

Creative Campus Working Group

Draft of Summary from Meeting 03 September, 2015

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The core concept here is building creative capacities through redesigning learning spaces to meet a far more diverse set of pedagogic practices and learning styles. This seems at one with the exciting possibilities of the reinventing of the very ways we comprehend knowledge itself which the new library will embody and extents that throughout the campus making the arts & humanities literally visible as never before.

Our highest priorities:

The creation of a **5. Concentration (NOT a Program) in Creative Writing** which would require the creation of a tenure-track or senior lecturer creative writing position in the English Department to bring an established writer who could then join with the Poetry Center and The Theatre Department with its offerings in play and screen writing to provide the basis for the Concentration. There is intense student demand for creative writing and we lose students to programs at other schools without it. Moderate cost/high benefit.

Combine 82. Unique Collections Visiting Scholars Program with 44. The Humanities Works. The **Unique Collections** proposal makes Smith's rich collection of things—books, manuscripts, art works, etc.—the focus for projects realized by faculty & staff working in collaboration to formulate a theme highlighting a collection and bring a two-year postdoctoral fellowship and a one semester visiting scholar to campus for classes, lectures, and a symposium. **The Humanities Works** proposal provides the perfect laboratory for such an on-going program ideally repurposing the Alumnae Gymnasium reading room as the play space in which community interactions of all kinds happen with offices surrounding it for the faculty and staff participants in this two-year theme unit. Here the long processes of thinking and work, of

reiterating and reimagining will happen where the process is the most important component of all. This would offer sustained intellectual sustenance beyond the semester to year Kahns. It will also provide a shared center for the arts & humanities which other campuses have (Bryn Mawr) but we do not. Arts and Humanities are extraordinarily generative fields, exploring complex, destabilizing questions that seek profound understanding and often radical renovations of our world.

Members of Division 1 seek a commons in which to investigate, individually and collaboratively, issues that are best addressed across our diverse disciplines. One of Smith's greatest virtues is its capacity to produce intellectual discourse in an interdisciplinary way, but this new Arts and Humanities space will acknowledge, with projects in which many faculty and students may engage over a relatively long time frame, that some work is best done with disciplinary *alliance* as well as synthesis. We see these projects as formative for students while here at Smith, but students who have a meaningful relationship with The Humanities Works will also develop professional interests grounded in intensive engagement with precisely the kinds of methodologies *across disciplines* that prepare them for powerful working lives in careers that may not even exist yet.

Understanding that the Sophia Smith Archive is going to move into the newly renovated library, the proposal seeks to adapt that space for The Humanities Works. This would be a reconceptualization of the top floor of the Alumnae Gymnasium to create a dynamic public space for the entire campus. The current line of offices could be reconfigured as faculty workplaces, occupied on a rotating basis depending on a faculty member's engagement with current Humanities Works projects. The proposal would maintain the current beautiful, open atrium as lecture/discussion/performance space, while what is now the research area would become a kind of modular lab space for a range of collaborative projects among students, faculty, staff, and other constituents, changing in its formation as the needs of participants change.

Moderate cost for the visiting scholar's program (estimated \$200,000 per 2-year program)/moderate to high cost for the repurposing of the Alumnae Gymnasium but high benefit from the combination of the two.

111. Creative Learning Spaces (not Classrooms) in the Humanities/Social Sciences. Like the play space in **The Humanities Works** this is something that will open up pedagogic practice in a myriad of ways as more and more classes emphasize making as a fundamental part of learning. The materials here are simple and negligible in terms of cost—pieces of recycled paper of various sizes, pencils, modeling clay, pipe cleaners, legos, etc.—but having them at hand for spontaneous use is key. Design Thinking funds can make a few carts stocked with such materials available immediately as a first stage, but ideally a cabinet of these and other materials would soon be in a majority of classrooms. As the College redesigns learning environments for flexible use, then just like computers, projectors, and projecting surfaces, expansive white boards and modular furniture on wheels should become the norm. Hillyer 320 the Digital Media Lab which opened last year is ideal—all the furniture can be reconfigured at will and the large computer screens fold down into the modular tables for face-to-face discussions. Moderate cost, high benefit.

A related idea which arose in our discussion was the desirability of repurposing a decommissioned space as a “creative clubhouse” for students which would be entirely under their control. Unlike the space in the Campus Center this would be a place where students could live with the messiness which the iterative process of creation requires. Moderate cost, high benefit.

58. Institute Smith Arts (Office for the Arts) by hiring an Arts Coordinator. The lack of this one staff position means that events are often not effectively broadcast even across campus let alone to a wider community. Time conflicts abound and undercut attendance. This kind of coordination is something which our competitors do superbly not only to a local but a nation-wide and even international audience (Wellesley, Wesleyan). Students interested in arts management might have internships and as an institution we are losing out on grant money in this field. In order for Smith to have a Creative Campus which integrates arts and non-arts disciplines they need to be visible and, like the other highest priorities listed above, this is a critical component for its success. In future if the other Five Colleges also hire arts coordinators then this could be a Valley-wide initiative. Moderate cost, high benefit.

More Research/Information Needed:

123. Smith College ensemble-in-residence: Wet Ink We found this a potentially exciting possibility with high profile visibility for the College and benefits for students in the form of internships and to faculty in professional collaborations. Our question was how to estimate the cost. We strongly recommend looking at the well-established summer New Century Theatre at Smith as a model, however.

192. MacLeish Field Station Artist in Residence We liked the idea of integrating CEEDS with artistic, literary, and philosophical imaginations through an artist in residence—could after all even be a creative writer, linking it to **5. Concentration in Creative Writing**—but more information is needed on the time-frame for the residency and whether membership in the Long Term Ecological Reflections (LTER) networks involves additional costs.

10 Years+ in the future:

Once we can gauge the success of the Creative Writing Concentration then consider the possibility of a **10. Smith MFA Program** for writers of fiction, poetry, and non-fiction. Our chief concern is the cost of financial aid, but if the program were small it could be a high profile possibility for the College as the male-dominated programs elsewhere are notoriously cut-throat. Need more research on the cost of such a program to assess its feasibility. It also seems as though simply making it the Smith MFA Program says it all.

Proposals to be Redirected:

158. Mesocosm Facility: perhaps to CEEDS to seek research funding or to Sustainability (already also sent to Research Experiences)

130. Reintegrating Astronomy at the MacLeish Field Station: although the committee agreed that looking at the heavens through a telescope is a creative experience and the MacLeish Field Station the perfect place to contemplate the stars we thought was more the province of either the Curriculum Group (to which it was also directed) or, given it is the MacLeish Field Station,

perhaps Sustainability. Surely all that is needed here is a donor to upgrade and relocate the telescope.

Proposal Rejected:

61. The Not So Big College is in the group's wisdom more a mind-set than a proposal. Three dining rooms at Smith would trade away a fundamental part of the Smith experience and an important selling point. Shifts in varsity sports are made periodically. Classrooms which promote creative pedagogy are more effectively addressed in other proposals (see above).

Summary respectfully submitted by Barbara Kellum