

# Know Your Alumnae Association

You are an important ambassador for the Alumnae Association of Smith College. Here is some information to share with alumnae, students, and other audiences you meet as part of your work for Smith.

## Mission

The Alumnae Association of Smith College (AASC) is dedicated to enhancing the lives of Smith women worldwide. Through high-quality programs, unique services, and world-class events, the association reinforces the strong, lifelong ties that our diverse alumnae have to Smith and to each other.

## How the AASC Keeps Alumnae Connected

The Alumnae Association is in the business of keeping alumnae connected to Smith and each other. To do that, the association offers a variety of programs and services. Here's a snapshot of what's available:

- ◆ **NETWORKING:** More than 12,000 alumnae are available for mentoring and networking. To find out about job openings, events, and other career-related information, visit <http://alumnae.smith.edu>, log in to the Alumnae Directory, and then click on Career.
- ◆ **ONLINE CONNECTIONS:** The AASC's **searchable online directory** makes it easy to find old friends. You can also create an online profile, post photos, create friends lists, and sign up to be a mentor to students or fellow alumnae. Log on at <http://alumnae.smith.edu>.
- ◆ **EXCLUSIVE ONLINE CONTENT:** The association's Web site (<http://alumnae.smith.edu>) features a **treasure trove of content** available to Smith alumnae. You can listen to Smith authors discuss their work, you can hear faculty members talk about their research, and you can find full audio transcripts of the association's educational symposia.
- ◆ **REUNIONS:** Each year, thousands of alumnae return to campus for one of the college's most popular celebrations. The event features an array of activities, including the Ivy Day Parade, Alumnae College, and class-sponsored performances. It's the perfect time to renew your connection to Smith and your classmates.
- ◆ **EDUCATIONAL SYMPOSIA:** The Alumnae Association's **educational symposia** are enriched by Smith faculty and alumnae experts who are more than willing to share their talent and expertise. Hundreds of alumnae have reconnected with Smith scholars through successful educational events on a range of topics, from landscape design to ethics, financial independence, and life transitions.
- ◆ **CLUBS AND AFFINITY GROUPS:** Smith clubs exist in most states, Europe, and Asia. With diverse memberships, the **clubs serve an important purpose** of keeping alumnae connected at the local level. They plan a variety of events, such as book sales, faculty speakers, and scholarship programs that remind their

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local communities of the generosity and social responsibility of Smith alumnae. In addition to a vast club network, the association plays host to a variety of **affinity groups that bring together alumnae** with similar interests and cultural backgrounds. Existing groups include Black Alumnae of Smith College (BASC), the Association of Latina Alumnae of Smith (ALAS), the Smith Asian Alumnae Connection (SAAC), LGBTQ Alliance of Smith College, Smith Alumnae Chorus (SAC), and Smith Alumnae with MBAs (SAMBA).

- ◆ **SMITH TRAVEL PROGRAM:** Each year, the Smith Travel Program puts together a roster of new adventures that take alumnae and friends to nearly every corner of the globe. As an alumna, you're guaranteed access to qualified experts, Smith faculty, and local alumnae. Trips run the gamut, from cruises to train trips, theater tours, and family adventures.
- ◆ **SMITH ALUMNAE QUARTERLY AND E-NEWSLETTER:** The award-winning *Smith Alumnae Quarterly* keeps alumnae up to date about what's going on at Smith and in the lives of classmates and friends. In between issues of the *Quarterly*, the association's electronic newsletter, "Notes from Paradise," keeps alumnae informed about campus events and alumnae accomplishments.

## Pride and Recognition

The Alumnae Association is proud of its work and has been recognized nationally as a leader in alumnae relations. Here are some noteworthy achievements:

- ◆ The Alumnae Association was founded in the spring of 1881; it was officially incorporated in 1931. Originally conceived as a dues-paying organization, the association is now all-inclusive and boasts a worldwide membership of well over 45,000 alumnae. The association has grown and prospered into a vital organization that continually meets the needs of alumnae and the college community.
- ◆ In the past 11 years, the *Smith Alumnae Quarterly* has received 15 awards for excellence from the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE).
- ◆ The Alumnae Association has received two silver medal awards from CASE for its communications work.
- ◆ There are 108 Smith clubs around the world.
- ◆ More than 80 Smith faculty participated in Alumnae Association events around the world last year.
- ◆ Nearly 400 alumnae traveled with Smith Travel last year, visiting more than a dozen countries.
- ◆ Close to 2,000 alumnae attend Reunion each year.

## How to Get Connected

- ◆ **Volunteer.** Get involved with your class, club, or affinity group, sign up to be a mentor, or help your class plan its next Reunion. There are myriad ways to share your time and talents with the Alumnae Association
- ◆ **Visit us online.** Go to <http://alumnae.smith.edu> for information about all the benefits and services and volunteer opportunities available to alumnae.
- ◆ **E-mail us.** Send feedback or ideas to [alumnae@smith.edu](mailto:alumnae@smith.edu).
- ◆ **Phone.** For specific questions, call 800-526-2023.

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# Words from the President

President Carol Christ has begun laying out her vision for Smith as we enter the campaign. Following are selected remarks for use in discussions or correspondence with alumnae. Please note that these are excerpts. This document should not be used as one cohesive narrative.

## On Smith's position in the landscape of higher education:

“In considering the strategic options before Smith, it is important to understand Smith’s position in the landscape of higher education. Smith is a private liberal arts college for women.”

“Liberal arts colleges...offer a distinctive set of assets: a low student/faculty ratio; a predominant focus on undergraduate education; residential life on closely-bound campuses; a rich mix of extracurricular programming; and extensive, closely-tied alumni networks.”

“Despite the many and evident strengths of the elite liberal arts college sector, it faces significant challenges in its cost structure. The very assets that make it distinctive—small size, low student/faculty ratio, residential campuses, and rich extracurricular programming—make the cost per student high.”

“Since 2002, applications have increased by 32 percent; we have stabilized the discount rate, improved retention, and enhanced the quality of students.”

“Smith is large for a liberal arts college, and it is the largest of the women’s colleges... We receive more applications from women than many of our peers, but we must admit far more of these applicants to meet our enrollment targets. This challenge may well become harder in coming years as the population of high school seniors declines, particularly in New England and the Middle Atlantic states, from which we draw most of our students.”

## On Smith's strategic options:

“Given the set of financial and enrollment challenges that liberal arts colleges face—challenges that are greater for women’s colleges because they recruit only women—it is critical for Smith to consider the strategic options before it. We therefore have been concentrating, with the board, with our planning committees, and with the faculty, on the options in front of Smith.”

### **OPTIONS THAT THE PRESIDENT DESCRIBED AS NOT DESIRABLE INCLUDE:**

“Stay the course.... The weakness of this strategy is that it doesn’t anticipate or address any significant erosion in market position, nor does it anticipate any of the other shifts in the higher education market place.”

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“Reduce the size of the college...The disadvantage of this strategy is the loss of net revenue it entails.”

“Make much more aggressive use of merit aid...This would be a difficult course because it would compromise our commitment to access.”

“Reduce costs... Smith clearly needs to continue to put pressure on the cost side of the ledger. However, any significant budget reduction would require major changes in the college’s financial and programmatic model, changes that would separate us from our peer group.”

“Reduce the time to degree... Reducing time to degree would increase our enrollment challenge because it would necessitate recruiting even more students to meet our enrollment goals.”

#### **OPTIONS THE PRESIDENT DESCRIBED AS DESIRABLE:**

“Significantly increase Five College collaboration... This option has the potential of reducing costs, maintaining program depth and variety, and creating a more co-educational environment while maintaining our mission and distinctive character.”

“Remain a women’s college... Smith’s brand is arguably most strongly linked with its women’s college identity.”

“Significantly increase the percentage of international students while adopting a defining initiative in global leadership.”

“Increase summer programming from the pre-baccalaureate to the post-baccalaureate level.... Smith could diversify its revenue streams and extend its reputation by more intensive use of the campus during the summer.”

“Replace some undergraduate enrollment with co-educational professional graduate programs... By carefully selected professional graduate programs, which could provide five-year BA/MA options for our undergraduates, Smith could somewhat change the enrollment mix.”

### **On an international strategy of global leadership:**

“The most compelling strategy, I believe, is increasing the percentage of international students and developing a defining initiative in global leadership. Such a strategy takes advantage of a shift in a market where there is less resistance to women’s colleges; it builds powerfully on our history and resources; it is central to our strategic plan; and it speaks to a compelling contemporary need. It answers the question in a powerful way: why a women’s college.

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“In a recent book, written with his wife, Sheryl WuDunn, journalist Nicholas Kristof argued that women’s rights are the defining cause of our time. He quoted the Chinese proverb: “Women hold up half the sky.” He continued, “Yet that’s mostly an aspiration: in a large slice of the world, girls are uneducated and women marginalized, and it’s not an accident that those same countries are disproportionately mired in poverty and riven by fundamentalism and chaos.” He pointed to the growing recognition on the part of government, NGOs, and business that focusing on women and girls is the most powerful way to fight poverty and extremism. ‘Women and girls aren’t the problem; they’re the solution.’

“Making progress in addressing this gender gap will require well-educated women from many nationalities and socioeconomic backgrounds, globally educated and prepared to lead. What more appropriate institution of higher education to take on this challenge than a woman’s college of Smith’s resources, distinction, and history? It extends Sophia Smith’s vision to the 21<sup>st</sup> century—by education, to increase women’s power for good.

“Such an initiative aligns powerfully with Smith’s investments in science and engineering.... Long before any ground was broken, Ford Hall had its origins in urgent conversations about Smith’s role—and responsibilities—in addressing the challenges facing humanity in the 21st century.... Smith’s preeminent position in science and engineering education positions us even more powerfully in preparing women for global leadership.”

### On Smith’s distinctive assets:

“Some of Smith’s distinctive assets resemble those of other, co-educational liberal arts colleges—small classes, in which students get much individual attention and develop particular fluency in speaking and writing; a faculty whose primary focus of attention is undergraduate education; the opportunity to take a broad range of small classes across the liberal arts; extensive extracurricular opportunities that develop leadership; and a residential community that educates students in citizenship.

“In addition, Smith’s identity as a women’s college gives particular value to the women who attend it. Smith’s graduates are exceptional and recognized as such in all fields of endeavor. Some people define this value as self-confidence: the important presence of women on the faculty and the administration, the many opportunities student organizations provide for leadership, the exclusive focus of men and women faculty on developing the minds and talents of women students combine to build unusual self-confidence that is a foundation for success.

“I believe that women’s colleges give their students a powerful sense of agency in their community that becomes a foundation for effective action and leadership. The World Economic Forum defines leadership in the following way: “True leadership is exemplified by those who are able to energize individuals and teams; empower, fertilize and build communities; and recognize and form the talent around them. They are the coaches, learners, teachers and mentors who dem-

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onstrate the discipline it takes to make changes to other people's lives and to our world." That vision of leadership is a vision of agency in community; it is one Smith offers."

## On the Smith Design for Learning and Concentrations:

"In its strategic planning, Smith has given a great deal of energy to the enhancement of the curriculum. The Smith Design for Learning is the result. This was, and continues to be, essential and important work on the core of our enterprise, assuring that the education we offer is of the highest excellence, power, and coherence.

"We have focused the curriculum on building essential capacities; we have improved the advising system; we have increased opportunities for independent work; we have integrated student services with an emphasis on a holistic understanding of a life well-lived through the Center for Work and Life.

"We are now in the process of creating three linked centers, each bringing together faculty across departments and programs, each offering new opportunities for students to do experiential projects, bringing what they have learned to bear on real-world problems.

"Emerging from these centers, as well as the Museum of Art, the Sophia Smith Collection, and the College Archives, are a set of concentrations, combining internships and course work. These offerings will be unique to Smith, replacing conventional academic minors and preparing women who are both intellectually strong and prepared to offer leadership in addressing society's challenges."

## On Women of Promise, Lives of Distinction:

"This curricular work positions us powerfully to achieve our vision of global leadership. In the planning process, we created and affirmed this mission statement: *Smith educates women of promise for lives of distinction*. We want to draw those exceptional women more extensively from around the world, so that our graduates, wherever they come from, will develop those capacities of mind and character that will enable them to contribute and act effectively in the global village in which they will all be living."