke of her upbringing in Holyoke. She really got them interested, though, when she talked about how great Smith is and how proud she is to work there. She played a video that showed women of color prominently woven into the fabric of the campus to a predominantly Hispanic school, and yes, they noticed. Many of the thank you notes the children wrote said they want to go to Smith. Who knows, one day, a future Smithie from the Class of 2012 may write on her application essay, "I first heard about Smith College when this fabulous woman spoke at Career Day in Holyoke..."

With her dynamic personality and enthusiasm for Smith, it's not surprising that Jonelle made such a positive impact on these kids. She's a great inspiration and role model for us all.

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**The Staff Council Chronicle**

*November 2009*

*News and More for Smith College Staff*
The Many Faces of Smith

... over the Y
Smith Must Embrace its Pioneering Spirit!

The new year is always a time for reflection. Because this is the last new year I will spend in Northampton, it is particularly significant, as I think back on the last decade and forward to the next. My husband and I are planning our move—back to Berkeley, California, and a more urban environment. Despite the fact that people sometimes call Northampton the Berkeley of New England, Berkeley, California, is a very different kind of community. I will take a sabbatical for a year, which I will spend in writing and reflection.

I will take with me from Smith a very different understanding of community than the one I got to know at the University of California. On my very first day of work at Smith, now more than 10 years ago, I went to a memorial service for the husband of a faculty member who had recently died. The husband was not an employee of Smith; at Berkeley, only a few close friends would have taken notice of such a passing. At Smith, Helen Hills Chapel was full—of faculty, of staff, and of their families, as they gathered to remember the man who had died, who had been part of their world.

The vividness of community, and the responsibility people take for it, has particular power at Smith, whether in the intensity with which students respond to acts of bigotry, the deep commitment to local philanthropy in staff and faculty support of the United Way, the countless ways in which people who work at Smith—staff and faculty—extend themselves beyond the strict definition of their jobs to make the college more welcoming, more supportive, richer in human ways for the students.

It takes a village to raise a child, Hilary Clinton said; this village raises many daughters. I have learned to treasure the contribution of each and every person who works here to that endeavor.

When Kim Alston invited me to write this column, she asked me what my most cherished wish was for Smith. In the years to come, I hope Smith is not afraid to reinvent itself. Smith was a pioneering institution when it was founded—a radical institution, for its time. In its complex development into one of the most competitive colleges in the United States, it has not lost touch with its founding values. In the challenging times ahead for higher education, Smith must embrace its pioneering spirit, not fear letting go of the old and experimenting with the new. All of you, whatever your sphere of work, have important roles in that project, in imagining how we can work in even more effective ways to serve our students.

—Carol Christ
President

Daffodils by Naomi Sturtevant
Story Highlights from the Staff Council Chronicle

1988  Staff Connection Working Group forms
1991  Delegates attend Staff Council Convention
1992  Board of Trustees approves development of Staff Council
1993  First issue named “Council Chronicle”
1995  Staff serve on ACRA (Advisory Committee for Resource Allocation) for the first time
1996  Feature on President Ruth Simmons
1997  First appearance of Staff Council logo
1999  Remembering Dick Hunter
2000  Smith Staff Walk for the Jimmy Fund
2001  Chat with Acting President John Connolly
2003  Lunch and Learn series debuts
2005  Faces of Smith Student Help
2007  Report on “Race, Privilege, & Prejudice: A Community Cornerstone”
2009  Staff shares Art with Smith community
2011  Chronicle profiles Senior Staff members
2013  The Diversity Committee’s “Between the Lines” Staff Reading Program focuses on classism

Past copies of the Staff Council Chronicle are available at http://www.smith.edu/staffcouncil/chronicle.html
Retrospective from Past Editors

Ken Molnar (2007-2008):

It was a series of unexpected events for me in ultimately ending up helming the Staff Council Chronicle. I moved to town knowing no one, then heard about a job at Smith through my new neighbor. So I'm at Smith. I end up working in the Events Management department. Fine so far. Then my boss asks me to be the liaison for College Relations at Staff Council meetings. I end up in the Communications subcommittee. (See where this is going?) . . . Stacey Anasazi was editing the Chronicle at the time, and I believe she put an ask out for assistance with the issues at one of the meetings. I volunteered, having a skill or two with computers and visual arrangement. A while later, Stacey declined the position and then, guess what? That's right, it was me.

Running the Chronicle was an exercise in extreme self-confidence, or hubris, I still haven't decided which. You kind of single-handedly had to decide what the issue was going to be, come up with ideas for articles as well as visuals and graphics, and even possibly—or impossibly—a theme. It was a joy.

The thing I was most proud of, I think, was the introduction of color printing—which in no way am I saying that I invented—but it was a nice new, fresh look for our little newsletter. I also think I probably clocked in at the most pages of any editor. The issues I produced were mini-tomes. Anyway, I always tried—as much as possible—to make the issues look like a cross between a magazine and a newspaper. Feedback, as much as I can recall, was always very positive.

But, anyway, all of this work was in addition to my regular duties as a full-time Smith employee in a very busy department. I think I did this for a few years and then it was time, exhaustedly, to pass the baton. Looking back, I do not even understand how I fit it all in. I guess you can do a lot when everything is new, you have lots of ideas, and you don't know what you're in for!

Laura Rauscher (2004) I was an editor for only a very brief time, maybe a year. Frankly, my only memory was that for the first time we made a point of making the print version available in audio if people needed that. A notice was included on each issue stating that the Chronicle was available in audio format and how to obtain an audio copy. It was an access issue for people with visual and learning disabilities, but also addressed some employees who may not read well or for whom English is a second language. Soon after I stopped being an editor that notice seemed to disappear. It is always a challenge to institutionalize these kinds of practices and I am no longer aware of what the target audience is or what the distribution is like.

Dick Fish (1995-1999) “The Chronicle was multi-paged and more frequent, but not necessarily better!”
Xinh Spangler (2005-2007) “I had a great time,” Xinh remembers with a broad smile. As editor, she credits much of her success to the close working relationship she developed with copy editor Stacey Anasazi and the Communications Committee. Staff Council helped her meet new people around campus and make new connections. Her most interesting story, she says, was the one she wrote on “student summer help.” Spangler, who has been at the College for 12 years (beginning in RADS and currently employed in Facilities Management), said she enjoyed interviewing students, finding out where they worked around campus, and getting their different opinions on issues.

Eric Weld (1999-2002) I was honored to serve as editor of the Council Chronicle from July 1999 to April 2002 (was it really that long ago??). Designer Patty Hayes, in College Relations, and I published a four-page quarterly. We tried to include helpful articles to Smith staff members—such as how best to invest retirement savings and keeping safe on campus—as well as profiles on people in the college community.

For me, the most enjoyable aspect of serving as editor of the Council Chronicle was getting to know a diverse array of Smith staffers. I especially enjoyed interviewing and writing profiles on people across campus, including Leroy Truehart (Physical Plant), Maria Vallejo (Office of Institutional Diversity), and Dick Hunter (Physical Plant). Looking back on editions we published is like uncapping a time capsule: a feature on preparing for Y2K; covering the Employee Excellence Awards, the President’s Winter Party, and the Lunch Buddies program; reports from President Ruth Simmons. If those are all familiar themes and names, then you, too, have been here for nearly as long as the Chronicle! Happy 20th, Staff Council!

1985 Letter to the Editor
To The Editor:
What is “banner” and why is it making us crazy?? As a nine-month employee at Smith, I frequently feel out of the loop when I come back in September, but this year was particularly different: a new supervisor to report to, a retired Director of the department, and Banner! A week before returning to work we learned there would be a new billing system in place that we needed to learn for opening day. Two days before we opened we had a training session, and it became clear what we were in for. I’m sure the greater plan of Banner is good, but at no point were we asked what we needed from a billing system, what we needed access to, or how this would change our operation.... A month into using Banner, we have not been able to do department billing, or deal with the large number of customers we serve who are not in the system (retired, or otherwise only casually associated with the College). This makes us feel very unorganized, and as if we are not able to do our jobs.

Early on it became clear that not everyone would or could remember their Social Security number (the new billing number), and some folks have a legitimate hesitation in using their SS# in such a public manner. Of course all these bugs will be worked out, but we are still struggling to use Banner the way we need to in order to serve our customers the best way possible. Banner is here to stay and we will have to adjust but how much better it would have been to talk with us ahead of time to determine what we need from such a system.

Sylvia Crafts, RADS
From the Spring 2004 issue of the *Chronicle*: A new Campus Center

From a cocoon forth a butterfly, as lady from her door.  
Emerged — a summer afternoon — repairing everywhere.  
Emily Dickinson – Part Two: Nature

I have to admit, I t88o was very skeptical.  Early on, the tenor of the workplace conversation was disparaging at best.  Mild cynicism had been a consistent component from the rejected architectural design at the beginning to serious budgetary considerations toward the end.  From this spectrum of doubt a beautiful Smith College Campus Center has emerged.

Days after arriving at 76 Elm Street as a new employee, I oscillated from contemplating an orderly evacuation to yelling out, “run for your lives!”  The quaking ground loudly gave way to the foundation and steel skeleton of a new building that consumed what were once valued employee parking spaces.  Eventually, a structure began to take shape — and a very different kind of shapes indeed.

During construction the Smith community were quite imaginative in describing the new and imposing Elm Street edifice.  Some questioned the shape (“it looks like the hull of a ship”), others wondered why there were only portholes and no windows.  But when an image of the finished building was posted on Elm Street, it was way different from what we were seeing.  At that point most thought either architect or contractor had completely missed the boat.

Yet a change was meticulously taking place — a slow and steady metamorphosis.  Just as a caterpillar gives no hint of the majestic beauty it will become, our Campus Center masked its true beauty until the end of summer.

When I returned from vacation in late August, a colleague asked if I was going over to see the Campus Center.  I explained I had already done the plastic yellow hardhat tour.  After she informed me that the Center was now open for students, faculty and staff, we walked over.  First impression:  Wow!

On a cloudlessly clear morning, walking inside the building was not much different from walking outside, if one were to excuse the walls.  The ceiling was cerulean blue.  Later that day, the sun shone so brightly through the glass topside that some of the students wore sunglasses.  I am eager to see what wonderful aesthetics the Campus Center will provide on a clear starlit night.

And how might it look with a full, bright near-yellow moon providing its unique and shadowy illumination?  Looking up, I wondered what would be the sensation of seeing rain falling or the first snowfall.  The bright, colorful cushions and furnishings inside the Campus Center are dramatic when contrasted with the pure white background.

The walkways consist of gentle curves — nothing too abrupt or too rigid.  Many doors and interior walls are glass — lessening the private space/public space dichotomy.  The tri-level complex is mostly an inviting mixture of new age and retro.  The beauty of this Campus Center Butterfly is less evident outside the building.

As we walked out the front, I noticed the chiseled tribute to Ruth Simmons from the Smith College Board of Trustees for her help in building bridges of understanding.  I began to better understand that visionaries see more than parking spaces and windowless walls.

Landscaping and finishing touches to the exterior of the building have improved the fit within the community at large.  And now walking through the neighborhood, one finds students of all colors from across the country and all nationalities congregated in and around this vibrant center.

The Smith College Campus Center is alive and students have settled in appearing very comfortable in their atmosphe88e-like surroundings — some isolate to read a book, while others group for a chat.  

Now, I not only understand — I believe.

Farris Shelton
Do You Know
Your Campus Landmarks?

The Girondet Gates
Dedicated 75 years ago—on October 18, 1924—the Girondet Gates have been a traditional symbol of Smith College for generations. During a dedication ceremony speech in John M. Greene Hall, President William Allen Neilson declared, "May the story of the Smith College Relief Unit be your heritage and your pride, and may its story be told to each succeeding generation."

But what was the Smith College Relief Unit and what do the Girondet Gates represent?

The idea for the Relief Unit came from Mrs. Harriet (Boyd) Haws, class of 1892, who during a speech at a Boston Smith Club luncheon in the spring of 1917, proposed that a relief unit be sent out to northern France to assist the refugee population struggling to survive the devastation wrought by World War I. The plan was presented a second time and approved at the June annual meeting of Smith alumnae. In less than three months, recruitment, financing, and equipment were secured, and 17 Smith alumnae sailed for France with a cargo of two small Ford trucks and six prefabricated two-room wooden barracks.

Arriving at the Château de Robecourt in September, they were greeted by 25 women and three children, the burning of village's only remaining residents. By September 20, the unit had imported six cows, set up a milk station, and brought together 130 children from eight neighboring villages for a party. For two years and eight months, Relief Unit alumnae volunteers worked tirelessly to find drinking water, food, clothing, livestock and seeds for 16 French villages within 10 miles of the war zone. Health care was provided by two Smith doctors while alumnae ranging in age from 22 to 52 drove through abandoned trenches, fed animals, loaded trucks, and tended roofs. In 1920, the advancing German army eventually forced the unit to evacuate the villages and remove themselves with the retreating French forces.

The Girondet Gates at Smith are an exact replica of the gates at Château de Robecourt in France, where the unit had its headquarters. Originally located between College Hall and what is now Hillier Hall, the gates were moved to their present location nearly 30 years later in order to provide a wider space for vehicular traffic.

By Cindy Bucci '8

Potluck Picnic a Success

Staff Connection's first social event, an international potluck picnic held in August, was a feast for both the stomach and the ears. Staff from all over the campus came with their dishes—Puerto Rican beans, Italian pasta, Norwegian salmon, Middle Eastern past, American brownies, French cheese—to make it a grand picnic. But eating wasn't even the main course; talking was. Staff who'd never met discovered they had a lot in common. Staff who knew one another already found time to chat without the distractions of work.

Ideas from a brainstorming session about possible T-shirt designs for Staff Connection revealed lots of creativity, the group is now seeking funding to produce one of the designs as a T-shirt or coffee mug for sale to staff.

The international potluck gave us all a chance to share food and ideas, and it closed the summer on a congenial note. Any readers who would be interested in organizing and/or attending a fall or winter potluck should contact a Staff Connection Steering Committee member—Emily Harrison Weir

Time in Water by Patricia O'Connor

1. Cape Cod: Atlantic Summer 1997 Ceramic Etri

Luscious color, the late afternoon the tinge of briny salt the deep blue of water dutch from Narragansett Wears blue suit and walking through together and home bright and bitter water the August air.

The remnants of my town walk to the orange black tar that follows the route of water as I chase the swirl and change in the changing light.

2. My legs ache from the stop of tan and quickening sand as I stop along the edge of the ocean shell into high yellow sea grass where the water suddenly deepens I light fire on the water rises past my chest I cannot swim I want for you.

The seawater and splash around my hand I must hold to breathe. The water moves up the white between each one's hand.

I turn back.
Smith Softball Takes It All!

The Smith College Co-ed Softball Team, financed in part by Smith College, has been competing in a league organized by the Northampton Recreational Department since 1990. Over the years, coaches have been Deb Bradley, Ann Nichols, John Sheier, Robert Shyen and the gentleman whose leadership has resulted in our most successful seasons, Jim Montgomery. As the only player remaining from the original 1990 team, he coached the team to the 1996 division championship and 2nd place in post-season playoffs in both 1996 and 2000. But our greatest feat came this past summer when Smith . . . well, read on and find out!

Our league plays seven-inning games. With a score tied at 6-all, we were in the bottom of the eighth against the only team to beat us this season: Oleanders. Hungry – it was two hours past suppertime. Tired – we’d worked all day and were now in extra innings. And hot! Seven-thirty in the evening and the Heat Miser was holding steady at 95 degrees. We had to score to end the game before we melted. We had to win to get to the championship game.

Louis, up first, reached, really reached, to get to a ball that would have landed at least a foot in front of home plate, and turned a poor pitch into a grenade to left field. Karin followed – hitting what I assume was a better pitch (that I was too nervous and excited to record) and earning her place on first. Okay, runners on first and second. Rob, with the sure bats of Linda and Kevin waiting in the wings, waits for his pitch and pushes a long, low flyball into right field. The two fielders close in, but the ball finds turf. Louis, with his locomotive on full throttle, powered around third and was practically mobbed by the Smith bench before he reached home plate, smiling to beat the band! Maybe because he was the winning run. Maybe because he didn’t have to pitch into a ninth inning. Maybe because this win put us into the final game of the playoffs. Only he knows!

—Excerpted from “Whew! That Was Close!” post-game e-mail report for the August 5, 2002, semifinal playoff game.

. . . We knew we’d had a great season, but with this win, we had set the high mark for the team. For the first time in the team’s thirteen years existence, we secured both the division championship and 1st place in post-season playoffs and finished the season with an 18 and 1 overall record. Sure, our win/loss record looks impressive. Truth be known, we really had to come together as a team to pull off our wins, winning several games by only one run. Looking at the season as a whole, we out-scored our opponents 2-1. (This sort of stat selection is what happens when the accountant on the team gets a hold of the score book!)

After the final game, the team picture was taken with the championship trophy, and although we were a little hot and weary, we had plenty of energy (and reason) to smile!
Dogs and Their People
And other pets!
Upcoming Activities

March 12-24  In celebration of its 20th year of community building, Staff Council will hold an exhibit featuring its contributions and accomplishments. The exhibit, which will highlight Council history, committees, and special programming, will be set up in the Nolen Arts Lounge in the Campus Center. An opening reception is scheduled for Tuesday, March 12, from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. Light refreshments will be served. All are welcome!

March 26  The annual Book Swap will be held from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. in CC 103/104. All staff are welcome even if you don’t have books to swap! To volunteer, contact Mairin Brady at mbrady@smith.edu.

May 4  The spring New York City Bus Trip is a fun opportunity to visit the Big Apple on a Saturday. Round-trip tickets are $40.00 and can be purchased by contacting staffactivities@smith.edu.