

# THE SOPHIAN



COURTESY OF THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

## President Kathleen McCartney on a Decade at Smith

JORDAN FERDMAN '26J  
FEATURES EDITOR

**In your experience, what makes Smith unique, and, by extension, how is the role of the president defined by campus culture?**

I was really thinking about this. It's really hard to define a culture, right? When I came here, I was joking that I felt like an anthropologist trying to figure out the Smith culture.

A few things that I think were very clear to me was that absolutely everyone — the students, the staff, the faculty — was really passionate about their work. I think the students here are hard-working, actually, compared to some other campuses. The alums stay connected for life. There's an alum from California who said to me, my first year here, that the Smith experience is four years but the afterlife lasts forever. I think that's true — the alums are incredibly engaged. Not every campus has the reunion structure that we have or, you know, the 200 Smith clubs across the globe. There's one in Seoul, South Korea! I've been to Seoul twice, and 100 people or more show up to these events. People are passionate about it, the alums.

I think the campus is really part of what makes Smith unique. We live in a botanic garden by a river that we call a pond.

*continued on page 4*

## Smith Admits 19% of Applicants from Largest, Most Diverse Pool in Smith's History

NAOMI SCULLY-BRISTOL '25 & SKYLER WILLIAMS '25  
NEWS EDITOR & NEWS WRITER

Smith College received applicants from all 50 states and D.C., four U.S. territories, and 140 different countries for the Class of 2027. Out of 9,968 applicants, 19% were admitted. On May 1, National Decision Day, admitted students made their final college decisions, and Smith's class of 2027 is on their way to Northampton.

These students were chosen from the largest and most diverse applicant pool in Smith's history, according to Joanna May, Vice President for enrollment.

*continued on page 3*



BY PHOTO EDITOR SHERRY LI '25

## Emulate Magazine is Reimagining a Platform for Artists at Smith

SOPHIA HAYDON-KHAN '25  
ASSIST. ARTS & CULTURE EDITOR

"Emulate," Smith's latest literary magazine, has undergone a series of instrumental changes over the past few years to become a prominent fixture of the school's arts scene. Its evolution, and the grounds upon which it was necessitated, have brought into question both the role of literary magazines at Smith and where "Emulate"'s future lies.

*continued on page 7*

Dear Dedicated Sophian Readers,

Thank you for reading the final print edition of the 2022-2023 school year. This issue includes the debut of our games section with the first Sophian crossword puzzle that we hope you will enjoy solving. We are excited to write more stories for you next year and hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as we have enjoyed making it. We feel so lucky to have such a fabulous community to write for and about. Enjoy & have a great summer!

The Sophian Board

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This Issue

Page 3 -Smith Admits 19% of Applicants from Largest, Most Diverse Pool in Smith’s History

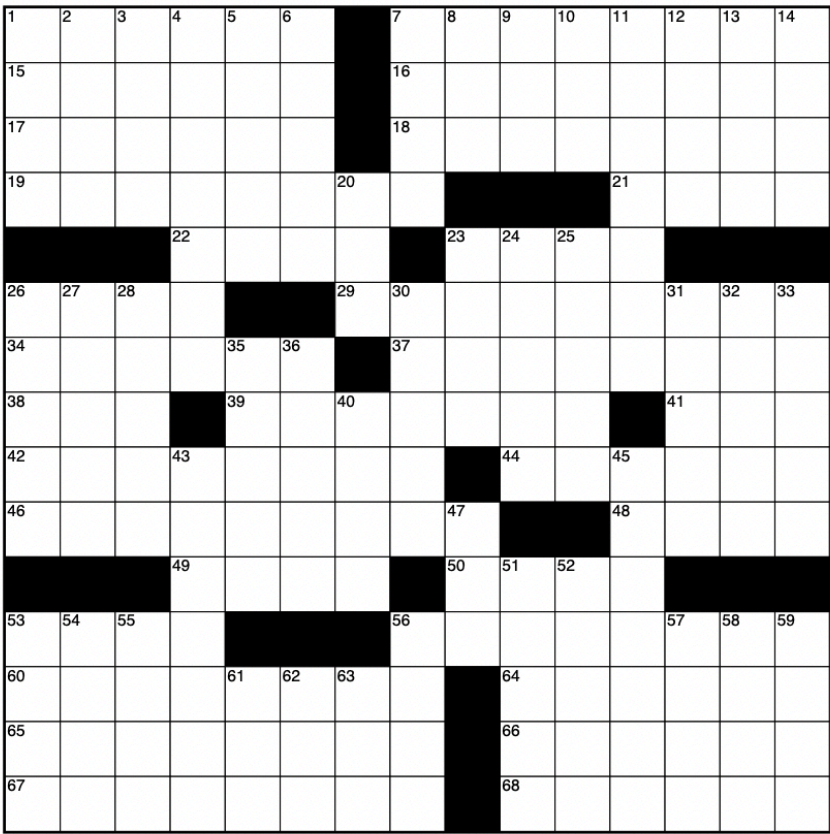
Page 4 - President Kathleen McCartney on a decade at Smith

Page 5 - President Kathleen McCartney on a decade at Smith (continued)

Page 6 - Wellesley Students Vote to Include Non-women in Admissions: What This Means For the Future of HWCs

Page 7 - Emulate Magazine is Reimagining a Platform for Artists at Smith

Page 8 - Pulling Away from the “Pioneers”: Smith Athletics Hosts Panel ....



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MAISY HOFFMAN '25  
& SKYLAR BALL '26  
ASSIST. CROSSWORD  
EDITOR &  
CROSSWORD EDITOR

ACROSS

- 1 Underground happening spot in Noho  
7 Oceans practice religion?  
15 French header  
16 Alpha \_\_\_\_\_, our closest neighbor (cosmically)  
17 Tug, again  
18 Naomi who wrote “The Power” and “Disobedience”  
19 “Go!” to an indoor location?  
21 Many a disease ender  
22 Suffix to Sacram or pim  
23 Undergrad deg. for a hopeful teacher  
26 Beginner of ilige or ed  
29 Split a mountain top?  
34 Fortune Telling decks  
37 Goodies you might find at Hungry Ghost or Tart  
38 U.K. honor, or germy follower of micr  
39 Salary painted like a rose?  
41 Literal opposite of syn.  
42 Spelling rule that doesn’t apply after C  
44 Home country of Nikola Tesla  
46 Short pants on an ear?  
48 They’re hung by drivers  
49 Grandson of Adam  
50 Locale with a serpent problem  
53 Kindergarten craft must-have  
56 Particle goes on an adventure?  
60 Layered dessert  
64 Analogy phrase  
65 Duly appointed agent  
66 Name-brand electric cars  
67 Practice fighting columns?  
68 Design-wise feature of a slingshot or dowsing rod

DOWN

- 1 Part of a school year, “J” for Smithies  
2 What amour is spelled with  
3 Ambiguous degrees  
4 Come to the rescue  
5 One rotation

- 6 Potential subject line of a follow-up email addressing a land sale  
7 Deceptive trick  
8 Slippery fish  
9 &  
10 \_\_\_\_ Jeanne D’Arc  
11 Like a Weird Al song  
12 Molasses liquors  
13 Fearsome Greek goddesses  
14 Yangs’ partners  
20 “And I \_\_\_\_,” viral catchphrase of 2019  
23 [It’s cold!]  
24 You might find pigs here  
25 Weaken over time  
26 Ancient Greek philosophy follower  
27 Limerick rhyme scheme  
28 Radiohead 1993 hit then covered by Glee  
30 Cold one  
31 Abu \_\_\_\_\_,  
32 Granter of three wishes  
33 “¿Como \_\_\_\_\_,” en Español  
35 \_\_\_\_ one, special amenity you might get for your laundry or your Head and Shoulders products  
36 Root for flesh  
40 Earthy word that may precede cience or strategy  
43 Something advocated for in “The Lorax” (2012)  
45 Scrawny  
47 Boston sch. known for its worker co-op program  
51 Divine figure  
52 Park in Colorado  
53 Car robbery video games  
54 Condition that might make one talk like thith  
55 Precursor to minor and major, in the sky  
56 Query, abbr.  
57 \_\_\_\_ Vista, UCSB locale  
58 Himalayan puff pastry  
59 Sommelier’s asset  
61 Boss, abbr.  
62 Odysseus’ rescuer  
63 Work with a needle and thread



# Smith Admits 19% of Applicants from Largest, Most Diverse Pool in Smith's History

**NAOMI SCULLY-BRISTOL '25 & SKYLER WILLIAMS '25** NEWS EDITOR & NEWS WRITER  
*continued from page 1* There was a 36% increase in applications this year, including a 51% increase in international students, a 43% increase in students of color, and a 40% increase in students applying from outside of the Northeast and New England regions.

The admissions rate dropped to 19% this year, down from 23% in 2022, and 30% in 2021. The college is expecting to enroll 630 new students in 2023. In comparison, Smith enrolled 619 new students in 2022, and 676 in 2021. As well, 48% of the targeted enrolling class were admitted Early Decision 1 or 2, which was “a slight decline from last year,” according to May and Deanna Dixon, the Dean of Admission.

However, Smith has not admitted any first year students to start in January, a sharp change from recent years, which have had significant numbers of J-Term admits. Smith will still admit a small class of transfers and Ada Comstock scholars in January.

“We piloted January enrollment for first-year students in January of 2022 after enrolling a large first-year class in fall of 2021 (which included over 100 students who deferred their admission from fall of 2020 to fall of 2021),” said Dixon in an email. “We have paused that pilot as we assess the success of the pilot year, and the future viability of the spring entry term for first-years.”

The increase in applications may be credited to the changes to Smith's financial aid policies and the elimination of a separate supplemental essay when applying. This was also the first year since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic that admissions staff could travel around the United States to meet potential applicants and have in-person admissions events.

In October 2021, Smith announced that they would eliminate loans in financial aid packages, instead providing grants to meet 100% of demonstrated need. As well, the college eliminated the Smith Application for Financial Aid, now only requiring the FAFSA and CSS Profile to apply for aid, somewhat streamlining the process.

The elimination of the supplemental essay has made the admissions process much easier for potential Smithies. They only had to submit the general essay through the Common or Coalition Application, no longer needing a short answer to a Smith-specific question. In the previous few years, the question had been about “a song or piece of music that is partic-



PHOTO BY GABY AYALA BECERRA '25

ularly meaningful to you.” Additionally, Smith has no application fee and is test optional, so applying is very accessible.

“Critical and analytical thinking, resilience, and contributions to their community, broadly defined, are valued attributes that we contextualize within each student's background and experiences,” said Dixon and May on the characteristics Smith looks for in applicants in an email.

The Admissions Office partners with community based organizations, like College Match, Minds Matter and Posse, as well as charter school networks, like Achievement First and The Young Women's Leadership Schools to bring in a diverse class to Smith. The Admissions Office also tries to focus on “diverse regions” for admissions programs and provides fund-

*“Critical and analytical thinking, resilience and contributions to their community, broadly defined, are valued attributes that we contextualize within each student's background and experiences,”*  
 — Dixon and May

ing for students to attend the Women of Distinction, a program for first generation, African American, Asian American, Latina and Native American high school seniors.

This year Smith announced a partnership with national non-profit Questbridge which works to increase the

presence of high-achieving students from low-income backgrounds on college campuses. Smith will admit its first Questbridge students in fall 2024.

As the Class of 2027 enters their first year at Smith, they will join a student community that “sees learning as collaborative and continuous, has an expansive world view, and engages across differences,” according to Dixon and May.

# President Kathleen McCartney on a Decade at Smith

JORDAN FERDMAN '26J  
FEATURES EDITOR  
*continued from page 1*

I think it's healthy to be immersed in nature. I think the campus kind of grounds us.

The other thing I want to say that I knew when I came was that I think Smith really encourages activism. It is one of the reasons I wanted to be here. Not all college campuses are as engaged in making the world a better place as Smith students, staff, faculty. It's just kind of in the Smith DNA. It's something I have been proud to be a part of.

**What would you like your legacy to be on Smith. Do you think you have achieved this?**

I thought about saying, "others can figure that out." So much has happened. Let me step back.

When you're a president, you don't do anything alone. You do it with your senior team. You work with the faculty, you work with the board of trustees. I'll tell you some things I was proud to be a part of.

The first thing was really about supporting students. Not just financial aid but also equalizing the student experience. Since I've been here, we've eliminated fees for music classes, art classes and I think even some science classes had lab fees and so on. I like this phrase: "equalizing the student experiences." It comes from Anthony Jack, a professor at the Yale School. I'm really proud of the money we've raised for financial aid. My largest gifts have been for financial aid. There was the \$50 million dollar gift, there have been several \$10 million dollar gifts, and so one of the things I get to do when I meet with alumni is let them know what my priorities are. The alumni have been extremely generous.

I think the second thing I would say is expanding our work in equity and inclusion. What journalists refer to as the "racial reckoning" really started in my first and second year, and I

think students really wanted us to do more. At that time, I would say most liberal arts colleges had one person in charge of DEI work. We had LaTonya in multicultural affairs and an assistant director. And we had one person, not even a Vice President, who worked in College Hall. We greatly expanded our team. Floyd Cheung is a VP, and I think we have five other full time people working there. Floyd tells me we've made a greater investment in DEI than our peers. We need people to get the work done.

Everyone from the physics department to the art museum is working on a racial justice action plan. Floyd gets most of the credit for that, but I'm really proud that we expanded our work there.

I'm so excited that we'll be carbon neutral by 2030. There will only be a handful of colleges that are, and hopefully the work we're doing will inspire other colleges. It's really going to happen, and there are

a lot of people who worked on the proposal, including trustees, and ultimately that project is more than \$200 million dollars. That requires a vote of the board of trustees, so I'm very grateful for their partnership.

The last one is the library. When I first came here, I couldn't have imagined that a building project would be so exciting. I've always been someone who likes to build programs on the ground for students whether they're degree programs or centers or extracurricular things. The library really is the intellectual heart of the campus. So many people have told me how that space has enriched their lives. Nobody liked going to Neilson before. It was all dark and didn't beckon you to study there. This space does, and there are so many different kinds of spaces. [.....] It's a work of art as well as a functional library. I'm very proud of that too.

***"Not all college campuses are as engaged in making the world a better place as Smith students, staff, faculty. It's just kind of in the Smith DNA. It's something I have been proud to be a part of."***  
—Kathleen McCartney

I'll tell you one more thing. I'm really proud that we were able to raise \$10 million dollars for the poetry center. That means that if there's ever a tough economic time, the poetry center will be protected with this wonderful \$10 million dollar endowment that will fund a full-time poet who's coming next year. They have core funding to expand their work. I think the poetry center is one of the things that makes Smith very special. Most campuses don't have one. We, since I've been here, have brought in some of the best poets in the country like Tracy K. Smith and Ross Gay. Poetry readings that were incredible.

**What is your proudest achievement as President?**

It's easy: last year when we eliminated loans from our financial aid packages. That initiative is costing the college \$7 million a year. We self-funded it. Our endowment grew. I talked to the Board chair, and we put a working group together. That working group agreed that this would be the best thing to do.

After that vote, the trustees (and I am a trustee) spontaneously stood up and started applauding. People had tears. We just couldn't stop talking about the fact that we knew that we were changing lives for the better that day. Our students are going to graduate with no debt. If you read the newspapers, there are so many stories about students being overwhelmed by how much debt they've had to take on. That's just not going to be the case here. I think it's going to encourage students like me, who come from families with fewer economic resources, to apply to Smith.

Our applications are up 122% in the last ten years. We've been really working hard on getting the message out that we invest in our students. It's more than double, I can hardly believe it. That's a point of pride too.

**What are your post-Smith plans? Do you feel a connection to the class of '23 as you are sort of "graduating" with them?**

I'm working with a coach right now, and one of the things he suggested is to take time to figure it out rather than jumping too fast. I don't want another full-time job, but I'm sure I'll do some writing about higher education as I have all along. I'm sure I'll get involved in some nonprof-



its on a volunteer basis. I also want to take some time for myself which has been in short supply for the last ten years. Bill bought me a fancy new camera. I want to spend some time on photography, which I used to do.

I'm very excited about spending more time with my grandchildren. Even on March break, I found myself taking one of them to gymnastics classes because my daughter didn't have anyone to do it. I was thinking that there will be more of these special moments with them, watching them play sports but also babysitting for them and just plain-old hanging out.

The eight-year-old was born on Rally Day my second year here. She visited recently and went to a basketball game and visited the library, which she really loved. She wanted to go back to the library and read there. She said to me, "I don't want you to retire." I said, "Why don't you want me to retire? I'll see you all the time!" And she said, "Because I want to come to Smith and I want you to be the President when I come." I hope she does come to Smith. That would make me really happy.

I do feel a special connection to the Class of 2023. And I think they might as well, or they at least know this is a special year for me. I've been invited to many events this year. Like tomorrow, I'm having tea at Chase House. I had tea at another house on the quad. They're seeking me out: Can you come to this? Can you come to that? I'm going to as many things as I can.

I thought really long and hard about my last Ivy Day dress. I thought about the fact that I'm about to experience a big transition and they're about to experience a big transition. They're different transitions, but there are lessons in common for them and for me. That's what I'm going to write about. I'm excited to give my last Ivy Day address.

**What words of wisdom would you share with incoming President Sarah Willie-LeBreton?**

Well, your first question was about words of wisdom for Sarah, and I was asked to write a chapter for *The College President's Handbook* awhile back. I had five pieces of advice—not just for Sarah, but really for anybody starting out—the first piece of advice was to always be mindful that leaders set the tone for an institution. People look to you, especially during difficult times like

a pandemic. I think it's important to be optimistic and open. That's the first lesson I learned. I met with the Dean of the Kennedy School at Harvard who told me "just smile all the time." That's really what he meant.

The second lesson I've learned is to really trust myself. I think one of the biggest mistakes I've made is when I let people talk me into doing things. If I'm going to make a mistake, I'd rather make my mistake rather than somebody else's mistake.

The third piece of advice is to remember that time is your most precious resource. Manage your time well. There will be so many requests for Sarah's time. And she has to figure out what she has time to do. All presidents need to preserve time to think and reflect. Some of the days are...a lot of the days are 12 hour days.

The fourth would be building a good team, but hopefully I've done that for her. There's always turnover and making good decisions in searches is just critical to your success.

The last thing is to really try to cultivate equanimity. You've gotta accept the good and the bad. Every single problem that happens on this campus finds its way to me. There's lots of problems to deal with and lots of crises I've had to manage through. Trying to learn how to be calm—especially when people are angry. When people are angry about something Smith is or isn't doing, being able to listen well and be a calming presence is, I think, really important for them and for me.

**What will you take with you from your time at Smith?**

It's hard to describe ten years. I think that there are some meetings. My team met here the night before we decided to send students home because of the pandemic. That really stands out. We knew we were making a big decision with very little data. We talked and talked and decided to sleep on it and the next morning made the decision to send the students home. We didn't know how long: maybe a couple of weeks, right? That was the right decision, and we were one of the first colleges to make it.

There are some decision moments that stand out, but also really happy memories. Every single Mountain Day. On Mountain Day, I always get emails from alums saying, "I'm crying in front of my computer!" This year it occurred to



COURTESY OF THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT  
me that next year, I'll probably be crying in front of my computer knowing I'm not on campus.

I remember during my inauguration my first year, I got a note from students on the quad saying they wanted to meet me here and walk with me to the ITT. Someone on my team said, "I'll tell them no." I said, "no, I want to walk with them!" They were like, bagpipes and a huge crowd. And I could see some of my Harvard friends running around, and it was so emotional. If you ever are near my office, someone snapped a picture of Bill and me where we're kind of looking at each other with awe, like oh my god. This is a moment.

I've been thinking about this anyway, what will stay with me. So many student performances. The plays, like *Fun Home*. And the dance recital. Vespers. A lot of student performances.

I've had some very poignant conversations with students during office hours where they're really confiding in me and asking for advice.

Cheering the Pioneers, especially the basketball team this year. That was so joyful.

I have so many memories, but even the crises like the pandemic. When there's a crisis and you're responsible, there's a way in which even though the work is hard, it just feels meaningful and important. In fact, my daughters think I'm going to miss the crises the most and are teasing me about that. Those are just important moments in a presidency to get it right.

# Wellesley Students Vote to Include Non-Women in Admissions: What This Means For Future of HWCs

LOUISA MILLER-OUT '25  
ASSIST. OPINIONS EDITOR

In early March, Wellesley students voted in a nonbinding referendum to open the school's admissions to all trans and nonbinary people rather than just those who "live and consistently identify as a woman" per the school's admission policy. The referendum also urged Wellesley to be more responsive to the gender diversity of the student body by not only using female-gendered language to refer to its students.

As a nonbinary Smithie in community with trans men, masc and nonbinary people, I feel compelled to speak out on this issue because this vote could set an important precedent for other historically women's colleges, including ours.

When I applied to Wellesley in late 2021, I remember specifically looking up their gender policy online because I had recently realized I was nonbinary and was in the early stages of coming out to my friends and family. Their website informed me that they accept cis, trans and nonbinary applicants — as long as they "live as a woman and consistently identify as a woman." I was torn. I had certainly lived and identified as a girl or woman for most of my life. But my mind was fixated on the word "consistently." Some days, I certainly felt more feminine than others. Did I consistently identify as a girl or woman? I wasn't sure. I submitted my application anyway. I had no way of foreseeing how I would identify by the time I eventually got my admission decisions. For all I knew, I might have gone back to identifying as a woman by then. I figured that as a college founded to educate people of marginalized gender identities, Wellesley would not refuse me admission on the basis of my gender, because I certainly still experienced marginalization on the basis of my gender. In fact, I was beginning to experience a unique form of erasure that many cis women are unfamiliar with; the invalidation of my very essence. Eventually, I would realize that Wellesley was perpetrating this erasure, and continues to do so to this day. And, evidently, its students have realized this too.

While Wellesley's student leadership seems to endorse the opinions expressed in the vote, the college's president, Dr. Paula Johnson,

opposes this view on the grounds that it goes against Wellesley's founding purpose. The administration's official stance also appears to be against inclusion of trans and nonbinary people who don't identify as women.

These parties and those aligned with them often defend their opposition by implying that trans men enjoy a certain degree of privilege under patriarchy and therefore are not in need of affinity spaces as women are. Indeed, some trans men who have the privilege of "passing" as their gender to the public do not face as severe a degree of oppression. But there are varying degrees of oppression experienced by women with varying degrees of wealth and racial privilege, and that doesn't stop society from recognizing that they need affinity spaces like historically women's colleges.

As Hadley Ott '24J, pointed out, "trans men oft face gender discrimination on the basis of their trans identity." This discrimination comes in the forms of erasure, harassment and targeted violence due to bigotry. Even if they identify as masculine under a system that prizes masculinity, the marginalized status of trans men should not be discredited and invalidated. In fact, failing to live up to masculine ideals created and promoted by patriarchy is a cause of suffering for many trans men. The patriarchy harms everyone. And while many affinity spaces exist for women, there are few that are explicitly welcoming of trans and nonbinary people. This can result in many trans and nonbinary people feeling like they aren't accepted anywhere; they feel too queer for men's spaces and too masc for historically women's spaces, including Smith.

Raia Gutman '26 said, "Many cis students come here expecting to only meet other women, and their adjustment to the presence of trans Smithies can be harmful to those of us who find ourselves explaining and justifying our presence here. Many faculty assume all their students identify as women and use she/her pronouns. I've talked to several people who are nervous to correct their professors out of fear of creating awk-

wardness or being treated differently, and that makes for a worsened academic experience." Alette Matthews '26 agreed, and said, "I've felt a mix of both acceptance and a silent othering... the assumption that all students on campus are women is quite pervasive."

The Wellesley administration's stated opposition to inclusion of gender minorities other than women comes off as hypocritical. They claim to be in favor of uplifting women and people of marginalized identities, but trans and nonbinary people are still marginalized even if they don't identify as women. As Matthews pointed out, "[historically women's colleges] are meant to be safe educational environments for those not welcome elsewhere." Institutions that seek to uplift gender minorities should include trans and nonbinary people, even those who identify as masc or as men, as beneficiaries of their efforts. One would be remiss to criticize Wellesley for contradicting its purported values regarding gender without calling out Smith for doing the same. "Smith's admissions policy pretends as though 'woman' and 'female' are stable, definable terms and that it is always possible to delineate one's identity between female or not, nonbinary or not, consistent or not. Meanwhile, the first unit in SWG 150, one of the more popular classes

*"I've felt a mix of both acceptance and a silent othering... the assumption that all students on campus are women is quite pervasive."*

—Alette Matthews '26

at Smith, is all about challenging the claim of the existence of a stable, logical gender binary," said Gutman.

This example perfectly illustrates Smith's tendency to performatively ac-

knowledge gender diversity without actually implementing trans-affirming policies. Gutman suggested that Smith should amend its gender policy to resemble that of Mount Holyoke, which is inclusive of female, trans and nonbinary applicants. Ott added that "Smith and other HWCs have a responsibility to be not only more trans-affirming but also more welcoming of more students of color. Especially trans students of color. When black trans women are free, we are all free."



# Emulate Magazine is Reimagining a Platform for Artists at Smith

**SOPHIA HAYDON-KHAN '25** “Emulate” formed  
ASSIST. ARTS EDITOR in 2019 as an “an-  
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azine,” as described by Editor in Chief AC Manning '25, before gradually shifting to become the arts and literary magazine it is today. Beginning as an affiliate of “Labrys,” the English department’s literary magazine founded in 2001, “Emulate” stepped up to the task of filling the void left by “Labrys” sudden radio-silence in 2018. Although it has maintained the tradition of publishing themed issues, “Emulate” no longer publishes the interviews and essays it used to, operating less subversively than it did in the past. Manning largely cites the pandemic as a culprit for the lack of information about the end of “Labrys” run and “Emulate”’s establishment, but, nonetheless, this shifted some responsibility to “Emulate” and sharpened their literary focus.

Each issue of “Emulate” is organized around a theme. Past issues have explored a variety of topics, ranging from “adolescence,” “intimacy,” and “The Weekend,” to “rites and rituals” and, most recently, “flights.” Submissions grapple with these concepts through poetry, prose, visual art, film and music. The theme for their upcoming issue is “redefining love,” which Manning elaborated on.

“You almost don’t need to say redefining love because love has so many different meanings, but we put that word in there to force people to think outside of the stereotypical definition of love — it’s about pushing the limits,” said Manning. Explaining the influences that led to the selection of this topic, she cited theorist Bell Hook’s work: “‘The Practice of Freedom’ is a really incredible essay about redefining love in reference to Black liberation. I was really inspired by that.”

Since her appointment as Editor-in-Chief in 2022, Manning has worked to reestablish “Emulate” as an open space for student work and introduce the circulation of print editions. Due to a stipulation in the organization’s initial charter that limited “Emulate”’s publishing abilities to an online platform, receiving funding from Smith’s SGA became an ordeal she was not prepared for,



PHOTO BY PHOTO EDITOR SHERRY LI '25

being both understaffed and experiencing a significant learning curve for running a magazine. Nevertheless, moving “Emulate” from an online-only publication to a print one was critical for Manning. “There’s a very hidden literary culture on campus. Maybe [it is] even non-existent — that’s the way it feels sometimes: if you don’t see a magazine on a table, you aren’t going to read it, you know? Even if there’s an online version” she said.

Feeling a need for creative spaces on campus is not a sentiment expressed by Manning alone. Magdalena Deniz '23, who worked on “Emulate” for the past three years, reiterated a belief in the importance of a wider spectrum of artistic spheres at Smith. “At Smith there are spaces for students to submit art; for example, I participated in the Nolan Art Lounge. That’s a good step in the right direction, but it would be nice if there was a space for more temporary art to be hung up in a more public area than Hillyer. The gallery environment is very sterile — I feel like it limits some forms of art,” Deniz said.

Her words signal a need for more public, interactive engagement within the Smith and Five College community — a need “Emulate” addresses. Assistant Head of Poetry, Eleya Bayer '26, reiterated the importance of community interaction, putting particular emphasis on the magazine’s contribution to highlighting marginalized voices on campus.

“It’s so amazing for me to see how everyone from all different parts of the world and all different identities have contributed to the magazine. I think that’s what is so important about it. I feel like a lot of voices at Smith aren’t really highlighted by the administration, and ‘Emulate’ offers this really great opportunity to highlight the people who aren’t necessarily being showcased,” Bayer said.

“Emulate” contributor, Lulu Wang '26, is grateful for the opportunity to display her artwork, pointing that it is a tool for young artists at Smith to gain professional experience. “If you want to become an artist in the future, you need to be publishing. This is a good chance for us to submit our artwork and receive that feedback from other people,” said Wang.

The magazine’s team is dedicated to ensuring its longevity. Additionally, some of their short- and medium-term goals include heightening levels of readership and potentially reworking Emulate back to something similar to its earlier, more anti-establishment beginnings. Bayer also hopes to involve more people of color in the magazine’s future.

“Highlighting POC work is super important, and I think at Smith it needs to be done more. I want Emulate to become a place where people of color and Indigenous people’s work can be highlighted — a safe, carefully curated environment,” Bayer said.



# Pulling Away from the “Pioneers”: Smith Athletics Hosts Panel on the Mascot Debate

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On April 21, Smith Athletics hosted a panel to support and facilitate ongoing discussion about changing Smith's mascot from the Pioneers due to its colonial connotations. The panel featured Karly Toledo '21, an Indigenous former Smith student-athlete, her colleague Margaret Faliano from the organization Illuminative, Indigenous Computer Science professor Johanna Brewer and American Studies professor Christen Mucher.

This panel was organized by Willa Goldman '23, Caroline Durr '24, Katherine Graham '23 and Sofia Trotta '23 from the rowing team along with the Smith College Sport Committee for Inclusion and Diversity (SCID). They organized the panel following a survey sent out to the entire Athletics Department asking about the athletic community's feelings on the current mascot. This survey was sent out to current student-athletes as well as some club teams.

The students thought the panel addressed a need for further context on the history of the word “Pioneer” and the impact that word has on the community.

“When we sent out the survey on the Pioneer mascot at Smith in March we noticed a lack of understanding about the direct impact of the word pioneer...we found ourselves struggling with questions of intention and impact. What is the direct impact of the word pioneer, and extent of that impact, on Indigenous students and our peers whose histories are systemically erased? How does the word enable those of us who benefit from that erasure to continue in ignorance?” the organizers said in a statement to the Sophian.

The panel was one step to answering some of these necessary questions. Mucher began the discussion by explaining how the “Pioneer Valley” was initially named as such to increase tourism in the area by emphasizing how the valley was one of the “first lands” to be discovered. She explained that the definition we recognize of being the first in a certain field or breaking barriers still has this underlying colo-

nist mindset.

Toledo elaborated on this by explaining how this term made her feel uncomfortable during her time at Smith and how it has likely led to a lack of Native athletes at Smith. She talked about how her experience on Smith Rowing allowed her to form deep connections with her peers and even connect with her culture through her time on the water, but she did not feel represented in her identity as an Indigenous student-athlete within Smith Athletics.

Toledo recalled how she was the only Indigenous athlete on campus and one of the only Indigenous students in the entire institution and asked the athletes to look around and think about why that has not changed much years later.

The panel discussed how easy it is to just accept an institution's mascot, especially when it is not an explicitly racialized term like the Pioneers. Faliano, a representative from Illuminative, a Native women-led social justice organization, spoke on how mascots can seem insignificant to some, but, for Native people, they represent years of erasure and often correspond with discriminatory behaviors targeting Indigenous people.

She explained how mascots are typically non-human entities that everyone can relate to. People can identify with the fight of “The Lions” or the competitive fire of “The Heat”, but while mascots like “The Pioneers” are not explicitly racialized or derogatory, racial minority groups cannot or do not want to relate to that title, even if it is intended to be used for its meaning of breaking barriers.

Faliano also mentioned how using Native people as mascots, even with the intent of “honoring them,” only further contributes to the dehumanization of Native peoples and stereotypes that erase their real world experiences. These mascots also encourage discriminatory



PHOTO BY PHOTO EDITOR SHERRY LI '25

behavior on the opponent's side including derogatory statements or gestures targeting Native people due to them acting as a symbol of the team.

So now that the exclusionary and harmful history of the Pioneers is revealed, what is the next step? The discussion addressed this with the final question for the panel, “What can we do to be allies and support Indigenous peers on our predominantly white campus?” Faliano called on the Smith athletes to be active allies and explain how any of these changes, like changing the mascot, will be slow and have a lot of resistance and that white student-athletes can have a louder voice in this fight.

The organizers commented on the power of the panel and their hopes for this discussion moving forward: “The panel surpassed every expectation and hope we had. We hope Smith and Smith Athletics will continue to have these discussions and give ears and platforms to Indigenous students and student-athletes, especially as the official mascot review moves into full swing over the summer and next semester.” It is evident that this debate is far from over. The organizers are in the process of discussing next steps for the change with administration and hope to also open up the discussion to the entire student body in the coming academic year.