

Letter from the Chairs

by Dawn Hines and Alison Schoen

With a new year upon us, the Staff Council wants to thank all of the staff for their hard work and dedication this past year. We recognize that things have been challenging and we tip our hats to you. Without our amazing staff, Smith would not be the institution we are today.

Our goals for this year are to continue to diversify our council, make sure trainings that promote safe work environments are available to all staff members, and continue to be the collective voice of staff to the administration, faculty and students.

Starting next fall, the college will replace loans with grants, making it the first women's college to implement such a sweeping change. President Kathleen McCartney said in a letter to the community that the college will "eliminate loans from its undergraduate financial aid packages for students receiving need-based institutional grants and replace the loan amount with grants from the college." This bold move aligns with Smith's goal to expand accessibility to all qualified students regardless of financial resources.

We hope you have had a chance to tour the new Neilson Library. It truly is the academic heart of campus. Don't forget to grab a snack at the library's cafe, The Compass. Dining there or at the Campus Center Cafe is easy using the Grubhub app. We would like to give a special shout-out to our friends in Dining Services who have stepped up to offer a safe way to feed us all.

The Staff Council has been hard at work making sure that your voices are heard. Please remember that all Staff Council General Meetings, and most committee meetings, are open to all staff members. Your feedback is welcomed. Contact us at staffcouncil@smith.edu or use the anonymous form on the Staff Council webpage with any questions or concerns.

We hope to be able to resume many of our normal Staff Council-sponsored events in the spring. We look forward to gathering together, meeting new people, and having some fun.



Staff Council Roster 2021-22

Cathy Amarante, Catering Dining Manager, Dining Services
Ruth Bonilla Cuaresma, Dining Room Coordinator, Dining Services
Ashavan Doyon, Communications Coordinator, College Relations
Adrienne Figus, Mellon Project Manager, Libraries
C.M. Flynn, Circulation Associate, Libraries
Dawn Hines, Asst Director/Milestone Reunions, Development
Kelly-Jean Huard, Associate Director, Systems & Networking, Information Technology Services
Brenda Jameson, Recruiting Coordinator, Career Development
Thomas Lark, Financial Systems Coordinator, Dining Services
Andrew Maurer, Interactive Media Coordinator, Art
Ann Mayo, Manager, Security and Guest Services, Museum of Art
Stephan Mish, Sergeant, Campus Safety
Elly Mons, Pre-Health Program Director, Clark Science Center Administration, Lazarus Center
Maddy Neely, Administrative Coordinator, School for Social Work
Ali Okatan, Student Financial Services Adviser, Student Financial Services
Martin Sawyer, HVAC/R Systems Operator, Facilities Management
Alison Schoen, Smith Connector, Class Deans Office
Erin Smith, Stockroom Services Specialist, Clark Science Center Administration
Barbara Solow, Assistant Director for News and Strategic Communications, College Relations
Katherine Trzaskos, Assistant Director, Employer Relations, Career Development
Lucinda Williams, Acquisitions Supervisor, Libraries
Patricia Woods, Assistant Director, Career Development
Debra Wright, Gift Planning Admin Coordinator, Development

Community Building and De-stressing for Staff

by Kathy San Antonio

The monthly Community Building and De-stressing for Staff group has met since January '21. Staff attend for different reasons, but most come to share common and different experiences of working at Smith. The group is open to any staff member. We end the session by giving “positive affirmations.” These are some examples:

“I am super thankful to have been able to join this meeting today! ... I really do see this group as such a testament to the care of each you have for the work that you do and taking care of yourselves, so thank you so much for this space and the opportunity to (be here).”

“I’m glad to be here with you all and appreciate everything that has been shared.”

“Thank you for continuing to provide this space for us to reflect on how to make time for ourselves. Because if we can be centered and happy, then we can help those around us.”

“Thank you SO much for organizing this and for the amazing materials you shared at the beginning — those were really thought-provoking and I’m looking forward to reading them over more closely.”

“Grateful for a space to come chat with others who are going through similar feelings.”

For more information or the Zoom link to the next session, email: ksananto@smith.edu.

Smith Parents of Little Ones Group

by Nancy Zigler, Laura Gomez, and Annie DelBusto Cohen

The Smith Parents of Little Ones Group cordially invites you to join a group of students, faculty and staff who are learning and sharing ways to parent during the pandemic. We discuss questions like:

How do you engage in designing equitable playgroups for your children, knowing that the youngest are not vaccinated?

How do you create a parent community during parental leave, when you are fearing for the health of your newborn child?

How do you navigate a difficult pregnancy when having ample help may require you to interact with more people than feels comfortable?

What was it like to give birth when hospitals were advising that no visitors were allowed?

How are the kids coping, and becoming the lovely, generous, aware and adaptable human beings they are proving themselves to be?

The group came to fruition after a session of a Wurtele Center Leadership Series, titled “The New Normal.” This Zoom chat was co-hosted by Wurtele Center for Leadership Director Erin Cohn and Jandon Center for Community Engagement Assistant Director Nancy Jimenez Zigler. Near the end of the session the conversation became lively as participants started considering the practical realities of transitioning back to work in-person while navigating the challenges of parenting.

Noting the excitement of the group, Laura Gomez, Administrative Coordinator for Lewis

Global Studies and Annie DelBusto Cohen, Leadership Development Designer for the Wurtele Center, soon connected with Zigler to discuss launching a group for parents of small kids. Two meetings have been held since the start of the semester, with one more on the horizon for Fall 2021.

As a team, it’s been fascinating to see staff members from different areas of the college come together to share their experiences with their own families and their own vulnerabilities as each one navigates issues including masking small children, managing stress and anxiety, and advocating for themselves and each other.

The [Slack channel](#) with 31 members has threads from co-sleeping to daycare to kids clothing swaps. Anyone is welcome to join the monthly informal lunches or to jump in on Slack with a question or comment! We hope to see you soon.



Staff Council Info

Staff Council is a great way to be involved on campus, meet colleagues in areas of the college you might not otherwise explore, and increase your engagement in the community. Look for information about elections in the spring!

Staff Council Website
smith.edu/staffcouncil

Facebook
facebook.com/SmithStaffCouncil

Staff Council Email
staffcouncil@smith.edu

Chronicle Email
chronicle@smith.edu

Staff Listserv Sign-Up

- Go to <http://tinyurl.com/q7w6qdr>
- Click on the blue “Join Group” button,
- Choose your email preferences and click “Join Group.”

Below: A Halloween baby “parade” sponsored by the Smith Parents of Little Ones Group, October 29, 2021. Photo courtesy of Laura Gomez.



This page and opposite: Photos from the Neilson Library renovation, now complete.

Take some time to visit the renovated Neilson Library, now open to Smith students, faculty and staff who are in the campus COVID-19 screening program. The spring issue of the Chronicle will include a discussion with some of the staff members who have been involved with the library's reopening.

Changes in Dining: Upgrades for the Present and Future

by Thomas Lark

Here at Smith, every department has seen significant change over the past couple of years. While much of that has been driven by the pandemic, we have also seen how upgrades to technology, new physical resources, and a focus on enhancing the student experience have affected the way we 'do business' at the College. Perhaps no department has been influenced more greatly than Dining Services.

Planning for the fall semester started in the spring of '21, at a time when self-serve buffets were not legally allowed to operate, and in-person dining was severely restricted due to social distancing requirements. Given that self-service and in-person dining was the standard format for all residential kitchens, major changes to service needed to be made.

Fortunately, the implementation of the Grubhub app during the previous academic year meant a system was in place to alleviate long lines. Utilizing the program this fall in two residential locations as well as the two retail locations allows for easy grab-and-go with limited in-person contact. In addition to being able to order ahead through Grubhub, reusable grab-and-go containers are now available at all locations. With the easing of restrictions on self-serve buffets, students can now get their own food to-go at all locations, and eat wherever they please.

Unsurprisingly, supply chain issues have taken their toll on food purchasing. Many ingredient substitutions and recipe changes were made to accommodate what suppliers have available. Nonetheless, there has only been an 84% 'fill rate' on food orders from US Foods, the primary vendor for Dining Services. When one out of every 6 items ordered is cancelled or not delivered, last minute changes become a regular occurrence. Sometimes products are switched out by

the vendor for a similar item that has different allergens or nutritional content, so double-checking orders has taken on extra importance this semester.

Fortunately, Smith has well established relationships with local food vendors that have significantly alleviated this pressure. Getting deliveries directly from the farmer/ beekeeper/ dairy cuts out the weak middle links that exist in national and international supply chains and makes for a more reliable and robust food system. According to the [AASHE 2021 Sustainable Campus Index](#), Smith dining ranks 6th in the country for sustainable dining practices.

Utilizing local vendors and an increase in grab-and-go service have been helpful during the pandemic, but those changes have been in the works for dining services for a while now. Pre-pandemic, the [Residential Experience Working Group \(REWG\) did a comprehensive study](#) and produced a report on what operational enhancements were needed to improve the dining experience on campus. The major themes included an increase in food service hours, more diverse dietary accommodations within each dining location, more equity in access to retail dining options, and an increased focus on sustainability; specifically, reducing food waste.

This semester, students received an increase in 'Dining Dollars' to be used at the Campus Center Café and the new Compass Café in the Neilson Library, in addition to the ability to use a traditional 'meal swipe' at these locations. These options have greatly increased access to retail options for all students. Chase House is now open continuously from breakfast through dinner, so students don't have to worry about missing a meal and having to wait for the next meal period to start. Combined, these changes give students access to hot food for 15.5 hours out of the day, a significant improvement over the 6 hours noted by the REWG.

Menus have changed to accommodate common student requests. The kitchens at both Cutter-Ziskind and Lamont serve Halal meals. Lamont is also free of the 8 major allergens, plus sesame and coconut. Vegan and vegetarian options have been expanded across campus so students aren't

stuck feeling like they have to eat at only one location. By implementing regular menu cycles at the houses, students know that their favorite items will come back regularly, and kitchen staff can focus on reducing waste and perfecting recipes as they get more familiar with them.

While there were significant hurdles in staffing at the beginning of the semester, dining services has worked during the summer and throughout the semester to fill vacated positions. Additional jobs have also been created, most of which have been filled at this time. In all, there are more people currently employed by dining services than at any time in the previous decade.

It is not a stretch to say that the COVID-19 pandemic, more so than any other event in our lifetimes, has produced significant changes in the way we do work. In dining it has driven change, but it has not shifted the focus from the bigger goals within the department. Enhancing the student experience has been a central focus since before the pandemic. Students now have more options and more access to a dining program that is more sustainable than ever before. During the pandemic and after, expanding upon that work will continue in the years to come.



6 Benefits of Being on Staff Council

Share your voice

We have a real seat at the table, and a history of effecting real change. Become an active member of staff council to make your voice heard regarding real issues that affect staff.

Advocate for staff equity

Smith staff are vital to fulfilling Smith's mission of educating women of promise. Become an active member of staff council and help make the campus community aware of the important role we play at the college.

Recommend new policies

Staff council leadership meets with the college President and the VP of Human Resources multiple times a year. Personnel Policy Committee members meet with HR on a regular basis. As a member of staff council, you will be part of the team that is creating and shaping our platform.

Make connections across campus

Staff council is an excellent way to meet people outside of your normal orbit. Connect faces to email addresses! Network! Make new friends!

Build and Foster community

Help foster a sense of belonging, while you satisfy your own desire to make a difference. We all have an important part to play at the college and we are stronger together!

Expand your resume

Staff council will look great on your resume! Take advantage of leadership opportunities your participation on the council can provide.

So, You Have to Make a Poster?

5 Things to Do, 5 Things to Avoid

by Ashavan Doyon

Things to do

1. Include all relevant information

The number of posters released that are missing crucial information would boggle your mind. Make sure your poster lists a title, date, time and location.

2. Be concise

No one is reading a 200-word descriptive essay of an event. Two to three brief sentences, with a link to more information if necessary.

3. Be flexible on the title

Especially for academic talks, the best title to draw people in may not be the title of the talk, but a call to action. Don't omit the title but consider where and how to place it. What about the topic is going to interest the community? Draw on that.

4. Have a focus point

Is it a picture, the typography of your title, the speaker's photo, or a book cover? Focal points need to draw the eye—you can have a giant panoramic photo and still have a secondary photo of the speaker. Make the hierarchy clear, the order should be obvious at a glance.

5. Be accessible

This is complicated. Start with care over color contrast and making sure your type is legible against the background. If your event is public, include the standard accessibility block in the footer (you can get it from college relations) and advertise at least three weeks before the event.

Things to avoid

1. Background colors that don't go to the edge

To avoid this, make the poster larger than your desired size and extend the background color to the new paper edge, then ask the print shop to trim to size. For 11x17 posters, this means at least one-inch margins and trimming a half inch off all sides of a 12x18 sheet.

2. Illegible fonts

No matter how cool it looks, it is not only inaccessible, if people can't read at least the title from five feet away, no one will read the poster.

3. Photos for which you don't have usage rights

It is not alright to use a photo of Yoda or the Simpsons on your poster. This extends to other photos, too. Images aren't free just because they were on Google. Be sure of the photo rights before using an image.

4. Misuse of Smith College branding

The college has rules for which fonts to use where, which logos to use where, and how much space needs to be between the logo and everything else. Two common errors: the diamond mark used by itself (this requires permission); and a white block around the logo when it is on a background color (the official logo files are eps files with transparent backgrounds so that doesn't happen).

5. Be consistent (college wide)

The college has internally consistent ways of listing everything from a date to a time to a title. These are all listed in the [Smith Style Guide](#), which is a trove of information that can keep you consistent.