



# A COLLABORATIVE COMPASS: STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE WURTELE CENTER FOR LEADERSHIP, 2020-2025

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our **mission** is to equip all members of the Smith community with the creativity, courage, and collaborative capacity to lead positive change at scales both large and small.

**Our Story:** The Wurtele Center for Leadership has its origins in two visionary and generous gifts from Smith College Trustee Margaret Wurtele '67, beginning with \$5 million in 2012 to fund the Center for Work and Life. Wurtele followed this gift with an additional pledge of \$10 million in the Fall of 2017, in order to transform the Center into a space dedicated more specifically to leadership development. With Wurtele's support, the Center will be able to contribute meaningfully to the College's mission to develop "engaged global citizens and leaders to address society's challenges."

In our work with students, faculty, and staff, the Wurtele Center for Leadership embraces and advocates for a collaborative approach to leadership. We strive to empower members of the Smith community with an understanding that they can lead from any vantage point, whether they hold positional power or not. At the same time, we recognize and seek to dismantle the power structures that produce inequities in leadership. We design workshops, talks, partnerships with other campus units, and other learning experiences that encourage participants to understand themselves (ME) and collaborate productively with others (WE) in order to apply their knowledge and lead change (IMPACT).

**Our Process:** In designing our approach to strategic planning for a new Center, it was especially important to us to create a process that was as inclusive and community-centered as possible; as such, we employed a human-centered design approach in our work. Our team began with extensive field research that allowed us to explore and understand the stories, values, and worldviews of a wide range of constituents through interviews and focus groups with diverse students, faculty, staff, and alumnae. The insights we collaboratively surfaced from our research were then funneled into the iterative development of the Center's first official mission statement, core values, and a preliminary framework for collaborative leadership development.

**The Plan:** Our Strategic Plan emerges directly out of this human-centered design work, representing our best attempt to meet the needs of the many constituencies we hope to serve as a Center over the next five years. As a guiding tool, we understand this plan as more of a compass than a map; the latter would suggest we are already familiar with the terrain ahead of us, while the former can point us in a coherent and unified direction despite our need to cover uncharted territory.

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### **Strategic Direction #1: Deepening Our Model of Collaborative Leadership**

The world we are educating our students to enter as productive citizens is radically different than the one faced by previous generations. As part of its most recent strategic plan, Smith College is turning its collective attention towards equipping students with the knowledge and skills they need to tackle complex, urgent problems emerging from an increasingly volatile and ambiguous world. The Wurtele Center's strategic planning research demonstrates a strong need to redefine leadership significantly in order to meet these new challenges. We seek to reimagine a leadership model that is less hierarchical, more collaborative, more creative, more flexible, more equitable, and more systems-conscious.

*Because it is important that we practice the form of leadership we seek to build in others, the Wurtele Center for Leadership will endeavor over the next five years to design and evolve our leadership model through collaborative learning, experimentation, and iteration.*

#### **Potential Future Initiatives:**

- Develop a 4-credit course: **IDP 133: Critical Perspectives on Collaborative Leadership** (to be first offered spring of 2021)
- Create a publicly visible **Collaborative Leadership Lab** within which we experiment with programming, partnerships, and projects in order to refine and deepen our model of leadership development.
- Develop a coherent **Core Programming Funnel** that allows students to explore the collaborative leadership at varying levels of commitment and intensity.
- Design, curate, and share a set of **Collaborative Leadership Learning Modules** that could be adopted and adapted in a range of learning settings (curricular and co-curricular), including in advising and career development.

### **Strategic Direction #2: Bridging the Curricular and the Co-Curricular**

Recent scholarship on the overall state of higher education points to a need for a radical transformation of our institutions in order to adjust to a rapidly changing world. Seeing these changes on the horizon, many voices are calling for a shift in the undergraduate educational model to provide students with meaningful, applied learning experiences that allow them to draw connections between diverse bodies of knowledge, gain skills to communicate and collaborate effectively with others, and learn to forge their own path in a volatile and changing world. The Wurtele Center for Leadership has the potential to contribute significantly in this effort, providing students with the interpersonal and leadership skills necessary to engage in this form of scholarship.

*Over the next five years the Wurtele Center for Leadership will design courses and programs, as well as create partnerships among faculty, students, and staff, aiming to better integrate curricular and co-curricular efforts to build students' knowledge and skills in order to maximize their impact.*

#### **Potential Future Initiatives:**

- Develop and lead the **Forge Fellowship Program** in collaboration with other units affiliated with Integrative Learning.
- Develop a **signature public speaking, writing, and art program** in partnership with other campus units.
- Create **funding opportunities** for students to pursue off-campus experiences (conferences, workshops, etc.) to help students connect their academic studies to larger purpose-finding.
- Leverage the resources of the Center to support the recommendations of the College's Study Group on Reimagining the Curriculum (SGRC) to assist in developing **frameworks for experiential learning** within and outside the major.



### **Strategic Direction #3: Expanding Our Commitment to Equity and Inclusion**

The need to engage in problem-solving with an equity lens applies to those seeking to make change at any scale, ranging from the interpersonal to the community to the global level. As innovative leaders seek to take on some of the world's most complex and urgent problems, whether or not those problems are directly categorized as "equity" issues, they would do well to recognize that these challenges rarely exist in isolation from questions of equity and social justice. A concerted commitment to equity requires leaders to have an awareness of their own biases, as well as a well-honed capacity for seeing systems and using that vision to uncover the complex and deeply embedded root causes of the problems they seek to solve.

*As the College works to empower and guide students and other community members in their efforts to lead towards equity and inclusion, over the next five years the Wurtele Center for Leadership will help to foster the collaborative and conflict management skills necessary for making positive change in the context of a diverse community.*

#### **Potential Future Initiatives:**

- In partnership with OEI, create a new, two-year **equity and inclusion-focused student leadership program** that provides students with foundational knowledge as well as deep training in facilitation and equity-centered problem-solving.
- Develop a set of **strategies for our workshops and programs** to infuse identity exploration and understanding of systems that produce inequity as curricular elements in the learning experiences we design.
- Create **funding opportunities** for students to pursue off-campus experiences (conferences, workshops, etc.) that align with our mission and allow students to explore identity-based and/or equity and inclusion leadership work.

### **Strategic Direction #4: Broadening Our Reach in the Smith Community and Beyond**

Our efforts to imagine a new model of Collaborative Leadership will be most effective if we are able to practice that model as a Center, encourage its adoption within the institution, and share it beyond the College to alumnae and others. If our goal is to produce graduates who are capable of thinking and bringing people together across disciplinary and systemic boundaries to make change, then we need to build the capacity of faculty and staff to do such work ourselves.

*Over the next five years, the Wurtele Center for Leadership will become a hub of thought leadership and professional development to build collaborative leadership capacities for those who work for Smith, alumnae who went to Smith, and those who look to Smith as a model for women's education.*

#### **Potential Future Initiatives:**

- Expand our **external engagement** in order to draw greater attention to our work (for example, establishing a greater presence on social media platforms, publishing op-eds, other publications, and presenting at conferences)
- Collaborate with the Office of Alumnae Relations to offer a series of mission-aligned remote and in-person **leadership development workshops for alumnae**.
- Expand our relationship with Human Resources to develop additional **professional development offerings** around collaborative leadership.
- Partner with the Associate Dean of the Faculty/Dean for Academic Development to support **leadership development efforts for faculty**.
- Create a small **Wurtele Center Design Team** made up of students, faculty, and staff to act in an advisory capacity and help co-design our offerings.