

THE SOPHIAN

Nine Years Later: Revisiting Smith's Gender Admissions Policy

CATHERINE NICHOLS '28
NEWS WRITER

As Mount Holyoke College celebrates its tenth anniversary of the change of its gender-based admissions policy, Smith College's policy continues to be a point of contention. Mount Holyoke, a member of both the Five College Consortium and the Seven Sisters, "welcomes applications from female, transgender and nonbinary students" as of 2014.

Since 2015, Smith's admissions policy has allowed for the admittance of "people who identify as women — cis, trans, and non-binary women." Smith requires applicants to check a box affirming that the applicant "understand[s] Smith's admission policy regarding gender identity and [identifies] as a female" on the Common Application, which Admissions uses to review incoming applications. Mount Holyoke does not include the same Common App question and permits students who do not identify as female but feel they belong at a gender-diverse women's college to apply and attend.

As conversations surrounding gender identity at historically women's colleges and in the global community have evolved over the past decade, so have ideas on Smith's policy and how to best account for transgender and nonbinary students at a historically women's college.

"There are feminist reasons for having a women's college," said Davey Shlasko, a Smith college alum, Adjunct Associate Professor of Transgender Studies at the Smith College School of Social Work and Diversity and Social Justice

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PHOTO BY SOPHIA HAYDON-KHAN '25

Younes Rahmoun and the Expanding Here and Now

SOPHIA HAYDON-KHAN '25
ARTS & CULTURE EDITOR
GRYFFYN MAY '27
ASST. ARTS & CULTURE EDITOR

On Aug. 30, visual artist Younes Rahmoun exhibited his largest opening yet, "Here, Now," drawing almost 400 visitors. The pieces sprawl across Smith's campus in four unique locations, ranging from Macleish Field Station to the banks of Paradise Pond to the SCMA galleries. His choice of setting challenges common notions of gallery space, situating himself and his art in both the future, past and present, as well as the North, South, East and West.

Emma Chubb, the Smith College Museum of Art's Curator of Contemporary Art, describes Younes' work as a collaborative, receptive project — not only bringing his work from Morocco to Massachusetts, but forming his pieces in conversation with the Smith campus, including natural spaces, professors, staff and students.

"One of the things that Younes does is he works in a very responsive way, and so all of his work is both rooted in his universe and then in conversation with the places where it goes," said Chubb. "As opposed to just picking up his work

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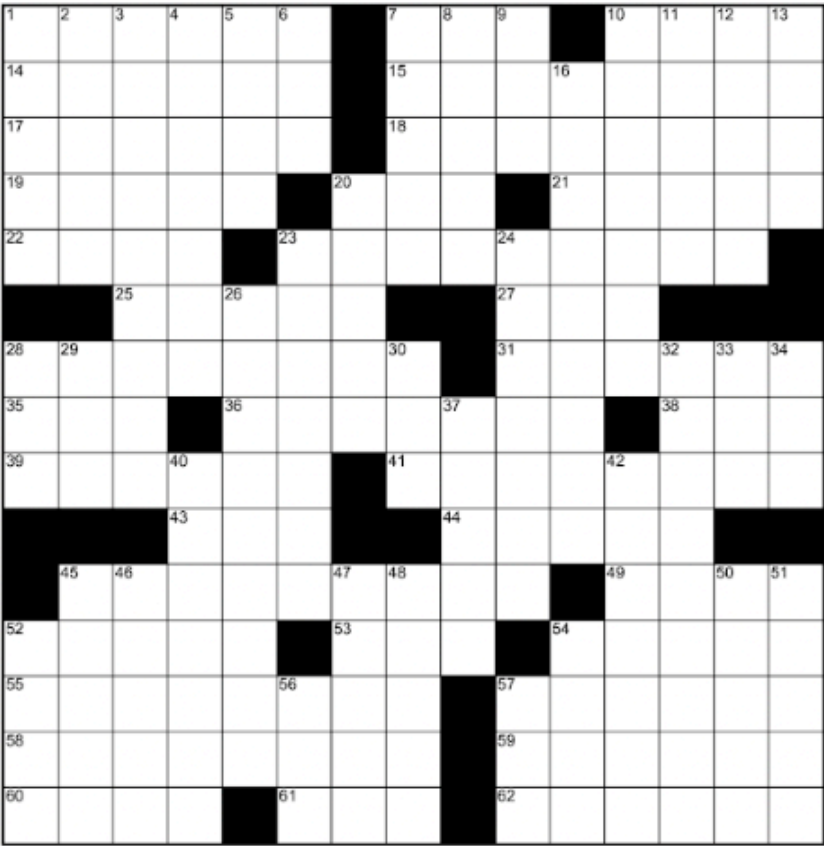
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Campus Map

MAISY HOFFMAN '25
CROSSWORD & GAMES WRITER

- Across:**
1. * MTH, GEO
7. Italian “your”
10. Ms. Smith’s nickname, perhaps
14. ___ wonder
15. * EAL, FRN, SPN
17. Groups of eight
18. Set adrift
19. Princess’s headdress
20. Key next to 30-Down, on a Mac
21. Take back verbally
22. * MUS
23. * BIO, NSC, ENV
25. Up to play
27. Li'l guitar
28. Steeped black drink
31. First first lady
35. Intro class, numerically
36. * ART, ARH, FMS
38. Snitch
39. Finishes with
41. 1,000,000,000,000 binary pieces
43. Brian of music fame
44. Go on, as an evening
45. * AST, PHY, SDS
49. * CHM, CSC, EGR
52. Uproar
53. Extra working hours
54. Epic Greek poet
55. Wildebeest all on its own
57. Brave heroine
58. * Where a 35-Across might be
59. Noah’s craft
60. Tea containers
61. Actress Issa
62. * ENG, HST, SOC



- Down:**
1. Hiking footwear
2. Old Roman coin
3. Tap someone again in a game
4. Thither
5. Small Japanese city
6. Folks without mental differences, in short
7. Opposable digit
8. Us in text
9. Source of withdrawal
10. Smith’s mascot
11. Asteroid discovered in 2003
12. “This Life ___”
13. 1860s American Girl Doll
16. Low quality gold
20. No. to call in LA or SF
23. Audited, as a class
24. A Roman one might be MID
26. Given an award
28. Thanksgiving dessert
29. Long, long time
30. Key next to 20-Across, on a Mac
32. Three terms in math
33. Box or trick starter
34. Mentions on Twitter
37. Cries out
40. Agrees
42. Grammar rule with “i”
45. Beginning of media and variable
46. Sing lowly
47. Anti gun-lobby wish
48. Chopin or Debussy composition
50. Wipe again
51. Sir Francis of piracy
52. Something you might break in the morning
54. Snicker sound
56. Fish with a sharp nose
57. Tom and Sugarloaf

Editorial Statement

Dear Readers:

We, the 2024–25 Editorial Board of The Sophian, are proud to present our October print edition.

As the semester is now in full swing and November approaches, we at The Sophian cannot understate the importance of democracy, integrity and accountability. With the United States presidential election coming up on Nov. 5, we urge our readers to utilize the privilege democracy affords them to make their voices heard at the polls. While voter turnout has improved in the last two presidential elections,

still, only two-thirds of the eligible population voted in the 2020 election.

We recognize the impact that journalism has on democracy, as well as the significant impact of democracy on journalism. We, as the Editorial Board, continue to advocate for truthful reporting and a journalistic standard that upholds the core values of democracy — respect for individuals and their right to make their own decisions, tolerance for differences of opinions and holding honest and fair elections for public office.

For students voting in Northampton, SmithVotes will provide shuttles to the polls at Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School from 12 to 8 p.m. Mail-in ballots need to be postmarked before Nov. 5.

We thank all our readers for their continued support of our publication, and we hope to see you at the polls.

With gratitude,
Isabel Birge '25, Editor-in-Chief
Brooke Chandler '25, Managing Editor

Narcan Trainings, NaloxBoxes and Harm Reduction Bags: The Schacht Center's Newest Wellness

LYDA MARTIN '26
ASST. SPORTS &
WELLNESS EDITOR

Starting in the fall of 2023, the Schacht Center began a program aimed at providing harm reduction resources to Smith students, including Narcan trainings, NaloxBoxes and personalized Harm Reduction bags.

The Schacht Center website defines harm reduction as “policies, programs and practices that decrease risk of overdose for people who use drugs,” while adding that harm reduction “can also extend to interventions that decrease risk in other potentially harmful situations.”

The Schacht Center will host various Narcan Training sessions throughout the academic year, advertised on their Instagram @wellnessatsmith. The first training session took place on Oct. 8 from 4:30 to 4:45 p.m. in room 102 of Neilson Library.

At this session, student Community Health Organizers (CHOs) Maya Jacobs '26 and Naima Masiki '26 gave a short presentation on the history and aims of the harm reduction movement, the impact and prevalence of overdoses in the larger Northampton community and instructions about how to administer Narcan, also known by its generic name naloxone.

The presenters provided free Narcan boxes after the session, each containing two doses and an informational packet written in both English and Spanish. At the free sessions, students can ask CHOs specific questions about the nuances of naloxone administration that are harder to communicate through an informational video.

Free Narcan is also available in the six NaloxBoxes around campus and the Opiate Harm Reduction bags at Schacht. Each Nalox-Box contains a mask for administering rescue breaths, nasal naloxone spray and nasal naloxone administration instructions. The NaloxBoxes, announced on Instagram on Feb. 24, 2024, are placed within the Campus Center, the Alumnae Gymnasium, Tyler Dining Hall, Cutter/Ziskind Dining Hall, King/Scales Dining Hall and outside the Friedman Apartments.



PHOTO BY CIARA MCAULIFFE '26

The Schacht Center's professional staff oversee the Harm Reduction bags program, which is implemented by student CHOs. Students can fill out an anonymous google form to request a bag labeled with their name or with a recognizable anonymous symbol that will be available within a week and can be picked up in the Schacht Center lobby during all open hours. There is no limit to the amount of bags a student can request.

As a movement, harm reduction focuses on preventing opiate overdose deaths, but is also concerned with other situations where harm can be mitigated. Harm reduction provides helpful tools for a wide variety of potentially risky behaviors, like condoms for safe and protected sex and sharps containers to promote sanitary needle use and disposal.

Schacht's current offerings include a Self-Harm Reduction bag (fidget toys, sour candy, rubber bands, red dot stickers, temporary tattoos, a calm strip and a mindful encouragement card), a Nicotine Cessation bag (fidget toys, a starter pack of nicotine gum and quit smoking resource sheets), an Opiate Harm Reduction bag

(fentanyl testing strips, nasal naloxone spray and nasal naloxone instructions), a Contraception bag (latex or non-latex condoms, latex dental dams, lubrication, non-latex internal condoms and/or non-latex gloves) and/or a COVID-19 Harm Reduction bag (KN95s, a saline nasal spray, EmergenC and antimicrobial wipes). On this form, students can also request a sharps container to safely dispose of needles and other sharp objects.

All of the materials provided in Harm Reduction bags are free. When an Opiate Harm Reduction bag is requested, the Schacht Center asks that the student watch a linked video to understand the basics of naloxone interventions and safe administration if they cannot attend the in-person training.

Through the introduction of Narcan training sessions, NaloxBoxes and the Harm Reduction bag system, the Schacht center aims to create an informed and well-equipped student body where Smithies are better prepared to take care of themselves, each other and the broader Northampton community.

Off For a Picnic In Our Sport Clothes: A History of Mountain Day Traditions

AURORA BAGLEY '26
FEATURES WRITER

Oct. 1, 2024

marked 137 years of Smith's much loved, highly anticipated Mountain Day. Throughout the weeks prior, Smithies speculated about the day the Wilson Bells would wake them up, signaling their day off. After an unsuccessful Sept. 23 Quad Riot, where students rallied together to urge President Sarah Willie-LeBreton to hold Mountain Day the next morning, the entire campus let out a sigh of relief when the long-awaited bells finally rang.

Every year, Smith College's Mountain Day comes as a surprise to the student body, a day when the President of the College cancels classes on a beautiful autumn day. Students celebrate by enjoying apple-flavored treats on Chapin Lawn, then partaking in various fall activities, such as apple picking, hiking, baking or simply taking a much-needed day off from classes. Mountain Day remains one of the most cherished traditions on campus, with many alums around the world continuing their own celebrations of the day after their time on campus.

Despite this deep love for a long, famous tradition, various aspects of the day continue to change over the years. Notably, this year and last, the College has stopped providing transportation to local orchards, instead bringing apples to the Houses to continue the day's connection to the fall fruit.

While these minor changes are often met with feelings of loss for tradition, a look into the Smith College archives shows that despite a lengthy 137-year history, Mountain Day has remained largely unchanged.

The very first Mountain Day, Oct. 6, 1877, saw 19 Smithies climb to the top of Mount Nonotuck to dine and relax while enjoying the Western Massachusetts views from over 800 feet above the Pioneer Valley. From then on, generations of Smithies would make similar journeys off campus, following in the footsteps of their '77 predecessors.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF SMITH COLLEGE ARCHIVES

Photos as early as 1882 show women in floor-length skirts skipping across logs over Whately Glen, some hiking up their skirts to wade in the water — a scandalous sight at the time. Others opted to hop into horse-drawn carriages to ride off to Deerfield, Greenfield, Mt. Sugar Loaf, Chesterfield, Mt. Holyoke, or Mt. Tom, while some groups chose to picnic in the woods with College-made boxed lunches.

As the decades changed, particularly around the turn of the century, so too did the way students celebrated Mountain Day; yet, the day did not lose its roots. Rather than climbing into horse drawn buggies, students piled into trailer beds, making their way to mountains to hike, dine, picnic or simply lounge around.

As transportation improved, Smithies went farther from campus, able to travel all the way to New Haven or Cambridge to spend the day away from a deserted campus.

“The very first Mountain Day, Oct. 6, 1877, saw 19 Smithies climb to the top of Mount Nonotuck to dine and relax while enjoying the Western Massachusetts views from over 800 feet above the Pioneer Valley.”

Even when the dreaded rainy Mountain Day came every once in a while, students made the most of the day, donning rain boots and coats to ascend the many hiking trails that surround the College on foot or by bicycle, often with the help of the Outing Club.

Mountain Day remains one of the most well-loved Smith College traditions to date. Despite remaining a part of the College’s history for nearly two centuries, surprisingly very little has changed about the day. While small changes, from clothing to modes of transportation to house names, occur over the years, the spirit of Mountain Day is alive and well throughout the student body.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF SMITH COLLEGE ARCHIVES

Nine Years Later: Revisiting Smith's Gender Admissions Policy

KATHERINE NICHOLS '28 Consultant at Think
NEWS WRITER

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is to create opportunities for people who would otherwise be excluded from higher education because of their gender — that includes everyone who identifies or lives as women, and it also includes anyone who was assigned female at birth.”

“I think Mount Holyoke’s policy is much more clearly aligned with feminist values and feminist reasons for having women’s education at all than Smith’s is,” he added.

Smith changed its admissions policy in 2015 to broaden access for transgender women — which it has successfully done.

A policy study group was created in late 2014, and after months of research and discussion, it presented the Board of Trustees with two proposals in April of 2015. The first was to make eligible any applicant who was assigned female at birth, as well as any applicant who identified as a woman at the time of applying. The second option, which the board chose to adopt, was to make eligible anyone who lived or identified as a woman at the time of application — including transgender women, but not nonbinary or transmasculine people who were assigned female at birth.

This policy was meant to uphold Smith’s mission as a women’s college by “consider[ing] for admission only those woman-identified individuals who seek entrance into a community dedicated to educating women of promise,” according to the report made by the study group.

“In my mind, this is an accessibility issue,” said Margot Audero ’26. As a Gold Key student, Audero meets many prospective students, including “transmasculine people who really feel that, even though Smith has a reputation as a historically women’s college, as fellow gender minorities, they could really thrive here.”

Shlasko added that having access to information about gender identity is not universal and could impact accessibility in applying to Smith. “If you grew up in a community where

you didn’t have access to open and expansive conversations about gender, then you might identify differently with these words just because of what they mean in that place,” she said.

When asked to comment on how diversity and inclusion play out through the admissions policy, Smith’s Admissions Office stated that “they adhere to the policy as adopted in 2015” and declined to comment further.

The 2015 policy announcement included a caveat that the school would continue to use gendered language and she/her/hers pronouns on the website and in official announcements. Audero is also Co-President of Smith’s Trans and Nonbinary Alliance, and has spoken with students about the impact of gendered language and policy on campus. “The issue isn’t just in the policy,” she said. “It’s this cultural perception of the Smith student body as one that only includes women.”

Although altering the admissions policy could encourage more inclusivity at Smith, it could also open the college to potential legal trouble.

“We have a legal framework to allow for colleges that only accept women, but we don’t have a legal framework for colleges that accept gender minorities,” Audero said. “There’s

fear that if we adopted a policy more similar to Mount Holyoke’s, we could be open to a lawsuit from a cis guy who says ‘Aren’t you co-ed? Why aren’t you letting me in?’”

Mount Holyoke College has not faced any lawsuit of this kind over the past 10 years of allowing entry to transgender men.

Of the Seven Sisters, Mount Holyoke’s policy is the most gender-inclusive. Bryn Mawr College allows for nonbinary students and transgender men to apply, so long as they have not undergone medical or legal transition. Barnard and Wellesley have policies that are similar to Smith’s, requiring applicants to identify and live as women. Sweet Briar, a small women’s college in Virginia, allows for only cisgender women applicants as of August 2024, making it one of the most conservative modern policies among HWCs. Conversely, Agnes Scott College in Georgia has allowed transgender men and nonbinary students to apply since 2011.

Both Shlasko and Audero stated that they would like to see Smith adopt a policy more aligned with Mount Holyoke’s.

“I think we’d be more true to Smith’s mission by allowing all gender minorities to attend the school,” said Audero.



PHOTO BY CIARA MCAULIFFE '26

Younes Rahmoun and the Expanding Here and Now

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specifically one surrounded by nature, allowed Rahmoun's art to interact with multiple aspects of the living world — both people and the earth itself.

"He was excited about that opportunity — he often will make exhibitions that have multiple locations, so that was the impetus for having it unfold in seven places — depending on how you count," said Chubb. "There's four on the map, but three of those are embedded in the museum. The pieces ask visitors to come and move through different spaces."

and this context together."

Bringing his pieces to a college campus,

The exhibition at the botanic garden displays a circular projection on a blank wall of a completely dark room. Headphones play a soundtrack that goes with the projection, which is a looped slideshow depicting progressing sketches of a seed hatching and growing. The quiet, dark room created an overwhelming sense of peace and stillness, a feeling that was soon contrasted by the eerie-sounding music played over the headphones.

The slideshow showed the growth of a seed that seemed to point to the cycles of life and growth. However, the ever-intensifying music and the plant's eventual overtaking of the entire screen also created an uneasy feeling in the viewer. Ultimately, not only did the piece speak to the concepts of birth and growth, but it also

left the viewer with a consideration of the cycles of life and death.

"Chajara-Tupelo" sits at the edge of Paradise Pond. The tree planted in 2019 is now not more than a few feet tall. In contrast with the exhibition at the botanic garden, which displays a progression of sketches of a seed growing into a plant, this exhibit provides a tangible version of that process, one that will continue to change, grow and remain a part of the earth for years to come.

"In today's fast-paced, internet-centered society, Rahmoun's work, which grounds his viewers in the real world, is all the more relevant."

The choice of setting, next to the pond, draws attention to how art interacts with nature and challenges traditional ideas of art settings, particularly the white cube gallery style. The white cube, which characterizes many art galleries today, uses blank white walls arranged in a square or rectangle, with a light source usually emanating from the ceiling. The idea behind this commonly used gallery style was to essentially block out everything other than the art, leaving the artwork as the sole focus of the viewer. However, by creating a piece that not only interacts with, but is also a part of the natural world, Rahmoun challenges his viewers to consider his piece in harmony with its setting.

In today's fast-paced, internet-centered society, Rahmoun's work, which grounds his viewers in the real world, is all the more relevant. By creating a space that invites people to appreciate the world around them, Rahmoun's exhibits provide a rare yet vital opportunity to slow down and let go of everyday distractions.

"I think for him, often his process is one that takes a kind of meditative quality and a way of being present with himself and with the here and now."



PHOTO BY SOPHIA HAYDON-KHAN '25

What Smith Doesn't Understand About Diversity

POORVI SARKAR '27
CROSSWORD & GAMES
EDITOR

What does true
diversity look like in
an era of systemic

inequality? At a recent Smith College training conference, I encountered a reminder of the work that still lies ahead. The conference focused on refining our leadership skills, but what struck me as most compelling was the presentation of a “power wheel” that ranked marginalized identities based on their proximity to power. This graphic illustrated a profoundly outdated and two-dimensional understanding of diversity, reducing complex experiences to a hierarchy defined by race, class, sexuality and more.

The wheel consisted of categories such as “religion,” where “Christianity” was placed at the top, signifying the closest proximity to power, while “non-Christian” identities were relegated to lower tiers. This is a reductive framework for understanding marginalized identities, and it is hard to believe that Smith would truly endorse such an antiquated perspective on identity and power dynamics, as it contradicts the values of inclusivity and equity that our institution claims to uphold.

Once, it seemed that Smith's veins pulsed with activism and was positioned at the forefront of progress. However, that legacy has not carried into the present day. The institution's self-perception of DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) is only reflected in its verbal commitments to inclusivity, yet it often falls short when it comes to meaningful action. While students are encouraged to consider how our identities inform our leadership roles, Smith, like many predominantly white institutions, remains willfully uninformed about what diversity truly means today.

Smith's commitment to diversity is not in vain, however. While a noble effort is made, the issue is that Smith caters this education to its majority audience — white, privileged students. While it is understandable to want to educate an ignorant population, this effort neglects students of color's education. Why do students of color have to suffer at the expense of their white peers?



PHOTO BY CIARA MCAULIFFE '26

How is that an equitable educational experience?

Student training should focus on empowering student leaders to extend empathy to others, regardless of their political identity or proximity to power. Our approach to wielding influence must prioritize empathy and inclusivity rather than a game of identity politics. An overemphasis on who is the most marginalized hinders progress both within the Smith community and in society at large.

When asked how I would reinforce DEI in my leadership, it surprised some when I stated I would not place “identity” at the forefront of my strategy. While my identity informs my perspective, it should not monopolize the discourse, especially at the expense of students of color. Not to mince words, it is crucial to respect and acknowledge our differences. However, our identities, both visible and non-visible, should not be at the forefront of our interactions. Reducing people to their “marginalized” identities only reinforces their marginalization.

Take Justice Kentanji Brown-Jackson's nomination by President Joe Biden, who emphasized her status as the “first Black woman ever

named to the United States Supreme Court.” In doing so, he promptly reduced Jackson to her racial identity. Her Blackness may have informed her life experiences, but it does not and should not trump the achievements that led her to become Supreme Court Justice. Jackson is extremely qualified and successful; meanwhile, Brett Kavanaugh, an alleged rapist, lied his way through a corrupt trial and still holds the same position as Justice Brown-Jackson. This raises a critical question: why are people of color and other minorities often viewed solely through their “politicized” identities?

This prevailing approach to “diversity” often panders to white audiences, perpetuating the marginalization of minorities within our institution. Instead, we should lead with informed respect, but what is the solution when this informing proves inequitable? This is not an excuse or justification for ignorance. Lack of knowledge should be treated with respectful inquisition. Smithies are supposedly educated and intelligent individuals — let's set the bar higher and strive for a more profound understanding of diversity that truly uplifts all voices.