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THE SOPHIAN

Smith College's Independent Student Press

PHOTO BY MARIAM HABIB '25J

Editorial

This print edition of The Sophian is dedicated to Jane Brinkley, a dear friend.

THE EDITORIAL BOARD

We, the members of the 2021-2022 Editorial Board of The Sophian, are proud to present this as our final print issue before the transition to the next board. Those of us who are seniors are especially sad to be leaving an organization that has meant so much to us, but look forward to what comes next, and have every confidence that we leave the paper in the best possible hands.

During our time, we have seen The Sophian's readership increase immensely, grown our social media presence, created a radio show and new podcasts, started a weekly newsletter, a Translations Issue and revamped our website. We also now get to see students donning Sophian tote bags on their way to class. Through The Sophian, we have gained a deeper appreciation for and connection to the community here at Smith that has become our home these last four years.

We want to thank the board that came before us, who helped guide us through writing our first articles as first years, and the support we have received from our communities both on and off campus. We are grateful to have been a part of The Sophian's journey.

We are so excited to see what the next board after us accomplishes, and to continue rooting for The Sophian as alums, and we are honored for The Sophian to be part of the formation of the new Journalism Concentration at Smith, which will begin being offered Fall 2022. While we as seniors won't get to take advantage of this, we're so glad to see other Smithies getting this opportunity to learn more about the important field of journalism.

With gratitude,
Mikayla Patel
Bella Levavi
Sadie Buerker

This Issue

Smith's Financial Report

NAOMI SCULLY-BRISTOL '25
NEWS WRITER

When the Covid-19 pandemic began in 2020, it marked the beginning of a period of upheaval for college finances. Stock markets plunged and students left campus, leading to a loss in revenue that forced many schools to implement cost cutting measures and find money from other sources.

Over the 2020 fiscal year, Smith's endowment decreased by $6 million. Yet in the 2021 financial year, the endowment grew by a substantial half billion dollars, growth of about 34% from what it had been in fiscal year 2020. So what is behind this growth of Smith's new $2.5 billion endowment?

The endowment

A college's endowment is money held in a variety of funds, some of which is used to pay for operating expenses and some of which is reinvested to continue its own growth. Money is raised for the endowment primarily through investments and donations.

Smith's endowment decreased by about $6 million from 2019 to 2020, likely due to the college going remote and the drop in the stock market caused by COVID-19.

The endowment's subsequent positive growth in the 2021 fiscal year came during a banner year for college and university endowments across the country. Bloomberg News reported that it was the strongest year for college endowments since 1986 as stocks and other investments surged.

Over the 2021 fiscal year, Smith also made the choice to move endowment management in-house. Previously, a firm called Investiture had managed Smith's endowment, deciding how to invest money and grow the endowment. Under Investiture, which Smith has used since 2004, the endowment grew from $900 million to around $2 billion. In a letter to the community, President McCarthy and Alison Overseth, Chair of the Board of Trustees, noted that moving the endowment management will allow the college to have more control over its investment strategies.

Successful fundraising efforts have also contributed to this growth. During the 2021 fiscal year, an anonymous alumna donated $50 million, the largest single gift in Smith's history. The alumna designated that $40 million of her contribution should go towards financial aid.

Smith's endowment per student is now estimated to be about $1 million. The endowment, combined with other assets, has grown significantly over the last decade. The Board of Trustees and President McCartney had been working on ways to enhance financial aid packages in light of this increase. The alumna's donation and the larger endowment, inspired them to think bigger, and this fall they announced that the college would eliminate loans from financial aid packages and replace them with grants.

Impact

During the pandemic, Smith lost revenue and chose to use strategic reserves to recoup it rather than dipping into the endowment. The college also furloughed and laid off staff members, along with instituting a hiring freeze and budget reductions.

"They're always like 'the endowment is a rainy-day fund, all of that money needs to be used when it's really needed,'" said a Divest Smith College member who sits on the Advisory Committee for Investor Responsibility of the Board of Trustees and prefers to remain unnamed, "and there was never a greater need than when the pandemic happened and Smith laid off a ton of people."

Smith's lack of financial support for staff was a matter of frustration for many at the college. When people were first furloughed, there was a significant delay in their ability to receive unemployment benefits. Because of this, a group of faculty organized a mutual aid fund that collected donations to distribute to furloughed staff who needed it.

"It really helped people get over that hump, and at the very least be able to get groceries. It was an extraordinary experience to be a part of that," said Jennifer Guglielmo, a history professor who helped create the fund.

"I think that the college could have done a better job at helping staff with applying for unemployment, though they did the best they could, honestly. I think HR was inundated. It was hard — nobody was prepared for what the pandemic asked of everybody, but you like to think that the college could be flexible enough to adapt and support its staff at such a time," Guglielmo added.

Smith can draw from the endowment to support operating costs, but some would also like to investigate where this money is coming from in the first place. Divest Smith College is a group that advocates for Smith to stop investing in the fossil fuel industry, as well as looking into possible investments in private prisons and other industries they feel do not align with the community's values. They have persuaded Smith to commit to divesting from fossil fuels, but the shift has yet to occur.

It is hard to determine what Smith is investing in to grow the endowment. When it was managed by Investiture, knowledge of the substance of investments was largely unavailable to the public. There is hope that by moving the endowment management in-house, the ambiguity of Smith's investments will decrease.

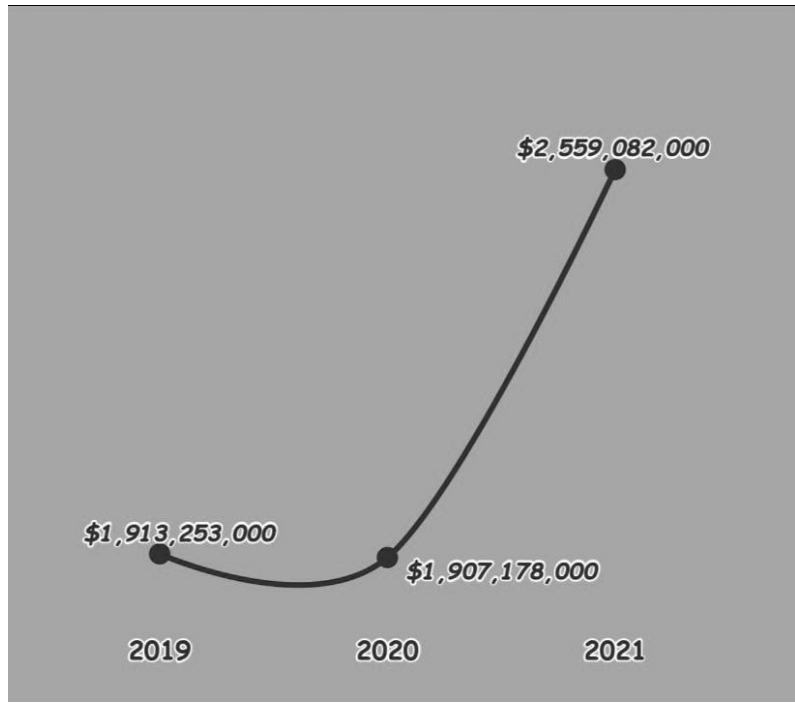
"I think the goal has always been transparency, because it's so much money and it gets, probably if you ask a lot of the students, misspent," said the anonymous Divest member, "like yes, this library is nice, but houses are falling apart. This move to be in-house should be able to give us more transparency because everyone in the office should know what's going on at least to some capacity."

Moving forward

Smith's endowment growth of 34% in the 2021 fiscal year is impressive when compared to the median return of 27% for US college endowments. Yet when looking at endowment funds of over $500 million, generally those of elite colleges and universities, and their median gain of 34%, Smith was average.

This divide is symptomatic of a larger phenomena in higher education, a divide between "elite" schools and others in wealth, influence and power. Smith is on one side of that divide; it has the $1 million per student and the ability to replace loans with grants that non-"elite" schools, which educate the majority of the country, do not. This leaves people wondering: what is the best way to use this money—this gift and privilege that the college has?

"You can't have this big sustainability project and then also be investing in fossil fuels," said the Divest member. "This is our college, the endowment is part of that, and it should reflect the goals and the ideals of the community." ■



Hijabis at Smith

KYLIN GAO ’25
FEATURES WRITER

A hijab is a veil worn by some Muslim women in the presence of men outside of their immediate family, according to Encylopedia of Islam. A hijabi is a woman who wears a hijab. According to the ACLU, in 2006, 69% of women who wore hijab reported at least one incident of discrimination compared to 29% of women who did not wear hijab. In February, 2021, The National Assembly of France banned the wearing of hijabs for women under 18 while in public. In response, people protested through #handsoffmyhijab.

“Some people treat me with respect. Whenever I would stand in the line, people would not come so close, especially guys, in a modest way,” Ramsha Rauf ’25 said. “I enjoy it,” she added. Rauf said this was not always the case. When Rauf first arrived at Huston, Texas, from a majority Muslim community in Mozambique, she stopped wearing hijab for a year because she thought she would be bullied for wearing hijab in public. She now wears a hijab every day. “Whenever I see other hijabis walking around, we instantly say salaam, which is saying hello.” She said the presence of hijabis makes her feep the solidarity within their community.

Muneera Alshagawi ’24 from Saudi Arabia said that she was surprised by the number of hijabis on campus. “It was very nice to have the Muslim Student Organization. It’s a place to find my own people and feel accepted,” Alshagawi said, wearing a pair of light blue mom-jeans, a knitted white cardigan and anoff-white hijab. However, the aspiring architect recalled encountering a man on Chapin Lawn, who called her hijab a “hat.” “I was thinking, like, ‘really? After everything, you must know that this is a hijab,’” she said.

RAMSHA RAUF ’25

Rauf said that her experience in Northampton has mostly been very positive, but she remembers one particular encounter. She and her friends were walking to CVS after dark, and talking about texting—when they walked by a man sitting under a building, who Rauf said probably misheard as “Texas.”

While they passed by, he said, “there is no Texas, assholes like you blew it up.” Rauf didn’t turn back because he wasn’t sitting under the building anymore. She heard someone walking behind her and thought that he had come out onto the sidewalk. “I didn’t have the courage to look back. I don’t know if it was him or somebody else. But I did hear somebody walking.” She recalled having a hoodie on, so it was hard for anyone to identify her hijab. She believed the man must have seen her face before she walked past him. “I get scared because I’m alone here. I don’t have anyone with me. So it’s like part of me feels weak,” she said, “given the situation, anyone would be a bit scared.”

“Sometimes I get a vibe from people where it’s like they’re totally being racist in their

PHOTOS BY SHERRY LI ’25

head right now," said Leila, a hijabi who chose not to use her real name. "But I wouldn't say that I've had someone shout racist things to me," she added. Alshagawi also recalls more subtle reactions that she got from other students seeing her wearing a hijab. "No one says anything or does anything, but you just get that feeling when someone's communicating with you that they're not very accepting of you wearing a hijab," said Alshagawi. She doesn't think it's because the students dislike her, but feels that "they just have a problem with the idea of the hijab."

Leila, who also identifies as queer, said that dating is difficult for her because she wears a hijab. "Sometimes I will be kind of interested in another girl. I don't want to approach them because I think it would be too much of a divide for them," said Leila. "At the same time, I think people don't see me like that because I wear the hijab. I've experienced that throughout my life." Leila said that her Muslim identity sometimes inhibited people from the queer community from connecting with her. On the other hand, Leila isn't sure if she would be accepted in the Muslim community if she were to come out.

"A lot of the Muslim community here at Smith are very nice," Leila said, "but at the same time, there's always that inkling of 'if I tell them that I'm gay, will that change how they see me? Are they going to think of me differently because of that?'"

Leila said that she wants people to see them as open-minded people, but she also doesn't want to wear her hijab as part of "an aesthetic."

To Leila, her decision to wear a hijab has both personal and historical roots. "A lot of people are uncomfortable with the way they look at your physical body and make judgments and opinions about it. I think the hijab is very good protection against that," said Leila. But wearing the hijab also has a symbolism beyond her experience. Leila said that she is very aware of how hijab has been used as an instrument to control how women look, "whether it be forcing women to wear a hijab or forcing them not to wear a hijab. that I have the choice to wear what I want, I'm going to wear what I want, and what I want to wear is a hijab."

Alshagawi said that she wears the hijab because of her religion. "I feel closer to God because I feel like I'm doing the right thing," said Alshagawi, who started wearing hijab in seventh grade. Alshagawi said that although wearing a hijab feels right to her, this is not the case for everyone. She said there is a popular myth that women who don't wear their hijabs are not faithful to the religion or don't follow the religious teachings. She said that is not true at all. "There are a lot of people that I know who do not wear hijab, and they're more religious than me," Alshagawi said, "people who I've seen that take off the Hijab were wearing it for the wrong reasons, like wearing it to please their mom or parents, for example, but they don't feel it in their heart."

Rauf said that being a hijabi means being more aware of her actions. "Whatever I do, hijab makes me think twice—this is not just representing who I am, it's representing my religion. I feel like it helps me be a better person," said Rauf. She said movies' portrayal of Muslims also made wearing hijab important to her. "When you're the few people who they interact with, I want them to have a different impression of what Islam is than is portrayed in movies."

"I have the choice to wear what I want, I'm going to wear what I want, and what I want to wear is a hijab."

MUNEERA ALSHAGAWI '25J

Leila urged Smith students not to judge people on their hijab or their religion. "Don't let what people look like in your preconceived notions get in the way of actually getting to know them." ■

Interview with Boy Harsher

MOLLY HART '24J
ARTS EDITOR

From their two-bedroom house in rural Massachusetts, darkwave band Boy Harsher pushes the boundaries of experimental music. The Florence-based duo, Jae Matthews and Augustus "Gus" Miller, are the most high-profile band in the local DIY scene. With over 500,000 monthly listeners on Spotify, an upcoming global tour and quickly sold-out shows at local venues, Boy Harsher seems about ready to outgrow the Pioneer Valley.

Since forming in 2013, the band has released three EPs and two full-length albums, and most recently, written, directed and produced "The Runner," a 40-minute short film with their own original soundtrack. I met with Boy Harsher at The Roost in Northampton to discuss "The Runner," making music and their life together in the Pioneer Valley.

Disclaimer: These sections have been pulled out from a longer interview. The full interview is available online, on thesophian.com. This interview has been lightly edited for brevity and clarity.

When you guys sit down to start a project together, what does that look like?

Gus Miller: It's pretty chaotic, normally. ["The Runner"] wasn't a normal album at all—it was very much a COVID album. We both weren't feeling incredibly creative, or motivated, really, because we write our music for live shows. That's where we picture the music existing. So having clubs closed changed the meaning of being a band. The songs were kind of different. I had more of these score-y songs, and then more of the poppy songs with vocal features, and we were just looking for a way to tie them all together. That's where the movie idea came from.

Jae Matthews: Yeah, I mean it feels tacky to say "pre-COVID," but a lot of the ideas we'd get pre-COVID would begin with one of us being like, "I really want to do this," and pushing it until the other gave in. This project is different because we were synchronous in our want to make the film. We thought that the first collection of songs would be a soundtrack for a non-existent film. And so we were coming up with these fantasy ideas for thuis film. And then we were like, wait a minute. Let's just make it. We can do it, we're never gonna tour again. And so we did it.

What advice would you have for a young person who wanted to get into the music scene?

GM: I think you just surround yourself with it. We started out just booking house shows, and I was making music as a hobby, but it was something I loved. So I started helping other people out with booking shows, shooting music videos, any way I could get my hands in it. And then we were around long enough, and we got some openings. I think if you love something and you want to get involved in it, you just need to completely surround yourself with it.

I mean, I think what this area needs is someone throwing more events. I feel like if someone stepped up and started a space, whether it be DIY or official, and started booking shows and facilitating, that would open a lot of doors.

JM: Gus is originally from Conway, which is right around here. So you had this opportunity to go to a lot more house shows.

GM: I didn't really go to house shows; I would go to Pearl Street and Iron Horse when I was in high school. It used to be crazy around here. There were so many more concerts.

What do you think the next step for experimental or noise music might be?

JM: I don't know. I do feel like I've seen so much of it. There's probably a whole conversation to be had about virtual worlds that I don't know about and can't comment on.

GM: Speaking of what we were just working on, I feel like movie albums—now shows—are a little bit more uncertain, and now people know what life is like without shows. Having this visual element to an album is something that people want to explore. Now you have this other entity, this other way to perform. Especially because musicians are becoming more multi-media now, anyways. You're not just a band anymore; you're a designer, you're a director, you have to do everything. So I think there's all of these musicians who are talented and have the power to expand from music.

You two have known each other for a long time. How would you say you've seen each other grow as individuals, as individual artists, and as a group?

GM: That's cute. When we first started, Jae had never really played music before. She had a natural talent for singing and writing lyrics, and I think she's really coming into that, since we started.

JM: I had severe stage fright.

GM: We started out, we'd be playing on the ground. I'd be kneeling down and Jae was kneeling down, like we wanted no interaction from the audience.

JM: Hiding, yeah.

GM: And now, we play at festivals for thousands of people, on huge stages. Jae can harness that energy and translate it.

JM: It's so scary, though.

GM: I'm just really impressed with how she's been able to grow with the project and lead the energy.

JM: Aw, thanks. I think one thing that hasn't changed, but maybe you've gotten even better at it, is this tireless work ethic. I'm one who's like, fuck it, I'm gonna go out and drink with friends, or eat some food––I'm just a highly social person. And often I'll put my work off to the last possible minute. Meanwhile, Gus is like, "No, actually, I'd rather stay home and just play this one note on my synth for four hours and figure out if it's even worth making a song out of." That's a big part of the reason why Boy Harsher is even a thing. Because of Gus' natural ability to create work.

Maybe you were a little more grubby though, when I met you in Savannah. Gus never really had a stable living situation. He lived in my attic, he lived in a gallery with a sulfur-water shower.

GM: So I've just become more of a gentleman. You've "My Fair Lady"-ied me. [Both laugh]

JM: I don't know about "My Fair Lady." But it is true that your immaculate work ethic and drive haven't changed. If anything it's gotten stronger. Really small things make you be like, "Okay, now I'm gonna push harder", where I would've given up a long time ago.

GM: Thank you.
JM: He can't take a compliment, though.

That's very sweet. How do you communicate and balance being creative and romantic partners?
JM: I think any couple and business partner relationship, anyone within both relationships, will agree that it's difficult. It's like "Pet Sematary, "A man's heart is stonier." What garden you tend to, what garden you sow—I always butcher that speech by what's-his-name—whatever garden you sow will be the one that flourishes. So I've felt there have been times where everything has been about Boy Harsher, and taking care of it, and making sure it's thriving. And those are the times when I feel the furthest away from my romantic relationship. And then vice versa. But I also think that during the times that are vice versa, when Gus and I are like, we're a couple and we're gonna function, those are also the times when we're the most free and creative. We did a classic escape where we freaked out when the shows got canceled and were just bummed, so we drove straight to Everglade City in Florida. It's a super isolated town. It was just this fun moment where we were like, "Oh, we really like being around one another." We were just writing stories together and singing in the car.

What do you love and not love about living in this area?
JM: It's a hard question to ask in winter, as someone who's so temperature-driven. But I do love that we live in this really quiet, teeny little neighborhood. So I can walk bare and just completely zone out because there's no cars that pass. I'm really sensitive to sound and I get really irritable—it's some psychotic thing I think I have. But our house is the craziest type of location: two dead ends connected by the world's smallest street, and we live on that street.
I hate cities, and I don't think I could ever live in one. It's overwhelming to me to be in a box and be aware of someone in the box next to me. I love that we are able to experience a very quiet life.
GM: Then I also feel like we get a bit of FOMO.
JM: Oh, my God, yeah. And everytime we go to LA, we're like, wow, you guys can eat dinner after 8:00 PM? On a fucking Monday?
GM: There's more going on, more connections happening, and I do feel like we are missing out a little bit.

PHOTO COURTESY OF BOY HARSHER

Which spots around Northampton do you like to go to?
JM: We only go to one restaurant around here, and it's Joe's. It's the best. There aren't many options, but Joe's is beloved.
GM: Miss Flo's diner, also.You can rely on them. It's a real steady place for eggs.
JM: Except on Wednesdays.
GM: It's a real thing I appreciate. Every other place around here is closed on a Sunday or Monday. But they're like, no, Wednesdays.
Would you consider playing a show at Smith?
GM: Maybe. Playing college shows is basically like being a quesadilla bar. Students wander by in their pajamas and stop for a couple minutes on their way somewhere else. ■

How Smith Perpetuates Toxic Diet Culture

ISABEL BIRGE '25
OPINIONS EDITOR

Trigger warning: This article contains discussion of eating disorders, dieting, and fatphobia that some readers may find distressing.

I was waiting in line for breakfast when I overheard two nearby students' small talk. Hello's had barely been exchanged before the conversation strayed to diet and weight. One student mused about the "healthy" options in the newly opened Northrop-Gillett dining hall. The other expressed their gratitude for these lower-calorie options and their frustration with the weight they'd apparently gained over the holidays.

This pissed me off, to say the least. There we all were, just trying to fuel up for the day, and now calories were being talked about as if they were a moral issue.

The more I thought about this, though, I realized this was not an isolated incident, but a reflection of the pervasiveness of diet culture at Smith. While I certainly don't blame these individuals for their private conversation, it saddens me to see how we're conditioned to prize the aesthetics of our bodies. Diet culture is everywhere; there are glaring examples like photoshopped advertisements in magazines, but diet culture manifests in subtler ways too. We rarely stop to think about how these messages permeate our everyday interactions, like in the aforementioned conversation, even at "woke" Smith College.

Students frequently talk about weight and diet—often over meals, ironically—and many of us don't think to question the normalcy of it, or are even consciously aware that we're participating in it. But what may seem like a benign conversation topic to some is actually harmful to others. We're all college students studying fascinating things; find something else to talk about.

Eating disorders are prevalent on college campuses, especially among students of color and queer students. Transgender students, for example, experience disordered eating behaviors at four times the rate of their cisgender classmates. Despite these statistics, the cultural narrative of eating disorders centers around the image of a thin, white, cisgender heterosexual adolescent or young adult woman with anorexia. For individuals who don't fit into these categories, eating disorders often go undetected and untreated.

Eating disorders thrive in high-pressure environments. At Smith, where academic intensity and a large LGBTQ+ demographic come together, the susceptibility to disordered eating is disproportionately high. With a student population that is statistically at an increased risk of these problems, Smith should have a multitude of resources at students' disposal. After perusing the Schacht Center's website, I found that although there is a registered dietitian on staff, students need a medical referral in order to get an appointment, and the availability of these services are not well advertised. What you can find on the website includes some troubling language.

Food is listed among the various "Wholeness Topics" on the website. I was astounded that instead of adopting an "all foods fit" mentality (which emphasizes that a wide variety of foods, even the ones labeled "unhealthy" are good for the body and mind), the nutritional advice included under this tab was riddled with diet culture language. They provide essentially a cheat sheet on nutritional labeling, which is like handing someone with an eating disorder a how-to guide for food restriction. Instead of providing links to eating disorder screening tools or support groups, they have links to nutrition facts databases.

The website also advises students to "avoid processed foods (especially sugar)" to combat negative body image. Instead of blaming glucose—a basic macronutrient without which we could not survive—for our body image issues, the Schacht Center should encourage us to examine how society has us waging war on our bodies. Such is the nature of diet culture: we're taught by mass media and healthcare providers alike to prioritize thinness and "purity" above holistic wellbeing.

The Schacht Center reinforces "clean" eating rhetoric, which provides a false sense of validity to a disordered mentality. While these terms may seem relatively harmless, the "I feel so fat today" or "I feel so guilty after eating those cookies" remarks come from the same insidious voice that will cause one in five individuals struggling with an eating disorder to lose their lives to the disease. While we shouldn't conflate all diet-talk with eating disorder symptoms, it's essential that students with such prevalent risk factors are able to identify the signs of a struggling peer.

An estimated 30 million Americans have struggled with eating disorders at some point over their lifetime and the vast majority will never receive treatment. I hope that more members of the Smith community will take time to examine how their words and actions are affecting others; when you bring diet culture to the dinner table, you are actively silencing and harming people in recovery. Eating disorders are most dangerous in isolation so we recover loudly to keep others from dying quietly. ■