

Ad Hoc Committee on Wellbeing, Belonging, and Social Life

Overview

Last year, I charged an ad hoc committee of faculty, students, staff and a member of the Board of Managers to review the College's goals for student life and recommend ways that we can cultivate a student experience that is healthy, inclusive, and equitable. The work of the committee was informed by a variety of institutional assessments and committees including the Swarthmore College Self-Study on Learning, Working, and Living, the Swarthmore Self-Study Action Committee, the "Re-imagining the Student Experience: A Visioning Exercise," and the Misery Poker Project. Co-chaired by Professor of History Bruce Dorsey and former Dean of Students Liz Braun, the committee examined a variety of topics related to the following overarching themes: Balance & Wellness, Spaces & Equity, Inclusion & Belonging, and Learning & Development.

The committee presented their findings to me in late June and grouped their recommendations into six subcategories: Institutional and Cultural Change, Student Social Life, Wellness and Self-Care, Faculty-Student Dialogue on Living a Healthy Intellectual Life, Communication, and Greek Life on Campus. The following provides a summary of the committee's recommendations.

Institutional and Cultural Change

The committee proposed various institutional and cultural initiatives, both short- and long-term, to improve student wellbeing. The first recommendation reflects a need community members have expressed for many years: the creation of a student commons or student union building on campus. Last spring, the Dining Hall and Community Commons Programmatic Committee was created to envision how such a space on campus would affect the student experience. This committee will update the campus community on their work through the course of the year.

Previous institutional surveys and the work of the committee have reflected students' desire to develop a campus culture that supports taking a break or stepping aside from academic obligations for self-care. The committee recommended implementing campus-wide initiatives that encourage time away from curricular and co-curricular obligations. Ideas included the implementation of an annual break day, or a "Swat Pause" where for some specified time period each week the College encourages the campus community to take a break.

Student Social Life

The recommendations included building on existing pilot programs which have received positive feedback, such as the late night dining/extended Crumb Cafe (formerly Paces Cafe) pilot, and the expansion of party spaces. Additionally, the committee recommended developing a more robust set of tools for student event planning and encouraging the development of safe, inclusive social events that promote responsible alcohol use.

Wellness and Self-Care

The recommendations for advancing wellness and self-care among students consisted of supporting existing programs that have been positively received by the student body. These programs include the SEPTA lottery program, Trail to Wellness, pARTy, massages at the Matchbox, the WRC pop-up patio, and extended hours at the Matchbox. Potential new initiatives include a self-care social media campaign and developing new programmatic partnerships with the Scott Arboretum (e.g. wellness walks, guided meditation, etc).

Faculty Student Dialogue on Living a Healthy Intellectual Life

The committee proposed recommendations for engaging faculty and students in dialogue regarding healthy work and life balance. The recommendations broadly speak to developing guides, resources, and sources of information to assist students in navigating the academic resources at Swarthmore: faculty presentations on using academic resources and thriving in one's academic discipline; weekly "Motivator" emails that offer insights on academic planning and work; regular, faculty-student conversations on expectations and workload; centralized and easily-accessible information for both students and faculty about all aspects of student academic support services; orientation programming for each class year; and an app or software to help students in choosing a manageable course load.

Communication

The committee recommended providing new modes of communication for fostering conversation between students and advertising events and information. Recommendations included digital signage across campus, especially in Sharples, Essie Mae's, Parrish Hall, the libraries, coffee bars, and other heavily-used spaces.

Greek Life on Campus

The committee proposed a review of the history of Greek letter organizations at Swarthmore and an examination of how peer institutions have addressed issues and concerns related to these organizations. The committee recommended that I charge a task force to assess Greek life on Swarthmore's campus and that I consider a moratorium on leased fraternity houses on campus while the task force completes its work.

During the summer, I worked with members of president's staff and others to begin to assess and implement these recommendations. A number of the recommendations are underway, including the work of the Dining Hall and Community Commons Programmatic Committee, the wellness and self-care pilot programs, and healthy intellectual life initiatives like the "Thrive Academically" workshops. We are currently determining the feasibility of and student interest in other proposed initiatives. I will announce shortly the creation of a task force whose work will focus specifically on the issues the committee raised regarding Greek life, student social life, and community standards.

I wish to thank all of the members of the committee for their hard work and dedicated service during the 2017-18 academic year.

Valerie Smith
President

Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Wellbeing, Belonging, and Social Life

Members of 2017-2018 Ad Hoc Committee on Wellbeing, Belonging, and Social Life

- Liz Braun, Dean of Students, *co-chair*
- Bruce Dorsey, Professor of History, *co-chair*
- Alice Holland, Director of Health and Wellness Services
- Landry Kosmalski, Head Men's Basketball Coach
- Lisa Meeden, Professor of Computer Science
- Nathan Miller, Associate Dean of Students
- Aixa Pomales, Director of Support Services at ITS
- H. Vincent Poor, Member of the Board of Managers
- Michelle Ray, Interim Title IX Coordinator
- Tomoko Sakomura, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Associate Professor of Art History
- Shá Duncan Smith, Associate Dean of Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Development
- Jeremy Seitz Brown '18
- Francisco Veron Ferreira '19
- Janice Luo '19
- Cassandra Stone '20

History

The work of the ad hoc committee on wellbeing, belonging, and social life draws on and builds upon the work of previous campus initiatives during the past several years that have studied and offered recommendations regarding student experiences and the campus climate. In the spring of 2015 the "Swarthmore College Self-Study on Learning, Working, and Living" was conducted by Rankin and Associates. This [report](#) identified both positive attributes and opportunities for improvement in terms of how individuals experienced the College. In particular, the study found that some underrepresented constituency groups were differentially affected by exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct and indicated that they were less comfortable with the overall campus climate, workplace climate, and classroom climate. In addition 7% of respondents indicated that they had experienced unwanted physical sexual contact. The [Self-Study Action committee](#) was formed in the Fall of 2015 to identify actionable steps in response to the survey's findings and since that time the committee has worked collaboratively with the President to implement a broad range of action steps while

continuing to gather feedback from the community through a regular series of Community Engagement Strategies.

During the 2016-2017 academic year the College conducted "Re-imagining the Student Experience: A Visioning Exercise," partnered with Brightspot Strategy, to consider the nature of students' lives beyond the classroom and the types of spaces, services, technologies, activities, and campus culture that might support those experiences, both now and into the future. The visioning experience's [final report](#) identified a number of recommendations for improving the student experience. Lastly, we also want to highlight the Misery Poker Project being conducted by Jill Gladstein, Associate Professor of English and Director of the Writing Associates Program and Woodjerry Etienne '19. The goal of this project is to explore the expectations, reality, and perceptions of the student work load, both in and out of the classroom. While they have not released the final results of their study they were willing to share their preliminary findings with us over the course of this year. These preliminary findings provided our committee with vital information related to student wellbeing, stress, and belonging, and we found lots of important synergies between our findings and theirs.

Each of these studies provided an important foundation for our committee's work and gave us an opportunity to reflect on where progress had been made, outstanding issues and concerns, and to amplify recommendations that have been made over the last several years that we think could have a significant positive impact on the student experience.

The Charge from President Smith

I am charging an ad hoc committee of faculty, students, staff, and a member of the Board of Managers to review the College's goals for student life and recommend ways that we can cultivate a student experience that is healthy, inclusive, and equitable. The Ad Hoc Committee on Wellbeing, Belonging, and Social Life will replace the Dean's Advisory Council, which has had a similar focus in recent years. Once this committee's work is complete, the Dean's Advisory Council will be restored.

I am charging the Ad Hoc Committee to examine, among other topics, the following issues that have surfaced during the last several years:

Balance & Wellness

- How should we support student health and wellness, including cultivating self-care, stress management, and resilience?

- How might we re-examine our culture of over-achieving, over- scheduling and over-programming while preparing our students for future success?

Spaces & Equity

- What improvements to our student space allocation procedures would promote our goals for a safe, equitable, and inclusive student social life?
- How can we re-imagine the use of spaces on campus to encourage collaboration, coalition-building and sharing of resources?

Inclusion & Belonging

- What types of events would strengthen a sense of belonging and deepen connections to the broader community?
- What is and should be the role of fraternities and sororities at Swarthmore within the context of social life?
- What further steps do we need to take to promote student social experiences that are safe and inclusive?

Learning & Development

- How can we empower students to play an active role in enriching their social life and promoting shared responsibility, accountability, and respect for one another?
- How should we support opportunities for students to connect across backgrounds, learn from differing perspectives, and develop skills to negotiate conflict?

Design Thinking

Our committee employed a *design thinking* approach to addressing President Smith's charge. Design thinking—also referred to as d.school thinking, named for the canonical program at Stanford University—promises two novel approaches: first, it focuses on the needs of the people you're designing solutions for, their expressed needs and their reactions to your ideas; and second, it encourages an action-based method of problem solving that seeks to break free from the inertia that typically characterizes committee work in academia. A committee has meetings, studies a problem, writes up its reflections, and then passes those along to the next committee that then has meetings, studies the problem, etc. As a recent article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* explains, "engaging in design thinking means retraining yourself to think differently, to break habits of mind and entertain possibilities you didn't even realize you were shutting off."¹ For our committee, design thinking offered a new energy for addressing the work of committees and a means by which we could bring fresh perspectives to longstanding issues of student life at Swarthmore.

Design thinking follows [a five-step method](#), beginning with empathy interviews. Our committee members conducted dozens of personal conversations with students about their work and social lives on campus, listening for what they wished for a more fulfilling college experience, and translating their thoughts into useful, action-based, "how might we ...?" questions that served as the foundations for brainstorming new ideas and possibilities. Then, the committee took those ideas and divided into four small subcommittees to pursue a more focused approach to problem-solving. The subcommittees focused on communication, wellness and self-care, student social life, and faculty-student dialogue. The subcommittees then developed several prototypes of ideas that we then returned to the college community of students and faculty, where we tested those ideas in conversations with the people for whom we were proposing our

¹ Lee Gardner, "Can Design Thinking Redesign Higher Ed?" *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Sept. 10, 2017.

ideas and solutions. Please see Appendix A for a full list of groups and individuals consulted as part of our committee's work.

The committee received training in design thinking from Denise Crossan, Lang Visiting Professor for Issues of Social Change at the beginning of the year, and Professor Crossan continued to serve as a resource to our committee throughout the year.

Guiding Principles and Findings

We listened carefully to the experiences, needs, and wishes of students, consulted with concerned faculty and staff, and we also we relied heavily on preliminary findings of the ongoing research project of Professor Jill Gladstein and her team of research assistants, known as the “Misery Poker Project,” that investigates students’ workload. Professor Gladstein offered the committee helpful guidance throughout the year.

From these conversations we began to focus the committee’s work based on the following general discoveries and guiding principles:

- ***Shared Academic Challenges.*** Our conversations with students and faculty over the past year reveal that students and faculty share a commitment to challenging themselves within the environment of a demanding liberal arts education. Despite some faculty’s skepticism whenever the subjects of workload and work-life balance are raised, Swarthmore students don’t wish to diminish the academic rigors of the College. Rather, students deeply value their academic experiences and want to be intellectually and academically challenged. However, they would also like their education not to imperil their wellbeing or curtail the joy of an intellectual life. They would appreciate guidance for when they can know they’ve done enough work, when and how they can take restorative breaks from their academic work, and how they can avoid feeling guilty about spending time away from academics when it is crucial to their self-care. Perhaps not surprisingly but too rarely acknowledged, Swarthmore’s faculty also shares similar concerns for finding the right balance in their own work lives and personal self-care and wellness. Our committee likes to describe this balance of shared academic challenges and wellness as *living a healthy intellectual life*.
- ***Knowledge & Communication Enhances Wellbeing.*** A major factor for dissatisfaction with the student experience arises from not knowing what one should know, or not having easy access to that information. Hence, our committee’s work has focused on solutions for easy and open access to information; transparency of processes and structure; learning from conversations between faculty and students; and new and creative options for better communications across the campus community.
- ***Peer Comparison.*** Students disclosed that much of their stress and discomfort about their academic and social lives comes from a culture of comparison that easily thrives at Swarthmore. Students find themselves making comparisons with their peers, noting the accomplishments, news of success, or apparent ease of completing work and finding time to relax among their fellow students. This is not the same as competitiveness. It’s the feeling that they want or need to

uphold the expectation of what a Swarthmore student can or should accomplish. Yet this feeling also aligns with the common phenomenon of the *imposter syndrome*: the misperception derived from comparing oneself to others, finding oneself lacking or feeling like everyone else is easily handling the challenges of Swarthmore and succeeding, which is followed by fears of failing and being found out as an imposter. These feelings play a crucial role in students' sense of belonging or inclusion within the college community. Acknowledging Theodore Roosevelt's adage that "comparison is the thief of joy," our committee strove to design recommendations that can alleviate the corrosive features of these kinds of comparisons, normalize the fact that every student will face challenges in college, and enhance opportunities for genuine connections between students and a sense of belonging at Swarthmore.

- ***Enhanced Opportunities for Social Connections.*** Students spoke frequently about the challenges of finding opportunities to get to know other students and socialize together in a range of different settings, especially for first-year students. Students would like a broader array of social options. The other major theme was a continued desire for a student commons or student union space that would be a focal gathering point for students to hang out in a social setting. Related to this was a desire for current resources that promote socializing to be available to students during late night and weekends in particular late-night dining and the Matchbox.
- ***Common Issues but a Diverse Population.*** We recognize that while we heard many common themes and concerns among diverse groups of students, no single recommendation can address the wellbeing of more than 1,600 individual students at Swarthmore. Each student must find the methods of self-care and wellbeing that fit their own personality and needs. The College should both provide and bring visibility to a diverse range of options that promote wellbeing and social life for students, including making a more concerted effort to lift up models and best practices before a broad audience of students. In addition, we discussed the importance of paying attention to the unique needs of particular groups of students on campus that might require different types of support.
- ***Importance of Taking a Break:*** Our discussions with community members affirmed that students would both benefit from taking more regular and frequent breaks. However, it can be difficult to get students to develop this routine due to time constraints and worries about spending too much time away from their academic work. Our committee discussed how to promote opportunities for short breaks or things students could do in 10-15 minutes that would be simple to access and help them form more regular restorative habits. We also discussed

some longer-term potential initiatives to help foster more of an institutional culture of taking breaks.

- ***Equity and Inclusion in Party Spaces:*** Many students voiced concerns that fraternities maintained a disproportionate control over the social scene and party space on campus. Students also expressed concerns about current alcohol policies and the perceived difficulties of hosting parties within the other available spaces that aren't as attractive to students as the fraternity houses. These combined issues have led to hesitancy from some other student groups to offer alternatives to fraternity parties. Other students expressed concern about the sense of entitlement, unsafe behavior, and lack of equity that arises from fraternities having exclusive control over houses for parties. Our committee acknowledged that we could not fully address all of the complexities of fraternities and sororities on campus, but we deliberated and offered a set of recommendations for a future task force to address these issues in the report below. We also consulted extensively with the Office of Student Engagement (OSE) and were encouraged by a range of initiatives and improvements they have been actively supporting related to student social life and parties. Several of our recommendations center on continuing to expand current or future OSE initiatives.

"How Might We ...?" Questions

With these guiding principles, we embraced the design thinking method of framing issues and problems to be addressed from the point of view of the people we were designing for. Here are some of the most generative of the "How Might We ...?" questions that we posed:

Balance, Self-Care

- How might we help students respond best to feelings that they can never do "enough" work?
- How might we facilitate realistic goal-setting and time management?
- How might we have students approach taking breaks and self-care as seriously and with the same amount of commitment as they apply to their academic work?
- How might we structure in regular, shorter, all-campus breaks?
- How might there be institutional support for taking breaks?

Social Spaces & Dining

- How might we create more clearly delineated spaces for socializing and play (where academic work doesn't intrude)?
- How might we create spaces or opportunities for students to be creative (i.e., maker spaces for art, design, film, music, etc.)?
- How might we improve the students' daily and weekend dining experiences even before a new and bigger Sharples is built?
- How might the College increase students' food availability?

Events, Parties & Alcohol

- How might we think about events on campus that can foster feelings of belonging and community/ies on *both* a small scale and large scale? (Can those goals be achieved together?)
- How might we design a safe and inclusive party experience?
- How might we make it easier for students to plan events or gatherings and advertise them?
- How might we have fewer events so that the sheer number of events doesn't add to stress?
- How might we increase the visibility of and encourage participation in the social opportunities that already exist? (Olde Club bands, Swat Deck, student performances, etc.)
- How might we facilitate more students going off campus?
- How might we address the fraternities' apparent monopoly over social space and parties without alienating students on various sides of this issue?
- How might we change expectations and perceptions about many social events and alcohol consumption, making spaces where alcohol and alcohol-free partying can co-exist together?

Belonging

- How might we help students who feel that the school's resources do not meet their particular needs?
- How might we adapt spaces and/or the social scene to provide more options for introverted students?
- How might we encourage or facilitate greater diversity in student events and social gatherings (celebrating different cultures and experiences, or circumventing white, heterosexual dominance of social spaces and events)?

Institutional and Cultural Change

One of the foundational principles of design thinking is that you begin your brainstorming of ideas without consideration of the institutional, financial, or cultural constraints that might make an idea unfeasible or postponed for future action. As such, we considered both the types of immediate actions that could improve student wellbeing as well as the institutional and cultural changes that have been long demanded or needed at Swarthmore but require additional financial resources to execute.

Our committee joins the chorus of students and alumni who have expressed the crucial need for a student commons or student union building at Swarthmore. The students that we spoke to felt strongly that this type of space would support many of the principles we outlined above, including but not limited to: encouraging students to take breaks by having a space designated primarily for socializing and taking occasional breaks from academics; cultivating a greater sense of belonging by having a central location where students could gather and easily foster relationships across majors and other interests; supporting visibility and knowledge of resources and campus programs by having a central location for publicity and information; and having spaces for students to engage in a range of interactive creative group activities such as cooking, playing games, musical performances, and more. Students also talked about the desire to have a pub within the student commons that could encourage safe drinking habits. We see the recent additions of the Matchbox, PPR apartments, and the Hormel Nguyen Intercultural Center at Sproul Hall to be valuable additions to help facilitate some of these types of activities and that this type of student commons space would further build on and enhance the success of these initiatives.

Our committee also recognizes that some of the changes that can develop a “healthy intellectual life” at Swarthmore will require more substantive changes in the College culture, to emphasize the parallel aspirations for achievement and wellness. One of our committee’s most popular ideas centered on structuring our weekly and semester schedules to allow for regular and occasional breaks from our hard-working lives. Like many religious colleges that stop weekly for chapel services, we propose that the College consider a weekly hour dedicated to stepping away from our work and reconnecting with our friends, colleagues, or ourselves. We liked to call this a ***Swat Pause***. Perhaps on Wednesday or Friday from 12 to 1, all offices, departments, courses, etc. would be allowed to close, to allow students, faculty, and staff to engage in some activity that is restorative, restful, or social.

We think this could augment and expand the initiative in recent years to bring back more regular Collections at the College but our committee liked the idea of having there be a range of different types of activities that would happen during the Swat Pause. We also note that one of the limitations of Collection in its current incarnation is that there are still many things scheduled over this time and that there is an expectation that offices remain open and the business of the college continue as usual during Collection

time. We are proposing that there be a broader institutional commitment and expectation that the entire community would stop and come together in diverse ways during this weekly time.

We also propose that the College consider a once-a-year (usually in the spring) announcement of a break day from the work calendar, modeled on what Williams, Mount Holyoke, or Smith Colleges call "Mountain Day," which could be named "Crum Day" or "Arboretum Day" at Swarthmore, in which members of the college community could spend time outdoors in our beautiful campus, coordinated with planned events, meals, and gatherings. This idea was also a very popular recommendation from the Visioning study and we found that there was a lot of support for this idea among students and our committee.

We recognize that such ideas cannot be easily prototyped or implemented by a committee's recommendation, that they would involve planning and coordination across campus, and a dedication of will and commitment from the College. These recommendations still constitute a central aspect of our committee's work and we felt that pursuing these types of ideas would send a powerful message to all community members about the College's commitment to community wellbeing.

Prototypes and Promising Practices

Student Social Life

During the course of our committee's work we learned that students had a variety of definitions for and understandings of "social life." We also had the opportunity to learn about and observe several new programs and pilot projects coordinated by the Office of Student Engagement (OSE) that we think are valuable additions to student social life offerings that begin to address some of the concerns that we heard from students. We wanted to share here a few of those promising practices and prototypes from this spring along with some prototypes and new initiatives that are planned for this coming fall. We think it's important to underscore the need for the College to continue to provide support for social activities that will be of interest to a broad range of the student body, including creative alcohol free social initiatives and parties with alcohol that are safe and inclusive.

Promising Practices

- Winter Formal: Students were very enthusiastic about the format of this year's winter formal. The winter formal has become a tradition that kicks off the spring semester with a dance and a range of other activities. Students particularly liked the combination of arcade and carnival games in Essie Mae's

- and the DJ dance party in Upper Tarble because they felt like there were a variety of different activities that would appeal to different students, which resulted in a great turnout.
- Themed Pub Nites: This spring OSE partnered with the Pub Nite organizers to provide additional funding for adding programming activities and expanding food options at Pub Nite to attract a broader range of students and to encourage opportunities for students to come together and have fun without having alcohol as the only focal point of the event.
 - OSE student programming board: This year OSE launched a student programming board to focus on planning and organizing a broad range of creative events for students.

Prototypes

- Late night dining/Expanded Paces pilot in Sharples: The Paces student staff, OSE, and Dining Services worked together in spring 2018 to put together a plan for a pilot this fall that expands Paces operations and late-night dining. The current plan is for Paces café to operate out of Sharples, which will allow for an expanded menu and hours (Monday-Wednesday 9pm - Midnight, and Thursday-Sunday 9pm - 1am.)
- Expansion of Party Spaces: In fall 2018 two new reserve-able party spaces will be made available to students. The Hormel-Nguyen Intercultural Center at Sproul Hall will include a large flexible space that can be reserved for a range of different types of events – dinners, performances, and parties with alcohol. In addition, one of the Lodges will be available to be reserved for smaller events (15-20 students).

Future Ideas

- Create an interactive program planning tool drawing on existing programming check lists and planning guidelines and continue to raise visibility of funding sources for programming events and program planning support.
- Continue to encourage OSE, the Associate Dean of Students, and the Alcohol and Other-Drug Counselor and Educator to work collaboratively with students on creating safe inclusive social events that promote responsible alcohol use. For example, this spring OSE and the Associate Dean of Students partnered with the senior class officers on a senior week water pong pilot. They will also continue to explore the idea of a campus pub in the future perhaps beginning with a BYOB pub pilot.

Wellness and Self-Care

Promising Practices

- Access to Philly: The SEPTA ticket lottery pilot this year was very well received by students with over 300-400 students applying for the 95 tickets available each week. Students used the tickets to access a broad range of activities in Philadelphia including entertainment, cultural events, going to restaurants, and visiting friends. Student Government Organization (SGO) has now also added the opportunity for student organizations to get SEPTA tickets. Both of these initiatives build on the success of the SwatDeck program which we would also encourage consideration for further expansion. Many students spoke about getting off campus to take advantage of the range of cultural activities and social opportunities in Philly as critical to their personal wellbeing.
- Creative approaches to breaks: Trail to Wellness, pARTy, massages at the Matchbox, Dinner with Strangers: Our committee identified a variety of initiatives that are excellent examples of innovative ways to encourage students (and faculty and staff) to take a break and connect with one another. A few of these examples are the Trail to Wellness breaks in the Cornell Library which involved Health and Wellness, Athletics, OSE, Scott Arboretum and SGO bringing wellness-related activities into the library; the annual Art Department pARTy that creates an opportunity to showcase faculty and student studios and work in a fun social environment; regular massages at the Matchbox for stress relief; and the Dinner with Strangers program that brings faculty, staff, students, alums, and community members together over a meal. We would encourage continuing to build on these types of initiatives. For example, one idea we had was to consider adding a "Lunch with Strangers" program that would involve reserving a table at Sharples at lunch time once or twice a week and then having faculty, staff, and students sign up to be a part of that table.

Prototypes

- WRC pop-up patio: Students continue to express a desire to find new and interesting ways to make use of the tremendous benefits of utilizing our outdoor space for socializing. This spring the WRC hosted a pop-up patio event that was very successful and could be a model for future opportunities to create temporary outdoor gathering spaces to encourage utilization of the outdoors.
- Increased Matchbox hours: Many students also talked about a desire for increased Matchbox hours especially on the weekends to encourage more students to use this space as a healthy way to manage stress and self-care. Starting this fall Athletics will pilot expanded weekend hours.

Future Initiatives

- Social media campaign focused on self-care: Use social media to bring visibility to self-care messages, techniques, and role modeling from a variety of students, faculty and staff. Also utilize digital signage around campus to lift up these messages and help make resources more visible to students. Also explore other online tools to assist with sharing information about resources such as "You at College" <https://youatcollege.com/>
- Arboretum as wellness space: Partner with Arboretum staff on creating short guided meditations around campus and other wellness activities involving the Arboretum and the Crum woods.

Faculty Student Dialogue on Living a Healthy Intellectual Life

A persistent idea emerged all year in our conversations with students and deliberations as a committee: it is critically important to have continuous and ongoing conversations between faculty and students about balance and wellness in our working lives. Rarely do faculty have transparent discussions with students about how they design assignments or allocate weekly work expectations, nor do they regularly talk about the range of acceptable performances expected from students in a course. We're convinced instead that both faculty and students would benefit from conversations about how to take healthy breaks to optimize their working capacities, or how to say "No" to self-imposed over-scheduling that stretch us too far. It's time to dispense with the Darwinian thinking that says, "students will need to figure this out one day in the real world, so let them figure it out on their own now." This subcommittee focused its attention on how to best develop a culture at Swarthmore that encourages and facilitates these types of transparent conversations between faculty and students.

Promising Practices

- There are exemplary faculty who already engage in these kinds of practices (in their office hours, when they introduce their courses on the first day, or when they encourage mid-semester evaluations and assessments of a course), and some faculty have developed helpful presentations on the "cultural capital" that students acquire when they learn how to, say, talk with professors or utilize academic support resources, and talks on how underrepresented students can thrive in the STEM fields. Unfortunately, only a small proportion of the student body is exposed to such transparent and helpful discussions and advice.
- College faculty gets weekly "motivator" emails to assist with balancing their work commitments, and the Associate Provost for Faculty Diversity and Development has developed numerous initiatives for junior faculty as they get acclimated to the work demands at the College.
- Students have existing support resources for time management skills (like lynda.com) or study skills (the SAMs program and other peer academic tutors and mentors).

Prototypes

- Faculty-Student Conversations: We tested in faculty-student focus groups examples of the topics that can generate fruitful conversations between faculty and students:

- *First Day of Class: What are you thinking on the first day of class? For faculty: what do you wish to communicate about the work expectations for your course? Students: What do you hear (or wish you'd hear) on that first day?*
- *Work Expectations: Students: What do you wish you knew about how faculty thought about their expectations for the work they assign in a course? Faculty: What do you wish to know about how students experience the work expectations in your course? Both: What conversations are lacking on campus or in the classroom about approaches to work demands and expectations?*
- *Office Hours: What assumptions do you have about their purpose, who should go (or who actually goes), and what kinds of conversations do you hope to have?*
- *Communication: What methods and approaches do you use for communicating between faculty and students? What do you wish you knew that you've since discovered from failure or as valued advice?*

The focus groups revealed that there is strong interest in having more transparent conversations between faculty and students about these questions:

- *When and how can I know when I've done enough?*
- *How can we talk about breaks and "mental health days" not as a threat to learning or evidence of students slacking but as a method for more intense participation?*
- *How can students learn to be more comfortable taking risks to participate more in class?*
- *How might there be a systematic way for students to check syllabi for peaks and troughs of work demands in a semester? Why is it helpful to have mid-semester evaluations and check-ins?*
- *How can we best think about time management for the limited time constraints that we all face in a given week, month, or semester? Are there more productive ways to think about the time invested in studying and completing work in a course?*

Future Initiatives

- *Regular and ongoing faculty-student conversations (like those described above), perhaps coordinated by the Associate Provosts or the Aydelotte Foundation.*
- *Videos of helpful conversations, either on Instagram or on The Dash on the College's website. We recommend this as one of the best ways for the maximum number of students and faculty to listen and learn from this dialogue*
- *Centralized and easily accessible information for both students and faculty about all aspects of student academic support services*
- *Orientation for every student year: a beginning of the school year orientation of what to expect and how to prepare for your sophomore, junior, and senior years.*

- *A Swarthmore course review and syllabus review app or software that could aid students in choosing a manageable course load during course selection. The platform could be managed by ITS along with the Swarthmore College Computer Society (SCCS) and in consultation with faculty.*

Communication

Mindful that forms of communication and social media are rapidly shifting in today's culture, our committee still wished to explore ideas for how to best communicate about everything on campus, from events to resources to best practices for balance and wellbeing. We offer the following recommendations:

Future Initiatives

- A video project, perhaps using Instagram or other well-used social networking apps or the College website's Dash, to share messages about wellness. We envisioned this project as one of the best means of making faculty-student conversations available to the broadest audiences on campus, but this could also be an efficient way to communicate information about events, event planning, academic resources, funding opportunities, or wellness activities.
- Increased digital signage across campus, especially in Sharples, Essie Mae's, Parrish Hall, the libraries, coffee bars, and other heavily used spaces on campus. Screens could communicate quick messages about events on campus, but they could also be interactive to allow all members of the college community to gain quick and easy access to necessary information.
- Investigate other tools to assist with communication such as "You at College" <https://youatcollege.com/>

Other Ideas for Future Exploration

There were a number of other interesting ideas that the committee did not have the opportunity to prototype but that we wanted to offer for consideration for future exploration. Here are some examples:

- Social media blackouts – Several students described this idea as a way to reduce stress, to take a real break and do something restorative, and encourage face-to-face connections. Another way of framing this is "Swat Unplugged," which could be videos with suggestions/experiences that people have when they turn off their phones, devices, and social media platforms. Some students recommended that there be lockers for cell phones, laptops, and other electronic devices in social spaces to encourage them to put their devices away and focus on being present with each other.

- Occasional in-depth (outside the classroom) learning activities that are project-based, travel-demanding, experiential, or combined activism with learning. This could take the shape of something like a once-a-semester, 3-to-5-day sabbatical that was approved as a self-designed experiential project (such as building or inventing something, attending or hosting a conference, organizing a hands-on group project, etc.) The goal would be opportunities to apply what students are learning in the classroom and apply it to an intentionally designed hands-on project. This could take a variety of shapes and forms and could be piloted during current college breaks. We would also encourage looking at how to expand and emphasize college opportunities that already function in this way

such as the extern program, courses that involve embedded travel as a component of the course, CIL@SF, and SwatTank.

Ad Hoc Committee Statement on Greek Letter Organizations and Fraternity Houses

Due to the breadth of our committee's charge we were not able to do the extensive level of consultation required to address a comprehensive understanding of Greek Letter organizations on Swarthmore's campus. After deliberating on the concerns raised about fraternities and sororities on campus, our committee agreed on the following statement. We would also recommend that the committee or task force assigned to address this issue also review the history of Greek Letter organizations at Swarthmore over the course of time and examine how peer institutions have addressed similar issues and concerns related to Greek Letter organizations.

- The long-term future of Greek letter organizations on campus can be best addressed with a task force of students, alumni, Board members, faculty, and staff dedicated to addressing the issues regarding fraternities, sororities, and fraternity-leased space at Swarthmore. The task force should make their recommendations to the President and Board by April 2019.
 - The task force should address these questions: 1) whether the current configurations of fraternities and sororities are compatible with Swarthmore values and ideals; 2) whether fraternities and sororities can be redesigned as more inclusive organizations; 3) what are the implications for parties and social life on an otherwise cash-free campus when dues-paying organizations can pay for alcohol; and 4) whether it is equitable, safe, and in the best interest of the College to have spaces (houses) on campus leased to fraternities and not shared with other students or on-campus groups.
 - We recommend that the task force transparently define how it will determine the sense of the community and employ a variety of methods including perhaps a survey of current students and alums to determine the sense of the community about the positive contributions of and current concerns regarding fraternities and sororities on campus, and how the community feels about disbanding Greek letter organizations or permanently converting leased spaces into all-college student spaces.
 - We encourage the selection of members of this task force before the end of the summer so that they can begin their work immediately in 2018-19.
- We believe that decisions about Greek letter organizations at the College and fraternity-leased spaces on campus can only be made with the participation of

the whole community in the discussion and with the inclusion of all interested groups and parties in the task force's work.

- We recommend that the President and task force consider a moratorium on leased fraternity houses on campus (for at least one year or more) while the task force completes its work and a college-wide conversation takes place about the best Swarthmore solution for Greek letter organizations.
- We recommend that the President and task force consider the possibility that a fair, equitable, and more democratic use of these two fraternity-leased spaces could arise from re-constituting these buildings as all-student spaces to be governed and allocated by a student board (a non-hierarchical form of shared governance, perhaps elected or nominated by student organizations that could include fraternity members but have broader student representation). We can see the inequities that arise when fraternities are one of the only student organizations with complete control and oversight for a particular space on campus. We would recommend considering the possibility of piloting this approach during the 2018-19 academic year during the moratorium.
 - If the College were to pursue this approach, we recommend that the College show its commitment by devoting its resources to upgrading and improving the buildings and their interior spaces. These spaces could now be envisioned as shared student spaces that foster community and not exclusiveness.
- If the task force decides that fraternities and sororities should remain a part of campus life, we recommend that it consider ways that Greek letter organizations can align themselves with the College's non-discrimination policy, as well as utilize the diversity, equity, and inclusion toolkit, developed by the Associate Dean for Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Development. We also wish the task force to consider whether Swarthmore should adopt a practice developed at other schools in which students are ineligible for new member recruitment or other forms of formal participation within the organizations until after the completion of one full academic year as a student at Swarthmore.

Appendix A:

Individuals and Groups Consulted during the Committee's Work

Associate Provost for Faculty Diversity and Development
Athletics Department
Aydelotte Foundation
Communications Office
Denise Crossan, Lang Visiting Professor

Dining Services
ENLACE
Events Management Office
Faculty focus groups
Jill Gladstein, Associate Professor of English Literature and Director of the Writing Associates Program
Lang Center for Civic & Social Responsibility
Misery Poker Project
Office of Student Engagement (Assistant Director of Student Activities, student programming board)
Phi Si Fraternity
Pub Nite organizers
Residential Communities Coordinators (RCCs)
Social Innovation Lab, Lang Center
Student Academic Mentors (SAMs)
Student Government Organization (SGO) Academic Chair
Student Health and Wellness Center
Scott Arboretum
Student interviews (between 40 and 50 students were interviewed)
Student focus groups
Student Wellness Program
Swarthmore College Computer Society (SCCS)
Title IX Liaison Teams
Wellness Seminar

Appendix B:

Key Insitutional Partners (to carry forward these recommendations and initiatives)

OSE, Dining Services, Athletics, Health and Wellness Center, CAPS, Intercultural Center, Women's Resource Center, Black Cultural Center, Office of International Student Services, Office of Religious and Spiritual Life, President's Office, Provost's Office, Dean's Office, Title IX Office, SGO, Student pub nite organizers, RAs, DPAs, SAMs, GAs, SCCS, Scott Arboretum, CIL, Aydelotte, Lang Center, ITS, Communications, Facilities, Faculty Chairs, Writing Associates, Vice President for Finance and Administration

June 2018