

Think Big!

Please come to one of
Science Planning
Committee's two **open
meetings** scheduled
for Wednesday, March
4th in McConnell 103:

12:15 to 1:15 For lunch

4 to 5 With refreshments

We are working on a
series of proposals to
submit to the
Committee on Mission
and Priorities (CMP)
as part of college-wide
strategic planning. We
will present the
promising idea
proposals we intend to
submit to CMP based
on our divisional
strategic planning
while we solicit
feedback and answer
questions.

All Div III faculty and
staff are welcome!



FROM THE CLARK SCIENCE CENTER DIRECTORS' OFFICE

February 2015

When "Brilliance" Back-Fires



When we think about how to foster persistence of women in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) pipeline, one area that gets a lot of attention relates to the unwelcoming work and learning environments that discourage and deny women. [A recent article in the *Los Angeles Times*](#) describes the stories of a number of women who quit jobs in industry after experiencing frustrating and hostile work environments. Clearly, we need to teach the next generation of educators and industry leaders how to address the biases and discrimination that hold back women at every level of the STEM pipeline.

But could some of our ideas about talent as well as our efforts to encourage really promising women to pursue STEM fields actually undermine our goals of gender parity? This is a worrisome idea and one that has some empirical support. [A study just released in *Science*](#) found that the more that STEM disciplines embrace the view that brilliance is important to success, the greater women's underrepresentation was in these fields (at the doctoral level), likely because societal stereotypes of women emphasize that they are not likely to possess this kind of raw talent. This notion, dubbed "field-specific ability beliefs," also predicted women's representation in social science and humanities fields (with women less likely to pursue music composition or philosophy, e.g.) as well as African-Americans across a variety of fields, including STEM. This line of research reminds me in some ways of [Carol Dweck's](#) early groundbreaking work. Her lab studies found that complimenting youth on their intelligence ("Wow, you're smart!") made them more likely to avoid future learning challenges relative to kids praised for their efforts ("Wow, you worked hard!").

When we hear or deliver lines about a student's intelligence, brilliance, or smarts, we do so as a form of compliment delivered with good intention. But good intentions do not remedy iatrogenic effects. We need to be careful about the ways in which the encouragement we offer could backfire for our students and undermine the very goals we pursue. Of course, we must work

to remedy unwelcoming environments for women in STEM. But, our ideas about success and talent could also fetter our students and their sense of potential and promise. We must emphasize that key ingredients to STEM success are practice, persistence, and grit. When we model, honor, and compliment these attributes, we cultivate the scientist in the next generation of women leaders.

--Patty DiBartolo

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It's Budget Time!

As budget holders prepare budget submissions, Patty and I will be grateful if you will share two types of information with us: your requests for equipment and your requests for Facilities Management project or renovations. Both types of information would help support our advocacy for Science Center-wide solutions to the challenges of renewing our scientific instrumentation base and keeping our facilities in good shape, suitable for their current purposes. We also encourage budget holders to make visible your realistic needs for classroom and research supplies that are not covered by grant or other sources.

In a lunchtime talk on February 25, David DeSwert, Associate Vice President for Finance, and Emily Schwarz, Budget Director, provided an overview of the College's budget process and finances. Their talk explained the larger context of the College's budget development and management, how the budget supports Smith's mission and priorities, some insights into how the science budgets fit into the bigger Smith picture, and best practices for creating and monitoring a departmental budget. If you were unable to attend the talk but would like to see a summary of the talk, please ask [Laura Fountain-Cincotta](#) for a copy of the summary.

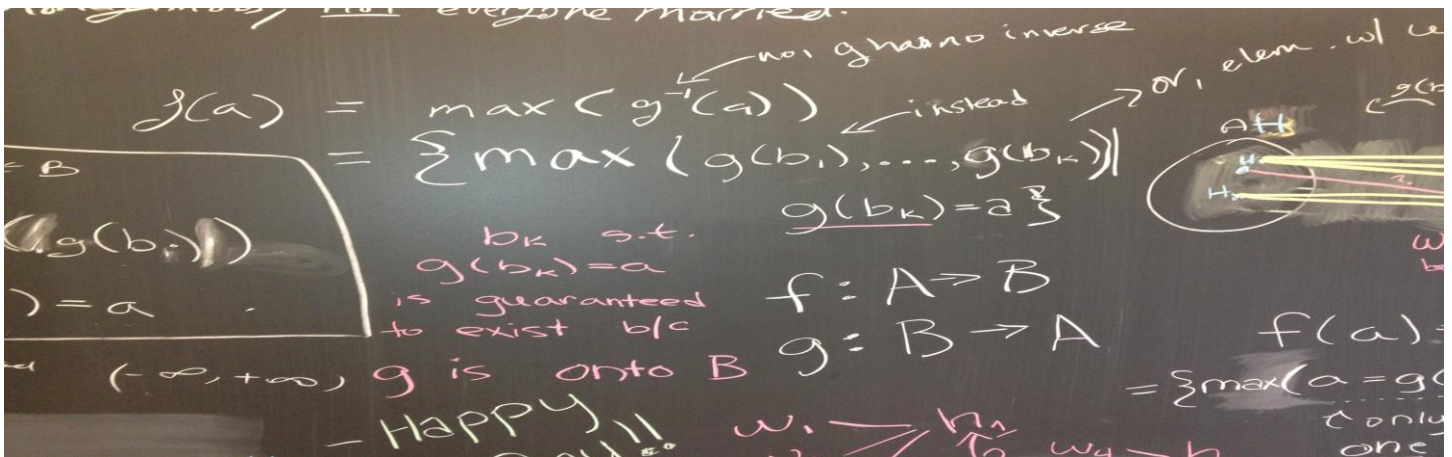
--Margaret Lamb, Administrative Director

CALLING ALL GREAT IDEAS

The [Committee on Mission and Priorities](#) has put out a call for our creative thinking and best ideas to help inform the College's strategic planning process. Science Planning Committee is working on a set of proposals based on divisional strategic planning (see "Think Big!" on the front page of this newsletter), but we want to urge all of our colleagues to share their own! On-line proposals are due to CMP by March 23rd. All they require is innovative thinking (and a short 1,000 character abstract).

For further details, see the on-line form here:

http://www.smith.edu/planning/planning_proposal.php



IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Week of March 16th
March 23rd 2015

Spring Break—No Classes
CMP Proposals due

CONTACT US: PATRICIA DIBARTOLO (pdibarto@smith.edu); MARGARET LAMB (mlamb@smith.edu)

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