125 YEARS IN THE MAKING
2019–2024 Strategic Plan for
THE BOTANIC GARDEN
OF SMITH COLLEGE
125 YEARS IN THE MAKING   |  2019–2024 Strategic Plan for the Botanic Garden of Smith College
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The mission of the Botanic Garden of Smith College is to foster education about the science, beauty, and importance of the plant kingdom through the use of outdoor and conservatory plant collections, gardens, displays, and exhibitions, and to preserve and maintain the historic Olmsted-designed campus landscape.

We carry out this mission while embodying the values of inclusivity, stewardship, collaboration, and innovation.
The idea... is to lay out the grounds so that they shall be not only most serviceable for our ordinary use, but shall also provide an ornamental botanical garden, the plants and trees being selected and grouped according to scientific as well as aesthetic demands.

PRESIDENT LAURENUS CLARK SEELYE, REPORT TO THE COLLEGE, 1892

Timeline of Key Events

- 1.23.18 Committee Workshop on Strategic Priorities
- 2.14.18 Staff Assessment of Organizational Identity
- 3.3.18 Friends Advisory Committee Assessment of Organizational Identity
- 3.21.18 Staff Playback Session on Organizational Identity
- 4.2.18 Committee Playback Session on Strategic Priorities
- 5.10.18 Faculty Focus Group on Interdisciplinary Teaching
- 7.25.18 Staff Workshop—Face-to-Face Learning Action Item Brainstorming
- 7.26.18 Staff Workshop—Inclusion, Diversity & Equity Action Item Brainstorming
- 8.1.18 Staff Workshop—Emerging Methods, Fields & Pedagogies Action Item Brainstorming
- 8.24.18 Staff Workshop—Experiential & Applied Action Item Brainstorming
- 9.26.18 Botanic Garden Volunteers Self-Assessment Session
- 10.24.18 Staff Charrette
- 2.6.19 Approval of Plan by Committee
The strategic planning process forces an institution to think about what really matters. This strategic plan is our first-ever comprehensive assessment of who we are as an organization, what we do, and how we can make the greatest impact on the world. In asking ourselves such essential questions, the Strategic Planning Committee took a broad and inclusive approach, investing a great deal of time into understanding what the Botanic Garden means to our many stakeholders. The result is a plan that has been developed both for and with the many stakeholder groups we have the pleasure to serve: Smith College students, faculty, administrators, and alumnae as well as Botanic Garden volunteers, K–12 teachers, visitors, and members of the Friends of the Botanic Garden.

The need for an organized and thoughtfully arranged plan for our future became clear during preliminary strategic planning conversations at the Botanic Garden. Through these visioning sessions, we saw the interconnectedness of the ideas, goals, hopes, and values expressed. Staff expressed a desire to focus more of their attention on the things that really mattered to them: sharing their love of plants and serving as educators, mentors, scholars, and researchers in an academic institution. They also expressed a desire to travel down a less familiar path, toward becoming much more responsive to the needs of our community and social justice–oriented institutions. At first glance, this may seem like an irrelevant goal for a botanical garden to pursue. In reality, botanical gardens are exceptionally well positioned to teach humanity how to appreciate, value, and understand diversity. The Botanic Garden of Smith College is, after all, a shrine to diversity.

With so many ideas swirling around, we concluded that we needed a comprehensive strategy, one that would express our vision and our values and act as a road map for realizing a well-defined set of objectives. After a yearlong endeavor meeting with stakeholders, developing a process, refining priorities, and discarding innumerable good ideas to make way for the very best ones, I am pleased to share the outcome of this process. No matter who you are, no matter how you interact with the Botanic Garden, this plan has been developed for you. On behalf of the staff and the Strategic Planning Committee, we look forward to doing this work with you.

Tim Johnson
A Culture of Discovery, 
A Culture of Inclusion & Access

125 Years in the Making represents the Botanic Garden of Smith College’s commitment to a new organizational culture. For Botanic Garden staff, the next five years are about further embracing and celebrating our identity as inseparable from, and integral to, something larger than ourselves: Smith College.

From the beginning, Smith has been more than just a school; it was, and remains, part of a movement to ensure women have access to the transformative power of a liberal arts education. And the Botanic Garden is indivisible from that movement. From Smith, the Botanic Garden derives its identity and purpose. Engaging in the campus dialogue, collaborating with partners across the college, serving the interests of the entire campus community, and putting Smith students first is how we will maximize our impact on the world.

Botanical gardens have a critical role to play in addressing the complex, urgent problems of our time—among them climate change, food insecurity, environmental degradation, unequal access to education, underrepresentation of women in STEM fields, discrimination, and racism. All of these challenges are issues of inequity and of unequal access to resources; addressing them starts with placing equity and social justice at the center of our work. Our efforts begin with our students. As an academic botanical garden, we have the opportunity to turn public engagement and public service into real-world leadership opportunities for Smith students. Through botanical coursework, scholarship, and experiential learning, we are preparing students of all backgrounds, identities, and abilities to shape the future of our garden, of institutions, and of the world.
Throughout our strategic planning process, staff, visitors, volunteers, students, and community partners said over and over again, “Someone took the time to teach me to love plants, and it changed my life.” Such a profound experience should be accessible to people of every ethnicity, gender identity, ability, age, sexuality, socioeconomic status, and level of education. Anyone should be able to effortlessly enter our spaces—both physically and psychologically—and immediately feel as though they belong.

The well-documented lack of diversity within the botanical garden profession limits the ability of these institutions to connect with a wider range of audiences. The Botanic Garden of Smith College is poised to be a leader in diversifying the next generation of researchers, practitioners, educators, innovators, and professionals. When compounded by a liberal arts education from Smith College, these future leaders with their diverse backgrounds, identities, experiences, and perspectives will be better equipped to develop the innovative solutions that are needed to address the world’s major challenges.

We envision a future where the Botanic Garden of Smith College not only provides innovative educational experiences to Smith students and the greater community, but also learns from them. This means telling more inclusive stories, being more collaborative about decision making, creating opportunities for visitors to share their experiences, designing flexible spaces that respond to changing community needs and interests, and making sure that navigation is effortless and safe for all. The end result will be more access, more meaningful engagement, more return visits, and more support for the mission of the Botanic Garden of Smith College.
125 Years in the Making

Smith College’s first president, Laurentus Clark Seelye, had an innovative and ambitious idea: establish the entire Smith College campus as an arboretum and botanic garden for the sake of both scientific study and beauty. President Seelye’s vision began to take shape in 1892, when the landscape architecture firm F. L. Olmsted & Company started work on campus planning. By 1894, a small greenhouse and potting shed were in place and serving as a nursery for landscape plants. As the greenhouse was expanded to accommodate a burgeoning collection of exotic plants, the Botanic Garden’s first director, William Francis Ganong, took over the task of planting the campus arboretum and establishing formal gardens. With the construction of Victorian-style Lord & Burnham glasshouses in 1895, which stand to this day, the Botanic Garden of Smith College was inaugurated.

Today, within those glasshouses, the Lyman Plant House is home to an extraordinary collection of plants as well as exhibition galleries, teamwork spaces and offices, and learning labs for students. The Botanic Garden’s many named gardens—including the Systematics Garden, Capen Garden, and Happy Chace ’28 Garden—and campus-wide arboretum enrich the Smith College campus and the greater community. And by being virtually accessible, the Botanic Garden of Smith College’s online resources extend the reach of the Botanic Garden worldwide.

Almost from the start, the Botanic Garden served both students and the greater public. In fact, its most high-profile events, the Spring Bulb Show and Fall Chrysanthemum Show, began in the early 1900s as showcases of student learning. At present, these shows draw a combined 40,000 visitors and a significant portion of the more than 100,000 annual visitors to Lyman Plant House.

Such a plan, though successful in many of the great Botanic Gardens of the world... has never been attempted, so far as I am aware, by any College in this country or elsewhere.

WILLIAM FRANCIS GANONG, THE SMITH COLLEGE MONTHLY, 1885
Meeting the Needs of Today & Tomorrow

A 21st Century Role for Academic Botanical Gardens

How botanical gardens carry out their three core missions—education, research, and conservation—has changed over the past century. From serving a small core audience of specialists studying taxonomy, pharmacology, economic botany, and horticulture, botanical gardens and their collections have evolved to become fertile ground for inquiry and scholarship in the humanities, arts, social sciences, data sciences, and health sciences. Academic gardens have also cultivated a larger audience among the general public, which is discovering that botanical gardens offer invaluable sources of information and inspiration.

Over the past century, the Botanic Garden of Smith College has adapted its mission to better serve the campus and the community at large, too. In 2020, as we celebrate the Botanic Garden’s 125th anniversary, this strategic plan will guide us in meeting the needs and interests of students, scholars, researchers, and the greater public in the years to come.

Key to this plan is strengthening the Botanic Garden’s connection to the Smith curriculum, which will in turn expose more students to the possibility of a botanical or collections-based career. We seek to reinforce our role as a leadership academy, to make every aspect of our operations available to students for experiential learning, and to empower staff to serve as professional educators and mentors to students. In doing so, the Botanic Garden will remain an exemplar of the college’s philosophy of fortifying theoretical knowledge with practical experience.

In addition, as a publicly accessible organization, the Botanic Garden of Smith College can draw on the energy and interests of students to bring fresh perspectives and to create
Preparing Students to Address Complex, Urgent Problems

In formulating our goals and setting our priorities, we turned to the 2016 Smith College strategic plan, Lives of Distinction and Purpose: A Plan for Smith, for guidance and inspiration. Critical to our decision making is the belief that, as that plan asserts, “pedagogy framed around complex, urgent problems—high-stakes global challenges that often lie at the heart of global inequities—holds the promise of transformative learning.” Issues such as climate change, food insecurity, environmental sustainability, access to education, and the status of women in STEM fields are so central to our work and so cross-cutting that they are addressed throughout our strategic plan. Given this commonality of purpose, we have adopted as our own the key themes of the Smith College strategic plan: Face-to-Face Education; Inclusion, Diversity, & Equity; Experiential & Applied Opportunities; and Emerging Methods, Fields, & Pedagogies.

Placing Students at the Center of Everything We Do

The Botanic Garden’s continued success and prosperity should be measured by the extent to which it supports the college’s mission. To this end, we are committed to putting Smith students at the center of everything we do.

We do this in two important and distinct ways. First, as one of the college’s unique teaching assets, we maintain collections, provide practical experiences and mentorship, provide staff expertise, and create educational experiences that directly contribute to the curricular experience at Smith College. Second, because the Botanic Garden is itself an institution, students involved in its new points of entry into the botanical world for our visitors. A priority of our students-first approach is to develop opportunities for students within our garden and beyond, in the broader professional network of botanic gardens, nonprofits, and community organizations. Doing so benefits both the students and the greater community.
operations learn how organizations work and how to work within organizations. At the Botanic Garden, students assist in all aspects of our operations, serve on hiring committees, share expertise with visitors, design programs and events, lead collaborations with partner organizations, and work in team settings with real stakes and real rewards.

Students who find a home in the Botanic Garden glimpse a future as professionals and leaders in ways they cannot through classroom learning alone. Their experiences here matter deeply and have a lasting impact, as the committee learned during the strategic planning process. Alumnae whose time at Smith revolved around the Botanic Garden cite their experiences within the Botanic Garden as instrumental to their career success. The details of their stories vary, but they consistently describe the mentorship, coaching, and collegiality as life-changing.

Letting Audiences Take the Lead

Plants are no longer interesting just to botanists, as reflected in the broad use of the Botanic Garden in the Smith curriculum. Researchers, scholars, educators, and students from across disciplines are finding fertile ground for critical analysis, scientific inquiry, and artistic expression in the botanical world. This diversification of interested parties and emerging relevance to new audiences demands a reorienting and reimagining of what we do as an academic botanical garden, as well as how we do it.

As Botanic Garden staff interact with more and more experts who are not botanists, and as more doors are opened into the botanical world for the uninitiated, it becomes increasingly important to question assumptions about who we are, what we do, and why we matter. To stay relevant, we must embrace an identity as a multidisciplinary, inclusive, user-centric institution that makes the interests, needs, and priorities of our many stakeholders our own.
With this innovative and student-centered plan, the Botanic Garden commits to strengthening its connection to the curriculum—humanities, arts, and social sciences as well as natural sciences—and to a pedagogy framed around big questions and urgent problems. The planned outreach to a broader community means that in the future even more will share in the learning, pleasure, and well-being fostered by Smith’s beautiful campus and arboretum.

Nancy Bradbury ’74, Professor of English Language and Literature, Strategic Planning Committee Faculty Representative
Strategic Investments in New Initiatives

Attaining the desired outcomes of this strategic plan will require new investments in people, programs, and spaces. Those outlined here reflect the initiatives that will require significant financial investments.

Staffing

Postbaccalaureate Fellow for Gateway Encounters
Postbaccalaureate fellowships are opportunities for recent graduates to hone their skills as project managers, communicators, and professionals, while continuing to draw on the resources of an academic institution. The Postbaccalaureate Fellow for Gateway Encounters will be focused on helping the Botanic Garden initiate a lifelong appreciation for the environment through botanical explorations (Desired Outcome 3.1).

Academic Partnerships Educator
The Academic Partnerships Educator will serve a pivotal role in orienting and connecting faculty to Botanic Garden resources and assisting with curriculum development (1.1, 1.2, and 4.1). This position will also administer the Botanic Garden Concentration (Action Item 3.2.1), managing the concentration committee, advising students, teaching a concentration seminar, guiding Praxis experiences, and coordinating capstone experiences.
Development Specialist

The Botanic Garden of Smith College has been fortunate to thrive without dedicated development personnel. This is a testament to the impact of the Botanic Garden’s work; it inspires giving. A comprehensive and methodical strategy for the continued financial support of the Botanic Garden is essential to reaching our desired outcomes. The Botanic Garden has many assets that can be more fully activated to reach these goals, including building a more robust connection to the Smith alumnae community through the Friends Advisory Committee (4.2.5). Not only will a development specialist help maximize the Botanic Garden’s impact over the next five years, the specialist will also expand our base of support among the Friends of the Botanic Garden, create paths into new communities, and build relationships with donors and supporters that will pave the way for continued impacts.

Student Leadership Opportunities

Endowed Fund for Underrepresented Student Internships

By establishing an internship endowment for underserved students, we will ensure that students from underrepresented communities have opportunities to explore botanical careers (2.2.2). Specifically, the endowment funds will provide stipends to students who are demographically underrepresented in botanical professions.
Student Engagement Internship

The Student Engagement Internship (3.2.3) will be a pinnacle student experience. With the support of Botanic Garden staff and the college’s many centers and resources, interns will have an opportunity to take the lead in finding innovative ways for Smith students to get their hands dirty and learn about plants. Student Engagement Interns will explore and grow their leadership abilities as they draw on their experiences, interests, and expertise to inspire, motivate, teach, and train other students.

Gardens, Buildings, and Landscapes

Capen Garden Update

Capen Garden is the Botanic Garden’s primary outdoor horticultural learning garden. As such, it must be updated from time to time to reflect emerging teaching methods, pedagogical theory, design principles, and plant materials. The next iteration of Capen Garden (1.2.4) will honor the garden’s history, introduce students to the science and art of horticulture, provide new points of entry into the world of horticulture, and enhance Capen Garden as a community gathering space.

Collaborative Space for Student Leaders

The current success of our internship program, the planned expansion of such opportunities (2.2.2, 3.2.2, and 3.2.3), and the establishment of a new community of practice around plant conservation (1.4) necessitate the creation of dedicated space for student leaders to work, collaborate, and learn (3.2.4).
Lyman Visitor Experience Overhaul

Botanic Garden staff will be developing a faculty-supported plan for botanical education at Smith (1.1.2), creating a collections management plan (1.3.1), and taking steps to put visitors at the center of the experience (4.2). In the process, new ideas will emerge about how our physical spaces might reflect our values and priorities. Such considerations will be coupled with our desire to reduce the carbon footprint of Lyman Plant House (1.2.5) and the need for routine preservation and renovations of the historic glasshouses. Our envisioned outcome is for a Lyman Plant House and Conservatory that offers an accessible and equitable journey of discovery, inspires wonder, promotes stewardship of the natural world, and invites participation.

Landscape Master Plan

Like Lyman Plant House, the landscape of Smith College is a manifestation of values and priorities. A new landscape master plan is already in development to bring the landscape into alignment with Smith College’s curriculum, pedagogy, and values (1.2.1). This plan will ensure that decisions about how Smith designs, builds, reorganizes, manages, interacts with, and interprets green spaces will be mission-focused. The result will be a landscape that lives to teach and that is inspired by natural processes and human endeavors alike. In support of this campus initiative, Botanic Garden staff will be adopting bioproductive management strategies (1.2.2) and systematizing an approach to invasive species control in the riparian zones of the Mill River and Paradise Pond (1.2.3).
Action Plan

Theme 1: Face-to-Face Education

SMITH STUDENTS ARE PROFOUNDLY IMPACTED BY THEIR CLASSROOM EXPERIENCES. Consequently, in seeking to fully embrace our identity as an academic botanical garden, we must strengthen and expand our partnerships with Smith faculty and instructors. Among that group, we already have close allies, innovative users, and energetic champions. These insiders regularly look to our staff, spaces, and collections for ideas, inspiration, and support. But we aim to connect with the larger Smith teaching community that is unaware of what we do, what we have to offer, and how the Botanic Garden can transform their teaching.

In the coming years, we will direct a significant portion of our communications toward the campus community to help Smith faculty and instructors discover our relevance to their work. By supporting inquiry into such meaningful subjects as social justice, sustainability, environmental stewardship, and the critical link between green spaces and human wellness, to name just a few, the Botanic Garden can embody the model of campus as classroom, even as we maintain our identity as an exceptional botanical institution.

Desired Outcome 1.1 Academic Resources: Improve awareness of the Botanic Garden as a unique teaching resource

1.1.1 Produce an annual report that tells our story and showcases our contribution to a Smith College liberal arts education
1.1.2 Develop a faculty-supported plan to ensure that the college offers innovative and relevant botanical courses

Desired Outcome 1.2 Campus as Classroom: Leverage gardens and spaces to inspire inquiry-based learning

1.2.1 Develop a landscape master plan that aligns the landscape with Smith College’s curriculum, pedagogy, and values
1.2.2 Adopt bioproductive landscape practices that reflect the college’s sustainability priorities
1.2.3 Collaborate with Facilities and the Center for the Environment, Ecological Design & Sustainability to embed in classroom learning a long-term strategy for invasive species management and waterway stewardship of the Paradise Pond waterfront
1.2.4 Bring environmental, cultural, and social issues to the forefront of learning with a new Capen Garden design
1.2.5 Reduce the carbon footprint of Lyman Conservatory

Desired Outcome 1.3 Unique Teaching Collections: Connect our plant collections to the challenges of today

1.3.1 Develop a collections management plan that aligns plant collections with their purpose as a resource for education, research, and conservation
1.3.2 Enhance online collections exploration and discovery through enhanced searchability
1.3.3 Develop a new plant label standard that is relevant to more visitors

Desired Outcome 1.4 Community of Practice: Place students at the forefront of plant conservation

1.4.1 Engage students in regional efforts to safeguard threatened species through seed collection and collaboration with New England Wild Flower Society’s seed bank
1.4.2 Expand on-campus research opportunities for students through partnerships with faculty researchers and the Center for the Environment, Ecological Design & Sustainability
1.4.3 Engage students in plant conservation through off-campus internships, research presentations, and participation in scientific meetings
1.4.4 Put the campus into service as a repository for native plant species that are threatened with extinction
The Botanic Garden of Smith College values diversity. The wide appeal of gardens and green spaces as well as the universal human dependence on plants mean that botanical gardens offer endless opportunities to explore the human condition and cultural diversity. However, the complex history of botanical gardens must be discussed and continuously acknowledged because access to botanical knowledge, materials, and spaces has not been equal, and the economic and social benefits have been shared by too few.

While informal outreach to on-campus communities of color by Botanic Garden staff over the last few years has resulted in more demographic diversity in our course rosters, student work-study hires, and internship cohorts, a formalized approach is needed to more consciously create spaces, programs, interpretation, and outreach programs that are accessible to people of all ethnicities, gender identities, abilities, sexualities, and socioeconomic statuses. Becoming a more equitable, just, and inclusive institution will require better data, a fortified culture of conscious inclusion, and acknowledgment that continuous improvement and growth will always be in process.

Theme 2: Inclusion, Diversity & Equity

Desired Outcome 2.1: Who We Serve: Diversify audiences and foster intercultural discourse by making spaces more accessible and welcoming
  2.1.1 Revise our mission statement to affirm the Botanic Garden’s commitment to inclusion and equity, and to prioritize co-creation of knowledge and active learning
  2.1.2 Update interpretive displays to tell a broader range of stories representing diverse perspectives
  2.1.3 Quantify Lyman Conservatory audience demographics
  2.1.4 Work with the Office of Disability Services to improve accessibility in our spaces and to our resources

Desired Outcome 2.2: How We Serve: Confront bias and racism to build a culture of conscious inclusion and social justice activism
  2.2.1 Collaborate with Unity organizations, the Office of Multicultural Affairs, and other cultural identity groups on outreach to ensure Botanic Garden experiences are relevant and affirming to students of color
  2.2.2 Create an endowed fund to support underrepresented student internship experiences and ensure participation by students of color
  2.2.3 Develop a diversity and inclusion policy that utilizes the principles of inclusive leadership to guide our culture and work
  2.2.4 Enable our community to hold us accountable by tracking and reporting on the diversity of our staff, leadership, and ambassadors
  2.2.5 Develop strategies, standards, metrics, and staff competencies that ensure hiring practices are equitable
Theme 3: Experiential & Applied Opportunities

THE BOTANIC GARDEN OF SMITH COLLEGE IS PREPARING THE NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS. While the core mission of a liberal arts education is to produce well-rounded individuals with a broad base of knowledge, a defining characteristic of a Smith education is that it meets this goal through providing both theoretical knowledge and practical experiences. Linking the two builds resourceful leaders who apply knowledge in innovative and effective ways to solve real-world problems.

The Botanic Garden operates as an institution within the larger institution. It is a vibrant environment in which students can learn about the many facets of an organization’s operation, from systems management to outreach, and its smaller scale relative to the college makes such understanding easier to grasp. At the garden, Smith students gain insights and practical experiences in organizational leadership, applications of theoretical knowledge, networking, effective communication, and teamwork. These sustaining experiences provide them with professional skills, and these professional skills have a demonstrable record of launching careers. The key is to expose students to the world of opportunities available to them within the Botanic Garden early in their Smith experience so that they can find their passion and fully capitalize on these resources during their time here.

Desired Outcome 3.1 Gateway Encounters: Initiate a lifelong appreciation for the environment through botanical explorations
3.1.1 Develop a first-year recruitment program that inspires students with diverse backgrounds and interests to pursue Botanic Garden experiences
3.1.2 Develop an educational microengagement series that brings students back to the Botanic Garden again and again
3.1.3 Enhance our ability to nurture resilience in our community by partnering with the Schacht Center for Health and Wellness and the Center for Religious and Spiritual Life on student programming
3.1.4 Pilot extended hours and accompanying community programming at Lyman Conservatory

Desired Outcome 3.2 Sustaining Experiences: Engage students in career-activating professional experiences
3.2.1 Build a Botanic Garden concentration where students will reinforce theoretical learning with practical experiences in organizational settings
3.2.2 Revamp the Botanic Garden internship programs with a focus on developing leadership skills
3.2.3 Establish an academic-year student engagement internship
3.2.4 Make office space for a growing number of student leaders
Theme 4: Emerging Fields, Methods & Pedagogies

THERE IS SO MUCH WE CAN LEARN FROM OUR STAKEHOLDERS. If we make it easy for people to access our resources, our gifted network of teachers will put our collections, spaces, and expertise to use as learning tools in innovative and unexpected ways. If we prepare our volunteers to be responsive to visitors, casual interactions will be transformed into personalized experiences. If we create more opportunities for visitors to tell stories, create content, and share ideas with other visitors, we will be better able to develop experiences that resonate with them.

We want our work to empower educators and excite learners. To accomplish this, we must engage in more conversations with users about what they need, what they want, and what they find relevant and transformative about the Botanic Garden. We must create more space for dialogue, reveal more about each plant, and spend more time contextualizing collections for audiences of diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and interests. Our approach to teaching and learning will be marked by a blurring of the line between teacher and student, a pronounced emphasis on what learners want (without assumptions about what they need), and the desire to help people find their personalized passion for plants.

Desired Outcome 4.1 Educators: Enable educators to unlock the full potential of the Botanic Garden in their teaching and learning
4.1.1 Facilitate Botanic Garden use by faculty and instructors by regularly participating in Teaching Arts Lunches and Teaching Circles
4.1.2 Restructure volunteer training to prepare volunteers for an expanded role in learner engagement
4.1.3 Redevelop K–12 tours to emphasize active engagement with the collections

Desired Outcome 4.2 Visitors and Supporters: Put visitors at the center of the experience
4.2.1 Develop a learning and engagement plan that brings the collections to life for visitors and generates return visits
4.2.2 Redesign Lyman Plant House to create a welcoming, accessible, and engaging first impression for visitors
4.2.3 Establish talk-back spaces for visitors to contribute to content creation and guide program development
4.2.4 Redesign external communications to enable people to connect to and support our work
4.2.5 Enable the Friends Advisory Committee to grow our fundraising capacity and energize our alumnae community to meet the needs of our strategic vision
1.1 Academic Resources: Improve awareness of the Botanic Garden as a unique teaching resource.

1.2 Campus as Classroom: Leverage gardens and spaces to inspire inquiry-based learning.

1.3 Unique Teaching Collections: Connect our plant collections to the challenges of today.

1.4 Community of Practice: Place students at the forefront of plant conservation.

2.1 Who We Serve: Remove barriers to access in order to diversify audiences, foster intercultural discourse, and promote social justice.

2.2 How We Serve: Confront bias and racism to build a culture of conscious inclusion.

3.1 Gateway encounters: Initiate a lifelong appreciation for the environment through botanical explorations.

3.2 Sustaining Experiences: Engage students in career-activating professional experiences.

4.1 Educators: Enable educators to unlock the full potential of the Botanic Garden in their teaching and learning.

4.2 Visitors and Supporters: Put Vistors at the center of the experience.
With the inclusion of climate change, food security, and diversity and equity in the plan, I see myself and the passions/concerns of my fellow students in the work of the Botanic Garden. Realizing that botanic gardens are thinking about these things has been a turning point for me, and I am now applying for botanic garden jobs for after graduation. Regardless of one’s major, there is a place for every student at the Botanic Garden.

Emily Hitchcock ’19, Environmental Science & Policy, Strategic Planning Committee
Student Representative
The Botanic Garden of Smith College