

THE SOPHIAN



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The Persistence of Parsons House

LAURA FAY '25 For many prospective Smithies, house community is a critical aspect to their college decision. With Smith's distinct neighborhoods and decades-long house traditions, these established support systems help first-years feel less adrift in this new stage of their lives. But despite being touted as a hallmark of the Smith experience, the traditional house community isn't available to all students. For residents of Parsons House, it's what they're trying to build. For residents of Talbot, it's something they'll need to fight to preserve.

For years, the status of Parsons House has been up in the air. Once planned to be released from the college's inventory, Parsons operated as temporary housing for Washburn residents in early 2021 while their house was under renovation. The following year, as the ongoing pandemic skewed enrollment predictions, housing officials placed first-years in the now-unoccupied Parsons.

Alex Beardsley '25, who lived in Parsons last year, put it bluntly. "They stuck 45 first-years and four woefully unprepared ResLife students into Parsons."

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Pioneers' Record-setting Basketball Season

LEAH VERESS '26 The 2022-23 basketball season was full of broken records and prestigious awards for the Smith Pioneers. The team saw their first appearance in the NCAA Final Four and their highest final national rank of No. 3 for Division III women's basketball.

Among their team accomplishments, the Pioneers claimed victories in four tournaments: Smith Holiday Classic, Bowdoin Coastal Classic, Tyler Tip-Off and the NEWMAC Conference Championship. They held a 30-2 season record, breaking the previous school record for season wins. In conference games, they went undefeated with a 10-0 record, and never lost a single game on their home court, even during the NCAA Championship rounds...

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PHOTO BY SHERRY LI '25

An Event to Watch Out For: Alison Bechdel at John M.

SASHA RTISHCHEV '26 On March 4, the Office of Student Engagement hosted Alison Bechdel, a cartoonist best known for her comic strips "Dykes to Watch Out For" and for her graphic memoir "Fun Home," at John M. Greene Hall for a keynote talk, moderated discussion and book signing....

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Editorial

Welcome to the first print edition of the 77th Volume of the Sophian! The new Editorial Board has exciting plans for the 2023-2024 school year. We plan to work in collaboration with as many other organizations and communities at Smith as possible to bring their voices to the Sophian; we believe this is crucial to ensuring the most interesting and nuanced journalism. At the Sophian, we want to make sure that journalism and sharing your voice and opinions are accessible to all students and encourage anyone interested to apply to write for us or send us a submission. This year, be sure to watch out for our new games and crosswords section which will be debuting soon! In “Riverdale,” the school newspaper “The Blue & Gold” is as important or more important than the local newspapers; our dream is a similar though, of course, more grounded future for the Sophian.

2023 is unique in that all of the members of the Sophian board entered Smith after the COVID-19 pandemic, meaning none of us have experienced a “pre-pandemic” Smith. Some of us are rising seniors who attended a Zoom semester virtually, as well as a Zoom semester on

campus, others began their college experiences with mask mandates and fear of getting too close to their classmates. Next year will begin a new era of Smith students. The majority of enrolled students will have only known a post-COVID Smith and, additionally, a new president will be joining the Smith community to help guide students of all class years and shape Smith as an institution. The editorial board of the Sophian is excited to take on the challenge of publishing stories for the community in this crucial time of change.

Signed, The Editorial Board

Dear Dedicated Sophian Readers,

I am excited to be your new Editor in Chief for the 77th volume of the Sophian. I have been a writer and editor for the Sophian for two years and have hoped to hold the role of Editor in Chief for as long as I can remember. I am planning for exciting things in the next year and am glad to have such a wonderful editorial board to work with.

On Wednesday March 29th, I lost my

grandfather, John H. Clinton Jr. My grandfather was a remarkable person and had a profound impact on the newspaper industry where he worked decades as the publisher of the San Mateo County Times. My great-grandpa was also the publisher and my great-uncle Horace Amphlett founded the San Mateo County Times in 1901 and made it into the powerful daily newspaper it was.

My grandfather also inspired me to have a passion for journalism and the power it holds. Just last month he helped me with my campaign speech to my colleagues at the Sophian where I shared my plans for the newspaper. I was proud to be able to tell him about being made Editor in Chief before he passed. I am so grateful for all he has done to shape me and inspire my passion for the power of the written word.

Journalism is a powerful form of communication. By providing accurate, unbiased and timely information about events and issues, journalists can help people understand what is happening in the world and, in the case of the Sophian, the Smith and Northampton communities.

Warmly, Phoebe Rak, *Editor in Chief*

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Learning to be Happy: Kaira Jewel Lingo

NAOMI SCULLY-BRISTOL '25 Kaira Jewel Lingo, NEWS EDITOR a Dharma teacher with a focus on spirituality and social justice, presented a Presidential Colloquium on April 3, 2023. She discussed finding purpose and happiness in life as well as the necessity of being grounded and present in difficult moments and in the face of the current crises like rising violence, a smaller job market and political polarization.

“When I was in college, I remember going to a talk by the teacher Ram Dass, who had also been a college professor ... one of the things he said was, ‘You learn a lot here, but you don’t learn how to be happy,’” said Lingo. “That really landed for me, and I decided I wanted to learn how to be happy, and so I went to Plum Village and looked for a spiritual teacher, looking for a spiritual community.”

Lingo spent 15 years in Plum Village, a Buddhist monastery in Loubès-Bernac, France, as a nun learning from the Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh. She has a focus on opening doors of the Dharma to BI-POC people, as well as offering support and contemplative grounding to social movements. Since leaving the monastery, she continues to teach and lead retreats internationally in the Plum Village and Vipassana traditions. She recently released her book “We Were Made For These Times: 10 Lessons for Moving Through Change, Loss, and Disruption.”

Lingo began her talk by leading attendees in an exercise to relax the Vagus nerve, the main nerves in the parasympathetic nervous system: “If we can help care for that nerve, and tone it, resource it, it is very helpful in providing a buffer for us when we meet challenges, so we can bounce back more easily, more quickly.” She guided people to begin by massaging around the outside of their ears, then covering their eyes with their hands, holding their cheeks in their hands, placing the hands on the chest and breathing deeply, placing the hands on the stomach below the belly button and finally, resting with their palms turned towards the ceiling.

Following the exercise, Lingo began to talk about finding purpose and various practices that can



PHOTO BY SHERRY LI '25

help with this. She mentioned the ignatian practice of imaging yourself on your deathbed and the Buddha’s five daily remembrances. In doing so, Lingo said, one can focus themselves on the present, and how to live

each day in a way that recognizes one’s purpose and how they want to live.

“We get so easily caught up in the superficial things, but we really want to be asking ourselves ‘what is my ultimate

concern?’ Because when we live from that place, we have a lot of freedom, we have a lot of clarity, and we have a lot of courage,” said Lingo.

Later in the colloquium, Lingo discussed the current “polycrisis” facing the world and the “intersecting strings of emergency” of shaky economic systems, increasing violence, mass shootings, political

divisions and more.

“One response to this kind of unraveling is to panic, withdraw, or give up. But there are other ways to meet this moment which have to do with coming from our purpose, coming from our place of groundedness,” said Lingo. “Precisely when we feel we need to speed up, when we’re being fueled by reactivity, what can be helpful is to pause, to slow down, to feel. We want to be our full selves when things are difficult, we don’t want to be acting from the unresourced parts of ourselves.”

This Presidential Colloquium was co-presented by the Center for Religious and Spiritual Life and the Jandon Center for Community Engagement. While introducing Kaira Jewel Lingo, President Kathleen McCartney said, “I know that we will be uplifted by her advice on how to cultivate equanimity and joy in the face of uncertainty.”

“Part of learning how to be happy is learning how to care for our suffering, turning towards difficult and exiled places within us,” said Lingo. “Not just on an individual level, but also collectively.”

“We get so easily caught up in the superficial things, but we really want to be asking ourselves ‘what is my ultimate concern?’ Because when we live from that place, we have a lot of freedom, we have a lot of clarity, and we have a lot of courage,”

--- Kaira Jewel Lingo

The Persistence of Parsons House

LAURA FAY '25
FEATURES WRITER

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ly. “They stuck 45 first-years and four woefully unprepared ResLife students into Parsons.”

Hannah Durrant, director of residence life at Smith, acknowledges that placing students in Parsons hadn’t been ResLife’s first choice.

“Our intent was that Parsons House would be offline for the 2021-22 academic year. [...] And then we had the incoming class, students started rescinding going abroad, and we needed the beds,” said Durrant.

The transition was jarring for the first-years. According to Beardsley, Parsons residents felt burdened with building a community from scratch.

“Part of why I chose Smith was for its houses instead of dorms mentality,” they said. “I was worried I was going to miss out on a lot of Smith traditions by moving into a house that was effectively a clean slate.”

Beardsley said they knew they needed to step up to create the house community they wanted. They and their friend Raina Plevyak '25

Alex Beardsley '25, who lived in Parsons last year, put it blunt-

ly. “They created new traditions: hosting PowerPoint nights, creating a Pitbull shrine, and starting a house-wide game of hide and seek with Timmy, the small stuffed chicken they’d found in some leftover Washburn boxes. Soon, a Parsons House community started to form.

Beardsley hoped that year would lay the foundation for the kind of intergenerational house community on which Smith prides itself. But while the community was there, the physical house soon wouldn’t be.

Last spring, a few days after room draw, ResLife told residents that Parsons House would be closed for the 2022-23 academic year. Surveyors had been going through the house periodically throughout the year, initially to prepare for a short summer job that would update the house in keeping with Smith’s geothermal project. But what started as new windows turned into a faulty wall, which turned into structural insecurities.

Beardsley was still visibly upset when talking about Parsons’s closure. “We found out via email one week after we picked our rooms in room draw,” they recalled. “Naturally, there was

some anger.”

According to Durrant, ResLife was not informed that the Parsons repairs would necessitate the house’s closure until two days after room draw. After tossing around different options for the house’s future, they realized Parsons would need to be closed for at least a year and summarily told residents. Still, Durrant admits, ResLife could have handled it better.

“My cardinal rule is that when sharing [...] information you know is not necessarily going to be well received is to set up a time to meet with students. And I didn’t do that. So I shared the information, there was no plan to meet with the students, and they called me out on it. Appropriately so, called me out on it.”
-- Hannah Durrant



PHOTOS BY SHERRY LI '25

“I broke my cardinal rule,” they said. “My cardinal rule is that when sharing [...] information you know is not necessarily going to be well received is to set up a time to meet with students. And I didn’t do that. So I shared the information, there was no plan to meet with the students, and they called me out on it. Appropriately so, called me out on it.”

Both last year and this year, Parsons has certainly risen to the challenge of creating an intentional community. They still receive a house budget from ResLife to maintain weekly house teas, host POCheese events and put on spring and winter weekends. Still, that’s not to say it’s been easy. For some former Parsons residents, the full-fledged communities in their new houses are a compelling reason to stay. For others, they worry that the

Parsons that reopens won't be the one they left behind. That's because, when Parsons reopens in the spring of 2024, former Parsonists aren't the only ones moving in: there will also be an influx of Talbot House residents.

On Jan. 26, ResLife announced that Talbot would be closed for the spring of 2024 to undergo renovations for the geothermal project. While Talbot's house community has a much longer history than Parsons', the prospect of a fully asynchronous semester is still daunting. Especially coming on the heels of a year of virtual house community during the pandemic, residents worry traditions will be lost.

"My year is the last year that experienced Talbot before the pandemic," said Lucy Brandenburger, '23, Talbot's house president. "It feels like we have a lot of memories that haven't really rebounded. I feel like campus as a whole has been struggling to come back after COVID, and there's a lot less participation or excitement to participate since then."

For a house that plans to be offline for half of next year, those problems are only exacerbated. It took rounds of persistent emailing to get residents to run for house council positions next year. It's also unclear whether first-years will be placed in the house, which would break the four-year cycle of how students typically move through the housing system. While Durrant calls giving Talbot first-years ResLife's "last possible option," the house will need to be near-full to compensate for Parsons continuing to be offline.

"We will need to think creatively about how to fill those beds," Durrant said.

But despite the uncertainty, Brandenburger believes Talbot will get through. Though she graduates in the spring, Brandenburger has spent her last semester recording and documenting, ensuring the incoming house council has everything they need to make the best of their situation. Talbot also has Parsons' community model to mimic in this uncertain time.

"They've made a really big effort to keep their house community," Brandenburger says. "People have to commit to wanting that community. I don't think it'll work if people don't. I don't think people can want it without doing the work to have



PHOTOS BY SHERRY LI '25

it."

By the time Parsons House reopens, residents will have been putting in the work, in person and virtual, through an unimaginable set of obstacles, for three years.

"Not everyone would have fought as hard for a house community as some of us did," Beardsley recalls. "It very well could have been ResLife's worst experiment — not to say it was a good one!

Don't do it again. But thankfully, there were some really dedicated people that were there making it happen."

While opening their doors to a slew of displaced Talbot residents will undoubtedly be strange, Beardsley knows the community they've spent so long building will still be there — and they're excited to share it with the rest of Smith.

Nutrition Isn't One Size Fits All

HILLARY CONNOR '26 *Trigger-warning: this article contains discussion of diet culture language, weight and nutrition that may be distressing to some readers.*

The Schacht Center recently hired a new dietician, Samantha Meyers RDN, as a student resource, who has been hosting open hours for athletes in Ainsworth Gymnasium. Students were encouraged to come with questions about the new resource or about sports nutrition in general with the incentive of “healthy snacks” to boost attendance. Certain athletic teams were also given more in-depth presentations and mediated conversations to cover the nuances of nutrition to fuel their specific sport.

The presentations and conversations acknowledged some of the harm that strict regulation of food can cause. However, it still featured a chart of optimal calorie consumption based on body weight, specific carb- to- protein ratios for post-practice snacks, and the recurring rest/easy/hard training day plates. This is the constant struggle with sports nutrition; there are obviously ideal ranges for nutrient and ratios and calorie needs that maximize athletic performance, but this resource needs to recognize that collegiate athletes are not just athletes, they are also students and humans with bodies that have different physical and mental needs that change constantly.

Students who attended were given pamphlets at the open hours that showed the differences between “hard” and “easy” training day meals versus rest day, offseason or meals for injured athletes taking time off. Easy days and rest days had fewer carbs and fats with an optional “weight management” line that further restricted carbs. Suggested foods and drinks included diluted juice, low fat cottage cheese and lean, non-fried meats. The suggestions featured no desserts, and the diagrams mostly depicted “clean” or whole foods.

These handouts were reminiscent of elementary school food pyramids or the government's MyPlate: encouraging rigid food ratios and leaving little room for any “fun foods,” or

even just convenient foods that are so crucial to getting enough nutrition in a busy college student's life. These guidelines also differentiate the amount and type of food based on the level rather than the type of training and fail to take into account the extra energy needed for recovery for injured athletes or following a hard training day, race or game.

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nutrition would make it ideal to have individual nutritionist appointments available, but the process to get these appointments is long and not conducive to the busy student-athlete lifestyle. Students must first schedule an appointment with a primary care provider at the Schacht Center and then ask for a referral to get an appointment, and even then, similar to the counseling services, there is only enough availability for each person to get a single consultation, unless they need “crisis care.”

With Smith's astronomical endowment of 2.6 billion dollars and the advertising of expansive and accessible mental and physical healthcare, this resource needs to be more accessible before students are in crisis. Moreover, the resources need to be framed in a way that promotes a healthy relationship with food and exercise above all other aspects of performance nutrition and works to actively dismantle the diet culture that is so prominent on athletic fields.

Smith Athletics is not immune to this diet culture. At Student Athletic Advisory Committee meetings with the dining hall staff, instead of

addressing more expansive dining hours to accommodate long practices or offering more vegetarian protein options, the main grievances were the lack of protein shakes and grilled chicken at dinner and the plethora of “unhealthy” breakfast options like croissants, hashbrowns and pancakes that are fan favorites with the rest of campus.

Smith athletes have unlimited access to trainers five days a week, state of the art facilities and every cross-training machine and injury prevention method under the sun, and yet there is such a lack of nutritional resources, which is such a key element to maximizing performance and maintaining health.

While lack of nutrition education is harmful, the blatant promotion of diet culture present in these resources can be even more damaging to athletes that are already pushing their bodies to the limit day after day. Athletes already face so much pressure to maintain certain weights or body compositions to optimize aerodynamics or speed. Encouraging weight management and strict portion control can amplify these pressures and make athletes susceptible to injury or greater health problems that can be permanent. According to an article from The Sport Journal, student athletes are a population that may be particularly at risk for developing eating disorders.

In particular, menstruating athletes risk loss of period and current and future fertility if they do not get enough calories and fats to support their reproductive organs. It is also important to acknowledge that Smith athletes are also college students outside of their athletic careers and should be encouraged to have fun meals with their friends and take advantage of quick fuel sources rather than being worried about which category their training falls into each day to determine their plate.

The addition of a nutritionist at the Schacht Center is an important first step to expanding our community's — athletes' in particular — nutrition education, but the focus needs to be on fueling enough and realistically instead of fueling for a certain size.

An Event to Watch Out For: Alison Bechdel at John M. Greene

SASHA RTISHCHEV '26
ARTS WRITER
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The event, which drew more than a thousand attendees,

was free and open to the public. Attendees ranged from Smith and other Five College students to older Bechdel fans from the Pioneer Valley which added laughter and a book-signing line stretching to the back of the building.

Bailey Butterworth '24 planned this event to revive the tradition of hosting student-organized large events after the pandemic. "I started in November by reaching out to [Bechdel's] agency and talking about the possibility of this happening," they said. Butterworth then reached out to various people and departments across campus to put the remaining pieces together, from catering the reception to booking John M. Greene Hall.

Bechdel began preparing her talk a couple of weeks before the event and was inspired by reading the newspaper. "It all seeped in and informed what I decided to write about, which is how important it is to be honest in a crisis of people not knowing what is true anymore," Bechdel said. She used this theme throughout her keynote speech by connecting her works to the political turmoil that occurred when they were published and to the current resurgence of anti-LGBTQ legislation, specifically in terms of education.

Bechdel also projected images from her works throughout the talk to highlight the points she made, garnering some extra laughs. She said, "It's always exciting to me when I can connect to the people who know my work, because as a writer you don't get to see people responding to it."

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--- Alison Bechdel*



PHOTO BY SHERRY LI '25

ci Young, who dove deep into Bechdel's past and present work. To prepare for the discussion, Young said, "I looked through her papers, I did a lot of internet research, and I've watched some videos she produced specifically related to her most recent book."

Butterworth wanted Young to facilitate because they thought it would be impactful to have two butch-leaning lesbians on the stage. Along with this, they said, "I thought that Nanci's expertise was relevant, especially because Alison has such a deep connection with archiving and just them being of a similar generation appealed to me."

The event concluded with a book signing where audience members lined up to get their copy signed and say a word to the author. Young said, "I was super impressed with her generosity and openness with meeting students, and I think

this generosity showed later with this long line of students who wanted to get their books signed by her." Bechdel asked the staff to continue permitting attendees to walk on the stage to ensure as many people got their books signed as possible.

Even though the event is over and Bechdel has left campus, students and the public can continue to connect with her and her work by visiting the exhibition of some of her archival materials on the third floor of Neilson Library or by leafing through her papers in the Special Collections themselves.

The event and subsequent exhibit (which is open for the rest of the semester) exposed many people to Bechdel's work and the college archives as a whole. The audience seemed to take away what Bechdel wanted them to, as she said, "I hope they have a little fun and find it better than sitting home alone."

Pioneers' Record-setting Basketball Season

LEAH VERESS '26

ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

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Along with the team's overwhelming successes head coach Lynn Hersey was also regionally and nationally recognized. She was named Women's Basketball Coaches Association (WBCA) National Coach of the Year, NEWMAC Coaching Staff of the Year and New England Women's Basketball Association (NEWBA) Coach of the Year. Hersey has been coaching the Pioneers for 16 seasons and has shaped the program into one of the most competitive in Division III. She has led the Pioneers to all three of their Sweet 16 appearances.

Three of Hersey's players — Morgan Morrison '23, Jessie Ruffner '24, and Katelyn Pickunka '22 — received regional awards.

Most recently, Morrison was named the WBCA NCAA Division III Player of the Year with All-American distinctions. Throughout the season she also won eight other awards including being recognized as a WBCA NCAA Division III Collegiate All-Star, the D3Hoops.com National Player of the Year and First Team All-American as well as the NEWMAC Athlete of the Year. This season, Morrison also crossed the threshold of being a 1,000 Point Scorer, a title only held by 14 other former Pioneers.

Throughout the season, Ruffner was also awarded an impressive number of distinctions including making the D3Hoops.com All-Region Second Team, NEWMAC All-Conference First Team, and NEWBA All-Region Third Team. Ruffner had 181 rebounds, 118 assists and 63 turnovers over the course of the season.

Pickunka's honors include making the NCAA Final Four All-Tournament Team and being named the NEWMAC Tournament Most Outstanding Player, NEWBA All-Star and Tyler Tip-Off Tournament MVP. She had 50 steals, 254 rebounds and scored 292 points over the course of the season.

While their success is clear on paper, the stats and distinctions fail to encompass the chemistry and dedication of the players and coaching staff themselves.

"We all created an unconditional bond," said Morrison, "It was just so supportive at all times, you could go to anyone on the team for



PHOTO COURTESY OF SMITH COLLEGE

anything and they'd be willing to help you out. That's really special and it's hard to find out in the real world."

The team spent countless hours together — practicing, traveling and studying. Basketball is a large part of their lives, especially when it came to the NCAA championships.

"Practicing for two and a half hours a day is really hard and it wears on you a lot and just having people who are going through the same thing to support you, you really make friendships that do last forever" said Morrison.

As the season went on, the Pioneers grew closer, both emotionally as well as in their playing styles.

"[The team] is there supporting you and I think that really translates into us knowing each other and knowing how each other plays, which makes us play better on the court," explained Morrison.

This chemistry translated to the coaching staff who also became a part of the Pioneers' basketball family. The Pioneer coaching team consists of four members; Head Coach Lynn Hersey, Assistant Coach Kate Kerrigan, Assistant Coach and Recruiting Coordinator Jen MacAulay, and Graduate Assistant Coach Kat Puda.

"They're just so close. They're very supportive of each other," said Hersey, "[they are] all their genuine selves and they support each other in that and ultimately it's a really great environment and I think that helps us on the court."

The admiration flows both ways. "When they give us feedback we really take it into consideration and apply it," said Morrison, "They do so much work for us that we just want to do the best we can for them."

Highlighting this dedication to their team, Morrison recalled just one example of the immense effort the coaching staff showed during the NCAA championship:

"We had a late game and we did not finish until 11:30 p.m. and then we had practice the next day at noon and they were up until 2:30 a.m. getting all the information they could on the team we were playing next and then came in at like 7:00 a.m. the next day and prepared even more for us."

With a staff that was prepared to work hard for their players and players willing to do the same for their coaches and themselves, there was just one more piece in the puzzle of a successful season: Drive.

"Right off the bat, we all came in this season going, 'we want a final four, we want to go to the national championship, we're going to do whatever it takes,'" said Morrison.

The team carried this mentality through the season, amassing the best record in the program's history and progressing the farthest the Pioneers ever have into the NCAA Championship.

Said Morrison, "We came in with that mindset from the beginning and it was always something we wanted to do and we knew that we were going to do."