The 2013 elections have come to a close and a new year has begun for Staff Council. We are thrilled to announce the 2013-14 roster of Council members who will serve as representatives for the entire Smith College staff.

This year’s Staff Council officers are Halley Ofner (Chair), Joanne Benkley (Vice Chair), Lisa Nawrocki (Secretary), and Beth Bone (Treasurer).

Smith College staff elected ten new members to Staff Council to serve from 2013 to 2015. They are Katie Averill, Elizabeth Bone, Celine Burgielwicz, Linda Gregory, Sara Kirk, Saari Koponen-Robotham, Anna Vargas, Laura Wyman, Nanci Young, and Heather Zottoli.

This year we also welcome back returning Staff Council members. They are Kim Alston, Erica Banz, Joanne Benkley, Mary Clayton, Deedee Cleveland, Carla Cooke, Katie Fitzgerald, Patty Hentz, James McCarthy, Lisa Morde, Lisa Nawrocki, Halley Ofner, Christine Reynolds, Deborah Richards, Avril Russell, Donna Safford, and Jenny Silver.

It promises to be an exciting year for Staff Council, as we continue to reflect on and celebrate 20 years at Smith and find new and innovative ways to engage staff all across campus. The Personnel Policy Committee will continue to diligently address staff needs and concerns in the coming year. The 2013-14 year will also see a return of the Between the Lines discussion program from the Diversity Committee, as well as staff trips and on-campus events from the Activities Committee. We look forward to seeing you at a Staff Council event soon, and we hope to see your name on the election ballot next year!

Between the Lines Planning Underway

If you are eagerly awaiting the announcement of the book for this year’s Between the Lines (BtL) reading program don’t despair, you haven’t missed it. As a result of feedback from last year’s participants, we have decided that we will announce the reading selection in September, which will allow everyone plenty of time to read the book before we hold a series of group discussions during January.

Can’t wait until September to participate? Enjoy a performance of Good People, an “entertaining, humorous and authentic conversation about class, race and have-not America” by Pulitzer Prize-winning author David Lindsay-Abaire, produced by the New Century Theatre (NCT) this summer (http://www.newcenturytheatre.org/currentseason.html). BtL and NCT are teaming up to offer half-price admission to all Smith employees (show your Smith ID) on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, July 12, 13, and 14! Join us for a potluck and discussion after the Sunday matinee (location TBA).

Join a Diversity Committee meeting—all are welcome. We will be meeting regularly over the summer. Join us to help select the BtL book, share your event ideas, or volunteer as a group discussion facilitator. Book suggestions, event ideas, and general questions or comments can also be sent to Joanne Benkley (jbenkley@smith.edu).

Between the Lines is a reading program started by the Staff Council Diversity Committee in 2012 with the goals of:

• promoting awareness of a particularly relevant topic for staff and faculty;
• expanding the way in which staff is engaged in issues of inclusivity and equity;
• allowing space for conversation and practice in perspective-sharing; and
• fostering a sense of community.

We hope you enjoy your summer, and look forward to reading between the lines with you in the fall!

Standing in the Spotlight

This year’s Spotlight Awards Program honored 29 outstanding Smith employees nominated by supervisors and colleagues. At the May reception in the Carroll Room, President Carol Christ shook hands and took pictures with staff “whose contributions went above and beyond the everyday scope of their responsibilities.” At this year’s celebration Lou Bouley, then vice chair of Staff Council, also acknowledged President Christ for her 11 years of dedicated service and support to staff with a bouquet of beautiful flowers.

The All-employee Summer Picnic

Will be held Tuesday, July 9, 11:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m.
Food will be served from inside the Campus Center, but employees will be encouraged to sit on Chapin Lawn with their colleagues. Rain location will be the Campus Center.
Staff Council Call for Suggestions

As Smith staff’s representative body, Staff Council is working on developing a set of priorities to guide its actions in 2013-14 and to work with President-elect Kathleen McCartney. These objectives will represent aspirations and practical next steps that the Council hopes to achieve. Your voice is important in crafting Staff Council priorities for the coming year. Below is a list of suggestions provided by Staff Council members. If you would like to add an objective or next step to the list below, please write to Staff Council at staffcounsel@smith.edu.

Decision-making
- Identify all college-wide decision-making committees on which staff should be represented and develop a plan to assure proper representation on those governing bodies.
- Work in earnest to have a staff representative at Board of Trustees meetings.

Communication
- Work more closely with student groups and Faculty Council to increase awareness of each other’s goals and collaborate when appropriate.
- Hold “Meet and Greet” Staff Council events, including open hours at times when members are available to hear questions, comments, and concerns from staff.
- Support the Chronicle as a Staff Council communication tool with a strong working relationship with Staff Council’s Communication Committee and more newsletter submissions from Staff Council members and staff.
- Hold a community forum in the coming year for staff to discuss staff-generated issues of importance.
- Update visual identity and priorities of Staff Council to reflect the Council as a cohesive resource for staff.

Leadership
- Build a strong working relationship with incoming President Kathleen McCartney and senior administration.
- Challenge the Council’s reputation solely as an events/activities planning body and reclaim its role as a representative body advocating for staff interests.
- Encourage increased awareness to staff about diversity issues including disabilities, class, gender, and race.

Equitable Health Coverage at Smith

For more than 10 years, Smith College has offered health insurance and other benefits to same-sex domestic partners and their families. In doing so, the college provides equitable access to quality health insurance for employees and their families. However, employees covering same-sex partners have been taxed at a higher rate than employees covering opposite-sex partners. Currently, the federal Defense of Marriage Act precludes employees from paying for a domestic partner’s insurance with pretax dollars. In addition, the college’s portion of insurance payments for the domestic partner is taxed to the employee as imputed income. Beginning with the bi-weekly pay period that ended on April 6, 2013, the college implemented a plan to make health insurance benefits affordable equally to those with same-sex partners and their families. This will be accomplished by a “gross-up” of wages of employees in same-sex partnerships, who currently have their spouses or families enrolled in health insurance. Human Resources will be communicating directly with affected employees and sharing the newly instituted policy with all employees at the next benefits open enrollment period.

—Smith College eDigest, April 11, 2013

Springtime in Central Park

This year’s New York City bus trip was an overwhelming success, despite initial concerns about filling the chartered bus. Ellen Lord from the Community Service Office and Morgyn Hall ’13 enjoyed a stroll in Central Park along Strawberry Fields, where John Lennon’s bestselling song title, “Imagine,” is inscribed. The next bus trip is scheduled for the holidays, on Saturday, December 7. The Activities Committee is looking for ideas for future bus trips. If you would like to make a suggestion, send an email to staffactivities@smith.edu. If there is enough interest in going other places (a minimum of 46 people are needed to fill a bus), the committee will book a trip for the campus.

Welcome, Kathleen McCartney!

As Smith prepares to receive its 11th president, Kathleen McCartney, Staff Council envisions creating a collaborative partnership with its new head. President-elect McCartney, the current dean of Harvard’s Graduate School of Education, was recently recognized as an exceptional leader at Harvard’s 16th Women’s Leadership Awards. McCartney, who is known for fostering women’s leadership, diversity, and academic achievement, starts at Smith on July 1, followed by an October 19 inauguration to which all staff are invited.