A Classroom of Many Stories

Suranjit Tilakawardane ’07 has been a member of Frosh Revue, rowed crew, played IM broomball and performed with the step-dance group Sankofa. He spent Winter Break, however, very differently from his fellow students.

Home in Sri Lanka, he and his family had planned a trip to the beach for the morning of Dec. 26 but then inadvertently slept in. That may have saved their lives. It certainly freed him to help the tsunami relief efforts, sorting emergency food supplies, before returning to campus for Winter Study. He arrived back at Williams changed by the experience.

Not all of our growing number of international students (6 percent of each class, up from 3 percent in the late 1990s) have had such dramatic encounters, but each brings to campus a unique background and perspective.

As part of the College’s strategic plan, we decided to increase the number of international students and to diversify the group by becoming one of the very few colleges and universities in the country to admit international students without regard to their financial situations, while promising to meet the financial need of each of them for four years.

Faculty have long been clear on how these students enliven the classroom.

“They’re exceptionally well prepared academically, tend to be more practiced at independent work and have a completely different point of view,” says Political Science Department Chair Cheryl Shanks. “They tend to see connections among countries and among institutions such as the market and the international media as central political agents. They’re less likely to view countries as discrete and autonomous and individuals as discrete and autonomous. International politics looms larger in the texture of their daily lives.

“So imagine how my international law class was transformed the last time I taught it. Students were from Bulgaria, India, Jamaica, Romania, Russia, South Africa, South Korea and Taiwan, as well as from Hawaii and from Berkshire County. A conversation about war-crimes trials, or intellectual property protections, or treaties on deforestation … completely different.”

Art Department Chair Mike Glier ’75 recalls advising an international student who had grown up in an educational system with a strict curriculum and was amazed at the freedom Williams afforded her to shape her own course of study. “She shared her delight of this opportunity with her classmates,” he says, “reminding those who had always enjoyed such autonomy how precious it was.

“At this moment, as the world struggles to accept variety so that we can coordinate globally, it’s essential that Williams students work in a classroom that is filled with many stories,” Glier adds. “Here they can learn from this yeasty mix to recognize the subjectivity of their own point of view and to become curious about the experience of others and tolerant of their opinions.”

As a result, all of our students become more in touch with the increasingly international world in which they will live and work.

This helps to explain the time and energy so many students, faculty, and staff have put into responses to the Asian disaster. They’ve organized benefit concerts, faculty forums, the placing of donation boxes on campus and on Spring Street, disaster-related programs on Martin Luther King Day, and an effort advocating debt relief for the hardest hit countries.

For Suranjit, his involvement in these activities had to wait. Three days into Winter Study his class, which is studying the political economy of South Africa, left for Cape Town. Another day in the life of increasingly international Williams.

—Morty Schapiro
A sampling of current books and other published materials received by the *Williams Alumni Review*

**EPH'S BOOKSHELF**

**Think You're the Only One? Oddball Groups Where Outsiders Fit In.** By Seth Brown '01. Barnes & Noble Books, 2004. 144 pp. $7.95. From The Church of Volkswagenism to The Luxuriant Flowing Hair Club for Scientists—associations and organizations for folks with not-so-mainstream interests.


**Psychology's Grand Theorists: How Personal Experiences Shaped Professional Ideas.** By Amy Demorest '79. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2005. 216 pp. $22.95 paper, $49.95 cloth. How the three historically dominant schools of psychology—psychodynamic, behavioral and phenomenological—were informed in large part by the personal experiences of their originators.


ON COMPACT DISC

FACULTY IN FOCUS

Urban Renewal

Concerned that one of his students had begun hanging around with "the wrong crowd," Jeanmot Barr, a teacher at Sleepy Hollow School in Tarrytown, N.Y., believed Williams' Urban Scholars Program might help the high schooler get back on track.

"I thought if I could show him life after high school, show him a school like Williams, maybe I could turn him around," Barr says. "He came and it did."

Begun 11 years ago by retired Williams admission director Phil Smith '55, Urban Scholars has brought students from Sleepy Hollow and other low-income, New York-area high schools to the Purple Valley each June to build their writing, analytical, skills and expose them to cultural and outdoor experiences. Participants, most of whom are black or Latino, are selected by their teachers for their academic achievement or potential.

Last summer—in addition to studying Shakespeare's As You Like It, seeing the play performed by Shakespeare and Co., climbing Mount Greylock and visiting the Clark Art Institute—Urban Scholars got a taste of what it's like to be social scientists, using North Adams as their laboratory.

Scholars were divided into groups led by Williams student-teaching assistants. Each group examined a theme (the environment, arts, social services, health care or education), met with members of the College's psychology and economics faculty, learned interviewing skills from a sociologist and examined economic, social and cultural forces affecting North Adams.

The groups then gave oral presentations, including a debate on charter schools, a rap song about North Adams' challenges and a sequence of mock TV programs portraying the city from various perspectives.

"I wanted students to see how people in a community can bring about change and to learn how to research a social problem—how to take that stance of interest and concern but ... remain objective and detached," says German professor Gail Newman, director of the Urban Scholars Program and the Lissack Professor for Social Responsibility and Ethics.

At first, Newman says, students were skeptical about researching North Adams. "Their attitude was, 'Why should we care about this little place that has nothing to do with us?'"

Ultimately, however, "It was an eye-opener for them," she says. "Here was a rural, more or less white community that turned out to have some of the same problems their own communities have."

Though Newman plans to continue the North Adams unit and add an oral history project, high school teachers like Barr say—curriculum aside—the Urban Scholars Program's greatest strength is how it "re-directs" students. "A lot of these kids are challenged socially, economically, linguistically or a combination of all three," Barr says. "Some kids are academically achieving, but they need that extra polish to get to the next step."

Adds José Reyes '06, who was a teaching assistant last summer, "They got to see what a college like Williams looks like, and they got to meet college students. They are definitely thinking about college in a new way."

—Zelda Stern

Funded by alumni, private foundations and the College, the Urban Scholars Program is an offshoot of a Winter Study course led by Phil Smith '55 that takes Williams students to New York City to teach in high schools in high-poverty areas. Four alumni of the program have graduated from Williams; two more are currently enrolled as undergraduates.

Fireflies, Rhythm and Inspiration

One evening during a visit to Colombia, Cuban composer Ileana Perez Velazquez, an assistant professor of music at Williams, fell asleep during a car ride. She awoke to find the car surrounded by fireflies so vibrant she couldn't tell them apart from stars in the sky. The image stayed with her, and four years later, she wrote the piece "Constellations Lost Among Fireflies."

For the prolific Perez Velazquez, whose music has been performed in festivals and concerts in Cuba, Colombia, Chile, France, Hungary, Mexico, the Netherlands, Spain, the United States and Venezuela, the impulse to create arises from sensory experiences that interest her aesthetically or move her emotionally. "Sometimes, as in 'Constellations,' I start with a strong visual or poetic image that guides me through," she says. "Sometimes, as in a piece I'm writing now for the Berkshire Symphony Orchestra (scheduled to premiere March 5), it's the opposite: I start with the sound itself, with certain rhythmic impulses, and the sound leads me to a visual image or a poetic abstract idea. Sometimes I write my own poetry. When I do, I write lyrics and music simultaneously. As much as I am a musician, I also love art, poetry, dance—all of it. Through my own music, I find the other arts."
**Fishy Business**

As an undergraduate biology major at Bowdoin College, Steve Zottoli was asked by his mentor if he’d like to assist him in research. Today, a mentor himself, Zottoli feels strongly about providing similar research opportunities to Williams undergraduates, with whom he works studying the same two cells in fish brains that first captured his imagination in college.

**Startling Research**

Zottoli, the Howard B. Schow ’50 Professor of Biology, has spent his career at Williams fine-tuning his research on Mauthner cells, a pair of unique cells in fish brains named for Ludwig Mauthner, who discovered them. The cells, which are large and easily identifiable, initiate a startle response common to many organisms. Fish, unlike mammals, are capable of functional recovery after a spinal cord injury, and Zottoli studies the role of Mauthner cells in the recovery of startle response. Over the years, his research has led to collaborations with about two-dozen colleagues around the world.

**Beyond Mauthner**

Like his colleagues, Zottoli has published dozens of articles based on his research in a variety of scientific journals. But unlike his colleagues at large research universities, he also is able to pursue interests outside of his primary research focus, thanks to Williams’ liberal arts environment. In conducting Mauthner research, for example, Zottoli learned of the late Julia Barlow Platt, a neuroscientist who “played a pioneer role in opening opportunities for other women who followed her.” Fascinated, Zottoli, with the help of Ernst Seyfarth, at the time a visiting research associate, studied her life and subsequently published “Julia B. Platt (1857–1935): Pioneer, Comparative Embryologist” in a 1994 issue of Brain, Behavior and Evolution. Zottoli’s research interests also have expanded over time to include comparative approaches to studying the nervous system and predator-prey interactions.

**Sea to Shore**

Zottoli and his student assistants spend part of each summer conducting research on marine fish at the Marine Biological Laboratory (MBL) in Woods Hole, Mass. Since 1996, he has directed a Williams-MBL program funded by a Howard Hughes Medical Institute grant to the College. Though he is stepping down as director of the program at the end of the academic year, he will continue to bring students to MBL each summer. Zottoli also volunteers with The Grass Foundation, a small, private nonprofit foundation chartered to support research and education in neuroscience. He believes such service is a way to provide neuroscientists in the early stages of their careers with opportunities similar to the ones that were available to him. Zottoli is a life trustee and current president of The Grass Foundation.

—Jennifer Grow

Whatever inspires an individual piece, the single greatest influence on Perez Velazquez’s work is the Afro-Cuban music of the island where she spent her first 28 years. “My music has a very strong rhythmic sense, but not rhythm in the sense that people usually perceive it—as a repetitive pattern,” she says. “In my case, rhythm is a more elaborate process, a pattern more hidden, constantly changing. It’s an unconscious process. The complexity of the polyrhythms of the music of my country is so strong that when it is not present in my music, I find the piece lacking.”

When she teaches composition, Perez Velazquez is careful to let her students find their own sources of inspiration. “I play many composers, different aesthetics—Bartok, Beethoven, modern composers—to give them an idea of the possibilities,” she says. “Then I ask them to compose something. I have them start … small: a simple structure for a solo instrument. I try to get them to organize their thoughts, to express one idea in a coherent way. They start with what they can relate to … They have to find their own identity.”

Perez Velazquez’s honors and awards include a Cintas Fellowship in 1999, first prize for interdisciplinary ensemble in the competition Encounter of two cultures in 1991 and first prize in the National Contest of Musical Youth of Cuba for the choral piece “yo os ame, amaos unos a otros” in 1987. She has been a professor at Williams since 2000.

—Zelda Stern

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Nationally recognized English professor Bob Bell on why he has a great deal yet to learn about teaching.

By Rob White
The Education of an Educator

To ask about Bell’s contribution to undergraduate education at Williams is just a bit like asking about Michael Jordan’s contribution to NBA basketball.”

So says Rutgers English professor William Dowling of Robert H. Bell, the William R. Kenan Jr. Professor of English. A friend of Bell’s since their days together as Dartmouth undergraduates, Dowling acknowledges his partiality, but many others in their profession concur. In November Bell was chosen by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education as Outstanding Baccalaureate College Professor of the Year.

This national honor comes as no great surprise back home. The Kenan chair Bell occupies at Williams is awarded to a professor “whose enthusiasm for good teaching, breadth of interest and achievement show promise of a creative relationship not only with undergraduates but also with young faculty.” Beyond campus, the American Association of Higher Education named him an Exemplary Teacher in 1994, and in 1998 he received another prestigious national award, the Robert Foster Cherry Award for Great Teachers.

What does the Professor of the Year make of all this? That he has a great deal yet to learn about teaching, and that to do so he must listen more—"charismatic listening," Bell calls it. His premise is that a professor’s knowledge is only half the battle. Indeed, the more one knows about a subject the harder it is to remember one’s own introduction to it. Meeting students at that threshold and showing them how to move themselves forward into knowledge is by far the greater challenge.

Bell began working on the battle’s first half in 1951, when he skipped kindergarten. His teacher found out he was already reading fluently and bounced the 5-year-old to first grade. In fourth and fifth grades, during study hall, he read the encyclopedia from Z to A. Raised by a doctor and homemaker, he immersed himself in nonfiction (with heavy emphasis on baseball and his beloved Red Sox) as well as every single Hardy Boys mystery.

He met his first great teachers senior year at Belmont Hill School, near his suburban Boston home. English instructor David Aloian introduced him to close reading and what Bell calls “the allure of language.” Soon he was writing hopelessly sensitive, though possibly therapeutic, poems and stories for the student literary magazine. At the same time his “Kennedy-esque” history teacher Fred Calder instilled in him the citizen activism that led Bell to found Dartmouth’s Students for a Democratic Society chapter in 1965.

Bell’s vocation came into view the day he and his favorite professor, Peter Bien of Dartmouth’s English department, ambled across campus deep in discussion about James Joyce’s *Ulysses*. When Bien mused, “You know, I get paid to do this,” Bell knew where he was headed. Winner of a Danforth Foundation Fellowship for exceptional promise in college teaching, he went directly from Dartmouth to Harvard, where he earned his Ph.D.
Bell arrived in Williamstown in 1972, doctoral thesis in hand, practically pinching himself to make sure it was all true. For three decades since, he has introduced thousands of students to the full literary monte—from Shakespeare to Austen, Yeats to Joyce, Eliot (T.S.) to Eliot (George)—and to a host of “non-canonical” authors as well. This spring he’s teaching an upper-level course on contemporary writers John Barth and David Foster Wallace. And next fall, in collaboration with music professor W. Anthony Sheppard, he’ll offer a course on Bob Dylan and the Beatles.

Bell admits that his first years teaching at Williams were “performance-based.” His enthusiasm for the subject, his humor and his youth made it easy for him to engage students. But he realized that in order to recreate for students his own experience of self discovery and intellectual passion he needed to subordinate himself, allowing students to make their own way. Gradually evolving into a less theatrical teacher, he focused more than ever on the material and on his students’ perceptions. Marcia Johnston Wood ’79, now a clinical psychologist in Portland, Ore., recalls, “By carefully verbalizing each step and method in his own reading of poetry and by soliciting students’ participation at every level of the process, [Bell] made you feel that he was continually learning along with you.”

Bell also impresses students with his respect for them. “He wants to know how his students experience life,” says Heather Brubaker ’03, and he occasionally “pauses to solicit a class’s advice on topics like suggested summer reading for his high school-age daughters.” (Bob and his wife, Professor of English Ilona Bell, have two daughters, Kaitlin, now 21, and Amanda, 18).

Certainly this approach makes for a comfortably collegial and stimulating classroom. Associate Professor of Geosciences Ronadh Cox, who once sat in on Bell’s Modernism seminar, remembers that “each and every individual contributed, even those who were extremely shy. Bob himself did not do much talking, but by the end of each meeting I realized that he had managed to get the students to make the points that he wanted to come out of the discussion.”

And students work harder and learn more in the climate Bell fosters. “Bob’s popularity has nothing to do with coziness,” says his colleague Stephen Fix, the Robert G. Scott ’68 Professor of English. “He expects students to be prepared, though he’s never out to embarrass them. His is a powerful combination of warmth and toughness and candor.” Or, as Bell put it in a Nov. 18 USA Today article on his Professor of the Year award, “I can be more demanding by being more personal.”

While growing as a teacher, Bell has been active on the scholarly front, contributing frequently to academic journals from the American Scholar to the Milton Quarterly. He’s edited Critical Essays on Kingsley Amis (1998), contributed to The Columbia Companion to the Twentieth Century Short Story (2001) and co-written the forthcoming Reader’s Guide to David Foster Wallace’s “Infinite Jest.” He’s also published essays on Shakespeare, Boswell and Joyce as well as several pieces on teaching.

His “big book” came mid-career, with Jocoserious Joyce: The Fate of Folly in “Ulysses” (Cornell University Press, 1991). An exploration of Joyce’s comic vision, Jocoserious earned acclaim from the exquisitely discerning community of Joyce scholars. The book, according to the Review of English Studies, “deserves a place on the shelf along with [the] classics of Ulysses criticism. … It has absorbed what they have to teach and, correcting the tendency they share to be over-serious about Joyce’s meanings, moves easily to another level of sophistication.”

The accolades relieved Bell of the mild “what if?” burden that might shadow any young professor who chose to teach at Williams rather than, say, Harvard. “Since Jocoserious Joyce,” he says, “I have found myself more inclined than ever, in some sense freer, to define myself as what I essentially am, an undergraduate teacher. Though I write constantly, my highest priority is teaching.”
Left: In a Shakespeare class in 1998, Bell contemplates Hamlet’s dying words: “If thou dost ever hold me in thy heart/ Absent thee from felicity awhile.”

He also has devoted considerable time to teaching teachers. In 1994, he founded the Project for Effective Teaching (PET), a mentoring program for professors in their first three years at Williams. Through discussions, conferences and weekly lunches, PET faculty learn from Bell and from each other approaches and strategies that work best in the classroom.

Bell contends that the techniques of “charismatic listening” are there for any teacher to learn, but his own motivation to hone them is unsurpassed. Says Brubaker, who as an undergraduate worked as Bell’s teaching assistant, “After more than 25 years at Williams, a named chair and a position as a faculty mentor, he tirelessly self-critical his performance in the classroom. He used to review certain classes with me, wanting to discuss the flow, his division of time, which topics of discussion seemed to be most thought-provoking.”

A commitment so personal bleeds over into a kind of learning Bell ruefully (but fondly) refers to as “Life 101.” According to former student Brooks Fisher ’80, who is vice president for learning and development at the software company Intuit, Bell’s “great compassion and sensitivity guided us to ask the harder questions—not ‘What does this mean?’ but ‘What does this mean to me?’”

Rob White is director of communications for the Department of Alumni Relations and Development at Williams. Bob Bell was honored in Washington, D.C., in November as Outstanding Baccalaureate College Professor of the Year. (Mark Taylor, Williams’ Guett Professor of Humanities and Religion, received the same award in 1995.)

BELLSDAY

Though it’s about a great many things besides, James Joyce’s novel Ulysses is about a day—June 16, 1904—in the life of Dublin denizen Leopold Bloom. In keeping with Bob Bell’s groundbreaking Ulysses scholarship, we offer his own account of a day—Nov. 30, 2004—in his own life in Williamsburg, a century and ocean away from Bloomsday.

6:30 a.m. Awake. Check sports pages for disturbing indications that George Steinbrenner ’52 wants to poach Pedro.

7:00-8:00 Think about Auden’s poem “Musée des Beaux Arts.”

8:30-9:45 Teach English 106, “Modern Poetry” class.

9:45-10:15 Converse with two students, then with Pat Malanga, academic advisor, about English department job applications.

10:20-12:10 p.m. Grade and comment on student papers; discuss missing student with Dean Dave Johnson ’71; answer e-mail from former students, friends and colleagues about Carnegie award.

12:10-1:00 Lunch with my student advisee.

1:10-2:00 Arrange PET lunches tomorrow and Wednesday and schedule series of PET events in January and February. Write letter of recommendation for former student.

2:00-3:00 Grade more English 106 papers.

3:00 Home for nap; decline wife’s invitation to help pick up debris in our back yard from yesterday’s wind storm. (Wife Ilona Bell is a professor of English at Williams.)

3:30 Coffee and second shift. Read and evaluate applications for English department position in “Literature and Philosophy.”

4:30-5:30 Finish current batch of English 106 papers; more due Wednesday.

6:15 Too dark to run outside; listening to The Band, run on treadmill for 42 minutes.

7:15 Dinner with Ilona. We discuss women’s relative lack of success attaining tenure at research universities, according to Chronicle of Higher Education; also discuss possibility of moving stereo speakers from living room into family room to replace 1967 KLH speakers, once cutting edge, gradually obsolete, now defunct; Ilona vetoes idea, urges me to purchase new, smaller speakers.

7:45 Tea with Ilona, establishing absurdity of trying to save a few dollars by moving old speakers from living room; shift subject to a book we both read last week, Stephen Greenblatt’s Will in the World.

8:00 Work on lectures in progress for course next fall on Bob Dylan and the Beatles. Consider assigning a biography of Dylan and wonder how much of that book to incorporate in my lectures. The more I work on these lectures, the more excited I get about the course.

11:00 Watch Jon Stewart’s Daily Show … and so to bed.

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Kathy Sharpe Jones ’79 tends to the emotional and mental health of troops stationed in Iraq.

Kathy Sharpe Jones ’79 lives and works in a tent on a forward-operating base near Najaf, Iraq. A 9 millimeter pistol is strapped to her hip “nearly 24/7.” When she leaves the base on a convoy, she’s required to be in “full battle rattle—weapons locked and loaded and wearing body armor and helmets.”

A U.S. Army major, Jones is the psychologist member of a Combat Stress Team, a relatively new approach for tending to the mental and emotional health of troops stationed in war zones. Her job: to help treat troops for and educate
By John Greenya

Scholarship Program. Jones received a doctorate in philosophy with a concentration in psychology in 1986 and served in active duty with the Army until 1989, after which she worked as a counselor in a variety of settings, including Kilby Correctional Facility in Mount Meigs, Ala., and the St. Louis VA Medical Center. At the VA hospital in Atlanta, she counseled veterans on smoking cessation, pain and weight management, health education and coping with chronic illness and disease.

“The Army,” Jones says, “has come a long way in dealing with stress,” broadening its focus from treatment after the fact to include education and prevention. In short, her goal is keeping soldiers “in the game, so to speak. Combat stress teams were used somewhat in the Gulf War, quite a bit more in Somalia and Kosovo, and were and are still used in Bosnia. We’re learning from each conflict.”

Through prevention and treatment “in theater,” teams including social workers, psychiatrists, occupational therapists, medical personnel and clinical psychologists like Jones can “provide the individual with tools needed to learn to manage and understand the stress reaction, can help him or her talk through the painful experience and, thus, keep it from coming back later to haunt the service member,” according to the Army report “Coping with Combat Stress.”

The report cites a summer 2003 study in which 77 percent of U.S. soldiers in Kuwait and Iraq reported mild or no stress problems while in the field. Of those seen by members of combat stress teams, 70 percent to 90 percent of service members “are returned quickly to duty.”

Still, challenges remain. Getting time off to seek help was the number one barrier to treatment, the report states, followed by finding a way to get to a behavioral health specialist or not knowing where to find help. Fear of stigma also prevents many soldiers, including younger ones and those who haven’t seen direct combat, from seeking treatment, Jones says.

To help ally concerns, Combat Stress Team members are careful not to make any entries in soldiers’ medical records unless necessary. “If we start giving diagnoses and labels, [personnel] may be identified as being sick or abnormal,” Jones says. “Our philosophy is that combat stress is a normal reaction to an abnormal situation.”

Though her tour of duty could be extended, Jones is slated to return to the States in June. In the meantime, the major, who is divorced, has communicated with her daughter Carmen, 16, and son Jonathan, 9, at least once per week by telephone or e-mail. (The two children are living with Jones’ sister.)

To relax, Jones reads, watches DVDs and plays Scrabble. “If you don’t occupy yourself intellectually, or if you don’t have a strong spiritual foundation, this bad situation could be a lot worse. It helps to be kind of an egg-head,” she says with a laugh.

She also has kept in touch with her Williams classmates, who “adopted” her during Reunion Weekend. “They read a statement from me at the [class] dinner,” she says. “They send packages once a month. I’ve gotten e-mails, letters, and they’re in touch with my kids. It’s just been wonderful.

“We’re a close family at Williams,” she adds. “Kind of like the Army.”

John Greenya is a free-lance writer in Washington, D.C.
OUR BODIES,

Left to right: Ashley Ulmer, Amy Shapiro and Dellie Sorel, all Class of 2005, photographed by Roman Iwasiwka at the Williams College Museum of Art, December 2004.

BY KATE STONE LOMBARDI '78
Freshman 15. Estrogym. Ripped. Jacked. Expressions you're likely to hear bandied about on any college campus, and Williams is no exception. But casual banter about eating, exercise and weight belies an important fact: Many students who might otherwise be healthy have unhealthy perceptions about what they see in the mirror.

For Amy Shapiro, Dellie Sorel and Ashley Ulmer, all Class of 2005, the issue hit close to home. Frustrated by seeing friends whose preoccupations with eating and exercise interfered with their happiness and development at college, the three embarked on a public art project last spring to raise awareness and stimulate frank discussion.

They began their campaign with familiar images—those ubiquitous male and female stick figures that often mark men's and women's restrooms. The students then distorted the sizes and shapes of the figures, accompanying them with messages about body image.

One rendering featured stick figures peering at their altered likenesses in a mirror, along with the text: “Dissatisfied with your reflection? 80% of women and 20% of men report being terrified of being overweight. Familiar?” Also included were the phone numbers for the College’s Health Center and nutritionist. The messages were printed on stickers and affixed to nearly 2,000 coffee cups distributed in Baxter’s snack bar, the Science Center’s Eco-Café and dining halls across campus.

“I wanted to get into the psychological aspect of the disorder, the problem of looking in a mirror and seeing yourself in a distorted way or feeling that your body is the center of attention, in the spotlight,” says Ulmer, an art and women's and gender studies major who designed the images.

The three students also created cards placed on tables in the snack bar, Goodrich and Eco-Café with the message: “Everyone has a relationship to food. Everyone has a relationship to his/her body. This project is designed to encourage us to recognize and reflect upon these relationships; these images apply to us all. We all need food to survive and thus are not exempt from the daily decisions of type, quantity and proportion of food. We are not exempt from media images of ideal bodies, nor are we exempt from the material world that feeds into obsessions about looks and about our bodies. Some people do have healthy relationships with both food and their body; they are comfortable in their own skin. But this project encourages us to think about our health, our bodies and ourselves. Are you in the place you want to be?”

Reaction to the art project was generally positive, though some were uncomfortable with it,” Ulmer says. Many spoke openly about concern for friends. Feedback from men was stronger than expected, with several members of athletic teams expressing worry that male teammates were dieting and exercising excessively. Responses were eulogized from a list server the three students created and advertised on the table cards.

Although Shapiro, Sorel and Ulmer are realistic about the ability of the project to move a largely private, personal issue into the public sphere, they hope at least one message came across: Students preoccupied with exercise, diet and other issues related to body image and stress are not alone.

Williams is no more or less affected by body image issues than any other college campus. The American College Health Association, which tracks the well-being of undergraduates nationwide, reports that slightly less than 2 percent of students surveyed report suffering from anorexia, and 2.4 percent report suffering from bulimia. (Experts in the field say these numbers are artificially low because they are self-reported.)

The 2003 study also found that 62 percent of female students in U.S. colleges and 43 percent of male students reported exercising in the previous 30 days to lose weight. During that same period, 40 percent of females and 20 percent of males had dieted; 7 percent of females and 3 percent of males had taken diet pills; and 3.6 percent of females and 0.4 percent of males...
had vomited or taken laxatives in an effort to “purge” themselves.

Meanwhile, the Tufts Longitudinal Health Study, an ongoing research project involving Tufts undergraduates, reports that 32 percent of male and female students indicate a general “decline” in their body image during freshman year.

At Williams, the Health Center treats 20 to 30 students each year for eating disorders. It’s hard to say how many more students are undiagnosed or fail to seek treatment, usually because they are “very ashamed, and they’re very scared,” says nurse practitioner Dale Newman. “They think there’s something wrong with them and that you’re not going to like them if you know.”

Often, students struggling with eating or exercise problems are referred to the Health Center by roommates, friends, junior advisors or coaches. Incoming first-year students also complete an extensive medical history that asks about eating disorders and/or weight concerns. Newman reaches out to anyone who reports having a problem in the past to remind him or her that college can be a stressful time and that Williams takes a coordinated approach to providing assistance and services.

“Most people have found that any one treatment doesn’t work well alone,” says psychiatrist John Miner, the College’s co-director of psychological services. “We have all found that what works best is to work together—with the nutritionist, the medical staff, the counselor, the psychologist. Health is a holistic approach.”

Through medications are sometimes administered to help treat stress and other issues associated with eating disorders, counselors also focus on getting to the psychological and behavioral roots of the illness.

Eating disorders often involve the dynamic of control, Miner says. Students trying to cope with stress or uncomfortable emotions often believe that the one component of their lives that they can control is what they take into their bodies. Compulsive behavior sets in, as it does for those who exercise excessively.

It can be very difficult to continue attending college when a body image disorder gets out of control. For one thing, an all-consuming focus on food or exercise leaves time for little else. Moreover, such disorders are both physically and emotionally debilitating and can affect everything from energy levels to cognitive skills. Often, students take a leave of absence from school to cope with their illness.

“We have found over time that it is very hard to do the kind of work, psychologically and behaviorally, to get an eating disorder turned around and do the academic work that Williams requires,” Miner says. “To do both at the same time is kind of daunting.”

Coaches and trainers also play an important role in recognizing and getting help for students suffering from body image disorders. For example, women’s crew coach Justin Moore says he and other staff constantly stress the importance of allowing the body enough recovery time between workouts.

“It’s a really difficult issue,” he says. “I’m not professionally trained to be a counselor; I’m professionally trained to be a coach. But I think we coaches are very much in the forefront.”

An equally important role, Moore adds, is helping students learn how to set boundaries for themselves.

“I have kids tell me that six hours of sleep is enough,” he says. “They want to sing, they want to be involved in athletics, they want to maintain their GPA and they want to do service. These kids do not know how to slow down.”

As the College’s nutritionist, Ginny Skorupski educates students about healthy diets and helps individuals who have “lost touch with what is good eating.”

“We need to do the best we can to support students’ nutritional status through this whole thing,” she says. “A lot of times, a kid will come to talk to me and relearn the basics of healthy diet. I’ll ask them if they ever liked things like mayonnaise on a sandwich or ice cream, and they’ll say, ‘Yeah, I guess I did.’ Truly, the way they see food changes dramatically the longer the eating disorder goes on.”

Williams’ past attempts to organize support groups have proven unsuccessful, primarily because the campus is so small
and students are concerned about their privacy. Nevertheless, the College continues to explore new ways to help those students who are running into trouble and to intervene before problems become entrenched.

Williams also participates in a national “Body Image/Eating Concerns Day,” when the Health Center dispenses information about these issues. The center also provides information on its Web site, in dining halls and in training rooms.

And then there are projects like the one undertaken by Shapiro, Sorel and Ulmer. The three friends were enrolled in Art History 101-102 and studied Professor Peggy Diggs’ “Domestic Violence Milk Carton Project,” a series of illustrations and statistics placed on 1.5 million containers of milk in the New York and New Jersey areas in late January 1992.

The milk cartons, like the coffee cups, not only dispensed important information but also sent a strong message: “If this is on the side of a milk carton, this is happening to a lot of people,” Diggs says. “So I’m not alone. This is an issue.”

When the students approached her with their idea, Diggs offered to help in any way she could, from reviewing the images to giving advice on where to have them printed.

“I very much enjoyed their enthusiasm, initiative and willingness to try something,” says Diggs, who subsequently had Ulmer and Sorel (a chemistry and math major who plans to study medicine) in her team-taught class “Practicing Feminism and Activism.” “I am very impressed that they bit the bullet and did this.”

Their work was funded with $200 from the Health Center, and coffee cups were donated by dining services. Although the project was small in scope and scale, the three students say it had a tremendous impact on their lives.

Shapiro, a psychology and art major who plans to attend Mount Sinai Medical School to pursue a medical degree and master’s in public health, spent last summer helping a pediatric endocrinologist research obesity in children. “I was also confronted with the other spectrum of disordered eating with anorexia and bulimia,” she says of the experience. “I saw several adolescent patients suffering from the disorder and, contrary to popular stereotype, I saw a male patient suffering from anorexia.”

Ulmer took the sociology course “Image and Representation” last semester and did a final project on how the dynamics of exercise and of workout rooms on campus affect non-varsity female athletes. Using photographs of equipment and rooms as visual cues, she interviewed students about their attitudes toward exercise. She says the project “has revealed how the layout and arrangement of these spaces does in fact reinforce and perpetuate competitive environments of eating and exercise.”

Ideally, Ulmer says, “There is always the hope that in our future careers, Amy and Dellie, as doctors, and I, as a potential graduate student in women’s studies, might come together again on these issues.”

Kate Stone Lombardi ’78 is a free-lance writer based in Chappaqua, N.Y., and a regular contributor to The New York Times.
We could hire the most expensive photographer with the best equipment to take the prettiest pictures of life at Williams, and we'd never get anything as good as these. Hundreds of students opened their albums—digital and otherwise—for the Admission Office's Candid Photo Contest, held last fall. Winners' snapshots appear in the 2005-06 Prospectus, the view book sent to all prospective Williams students. Here are some of our favorites.

Every once in a while, the Committee for Undergraduate Life will sponsor raffles. Last year one of them was the Odd Quad Suitcase Party—and the two winners were to be sent to the Caribbean for that weekend. Manny (a friend from my entry) and I bought two raffle tickets and had really convinced ourselves that we were going to win. We had our bathing suits packed and everything. Then we didn’t win. So the next day we put on our bathing suits and sun block and went out into the Berkshire Quad to tan. Unfortunately it was about 10 degrees Celsius, so we only lasted long enough to get this picture. Good times. — Candice Covetti ’06
“Stepping” involves dancing, clapping and stomping in rhythm, but I had never heard of it before coming to Williams. When I saw Sankofa, the Williams step team, perform I was enthralled, so I auditioned and joined the squad. As a modern dancer, there are times when it’s frustrating trying to adapt to a novel form of movement, but for the most part it’s been a rewarding challenge and a source of great friendships. Over the summer I participated in a workshop of “Soul Steps,” a show about the history of step created by Maxine Lyle ‘00, who is now working on the next stage of it in NYC. — Emily Bloomenthal ’05

On a Friday night, a small group of us decided to have a campfire and spend the night on Stone Hill. I woke up in the morning lying on my stomach and stuck my head out from my sleeping bag to stretch. Lifting my head, I saw a cow looking right at me … three feet away! Startled, I released a yelp that woke everyone else up but did not faze the cow at all. Now awake, we all looked around to find about 30 of them surrounding us! They all looked very confused. After a few pictures, we returned to campus just in time to eat breakfast in Driscoll. — Bill Ference ’07
EVERYTHING WILLIAMS

War was declared at a particularly intense time of the academic year, but students still gathered on Chapin steps to express their feelings about the war and President Bush. (Supporters of the president and the war were also present ... but were considerably outnumbered.) Impromptu speakers stood up to articulate their arguments against the war, and a petition reading “Not in our names” was offered for those present to sign.

— Alana Whitman ’05

while away the day
books to read and games to play
Williamstown seems better still
if you just let the hammock sway
— Morgan Goodwin ’08

Here we have my boyfriend Tom trying to taste “the real maple syrup” at the annual Maple Fest in Hopkins Forest. Yes, it’s frozen. But he thought that if the Hopkins Forest Student Caretakers can get about 40 gallons/ year of refined maple syrup from those trees, then a little bit more wouldn’t hurt. It’s not every day that you can go on a date to get free samples of hot ’n’ fresh maple syrup straight from the forest on a freezing afternoon during winter.... So we make the best of it. — Ya Xu ’06
Why would these six juniors sacrifice study abroad opportunities and the security of choosing housing with their friends, opting instead to live with a group of freshmen for a year as volunteer peer advisers? Administrations at rival schools must wonder at the coup the Williams Dean's Office pulled off in forming the Junior Advisor system, an arrangement in which mentoring rather than discipline is the idea (unlike RA formats at other schools). It is considered an honor rather than a job to be a Williams JA. We're pretty sure the administration is putting the money it saves into private faculty pizza parties (the location of which remains, as yet, a mystery to us).

After months of anticipation and preparation, the freshman class was practically at our doorstep. We donned our snazzy JA T-shirts, put our heads together and took a deeeeeeep breath.

— Don Mitchell '06

An afternoon's hike,
17,937 paces
And I'm looking down on it all with
Strangers that I've gotten to know
Through labored breath and
Quiet footsteps.

A green valley,
Another stranger.
But as the sun drops,
And the color changes
In the hills,
This purple valley begins to look a lot like
Home.

— Justin Bates '07
The Ephs were battling the Lord Jiffs of Amherst at the 2003 Homecoming game. It was a close match, and the energy at the event was unbelievable. Cheers rang out and echoed from the masses of fans. Suddenly, my friend climbed onto the shoulders of a nearby person and emphatically led the entire crowd in a resounding Williams cheer. Needless to say, the Ephs emerged victorious.

— Chris Lee '07

Only at Williams would we find ourselves with the unexpected pleasure of getting up on a random October's Friday and discovering that we'll be hiking up the trails in the mountains instead of hiking up the stairs on the way to a class. At Story Ledge, where all students reach their final destination for Mountain Day, our friends share a gorgeous view above and beyond the Berkshire Mountains while happily basking in the sun in each other's embrace. — Hanjie Yu '07

When I moved in freshman year, my family noticed the words “doomed to know not winter” engraved on one of the gateposts on the edge of the Freshman Quad. Since we had all heard about the cold and long reality of winter in Williamstown, those words soon became a joke in my family, and rarely do we talk about Williams without someone repeating those words. As soon as I got back to my room the day the first snow fell, I took a picture out of my window to send home. — Elizabeth Pierce '07
My WOOLF (Williams Outdoor Orientation for Living as Freshman) trip, advanced backpacking, landed me and nine others on a gorgeous stretch of the Appalachian Trail in Vermont. Over the days and miles, my group slowly went insane, as can be seen in this picture. It wasn’t even posed—I just pointed the camera at them, and they provided the rest.

— Ben Rudick ’08

One of the objectives during WOOLF (outdoor orientation) is to meet some people away from modern civilization and technology. Unfortunately, my group seemed to be a little confused, mistaking a tractor parked in a field for a mountain we could climb over. So, while we had some trouble with the “getting away from technology” part, we all enjoyed our experience, and my WOOLFies had the chance to check out a small part of the Berkshire area.

— Dan Binder ’07

One random day in October, all classes are canceled for the purpose of rejoicing in the fall beauty of the Berkshires. I slept through most of “Mountain Day,” but awoke for some outdoor fun, such as this mountaintop choir performance. Apparently the choir director had ridden up the mountain on his bike and was furiously conducting in spandex bike shorts and sporty sunglasses—I had to get a picture. All I could see was a row of heads, so I jumped on the roof of the director of Outing Club’s already beat-up pickup truck and took this picture.

— Ben Rudick ’08
Recognize me? Even under all this hair? Enyi Abol-Koene ’05 (left) acquired a new hairstyle while studying in France. Like many juniors, Enyi returned to Williams transformed in more ways than one. While visiting campus, she surprised three friends who didn’t recognize her. Dan Weintraub ’05 (right), however, wasn’t fooled. He recognized his good friend.

— Kate Rutledge ’05

Saturday, my tiny Greylock dorm, a dim light, a cup of wine,
I don’t play good pieces, but we can still like,
The end of language is music, we should never lie,
A calming hand,
A warming wink,
An insider’s tease,
All are the secret cords between friends
that light up a joyful Williams night

— Wei Wang ’07
Winter Carnival serves as a refreshing change of pace from the cold and sometimes dreary days of winter, with activities ranging from parties to ski races to the Outing Club-sponsored Winter Games. In the sledding competition at the Winter Games, two sled teams of five compete in a simple looped course. Far from being terribly competitive (although some might argue that point!), the event proved to be filled with wonderfully costumed teams who would stop at nothing to complete the course without yanking their passenger from the sled and dragging them face-first through the snow! Unfortunately, right after this shot was taken, the overzealous leader of this team managed to motivate his group with a resonating battle cry, and the poor passenger (who was holding on for dear life!) got pulled free.

— Chris Lee ’07 ★

Fact: Williamstown is very cold in the winter.
Fact: Williamstown is very beautiful in the spring.
Result: Students spend as much time outside as possible in the spring, including when they should be inside napping.
Result: Students unintentionally fall asleep in chairs in the Science Quad for hours at a time, their friends laughing at them and recording it on film.

— Dan Seuss ’07 (photo by Laura Ellison ’07) ★
| Signature | by Patrick Cavanaugh ’54 |

The Muskrat Man

When I was young, I spent a lot of time perusing my father’s closet. As befitted an ex-Army officer, everything hung neatly in place. Rows of handmade worsted suits from Jacob Reeds lined up in ever-darkening colors. Countess Mara was the tie of choice, in generous widths of rich fabric and vivid colors. The mahogany dresser contained rows of shirts from Sulka, their perfection a testament to my mother’s skill with a hot iron. Neatly creased Borsolino hats rested in oval nests. On the floor were aligned the finest offerings from French Shriner & Urner, their shape maintained by wooden shoetrees.

Do not think my father was a dandy. His personal history was the stuff of Horatio Alger stories: child immigrant who delivered tubs of beer to the Irish railroad workers in New England, sometime Montana cowboy, World War I officer decorated with the Croix de Guerre, sales manager for a trucking company, successful small-town businessman. He was a three-goal polo player and an avid hunter and fisherman.

But the image I have is of him leaving the house for the Tuesday meeting of the Kiwanis Club, smelling of Old Spice and talc, wearing one of Jimmy the Tailor’s hand-cut suits and a complementary Burberry overcoat. He looked good. He looked like Somebody. And he must have been dressing me. “You got any muskrat?”

“Pardon me?”

“Is it muskrat season yet?”

I had to confess, I did not know. He peered at me intently, taking in the cap, the cargo pants, the olive jacket. “ Ain’t you the Muskrat Man?”

Sorry, I said, not me. Having no further use for the ones I had on the night before—and the fact that I showered and shaved less frequently. There was mention of my belief that you don’t need to comb your hair if you’re going to cover it with a cap. The phrase “pretty is as pretty does” was thrown around.

After some thought, I made a decision. Henceforth, I would wear my Muskrat Man outfit to destinations like the County Dump, Southern States and chicken sexing exhibitions. When I ventured forth to see anyone with a diploma on the wall or to borrow money or to go to a really nice party, I would revert to the Slightly Threadbare English Gentry look. When in doubt I would wear a blue blazer over faded jeans, black penny loafers with no socks, and be mistaken for a recent transplant from Cape Cod.

Patrick Cavanaugh ’54 is a retired automobile dealer. He lives in Fruitland, Md.