THE INAUGURATION OF

Sarah Willie-LeBreton

12th President of Smith College

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2023
The promise of education is not just the creation of knowledge, but the model of how to share it for our mutual liberation and the collective good.
Sarah Willie-LeBreton
12TH PRESIDENT OF SMITH COLLEGE

Sarah Willie-LeBreton is the 12th president of Smith College. She earned a bachelor of arts degree from Haverford College in 1986, and an M.A. (1988) and Ph.D. (1995) from Northwestern University, all in sociology. After having taught at Colby College (1991–1995) and Bard College (1995–1997) in tenure-track appointments, she was tenured at Swarthmore, where she served as coordinator of the Black Studies Program and chair of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology for a total of 17 years. She was appointed as provost and dean of the faculty at Swarthmore in 2018 and served in that role until 2023.

An accomplished administrator, scholar, and sociologist who studies social inequality and race and ethnicity, Willie-LeBreton is known for her commitment to the liberal arts, strengthening community, and energizing the work of equity and inclusion. She is the author of several dozen articles, essays, reviews, and op-ed columns. Her first book, Acting Black: College, Identity, and the Performance of Race, examines how the experiences of Black college alumni of a predominantly white institution (PWI) were distinct from those who attended a comparative HBCU from the waning days of the Civil Rights Movement through the country’s political turn to the right under the Reagan presidency. Her second book, Transforming the Academy: Faculty Perspectives on Diversity and Pedagogy, is a collection of essays that she contributed to and edited. It focuses on the challenges faced by faculty who were previously underrepresented on campuses, including people of color, queer people, neurodivergent people, and people who immigrated to the United States. It explores their experiences as they become participants in dominant spaces within the American Academy.

Willie-LeBreton considers herself an applied sociologist, and she has worked with a broad range of groups and organizations to understand social dynamics and develop strategies to move toward organizational self-awareness, transformation, compassion, and inclusivity. She is a member of and has been active in the Eastern Sociological Society, Sociologists for Women in Society, the Association of Black Sociologists, and the American Sociological Association (ASA). For several years, she reviewed sociology and affiliated departments as a member of the ASA’s Departmental Resources Group. Her board service has included the Executive Office and Budget of the ASA, Pendle Hill Quaker Center, Haverford College, Benchmark School, the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation, and she sits on the advisory board of the Integrated Impact Group (IIG), which offers consulting for the educational sector.
The Installation of Sarah Willie-LeBreton

**Processional**

“Triumphal March,” from *Aida*, by Giuseppe Verdi (1813–1901)
“Quick March,” from *Sea Songs*, by Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)

The Smith College Orchestra
Jonathan Hirsh, Conductor

**Order of the Academic Procession**

College Marshals
Delegates from Academic Institutions and Learned Societies
Trustees Emeritae/i of Smith College
President’s Team
The Smith College Faculty
The Board of Trustees of Smith College
The Platform Party
Past Presidents of Smith College
The President-Elect and the Chair of the Board

**Opening of Ceremony**

Elizabeth Jamieson ’94, Head Marshal and Professor of Chemistry

**Land Acknowledgment**

Floyd Cheung, Vice President for Equity and Inclusion and
Professor of English Language & Literature and American Studies

**Invocation**

Matilda Rose Cantwell, M.S.W. ’96
Director of Religious & Spiritual Life and College Chaplain

**Greetings**

Vanessa Nicole Silva-Burgos ’24, President of the Student Government Association
Dawn Hines, Director of Class Engagement & Annual Support and Chair of Staff Council
Darcy Buerkle, Professor of History and Faculty Council Chair
Peggie Ward Koon ’74, Trustee and President of the Alumnae Association of Smith College
Edward Wingenbach, President of Hampshire College

**Musical Selection**

Smith College Glee Club
“Simple Gifts,” traditional Shaker tune, arranged by Aaron Copland
Amy Roberts-Crawford, Pianist
Jonathan Hirsh, Conductor

**Welcome**

Alison Overseth ’80, Chair of the Board of Trustees

**Video Greetings**

Ruth J. Simmons, Smith College President Emerita (1995–2001)
U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts
Sweet Honey In the Rock
“Come Ye” song by Nina Simone

Remarks
Gina-Louise Sciarra ’96, Mayor of Northampton
Valerie Smith, President of Swarthmore College
Wendy Raymond, President of Haverford College

Investiture of the President and Presentation of the Symbols of Office
Carol T. Christ, Smith College President Emerita (2002–2013)
Kathleen McCartney, Smith College President Emerita (2013–2023)
Alison Overseth ’80, Chair of the Board of Trustees

Inaugural Address
Sarah Willie-LeBreton, 12th President of Smith College

Musical Interlude
“How Can I Keep From Singing” by Robert Lowry, arranged by Rollo Dilworth
Smith College Glee Club
Amy Roberts-Crawford, Pianist
Jonathan Hirsh, Conductor

Benediction
The Reverend Paula Lawrence-Wehmiller

Closing of Ceremony
Elizabeth Jamieson ’94, Head Marshal and Professor of Chemistry

Recessional
“How Can I Keep From Singing” by Robert Lowry, arranged by the Podd Brothers
Smith College Glee Club and Orchestra
Jonathan Hirsh, Conductor
Suite of Dances by Florence Price (1887-1953)
I. Allegretto
II. Allegretto
III. Allegro molto
Smith College Orchestra; Jonathan Hirsh, Conductor

All-Community Reception
Immediately following the installation, please join President Willie-LeBreton and her family on Chapin lawn for an all-community reception featuring a live performance from Sweet Honey In the Rock, and campus illumination at 7 p.m.
Academic Costumes and Degrees

In the early Middle Ages in Western Europe, the gown was a common form of dress for those of many ranks. It was thus natural that the first universities should adopt the gown, which they maintained even after the laity had turned to more modern dress. As the first universities were founded by the church, their students, no matter what their future profession, were long considered to be clerics and men of the gown.

Over the centuries, two other items of academic costume developed: the hood and the cap. With the gown, they came to reflect the different academic degrees, just as dress in general reflected the wearer’s social status and occupation. Although some institutions and countries adopted colored gowns, black became the standard in America.

Style as well as color has given the gowns distinction. The bachelor's gown is worn closed and sports long, pointed sleeves. The master of arts gown is worn open, with the forearms protruding through slits in the sleeves. Older doctor's gowns are worn open (newer ones tend to be worn closed) with full, round, open sleeves; facings of velvet; and three velvet bars on each sleeve. Originally, the hood was a cowl-like appendage that served as a covering for protection. By the end of the 15th century this function was assumed by the cap, and the hood—while retaining some of its original shape—was draped over the shoulder. In the United States the colored linings of black hoods came to indicate both the institution conferring the degree and the type of degree itself. Today, on a colored robe that signifies an institution, the field in which the degree was awarded may be indicated by "crow's feet" shapes embroidered in color on the front of the costume. For example, blue in a hood or on crow's feet signifies a doctor of philosophy; green, a doctor of medicine; brown, a doctor or master of fine arts; and golden yellow, a doctor of science. White signifies the liberal arts, and it appears most often in master’s and bachelor’s hoods.

As the cap functionally replaced the hood, it came to play its part in academic costume, testifying to the young scholar’s newfound freedom and independence. The Oxford black mortarboard (whether symbolizing the master workman’s mortarboard, the scholar's books, or Oxford's familiar quadrangles, no one quite knows) became more popular than the round velvet cap and eventually acquired colored tassels corresponding to those of the hoods, with doctors being entitled to wear gold tassels. Although much of American academic costume is derived from English universities, those of the continent boasted their own colors, textures, and shapes, which contribute greatly to the pageantry of an academic ceremony.

At Smith in 1894, caps and gowns were dismissed as a passing fad. President Seelye felt that such finery for either faculty or students was ill-suited to a noble, pioneering enterprise. However, as the dress of women members of the faculty became more colorful, the sober black of academic gowns to cover rainbow hues came into favor, and in 1910 the faculty permitted all who wished to do so to wear academic dress for the inauguration of President Burton. For Rally Day two years later, the faculty voted to dress up in what was then referred to as "simply academic evening dress."

The Presidential Medal

The Presidential Medal was commissioned by the board of trustees in 1995 to be bestowed upon Smith presidents at their installation ceremonies. Ruth J. Simmons was the first president to wear the medal; each medal bears the name of the president and the date of the inauguration.

The medal was designed by noted sculptor and printmaker Elliot M. Offner, who taught at Smith from 1960 until his retirement in 2004. Represented on the face of the medal are the Grécourt Gates, erected in 1924 by the board of trustees in recognition of the service of the Smith College Relief Unit in France from 1917 to 1920. The gates are an exact reproduction of those before the Chateau of Robecourt in Grécourt, France. The reverse of the medal depicts the tower of College Hall surrounded by treetops.

The Latin phrase on the medal, Vivat Academia, may be translated "Long May Scholarship Flourish," a theme that reflects Smith's goal as an institution of higher learning and the aspiration of each president as the college’s leader.

The Smith College Mace

In the late Middle Ages the academic mace became part of the ceremonial insignia of the universities of Western Europe. A direct descendant of the battle mace and the regal scepter, the academic mace has become a symbol of the corporate authority of the institution and is always carried to open formal ceremonies.

The Smith College mace, carried at the head of the academic procession, was given to the college in honor of Florence Macdonald '32 by the three presidents of
the college and the six women who chaired the board
of trustees during her years of service at Smith.

The mace, fashioned chiefly from cherry and
maple woods and designed and fashioned by Elliot M.
Offner, has decoration that is Celtic in origin. Carved
on one side of the caput, or head, is the Macdonald
crest and on the other side the Grécourt Gates. The
crowning ornament of the caput is inlaid with end-
grain boxwood and bears the dedication to Florence
Macdonald as well as the college motto—“to virtue,
knowledge” (2 Peter 1:5, King James version)—inscribed
in classical Greek. The names of all the presidents of
Smith College have been cut into the shaft.

Marshals

Elizabeth Jamieson ’94
Head Marshal,
Professor of Chemistry

Will Raven
Deputy Marshal,
Professor of Physics

Patricia Cahn ’06
Associate Professor of
Mathematical Sciences

Brent Durbin
Associate Professor
of Government

Randi L. Garcia
Associate Professor
of Psychology and of
Statistical & Data
Sciences

Nicholas Howe
Professor of Computer
Science

Susannah Howe
Design Clinic Director
and Senior Lecturer
in Engineering

Stephanie Jones
Assistant Professor of
Exercise & Sport Studies

Jack Loveless
Professor of Geosciences

Joyce Palmer-Fortune
Senior Lecturer
in Physics

Delegates of Colleges and Universities

1636
Harvard University
Alexandra Keller

1701
Yale University
Meg Kirkpatrick

1740
University of
Pennsylvania
Alexandra Cudby

1766
Rutgers University
Francine Conway
Jonathan Holloway

1767
Columbia University
College of Physicians
and Surgeons
George Lazarus

1780
American Academy of
Arts & Sciences
David W. Oxtoby

1787
Franklin & Marshall
College
Mary Osirim

1793
Williams College
Gretchen Long

1794
Bowdoin College
Sira Berté

1795
Union College
Dianne McMullen

1800
Middlebury College
Eliza Garrison

1816
Harvard Divinity School
Tracey Hucks

1821
Amherst College
Catherine Epstein

1824
Kenyon College
Jessica Moyer

1830
University of Richmond
Ronald Crutcher

1831
Wesleyan University
Anne Martin

1833
Haverford College
Wendy Raymond
David Backus

1837
Mount Holyoke College
Danielle Holley

1838
Duke University
Barbara Brehm-Curtis

1839
Boston University
Suzanne Kennedy

1851
Lasell University
Eric Turner

1855
Bates College
Garry Jenkins

1855
William Paterson
University
Mark Ellis

Continued on next page
1863
University of Massachusetts Amherst
Javier Reyes
1864
Swarthmore College
Valerie Smith
1865
Cornell University
Debra Shaver
1866
Carleton College
Rob Rothblatt
1870
Hunter College
Peggy Tirschwell
1870
Wellesley College
Andrew Shennan
1877
Rhode Island School of Design
Crystal Williams
1881
Spelman College
Pamela Scott-Johnson
Beverly Tatum
1885
Bryn Mawr College
Jennifer Walters
1885
Stanford University
RoAnn Costin
1887
Clark University
Margaret Guzman
1887
Pomona College
G. Gabrielle Starr
1889
Barnard College
Jennifer Fondiller
1901
California Polytechnic State University
Camille O’Bryant
1903
Skidmore College
Joshua Woodfork
1912
Rice University
Amy Vollmer
1918
American Council on Education
Terry W. Hartle
1919
Emmanuel College
Amy Hagan-Brown
1919
The New School for Social Research
Renée T. White
1926
Sarah Lawrence College
Kanwal Singh
1934
Salve Regina University
Kelli J. Armstrong
1946
Holyoke Community College
George Timmons
1955
Five College Consortium
Sarah Pfatteicher
1965
Hampshire College
Edward Wingenbach
1974
Consortium on Financing Higher Education (COFHE)
Janet Rapelye
1989
Beacon College
George Hagerty

Smith College Board of Trustees

Anu Aiyengar ’91
New York, NY
Deborah N. Archer ’93
New York, NY
Andrea Auerbach ’91
Menlo Park, CA
Johan C. Aurik
London, UK
Lisa Black ’81
New York, NY
Janelle Bradshaw ’00
White Plains, NY
Molly Burke ’76
Atlanta, GA
Mattie Peterson Compton ’72
Vice Chair
Fort Worth, TX
Denise Conway ’80
Plandome, NY
Pam Craig ’79
Spring Lake, NJ
Debbie DeCotis ’74
New York, NY
Lile R. Gibbons ’64
Old Greenwich, CT
Alicia Carew
Hammarskjold ’87
Atherton, CA
Terry W. Hartle
Washington, DC
Peggie Ward Koon ’74
Augusta, GA
Peggy Liu ’80
Hong Kong, SAR
Cynthia Meyn ’86
New York, NY
Susan May Molineaux ’75
Vice Chair
San Francisco, CA
Beverly A. Morgan-Welch ’74
New York, NY
Mohsen Mostafavi
Cambridge, MA
Kate O’Brian ’80
Martha’s Vineyard, MA
Alison Overseth ’80
Chair
New York, NY
David W. Oxtoby
Cambridge, MA
Lynn Reichenbach ’81
Portsmouth, NH
Claudia San Pedro ’91
Oklahoma City, OK
Kimberly Scott ’91
Phoenix, AZ
Ann Silverman ’96
New York, NY
Emily B. van Agtmael ’70
Bethesda, MD
Sarah Willie-LeBreton
Northampton, MA
Ling Yang ’02
Hong Kong, SAR
The Platform Party

Darcy Buerkle
Professor of History and Faculty Council Chair

Matilda Rose Cantwell, M.S.W. ’96
Director of Religious & Spiritual Life and College Chaplain

Floyd Cheung
Vice President for Equity and Inclusion and Professor of English Language & Literature and American Studies

Carol T. Christ
Smith College President Emerita (2002–2013)

John M. Connolly
Smith College Acting President (2001–2002)

Dawn Hines
Director of Class Engagement & Annual Support and Chair of Staff Council

Peggie Ward Koon ’74
Trustee and President of the Alumnae Association of Smith College

The Reverend Paula Lawrence-Wehmiller
Kathleen McCartney
Smith College President Emerita (2013–2023)

Alison Overseth ’80
Chair of the Board of Trustees

Wendy Raymond
President of Haverford College

Gina-Louise Sciarra ’96
Mayor of Northampton ’96

Vanessa Nicole Silva-Burgos ’21
President of the Student Government Association

Valerie Smith
President of Swarthmore College

Edward Wingenbach
President of Hampshire College

Past Presidents of Smith College

Laurenus Clark Seelye
1873 to 1910

Herbert John Davis
1940 to 1949

Jill Ker Conway
1975 to 1985

John M. Connolly
Acting President, 2001 to 2002

Marion LeRoy Burton
1910 to 1917

Benjamin Fletcher Wright
1949 to 1959

Mary Maples Dunn
1985 to 1995

Carol T. Christ
2002 to 2013

William Allan Neilson
1917 to 1939

Thomas Corwin Mendenhall
1959 to 1975

Ruth J. Simmons
1995 to 2001

Kathleen McCartney
2013 to 2023

History of Smith College

Smith College founder Sophia Smith had a daring vision—that through education, women's power for good would be “incalculably enlarged.” For Sophia, knowledge was a potent force for progress. Educated women, she believed, were the courageous agents of change the world needed most. Now, more than 150 years later, Smith College is still nurturing leaders and visionaries, empowering the loud voices that inspire change as well as the quiet ones who instill it.

Since its founding in 1871, Smith, its faculty, staff, students, and alums have worked to address society’s most complex, urgent problems. Throughout its history, Smith has lived its values, providing women with opportunities previously unavailable to them and using its resources to make change in the world beyond its Grécourt Gates. In the mid-1920s, Smith became a pioneer in global education, launching one of the first study abroad programs in order to help students actively engage in the world. More recently, Smith recognized the urgent need for more women leaders in STEM fields and was the first women's college to grant engineering (2004) and data science (2020) degrees. Today, Smith continues to innovate by becoming one of a select few colleges to eliminate loans from its financial aid packages and taking active steps to reach carbon neutrality by 2030 without carbon offsets.

Smith alums have used their education as Sophia Smith intended, “to do the most good to the greatest number.” As visionaries (Julia Child ’34, Betty Friedan ’42, Gloria Steinem ’56), policymakers (Tammy Baldwin ’84, Adrianne Todman ’91), artists and creators (Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy ’02, Kimberly Drew ’12), scientists and STEM pioneers (Evelyn Boyd Granville ’45, Continued on next page
Annie De Groot ’78), and business leaders (Dolores Kunda ’77, Anu Aiyengar ’91), Smithies are emboldened by an education steeped in the liberal arts to create a better world.

Certain enduring constants have long defined the Smith experience: a dedication to the importance of the humanities, arts, and sciences; an uncompromising defense of academic and intellectual freedom; an attention to the relationship between college education and the larger public issues of democracy and human dignity; and a concern for the rights and privileges of women. Today, Smith is one of the largest women’s liberal arts colleges in the United States. It enrolls more than 2,500 students from nearly every state and more than 65 other countries to develop global citizens able to address today’s challenges. As a global community of scholars, entrepreneurs, artists, scientists, activists, and humanitarians, Smith is fulfilling its founder’s hope that her namesake college would be a “perennial blessing to the country and the world.”

Search Committee for the 12th President of Smith College

Anu Aiyengar ’91
Trustee

Tiffany Lin ’23
Student Representative

Dary Buerkle
Professor of History and Faculty Council Chair

Peggie Ward Koon ’71
Trustee; President of the Alumnae Association of Smith College

Daphne Lamothe
Professor of Africana Studies

Terry W. Hartle
Trustee

Mary Huggins Gamble
Professor of Government

Mattie Peterson Compton ’72
Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees

Susan May Molineaux ’75
Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees; Chair of the Presidential Search Committee

Daphe Lamothe
Professor of Africana Studies

Alison Overseth ’80
Chair of the Board of Trustees

Kate Queeney
Professor of Chemistry

Kimberly Scott ’91
Trustee

Susan May Molineaux ’75
Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees; Chair of the Presidential Search Committee

Deborah Weinberg ’81
Trustee

Alison Overseth ’80
Chair of the Board of Trustees

Gregory White
Mary Huggins Gamble
Professor of Government

Dawn Hines
Director of Events Management

Elena Palladino
(staff support), Secretary of the Board of Trustees and Secretary of the College

Elizabeth Jamieson ’94
Head Marshal, Professor of Chemistry

Michael Thurston
Helen Means Professor of English Language & Literature, Provost and Dean of the Faculty

Elena Palladino
Secretary of the Board of Trustees and Secretary of the College

Julia Yager
Vice President for College Relations and Communications

Ashley Keedy
Associate Director of Alumnae and Donor Relations

Vanessa Nicole Silva-Burgos ’21
President of the Student Government Association

Michael Thurston
Helen Means Professor of English Language & Literature, Provost and Dean of the Faculty

Elena Palladino
Secretary of the Board of Trustees and Secretary of the College

Julia Yager
Vice President for College Relations and Communications

Mandy Duffy
(staff support), Executive Assistant for Advancement

Michael Thurston
Helen Means Professor of English Language & Literature, Provost and Dean of the Faculty

Elena Palladino
Secretary of the Board of Trustees and Secretary of the College

Julia Yager
Vice President for College Relations and Communications

Mandy Duffy
(staff support), Executive Assistant for Advancement

Elizabeth Secchia
(staff support), Administrative Assistant, Board of Trustees Office

Inauguration Steering Committee

Kat Dolan
Executive Assistant to the President

Andrea Fernandes
Director of Events Management

Dawn Hines
Director of Class Engagement and Annual Support, Chair of Staff Council

Elizabeth Jamieson ’94
Head Marshal, Professor of Chemistry

Michael Thurston
Helen Means Professor of English Language & Literature, Provost and Dean of the Faculty

Elena Palladino
Secretary of the Board of Trustees and Secretary of the College

Julia Yager
Vice President for College Relations and Communications

Mandy Duffy
(staff support), Executive Assistant for Advancement

Elizabeth Secchia
(staff support), Administrative Assistant, Board of Trustees Office