

THE SOPHIAN

‘We Celebrate Because We Can, but Also Because We Must’: a Bittersweet Celebration on the Quad

SHIRA NATHAN '28
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Cheering, pop music and love echoed across the quadrangle on the evening of Thursday, April 10 as hundreds of students gathered to celebrate queer and trans joy at the 35th annual Celebration on The Quad (COTQ).

“I think that it’s so Smith,” said Riko Mukoyama ’26, a dancer in Celebrations Dance

Company. The company always closes out COTQ. “I’ve always really appreciated the opportunity to perform [...] and watch and support my peers.”

The event, which began in 1991 as a candlelight vigil in response to a homophobic and transphobic hate crime on the quad, is a beloved Smith tradition. It has since transformed to in-

clude energetic and joyous performances like that of Celebrations Dance Company, becoming an evening recognizing both the weight of queer experience and the importance of queer joy. This year featured the beloved traditional performances by the quad houses, the Smiffenpoofs, Black-apella, Spitfire and Celebrations Dance Company, as well as more unique features like the Ice



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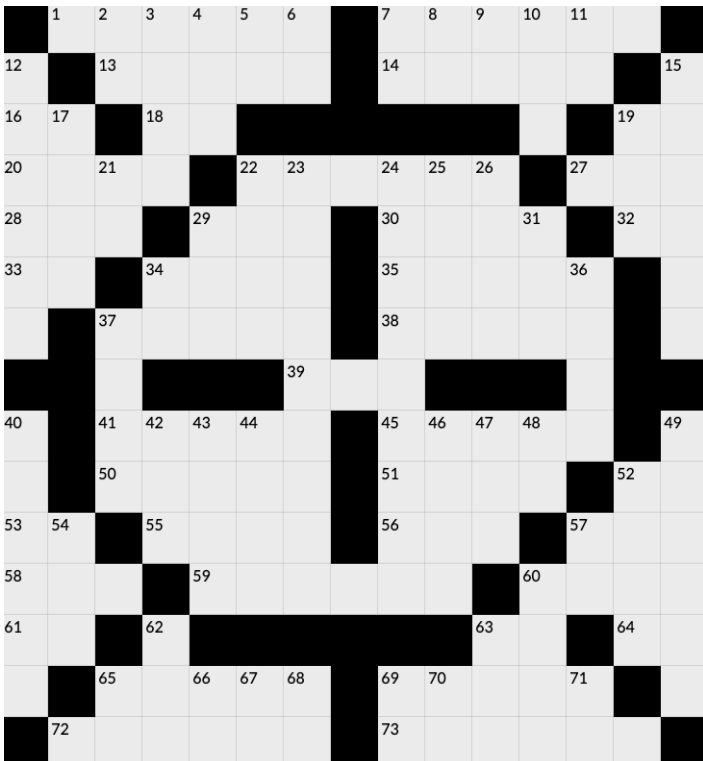
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April Crossword

POORVI SARKAR '27
CROSSWORD & GAMES EDITOR

- Across**
1. infamous unrhymable word
7. where one might store liquids
13. a little drunk
14. greek A
16. exists
18. with "&" in the middle, phrase for chilling
19. Pronoun
20. The scourge of many teens
22. "Bless you!"
27. Give it a go
28. Soft Chinese bun
29. valuable mineral
30. __ The Terrible
32. "It was okay"
33. Lawrencium on Periodic Table
34. Listen to, as a command
35. Transportation of the deceased
37. Chinese organized crime group
38. French art school
39. website link, abbr
41. Detangle, as a pair of earbuds
45. Famous composer whose work is featured in cartoons such as Looney Tunes and Tom & Jerry
50. Creepy
51. "Is it them ___?"
52. Plutonium on the Periodic Table
53. One of six, ideally
55. Sworn secret
56. Garden tool
57. Pronoun
58. HBO's Euphoria lead character
59. How Yoda may say he's hurt
60. Sharp twist
61. American automotive company
63. Disgraced rapper
64. When doubled, social gathering for gossip
65. South-Asian pants
69. "___ Summer" 2019 Taylor Swift Hit
72. What someone who's not sober does
73. Penny metal
- Down**
2. Tweet as your own, abbr
3. Kylie Jenner's son
4. American public broadcasting company
5. Thousands, slangily
6. "Big Four" Accounting Firm
7. Like most Smith degrees
8. Scientific ending denoting alcohols
9. What kids may have done to your house on the night before Halloween
10. One of the most used english words
11. West Coast city
12. Feasible
15. Double greeting
17. The Lion King antagonist
19. Former Medieval European country, abbr
21. Decline as a response
22. L*w
23. Greeting to a friend



24. Triple greeting
25. Where desserts might bake
26. Two of these used to paddle
29. "___ wan Kenobi"
31. Government intelligence agency
34. Choice between two options
36. What Sophian board members do
37. Is correct
40. An ion may have a positive or negative this
42. Prefix for new as in "classi-cal" or "liberal"
43. Filled, rolled flatbread
44. Infamous reddit thread
46. A deficiency in this may cause one to faint easily
47. Take legal action
48. Denote sleeping in cartoons
49. Unsophisticated person
52. Like many a rose
54. Slacker
57. Quick greeting
60. Hold on to
62. 21st greek letter
63. casual agreement
65. Doctor, abbr
66. A green light may signify this
67. Phrase used in journalism to denote information yet to be received
68. As 16-Across, to be
69. Loop someone in, on email
70. System to remove impurities from water, abbr
71. The, in French

Editorial Statement

Dear Readers:

We, the 2025 - 26 Editorial Board of The Sophian, are proud to present the first print edition of our 79th volume and the penultimate issue of the academic year. It is an incredible honor to be entrusted with this paper, passed down from the capable hands of our departing seniors, and we thank them for their hard work and unwavering care. We hope that our sustained commitment to diligent, quality reporting will continue to earn your readership and trust.

Indeed, we are cognizant that we are stepping into our roles during a tenuous point in Smith's history, marked by campus-wide disillusionment with various concessions made by Smith to the Trump agenda.

Throughout this tumultuous period, we hope that The Sophian can act as both a driver of transparency and a vehicle for informed discourse. We are as committed to honest reporting as we are to standing with our fellow students, especially our trans peers who have been ceaselessly subjected to hatred on this campus — systemic or otherwise. This paper belongs to us, the editors, as much as it belongs to our readers; you belong here, and we write for you.

The NCAA's participation policy to bar trans women from competing in womens' collegiate sports, effective as of February 6, 2025, has already had direct impacts on our student body. The Sophian has and will continue to meticulously report on the ad-

ministration's decisions and on the effects felt by our student athletes. Concurrently, we will continue to proudly highlight the victories and achievements that our teams have brought home to Smith.

Through all the murkiness, we are just as eager to see what positives the future holds for Smith. We are incredibly grateful for our talented team of editors, writers, translators, photographers and illustrators that make The Sophian what it is. Even as the year comes to a close, our work will continue.

With gratitude,
Olivia Petty '26 - Editor-in-Chief
Karen Colmán-Martínez '26 - Managing Editor

‘Screw It, I’m Gonna Write This for Me’: Tiana Clark Reclaims Rest and Joy with *Scorched Earth*

GRYFFYN MAY '27

On Tuesday, April 8, ARTS & CULTURE EDITOR the Smith College Grace Hazard Conkling Writer-in-Residence Tiana Clark introduced her sophomore collection, “*Scorched Earth*”, tackling issues of pain, loss, survival and joy in a world in ruin. After reading selected pieces from her book, she sat down with Ocean Vuong, a Northampton-based poet and New York University professor. The two discussed capitalism and whiteness in publishing, expectations of queer writers of color and the balance between joy and pain in poetry and in life.

In contrast to her new collection, Clark describes her first book as closely linked to her Master in Fine Arts, which inevitably comes with a degree of people (or professor) pleasing. This, they discuss, is also inextricably linked with both of their statuses as writers of color, a status that requires what Vuong describes as “the necessary performance of legibility that so many [poets of color] have to do.”

“My professors were in that old-school approach of ‘Professor is Bible, professor is canon.’ And I was responding, ‘Yes, sir,’” Clark said. “It took me a while to stand up to those voices, and to learn to trust myself and that process again, to have a fallow period. With this book, I was just like, ‘Screw it, I’m gonna write this book for me.’”

For Clark, part of crafting a book of poetry that ignored the expectations of and limitations placed on writers of color involved exploring ideas of being “too much,” and working outside of the margins of “legibility” or definition. Vuong emphasized Clark’s feelings of difficulty of breaking through barriers when working on a debut publication. “When you’re a struggling younger poet writing your first book, all the doors are closed, and the answer on the other side of the gate is, ‘This is a meritocracy. Come back when we decide you’re good enough,’” Vuong said.

However, once the door has opened, Vuong continued, a new set of complications emerge for writers of color.

“Then, when you get published, and maybe you have some success, all of a sudden

you’re on the inside of that gate and they’re like, ‘Give us more, we’ll publish anything,’” Vuong said. “And so you realize there’s a double standard [...] [When] you talk about ancestries, any time you see two writers of color coming through these traditions, you must also realize there are thousands who never made it.”

Vuong also reminded the audience of the importance of acknowledging how much those writers, as well as the ones who did “make it,” paved the way for today’s most radical writers and poets.

“I’ve always felt that all writers working in innovative, oppositional works in relation to power are working in the long shadow of Black thought, myself included,” Vuong said. “As an Asian American, immigrant, queer writer — whatever labels you want to put on me — there are no questions that I’ve asked in my own work that a Black writer has not already asked and answered before me on a global scale. Diaspora, immigration, everything — they got it covered. And I feel empowered to continue that.”

Clark expressed similar feelings of gratitude for the writers who came before her, crediting the “pillars” of poetry who contributed to making her into the poet she is today.

“I’ve always had to build my own literary ancestry, build my own sense of freedom through Black poets who were oppressed, and that is where I had personally found my sense of happiness. I feel like they have written that freedom back into me,” Clark said. “I feel so lucky to arrive this late to the tradition, because we get to have Toni Morrison and James Baldwin [...] [But] they didn’t have themselves. They had to be themselves. Imagine you’re Toni Morrison writing without a Toni Morrison. I’m in a cheat code just because I came late. The archive is bigger; we can think more robustly.”

Thinking about poetic histories inevitably begs the question of literary legacy, or as Clark and Vuong refer to it as, “mastery” — the achievement of poetic timelessness.

“I’ll never forget one time in graduate school I wrote a poem about Rihanna, and my

mentor at the time said, ‘You shouldn’t put pop culture in your poems, you should never have a timestamp in your poems.’ I asked, ‘Why?’ And she said, ‘Well, don’t you care about mastery? Don’t you care about legacy?’ And I was like, ‘No. I don’t,’” Clark said. “And that’s when I realized I was actively working against it. Not only am I not working for mastery, I couldn’t care less. I think when you grew up in a ‘feast or famine’ kind of living; when you grew up poor, there was no saving or thinking about the future. There’s only the urgent need.”

Not only does Clark’s work “question the validity of the questions,” it interrogates why failure is seen as a negative end instead of a beginning possibility.

“I think failure is a form, right? And even in leaping for the thing, even if you fall, I’d rather it fall, right?” Clark said. “I think for me, to be honest with you, I felt like I was reexploiting myself for my first book. Like I was reharmsing myself. Like I was following into the gaze that was also oppressing me. I wanted to actively push that off of me, and I forgot what joy could make possible in my work.”

Clark said she didn’t know if it was possible to transcend the pain, but regardless, her second book gave her a blank page on which to try.

“Obviously, a lot of these poems are written from a place of pain, but with this book, I wanted to take better care of myself, especially as a Black artist,” Clark said. “Because I do not want to survive or be sustainable by my exhaustion, by my pain, by my grief. That’s not what I want my legacy to be as a Black writer.”

At the end of their conversation, Vuong spoke to Clark about everything from pain and failure to joy and happiness: “You said failure is a form, but underneath that, I’m also hearing another form, which is ultimately very antithetical to capitalism and ideas of progress — which is rest,” Vuong said. “Rest is also a form, and I feel so actively rested reading your work, particularly this book. And Tiana Clark, all I want to say is thank you for writing. Thank you for being. Thank you for sustaining us.”

The Art of Spectatorship: How a Larger Fan Base Can Take Smith Athletics to the Next Level

OLIVIA MENDOZA '27
SPORTS & WELLNESS WRITER

Smith College Athletics is growing in recognition and acclaim. At a time when the global spectatorship of women's sports is on the rise, Smith is stepping up to the plate. Smith's athletic teams are consistently receiving national poll rankings, winning conference championships and making headlines. How can Smith stay on this wave of increased viewership? The answer starts with Smith students and community members.

At the Division III level, Smith Athletics has become more competitive on the court, field and water compared to years past. All Smith varsity sports teams have elevated their level of play,

increasing their winning percentages significantly from previous seasons.

During the 2023-2024 season, all 11 sports teams qualified for postseason contention in the New England Men's and Women's Conference (NEWMAC). Over the past two years, basketball, rowing, track and field, dive and volleyball have advanced to regional and national NCAA competitions, helping put Smith on the map as a leading liberal arts institution in athletic accolades.

Overall accessibility has contributed to the fluctuation of viewership among sports, especially for fans who are unable to attend in person athletic events.

For the beginning of the 2024 fall season,

NEWMAC partnered with FloSports, a sports media company and streaming platform. Under this five-year contract, viewers are required to pay \$29.99 per month or \$150 per year to stream any Smith athletic event. While there is a discounted price for NEWMAC students with an eligible .edu email, it was previously free to watch regular-season or NEWMAC postseason games.

"It is a pay-to-watch service, so that definitely gets a little tough [in terms of viewership]," Assistant Sports Information Director Connor Martin said. "But Smith, in the fall season and in the spring season, has been the most watched team [in the NEWMAC]. Our NEWMAC Championship volleyball game was the most watched event



PHOTO COURTESY OF ELIE PICHANICK '28

in the fall. And then the NEWMAC Championship for basketball, across all NEWMAC teams and all NEWMAC sports.”

While spectatorship at Smith is nowhere near the millions of views large Division I institutions receive, a crowd of dedicated fans is an influential factor in any student-athlete’s performance during competition. However, the playing field isn’t even.

“It all depends on what each person likes to watch,” swimmer Maddie Milla ’27 said. “Swimming, I think, is one of the most exciting sports to watch but not everyone thinks that. It’s a no contact sport, [...] with contact sports I feel like it’s easier because you have team one and team two and they’re going against each other. With swimming [...] it’s hard to tell with lanes and points and who’s doing what event, why they’re doing that event.”

Basketball is undoubtedly the most popular sport on campus, bringing in the largest student-body crowd by a landslide. During the 2024-2025 season, their home opener brought about 500 fans to Ainsworth Gymnasium. Volleyball welcomed 250 fans to their first home game and lacrosse had 75 fans out on the turf to watch them play.

Other teams like field hockey and soccer average between 100 to 155 fans per game throughout their regular season. In the postseason, 750 supporters packed Ainsworth’s stands for basketball’s first round NEWMAC playoff game. 200 fans turned out for volleyball’s game in the same round.

So why does spectatorship vary so much between the sports teams?

Milla noted rising excitement around the sport of swimming on a global scale. While the Olympic Games and World Aquatics Championships bring in millions of views, it is difficult to attract this type of enthusiasm to Dalton Pool.

“With college swimming, it’s mostly dual meets, one team against another. With the Olympics, it’s multiple countries against each other so everyone is just rooting for America, and it’s easy to pick your favorite American swimmer and root for them. [At Smith] we have four Smith swimmers in a six-lane pool. Who do I root for? What’s going on? Why are there multiple swimmers from the same team? I can see how it can be confusing.”

While general appreciation for sports tends to vary among the student body, many teams also face scheduling disadvantages that can impact fan turnout.

Because the NEWMAC has specific timeframes regarding when games can be held, ad-

ministrators note that this affects spectatorship across sports.

“There’s some sports that play at two o’clock in the afternoon, but that’s a lot harder for students to make, especially when it comes to class schedules, activity schedules, compared to a Wednesday night basketball game,” Martin said. “Softball doesn’t have lights on their field so they can’t play past 6:30 p.m. That’s just the way it is.”

While some student-athletes note inclement weather and the distance from central campus to the athletic fields as barriers that could deter larger fan bases, other factors may also contribute to this discrepancy.

An increased in-person fan turnout often correlates with a team’s success, which has taken some sports years to cultivate.

“No one really knew about volleyball just because we were building my freshman year. We [brought in] eleven people and had four returners,” volleyball student-athlete Abby Sweeney ’25 said. “We were historically not a very good program, our records were minimal, and we would be battling for the bottom of the conference.”

“Seeing that change from my first year to my senior year, winning the conference, we really have a larger fan base and people actually come to the games [...] You just will, sadly, only get more love when your team does better.”

“Seeing that change from my first year to my senior year, winning the conference, we really have a larger fan base and people actually come to the games,” Sweeney said. “You just will, sadly, only get more love when your team does better, but we should change that because [if you start supporting] teams early, you’ll see the results later on.”

Social media has become one of the largest ways Smith Athletics shares information with the student body and community members. The Smith Pioneers (@smithpioneers) Instagram account is the hub for all things athletics, posting upcoming events, results, highlight games and interviews with standout athletes.

Sometimes they get things wrong.

“At least for track, we’ve had a big prob-

lem with Smith Pioneers posting things that just aren’t even true about what happened at meets,” track and field student-athlete Kerry Seekamp ’26 said. “It’ll be like, ‘They ran an amazing 4x4,’ and we didn’t even run a 4x4 at the meet. And [the posts will] be pictures that are from years ago of a senior who graduated.”

Smith’s teams often rely on graduate assistants or undergraduate student-athletes to run team social media accounts. With their busy schedules, team social media managers often struggle to produce timely images without administrative support.

“We have a lot of trouble getting the Smith photographer in general to come to any of our events, which is why we use pictures that are three and four years old,” Seekamp said.

The Student Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) has been working to generate greater attention toward all athletics, while the SAAC Board aims to create relationships with the student body to further increase spectator participation.

SAAC Vice President and field hockey student-athlete Gracie Hylton ’27 said the most successful field hockey game in terms of spectator turnout was promoted by the college during the first week of orientation.

“When the hill is completely filled, we really feel that energy and the sideline is much more excited, and when you’re on the field, it feels so much more intense,” Hylton said. “We’re always playing for our teammates, but when the hill is completely filled and everyone is cheering for you, it feels like you’re playing for all of Smith, which we want to be.”

Martin noted the basketball team’s success with viewership due to the program’s community outreach initiatives that foster positive experiences for all generations of sports lovers in the area.

“[Basketball] started the Playmakers Club, so it allows teams to come in and play at halftime, or it allows different kids to do different clinics along the school year,” Martin said. “They also did another club for [adults] and they’re able to step into the huddle with Coach Hersey. They’re able to do all these things that feel like they’re a part of it, and that’s what has helped them succeed.”

Community outreach has been a crucial part of building relationships between fans and players over multiple seasons. Other sports are trying to reach the wider Smith community in creative ways.

An extended version of this article is available online at thesophian.com.

‘We Celebrate Because We Can, but Also Because We Must’: a Bittersweet Celebration on the Quad

SHIRA NATHAN '28
NEWS EDITOR
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Hockey team (who danced with their hockey sticks). The event also supported Safe Passage, a local domestic violence shelter, as well as the Zakat Foundation of America's 1 Million Meals for Gaza.

While in some years the revelry of the event has outweighed the reflection, this year's remarks were more bittersweet. In light of sweeping anti-LGBTQ+ legislation across the country, Smith's recent compliance with new NCAA regulations barring transgender athletes from competition and an incident involving hate speech that occurred on campus early last month, the planning committee emphasized the event's activist origins more heavily, and considered student safety more than usual.

The opening remarks spoke to the increasing precarity of LGBTQ+ rights in the United States. The statements included, "The Trump administration has made us afraid, but tonight is not a night to be afraid, it's a night to be celebrated. And everyone here deserves to be celebrated [...] you will always have a place in our community and at Smith," said members of the committee who asked to remain anonymous.

Aria Ramanathan '25, the chair of COTQ and one of the co-presidents of Emerson house, said, "I wanted to make sure that whatever we were doing, we were doing it in a way that we're continuing to take care of each other and continuing to uplift one another, because we're going into a lot of uncertainty." Celebration is her favorite Smith tradition, as it is for many students. While she understands and appreciates that it's largely adored for its 'fun factor,' she felt it was very important to honor the event's origins, especially now.

"When people are thinking about Celebration, they'll say, 'Oh yeah, the big shake ass event on the quad' But [...] this event is fundamentally rooted in activism [...] It is our job as a student body to continue to stand up for trans people [on and off] campus, no matter what Smith is doing, and to remember our commitment to each

other as a community. That is what Celebration is about," Ramanathan said.

Via Sussman '26, the head of tech for COTQ, agreed that this year's event was more weighty. "We're in a really weird place both on and off campus. This year it felt a lot more bittersweet, in the way that I think it kind of is supposed to...especially in light of Smith's compliance with the NCAA rules," Sussman said. They felt that it was important the committee took the time to acknowledge that, "especially when the college hasn't."

Safety was the number one concern when it came to planning the event, especially following the incident last month in which a local man placed pamphlets full of hate speech in Neilson Library and onto houses with Black Lives Matter banners displayed.

"Other than random weird incidents that would happen, I don't remember ever being as fearful as I was that week," Ramanathan said. That incident contributed to the decision not to advertise the event publicly this year; the committee emailed to students instead of displaying flyers. They also worked with Campus Police to come to a compromise that was respectful to students but also maintained enough safety considerations. The committee members expressed frustration that these precautions were necessary, feeling that it served to reiterate the need for continued resistance.

Sussman said that this year there was a lot more mention of the community beyond Smith, including the students at UMass who have been impacted by the Trump administration's crackdown on student protesting related to the ongoing crisis in Palestine.

Sussman and other committee members shared the feeling that Celebration provides many students an accepting environment. "As somebody who grew up in the South, whose loved ones and myself and a lot of my family are being really impacted by a lot of what's going on, it is so powerful to get to see a collective mourning and also a collective joy [...] I was holding

a lot of my friends from home really close to me during that, and thinking about how excited I am to be in a space with so many other queer people who get to be joyful, and how sad that not everyone gets to experience that." Muyokama echoed their statement, appreciating Celebration as a safe space to perform in community. "I thought about it a lot as I was up there on those steps, like 'wow, when else am I ever going to feel like this and do this?'"

Celebration is the second most attended event of the year, after Convocation. As an entirely student-run event, Celebration provides a space for students to express their opinions separate from the Smith Administration. Amidst the tension between the student body and the administration regarding the best response to the Trump administration's actions, this type of space serves as an outlet for the students while protecting the school from receiving outside criticism. Eva Larson '27, who also worked on the COTQ committee, said, "This is 500 people on the quad cheering about how we don't like the NCAA policy, there's clearly a significant amount of people who disagree with this and I think having that space to resist in a group capacity is really important." All students interviewed expressed frustration about Smith's decision, but also understood that the administration is trying to make decisions with safety in mind.

Most of all, it's clear that Celebration still holds a special place at Smith. Ramanathan said the biggest thing she wanted students to take away was a sense of belonging at Smith. "Not everyone gets to have that when they go home from Smith, or when they graduate, or before they got here [...] being able to come out together even on a chilly night and sit with your friends and watch your peers have fun and laugh is so important."

She hopes that future committees will continue keeping the vigil portion present. "I think that this moment in time has reignited us to remember that we do have to hold each other in grief, and we have to hold each other in celebration," said Ramanathan.

Remembering Smith's First Class of 1875

HAILEY KRUEGER '28 When Smith College's inaugural 14 students entered the college in 1875, higher education for women was considered to be an experiment.

Attending college as a woman in the late 19th century meant delaying the entrance into polite society and the expected roles of wife and mother by four years. Many were concerned that spending extended time away from home among intellectual peers would evoke a feeling of discontent toward domestic life in women.

"It was not suffrage or industry that exercised progressive women, but education, college education like that for men," wrote a member of Smith's first class, Kate Morris, in *The Smith College Monthly*. "We who tried it were the radicals of that time, in the forefront of queer women who did something new."

Smith was not the first women's college in the United States, but former President Laureus Clark Seelye sought to make it unlike any other.

"Let the requirements for admission be determined not by the number of students desired but by the demands of the highest intellectual culture," he stated at his inauguration in July 1875. At that point, only one student had passed Smith's entrance exam.

Smith's goal as an institution was to provide an education that would be equal to those offered to men at colleges like Harvard University and Amherst College.

"We certainly bore a burden from which girls entering college today are relieved," Morris wrote. "Namely, the doubt whether the college was going to be a real college or only a women's college — that is, something inferior to a man's college."

In order to display the seriousness of the institution, Smith required academic achievements similar to those expected at colleges exclusively for men. Among those requirements was an extensive knowledge of mathematics, history, English, Latin and Greek. Only 15 of the students who initially applied to Smith were considered up to its academic standards, hence the small size of the original class.

Despite these high expectations, Smith

was still an up-and-coming college. The campus consisted merely of College Hall, Dewey Hall and the President's House, the first being the only building to stand in its original spot as of 2025.

Morris reminisced on her class's first night at Smith and how it displayed the college's humble beginnings. "It is true we went to bed that first night with candles stuck in potatoes, the college linen got marked 'Smith College' [...] and the housekeeping [...] did not arrive till the second term," she wrote.

According to Morris, all classes were held in a single small room, a grand piano sufficed for the entire music department and, at the start of the school term, the library contained just one volume: Webster's Dictionary.

The number of students, buildings and books grew exponentially from the college's first year, and by 1879, the entering class consisted of over 100 students from a plethora of different states and social classes across the United States.

The first class, though unconventional, has been celebrated throughout the past 150 years as trailblazers with nicknames like "The Seventy-Niners" and the "Immortal Fourteen" or "Immortal Eleven" to reflect the fact that three

members of the original class did not graduate.

Like many Smith graduates since 1875, students from the original class went on to pursue further educational goals and earn distinguished careers.

Five of the original students became teachers at middle and high schools: Mary Bonney, Adelaide Edwards, Mary Adkins, Harriet Palmer, Mary Whiton and Mary Gorham, who was also Smith's first librarian. Harriet Palmer, as well as Henriette Leonard and Julia Gulliver, became accomplished translators. Julia Gulliver also pursued a doctoral degree in philosophy and served as president of Rockford College for 17 years.

Eleanor Cushing and Kate Morris served as presidents of the Alumnae Association for some time, eventually becoming the namesake for Cushing and Morris houses, respectively. Sylvia Spaulding wrote political pieces for *The Woman Citizen*, a suffragist magazine, and Anna Palmer studied music at the Boston Conservatory.

By 1879, when the first class graduated Smith, the *Boston Evening Journal* praised the accomplishments of the student, saying, "Smith College can no longer be called an experiment."



CLASS OF 1879 AT 1929 COMMENCEMENT, COURTESY OF SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Risking My Life for Chili's: A Hate Letter to the Infrastructure of Western Massachusetts

POORVI SARKAR '27 It's 12 degrees outside. In OPINIONS EDITOR

Northampton, that means the only adventure left is a two-hour bus journey to Hampshire College to indulge in the childhood whimsies of the Eric Carle Museum. The only direct bus inevitably leaves at 3 p.m. and gets you there by 4 p.m., just in time for the museum to close at 5 p.m., one hour later. After one hurried hour inside, we found ourselves stranded: The Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA) Bus 39 (the mini one) never showed up, leaving us on the side of an icy roadside without a sidewalk, slowly sliding back into a hill. Deep in Hampshire College's furthest, most desolate bus stop in the middle of the woods, we took whichever bus came next and would get us out of there. Our only salvation? Chili's.

The fast-casual chain restaurant off the highway was our only hope to redeem an otherwise dismal western Massachusetts afternoon. But reaching it meant another labyrinthine trip: the nearest bus stop off the B43 was at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. It was nighttime and no campus buildings were open, so we waited for the only miserly student who was leaving the Isenburg Business building on a Saturday evening and chased him down to sneak into a warm lobby. The next bus was coming in 30 minutes, and so we sat there watching the stock market ticker spin for what felt like hours while our limbs thawed.

The problem isn't that the PVTA bus sys-

tem is inefficient, it's that western Massachusetts was never built for people without cars. Many of the accessible restaurants and stores on the main route out of Northampton, Russell Street, are essentially inaccessible on foot. Even fast-food restaurants here in town are unreachable without a car. In a town with bike lanes, how is it that basic crosswalks are missing? Pedestrians who are trying to cross major intersections must gamble with their lives, all while battling the brutal New England weather.

This issue doesn't just affect students. The PVTA bus system serves a wide range of riders, many of whom rely on it to get to and from work. Along Russell Street, sidewalks come and go, and street lighting is a myth.

This isn't an accident. America's infrastructure was designed to prioritize cars and the automobile industry remains one of the country's most profitable. As I trudged through ice and snow just to get to a restaurant, and then sprinted to catch a bus that inevitably did not show up, of course my only thought was, "God, I wish I had a car." For me, it was just an inconvenient afternoon. For many others, it's a daily reality tied to their livelihoods. In rural and semi-rural areas like western Massachusetts, gaps in transportation aren't just an inconvenience — they pose real dangers for workers, disabled people, and marginalized communities who have few, if any, alternatives.

Adding insult to injury, Smith College is

a tax-exempt institution. Despite Smith's \$90,000 annual tuition, the college doesn't contribute to local, state or federal taxes that might otherwise support better public infrastructure. Instead, millions flow into new administrative buildings on campus while the town's essential systems stagnate. Every college in the Five College Consortium is tax-exempt, not just Smith. Although the PVTA bus system serves all five campuses, none of them contribute directly to its core funding.

Instead, broke college students and western Massachusetts residents are left footing the bill, even as millions of tuition dollars flow into the region every year. While students ride free during the academic year thanks to a Five College subsidy, and recent state programs have temporarily made buses free for everyone, it's still not enough.

Free rides do little to fix the underlying infrastructure problems such as the missing sidewalks, the vanishing crosswalks, the near-total dependence on cars. The money stays locked inside Smith's gates, building more administration complexes, while the town's basic needs are left to weather the storm, sometimes literally.

Is walking a mile in the frigid cold of Northampton's winter worth the Triple Dipper? This is a question I ask myself every time I've exhausted Smith College's eligible weekend activities. Maybe next winter, I'll camp out and watch as my tuition builds another glittering new building I'll never set foot in.

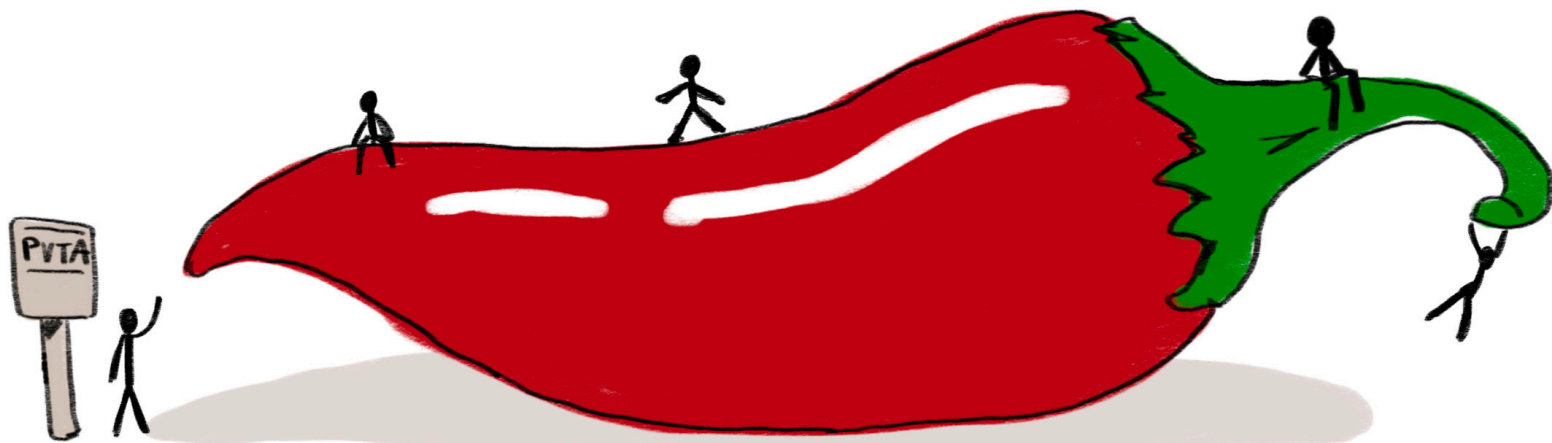


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