

THE SOPHIAN

Team Culture and The Success of Smith Crew

OLIVIA MENDOZA '27

SPORTS & WELLNESS WRITER
Smith Crew kicked off their 2025-2026 season with an impressive start. The Varsity Eight finished fifth in the Collegiate Eights at the Quinsigamond Snake Regatta and Head of the Charles Regatta and sixth at Head of the Fish Regatta. With strong performances in the pair event and second varsity eight, the team is looking to continue this momentum heading into winter training and eventually, their spring season.

After winning the New England Women's and Men's Athletic Conference (NEWMAC) Rowing Championship in 2024, Smith finished third in 2025. Having missed the mark for qualification for the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Championship last spring, the team is working their way back up to the top.

"Spring 2025 was a

huge learning experience for our team. We definitely were faced with some challenges and ended up tying at NEWMAC for the team points trophy and unfortunately ended up on the wrong side of that tiebreaker and that motivated the team tremendously," said Head Crew Coach Clare Doyle. "We walked away honestly, a little pissed off, a little bit frustrated, a little bit with a chip on our shoulder. What I loved about the energy of this group was they did not let that become a weight, and instead they used that as a total motivator, a major fuel source."

Entering the new season, the team has re-committed to building a strong team culture, aiming to build lasting relationships with each other and form better cohesion out on the water.

"I think the team dynamics are really good, and I

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PHOTO BY CANDACE HOPE AC '28

The End of an Era

Hungry Ghost Bread to Close After 22 Years

MIRIAM PENNOCK '28
 NEWS EDITOR

On the Tuesday immediately following Thanksgiving, Hungry Ghost Bread, a cornerstone of the Northampton and Smith College communities for more than two decades, announced its plan to close its doors on Dec. 20. The bakery, located just steps from Smith campus, has been a frequent stop for generations of students seeking fresh bread, cookies and a welcoming environment. Its closure marks the end of an era for many Smithies who saw the bakery as an integral part of campus life.

For owners Jonathan Stevens and Cheryl Maffei, the decision comes at the end of nearly 22 years running the retail shop and almost a lifetime of breadmaking.

"Cheryl does the hard work of actually running the business, so I get to bake the bread," Stevens said.

Maffei emphasized that Hungry Ghost was created to bring people together. Before opening their beloved retail location, Stevens ran a wholesale operation out of their basement.

"It was lonely," Maffei said. "You get to meet people when you're dropping off the bread. But we were

looking for a community experience. And the best way to do that is to have a bakery where people could drop by. That's what we did. And it worked. We made friends. We became part of the community."

The owners say that the bakery will officially close at the end of the day on Dec. 20. January will be spent cleaning the space out, and in February the new owners, Sam Coates-Finke and Ana Maria Valle Bendezú, will begin renovations.

"I have a broken wrist... and when you're in your mid-60s and your toes start to curl

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Season's Greetings

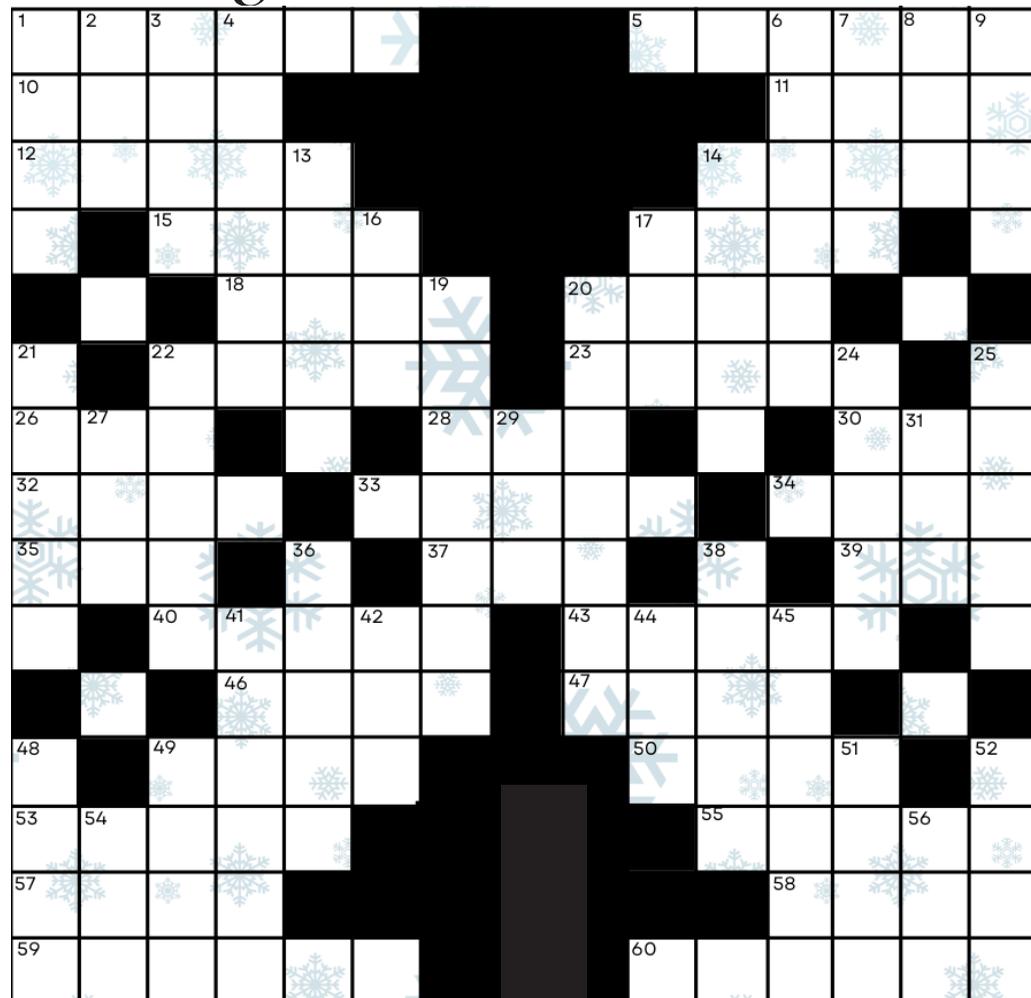
CAROLINE COOK '28
CROSSWORD & GAMES TEAM

Across

1. "Tis the _____"
5. Like an upgraded streaming plan
10. Shape of a rainbow
11. Puts on a wish list
12. "Silent Night," for one
14. North Pole toy makers
15. Wicked
17. Move wings rapidly
18. Ancient poem
20. Win someone over, as a pitch
22. A deadly sin
23. Minor adjustment
26. Hit the slopes
28. Earth Day mo.
30. Be in debt
32. What the animals do in the movie "Sing"
33. Don't slip on this
34. Cookie add-in
35. Org. for youth basketball tournaments
37. Tennis do-over
39. Fleur-de-____
40. Nick name?
43. Surname on Santa's return address
46. Dance in a pit
47. Heavenly instrument
49. Chocolate choice
50. Liberal arts college on the Hudson
53. Rave island of the Mediterranean
55. Walk pigeon-style
57. "Whip It" band
58. Actor Baldwin
59. Rhyming quartet
60. She tops the charts every December

Down

1. Coal carrier for the naughty list?
2. Unfinished equality



3. 43,560 square feet
4. Snow remover
6. "Deck the Halls" snippet
7. Reply requested on a holiday party invite
8. Scrape (by)
9. To be, to Brutus
13. Procedures involving suction, informally
14. Generous DeGeneres
16. Totally on fire?
17. ____ and far between
19. Braided bread
20. What a cat does after a nap
21. Thing to write when you'd rather be home for the holidays
22. Source of many winter infections
24. Store famous for "cash" that isn't really cash

25. Drink Addison Rae prefers the diet version of
27. Soul maker?
29. Go No. 1
31. Console everyone wanted under the tree circa 2007
36. Best Picture winner in 2025
38. Gold purity measure
41. Prime source of last-minute gifts?
42. Sound of disapproval
44. Black, yellow, or chocolate
45. Commotion
48. Santa's primary audience
49. Prima donna
51. Sandwich shop
52. Part of a foot
54. "Wanna ____?"
56. International Energy Agency, briefly



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What World do you Want to Live in?

A Conversation with Carrie Baker

ELIE PICHANICK '28
PHOTO EDITOR

Carrie Baker was teaching Gender, Law, and Policy at Smith College in 2022 when a student in the back row raised their hand.

“Professor Baker, do you know you are on the professor watch list?” they asked.

“And I’m like, what?” Baker said, relaying the story, “I didn’t know.”

The conservative organization Turning Point USA, founded by right-wing activist Charlie Kirk, created and maintains the “Professor Watchlist.” Its stated mission is to “expose and document college professors who discriminate against conservative students and advance leftist propaganda in the classroom.” Baker explained that she was added to this list after she co-wrote a guest essay in *The New York Times* with Carly Thomsen, an assistant professor at Middlebury College, and Zach Levitt, a Graphics Editor and Writer for Opinion at *The New York Times*.

“(This list) has not intimidated me,” Baker clarified, “but that’s because I’m in a supportive place.”

Under the Trump administration, scholars and journalists continuously face threats of censorship and extermination. Over the past few months, well-loved na-

tionwide programming, including PBS and NPR, has faced temporary shutdowns and threats of funding cuts — and these are just the stories that have made headlines. Scholars and journalists who speak out, like Baker, are coping with the new understanding that the organizations which ostensibly support them may actually be targeting them.

Over the course of her career in academia and journalism, Baker has never allowed herself to be silenced. “I want to act like I’m living in the world I want to live in, not like I’m living in the world I fear I’m in,” Baker said.

Baker is currently Chair of the Program for the Study of Women, Gender, and Sexuality at Smith. Before teaching in Northampton, she worked at Berry College in Rome, Ga. She started as a visiting assistant professor at Smith and was appointed to a tenure-track position in 2011.

Baker also works as a contributing editor and writer for *Ms.* magazine. She describes *Ms.* as “the magazine of the women’s movement.” There, she has worked to inform the public about the danger the U.S. poses to women and girls, crisis pregnancy centers, and abortion, among others.

“I’ve been at co-ed institutions and institutions in the

South and conservative areas, and I used to always say that I always felt like I had to look over my shoulder in those contexts because (they were) much more...critical of the kinds of things that I was doing: gender studies,” she said. “Coming to Smith was so nice because I felt like I didn’t have to constantly apologize or be careful.”

Baker noted how, since the first Trump term, gender studies programs in the South are collapsing. “Faculty are fleeing, and, you know, they’re burning books, like at New College (of) Florida.”

In a recent letter to the editor published in *The New York Times*, Baker explained just how grateful she is to be at Smith during the current political moment. The institution allows her to do the work that she is passionate about, including several letters to the editor published in *The Times*, without attempting to censor her. Baker’s piece on crisis pregnancy centers, which contributed to her placement on the “Professor Watchlist,” discussed the serious issues that the centers create.

“(The crisis pregnancy centers) try to confuse, like they lure people in with free pregnancy tests and free ultrasounds. And then they tell them that abortion will kill them and that it will cause breast cancer,”



PHOTO BY ELIE PICHANICK '28

Baker explained. Baker has conducted a plethora of research on crisis pregnancy centers and is currently co-writing a book on the history of these centers.

For women in the 11 states where abortion was banned with no exceptions following the 2022 Supreme Court decision, which reversed *Roe v. Wade*, these centers are one of a handful of ways to receive pregnancy tests and ultrasounds.

“Fifteen years ago, we had to sort of warn people that *Roe* was going to be overturned. Now it’s been overturned, and people know what’s going on, but you know it’s getting worse and worse, and we are constantly having to chase the latest story. I mean, it’s just a deluge of bad news constantly, I can’t keep up with it,” Baker explained.

During his first term, President Trump referred to journalists as “the enemy

of the American people.” Since then, the funding he has pulled from media organizations across the country has sparked fear of retaliation for any criticism of the U.S. government.

Baker has weighed the consequences but believes that it is too important not to vocalize her frustration. “It’s not even worth... shutting myself up because that’s almost worse than whatever might happen to me because I speak (out),” she explained.

In light of the political climate, Baker has had to take precautions like removing her information from public sites and places and warning her family members about potential backlash.

Nevertheless, Baker refuses to censor herself. “I think a lot of what they’re doing is intimidation, and if we get intimidated, then we let them win. And I think I have a side of me that’s just like, no effing way,” she said.

Team Culture and The Success of Smith Crew

OLIVIA MENDOZA '27
SPORTS & WELLNESS WRITER

feel like everyone's really committed to the team, and to put what you have on a day out there, and give whatever your 100% is of that day," said Leni Hicks-Dutt '27. "And I think everyone has played a role in that. I think the captains and the senior class have been exceptional leaders."

Having the most experience in big races and the long interim training blocks between the fall and spring racing seasons, the ten seniors on the team have a deep understanding of what it takes to get their team motivated to compete at the highest level.

"Our senior class that showed up this fall, has really stepped up into the role and has really been excited to lead. And I think you could tell they were excited in the spring," Hicks-Dutt said.

For this program, progress and success isn't just measured by numbers they post, but also by the community they have been able to form over the past four years.

"Going into this senior season, something that I've been really excited about is creating a team culture where everyone is really excited to go fast," said Rayna Rose '26. "It was really fun to come into the season and meet all of the first years and meet all the walk-ons and get everybody integrated and excited to race."

At the beginning of each academic year, the team hosts Walk-On-Week, which gives Smith students the opportunity to try out for the team if they were not recruited prior to arriving on campus. The program welcomed 20 first-years and walk-ons this year, which has contributed to a big energy shift that has been felt throughout the rest of the team.

"They've been a huge part of the momentum of this year. Our first year recruits just came in, having done the work ready to go, completely bought into the team culture we're building, and have totally motivated the team, and just done a great job this whole fall," Doyle said. "And then our walk-ons have been outstanding, most of them completely brand new to the sport."

Crew is the only varsity sport on campus that does not exclusively source their student-athletes through the recruiting process. Unlike other sports teams at Smith that have an average roster size of 20 athletes, the crew team has 47 student-athletes this year. Due to their large numbers, returners have made it a priority to ensure newcomers felt welcome and part of the team since day one.

"What I love about the walk-on program is it reminds our seniors and our juniors how exciting it is to learn this sport for the first

time," said Doyle. "It reminds everybody how special it is to discover something you love for the first time. So we're getting to see 11 new members of the team fall in love, or fall in love again with the sport."

The effort put into nurturing the team culture translated nicely throughout the fall racing season. Even during the actual races, the program has been able to find meaningful mantras to stay focused and motivated throughout the entirety of the race.

"Swing together is something we say a lot and trust each other, go fast. Because you can't make a boat go fast if you don't trust one another," said Nadia Grinyuk '28. "And be-

ing able to find each other and swing and follow every move exactly is very important, and I think we did a really good job of that."

"(The fall season is) not the peak of the year, that's just a stepping stone along the way to really (work at) what we're trying to achieve long term. We're just trying to use every opportunity we have to compete as fuel and motivation towards what we're trying to do internally and that is going as fast as we possibly can for this team," said Doyle.

"For this team, we can't control what other programs are doing. We can only train our best and put together our best team environment and give every athlete the opportunity to grow and challenge

themselves."

Maintaining a strong foundation of team culture for the 2026 season will continue to be the driving force in the team's performance down the road.

"The big goal is to go to NCAA, I think it doesn't stop there though," said Hicks-Dutt. "I think the more important goal is making sure we continue to be Smith Crew, and continue to be the people we are with the character we have, and let our rowing speak for itself in the way we come across as a team."

The official racing season for crew kicks off at the start of April. Until then, they will be training through the winter to work towards a nationals qualification.



PHOTO COURTESY OF SMITH ATHLETICS

The End of an Era

Hungry Ghost Bread Closing After 22 Years

MIRIAM PENNOCK '28
NEWS EDITOR

and you probably have cataracts, it's time to move on, it's as simple as that," Maffei said. "I want to spend more time with my grandchildren and do something else with what will hopefully be 20 more years of my life."

Stevens agreed, adding that "it's time for somebody else to do it."

While many community members speculated online about whether Hungry Ghost might relocate, rebrand or reopen under different terms, Maffei and Stevens were clear: the breadmaking chapter of their lives is coming to a close. "That's on them," Maffei said of the incoming owners. "I don't know what they're going to do."

Smith students have long been a visible and enthusiastic portion of Hungry Ghost Bread's customer base.

"Oh my God, what a bunch of cookie eaters," Maffei laughed. "We can't keep up with the cookies. But they clearly love the bread too...we know when the Smithies are around."

Stevens added that Mountain Day is particularly noticeable. "We know when it's Mountain Day too. They come get things, and we see them walking back up the hill from town."

Parents and alumni also contribute to the bakery's

connection with Smith.

"We know when parents are dropping students off or visiting," Stevens said. "And we know when reunions are, people come in, dressed in white, excited about getting the bread they remembered from years before."

Students echoed that sense of attachment.

Reagan Cobb '28 said they often visit the bakery two or more times a month.

"I really like that it's almost always fresh or at least warm," they said. "It's a very homey environment... and it's nice to have something freshly baked and handmade and warm when you're so far from home." Some of Cobb's favorites include the French batard, chocolate chip cookies and blueberry-lemon scones.

The ownership change, Cobb said, feels uncertain. "Change isn't always bad, but it's not always good either... It's an establishment I really like, and it's concerning if staff are being let go."

Other students shared similar appreciation. Itzel Aleman Flores '27, who last visited Hungry Ghost over Thanksgiving break, said she values the "homemade" quality of the bread, something that wasn't common where she grew up.

"It's really good," she said, adding that she hopes prices remain reasonable.

Tabitha Kibwaa '27 said

she last visited in the spring and loves to try new pastries. "They do good stuff," she said. She also likes how the building looks as well as the bakery's collaborations with local artists. The ownership change didn't come as a surprise to her. "A lot of places on Main Street are changing hands," she said.

Still, few students are aware of the past of the building that Hungry Ghost Bread occupies. Maffei and Stevens explained that the structure is owned by Smith College, but was originally a New England Telephone and Telegraph Company exchange building.

"They build them on the same plan. They're perfectly square and have that white wooden fringe," Stevens said. Before becoming a bakery, the building housed several businesses, including a chiropractor's office. The bakery completely transformed the interior in 2004, swapping dropped ceilings and tiny rooms for the warm space students and the community now recognize.

Beyond selling bread, Hungry Ghost created traditions, and a community. The bakery hosted the annual Wonder-Not Bread Festival, featuring vendors, samples of fresh bread, live music, puppets and parades, accompanied by the Expandable Brass Band.

"The bread festivals have been very memorable," Maffei said. "Those are always really jovial times... and a lot of Smithies would come and volunteer, especially with the puppets. It was kind of a 'come join us' day and they would."

The owners said the outpouring of love and support following their public announcement has been overwhelming. Their Facebook post received nearly a hundred comments from community members expressing gratitude and well wishes, sharing memories and more.

"We've read them all," Maffei said. "It's a little overwhelming. But there it is, all of those people commenting. They all have relationships with us, and then some."

As the bakery prepares to close and transfer ownership, both owners are reflective but content.

"Yes, the bread is good and the cookies are great, but it's really been about the relationships we've made."

"We're grateful for the relationships... it's really been about the relationships," Maffei said. "Yes, the bread is good and the cookies are great, but it's really been about the relationships we've made. It's bound to happen when you make hundreds of loaves a day, thousands a week, and God, I don't even want to

say a million a year. That's a lot of bread and it's a lot of hard work."

Stevens agreed, saying, "It's just a privilege to be part of a real economic exchange, that's what economics are supposed to be. We know our farmers, our millers, our customers. We've just felt connected. It's been a privilege. We appreciate that people have been enthusiastic and patient when we've run out of bread or when things weren't quite the way we wished they were. We're not a perfect cafe. We don't have coffee...we play music loud and we're a little rough around the edges. But we're focused on good food, and people seem to have appreciated that."

As Hungry Ghost prepares to close, Northampton residents and Smith students are saying goodbye to

a business that has shaped local routines for more than two decades. For Stevens, the handoff feels timely.

"It's time for somebody else to do it," he said.

Maffei, reflecting on the community's response to the announcement, delivered a final message to customers and neighbors: "Just, thank you."

Izzy Roland brings Dropout Humor and Film School Experience to Independent Feature “D(e)ad”

SADIE MCRAE '26

ARTS & CULTURE ASST. EDITOR

“D(e)ad,” written by and starring comedienne Isabella Roland, is an independent feature-length film about a young woman named Tillie (Roland) whose estranged father dies and begins haunting every member of her family but her. The film is a comedy based on her autobiography, bringing together three generations of Roland’s real life family, with a powerful emotional core rooted in familial bonds and the struggle to reconcile with a fraught relationship that can never be resolved. Roland gives a heartbreaking and hilarious performance, with direction by her real-life mother Claudia Lonow. “D(e)ad” is currently on a fan-supported theatrical run, which began through Kickstarter last year.

Roland’s Kickstarter had a funding period of 30

days and raised \$258,549, over 300% more than the pledged goal of \$75,000. Their pledged goal was reached in four hours and as they continued to get donations, they were able to get additional features outside of the bare bones of the film production, such as an original score, a trailer, color grading and a film festival budget. Since then, the film has been shown in theaters internationally through audience requests and growing hype.

Roland is best known for her participation in Dropout, a production company and streaming service that began in 2018 after rebranding CollegeHumor, a primarily Youtube-based company. Dropout continues to grow in popularity due to its large group of returning performers in various original comedy series, including a Dungeons & Dragons play, “Dimension 20.”

Roland took improv classes out of college and became immersed in the Los Angeles world of comedy which led her to Dropout. Through the comedy community, she made connections that became essential to her ability to put a film together. Erin Dellorso, who produced the film along with her partner Julianne Dowler, was one of these connections who had produced several shows and knew how to bring a crew together. This crew included other Dropout favorites, like Vic Michaelis, Zac Oyama and Brennan Lee Mulligan (Dimension 20’s founder, Dungeon Master and Roland’s husband).

Roland and I met to discuss the making of “D(e)ad,” her comedy origins, the anti-capitalist subtext of “Mary Poppins” which she has been watching weekly with her Mulligan and her toddler. Besides discussing the political potential of TV

shows for kids (if you are wondering, we also talked about Bluey, which Roland described as “sometimes too deep”), we related about the uncertain feelings of graduating from undergrad with an understanding of film but little resources for actually making one.

Roland explained to me that when she got out of college, there was an immediate disconnect between what she had learned in film class and the actual practical application of that knowledge without the equipment or a crew of peers. This led her down the sketch and improv avenue from which she acquired the community that allowed her to put the pieces of this feature together and apply her college experience, which she highlights as primarily the ability to write words into Final Draft.

In our interview, Roland also warned that networking out of college is a vapid process but stressed the importance of making genuine connections, encouraging recent film graduates “be open to meeting really talented people, because you will. And then having an ensemble and a community is what makes art happen.” Bringing together a group of newbies in feature-length filmmaking also meant that each participant was incredibly invested in

the production and created a comfortable environment for learning as they went.

Roland recalled that “at every stage of my career post college, I was making do with what I had.” In terms of creating an independent feature-length film, she experienced an appropriate level of chaotic money struggles and last-minute location switch-ups. She actually enjoyed the confines of independent production which allowed her not to get stuck on certain unachievable story aspects.

Roland describes the pleasant chaos as a constant feeling of, “Oh my god, we are making an indie movie and we’ve got to do it all right now. How crazy!” Thanks to the team’s excitement, Roland’s flexibility as a writer and the production team’s ability to make this feel exciting, the chaos became a welcome challenge that felt right.

Giving advice to Smith College students, Roland emphasized the importance of creating connections and understanding that what you have is what you need. She embodies an exciting example of a career trajectory that spans different avenues of performance and production that is still growing.

You can request a screening on their website deadthefilm.com.



PHOTO OBTAINED FROM IMDB

Smith's Bubble: Finding Strength In Solidarity

SWATI ERNST '29
OPINIONS WRITER

During the college application process, I spoke with a Smith College alumna who spoke fervently of the “Smith College bubble.” She described Smith as being an echochamber, or bubble, of progressive thought in which she wished she could reside forever.

Smith College is renowned for its radically progressive campus. Numerous clubs and campus-based organizations are based on activism. Walk-outs, protests and other politically motivated events are common occurrences on campus.

Although the productivity of activism within a campus of homogeneous thought may be questionable, ultimately, it provides the ability to translate consciousness-raising into feasible efforts for change.

This is not to devalue the importance of diversity of thought. It is to say that diversity of thought is not the only condition of change.

The concepts of thought “bubbles” or “echochambers” typically have a negative connotation: there are no radical ideas within campus conversations, therefore no solidified change can be made within those communities. On Smith’s campus, this concept does ring true to an extent — most of the stu-

dent population holds similar progressive thoughts.

I would argue that this is not such a bad thing. Although Smithies may joke that the lack of an alternative perspective to that of the 2,500 woke lesbians with microbangs residing on campus cannot be productive in creating change, there are benefits to homogeneous thought.

Firstly, mobilization to create change within student organizations and clubs is much easier with a common goal. Take Smith’s Student Justice for Palestine — with shared motivation, the orga-

nization has organized several walk outs and events within this semester. This might not have been possible without their ideological alignment concerning Palestine.

Some may see Smith’s bubble as a barrier to diverse perspectives and thoughts — there’s only so much growth that can be achieved in a community that does not challenge its own views.

This perspective is not invalid. There are restrictions to Smith’s bubble, and echo chambers can create unnecessary exclusionary thought. However, these re-

strictions do inherently not hinder the productivity of shared thought.

Smith’s campus may encompass a bubble of similar, progressive thought, but it is not the nation-wide majority. As seen in recent presidential elections, a majority of the United States population is opposed to this radical thought, and leans conservative — electing a presidential incumbent who, many Smithies could say, directly opposes the thought held within this bubble.

It is critical to have a shared safe space to draw strength in consolidated

thought, so that we can bring that strength back into the wider world. Smith’s “bubble” is a space in which students can collectively scrutinize their own thoughts and challenge their views, in order to solidify them.

As the winter break rapidly approaches, students are bound to return home to conversations with family members who do not hold their same beliefs or views. Having been in a space that allows them to solidify their own views, they will be able to bring substantial arguments to the dinner table, both physically and literally.



ILLUSTRATION BY OLIVIA PETTY '26



STEM VS. ART MAJOR

ILLUSTRATED BY AVERY JESSEN '29

EDITORIAL STATEMENT

Dear Readers,

We, the 2025 - 2026 Editorial Board, are proud to present our last print edition of 2025. Ever a labor of love, we would like to thank our hard-working editors, reporters, translators and photographers for their work this semester. Recently, we have been fortunate enough to welcome a new batch of talented illustrators who will

brighten up our home pages with their art, fulfilling The Sophian's mission to promote free expression in a variety of mediums.

Though we're dragging our feet through finals season, the larger semester has gone by wickedly fast. Many of us are eager for a real break, some of us are preparing for (or returning from) semesters abroad and a few of us are coming

to the realization that we only have one semester left. Feelings are bittersweet, but we look forward to holding elections for next year's Editorial Board in the spring and seeing where the new year takes us.

The fall brought exciting milestones: our growing comics section, our recently revamped newsletter, our extensive local elections coverage and the publica-

tion of some of our most meaningful articles. We also congratulate our J-Term graduates and wish the best to those heading abroad in the spring.

As we look toward next semester, we remain committed to reporting on the ever-changing campus and local landscape. With beloved community spaces closing their doors and new ones opening in their

place, we hope to continue documenting how these changes shape Smith and Northampton.

Thank you for your readership.

Warmly,

Olivia Petty
Editor-in-Chief

Karen Colman-Martinez
Managing Editor