Art Up Close
Opinions & Expressions

Interim President Bill Wagner’s advice to his successor. … A portrait of legendary Lane Faison ’29. …

Letters from readers.

Scene & Herd

News of Williams and beyond.

Life of the Mind

Beyond the Log
Fred Rudolph ’42 discusses Williams presidents at the turn of the 20th century and the rise and fall of the gentleman’s college.

Transcendent Gastronomy
Chapin Library is building an impressive culinary book collection with the recent acquisition of *The Physiology of Taste*.

Off the Wall
Students get close to art in WCMA’s Rose Study Gallery.

Combo Za
One of the oldest continually operating college improv comedy groups in America started at Williams 25 years ago.
Welcoming our New President

Though I can't claim the wisdom of years, I would, based on my months as interim president, give the following advice to Adam Falk as he begins his presidency on April 1.

Be willing to change your mind. Sitting with people and listening to them with an open mind has always resulted in better outcomes and saved me from heading down more than one errant path. Especially when time is tight, it's tempting to think you already know the answer or have the information you need to make a decision. Your responsibility will lie both with the individual and the College community, and knowing when to bend policy in the face of human pain or opportunity is a matter of judgment rather than formula.

Balance time spent in the weeds and above them. Much of the job involves working through endless detail—so much so that it can be hard to pull back far enough to see the College’s general direction, to articulate it to all our constituencies and to guide it.

Balance concern for individuals with attention to the whole. People will bring you their ideas, wishes and struggles. Sometimes you will be able to help, and sometimes you won’t. Your responsibility will lie with both the individual and the College community, and knowing when to bend policy in the face of human pain or opportunity is a matter of judgment rather than formula.

Remain faithful to your moral compass. Even when you make a mistake, it will not feel as bad if you have been true to your and the College’s convictions.

Get away. The College’s health now relies in part on your own. Maintaining that health will require you regularly to get away—physically, mentally, emotionally—so that you can return refreshed.

I have come to know our new president well enough to have confidence in his head and his heart, and I am eager to see in what new directions he will help lead Williams.

I am grateful to the very many students, faculty, staff, alumni, parents and friends who have made these past months such an extraordinarily rich experience for Linda and me, and I will return to the Dean of the Faculty Office and eventually to the faculty itself with deepened appreciation of and affection for all that makes Williams great.

—Bill Wagner, interim president

LETTERS

Thank you for the article about Barbara Bradley Hagerty ’81 (“Leap of Faith,” January 2010), her brush with “the presence of God” and her discovery of what she calls a Christianity “with a lot of tolerance, a lot of humility.” What we are currently recognizing as a culture is that the Enlightenment space-time box handed to us as a worldview is deeply flawed and a poor reflection of the world as it is. Perhaps one day, a worldview that incorporates transcendence without sentimentality and quackery will once again animate Western culture as it did before we went off track. Articles like this will help in the long road ahead.

—Jay Haug ’73, Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla.

That Hagerty has no explanation for why a woman with the blood drained from her brain remembered the operation is only proof that Hagerty has no explanation. It doesn’t prove there is or is not a God. She could equally argue that the fact that no one has any idea what happened before the Big Bang, much less how it came to be, is proof of a divine influence. She makes an argument and draws a conclusion that is appealing to many but is not logically complete.

—Doug Brockway ’76, Acton, Mass.

In response to the letter about organic farming practices in Nepal (January 2010), I would happily buy “organic produce” grown with human manure rather than supporting our current system, in which we treat water for drinking, defecate in it and then treat it again, removing the nutrient-rich sludge to be disposed of in landfills or incinerated. We use a huge amount of energy synthesizing fertilizers, which we spread on agricultural land with tractors, while we allow the majority of added nutrients to run off into surface waters and oceans, causing toxic algae blooms and “dead zones.” Which system makes more sense? Williams students are doing their part to fertilize land; the local wastewater treatment plant composes its sludge to sell as high quality fertilizer!

—Elena Traister ’01, North Adams, Mass.
As a high school student, I was admitted to Pratt Institute in New York City to study illustration and design. But the practical side of me chose business school instead, and it was decades before I picked up a paintbrush again. That changed when a job in direct marketing brought me and my family to live in Williamstown, where, surrounded by magnificent art, I dug out my watercolors and sketching pencils.

I was in my 40s, and art suddenly was my passion and preoccupation. I commenced to draw and paint flowers, landscapes and small still-life arrangements. This led to the first show of my paintings in 1995, and among the notes left in my comment book was this one: “I like your work, please call me. S.L. Faison Jr.”

In all honesty, I didn’t know who he was. It was only later, at a party, that Williams geology professor Bud Wobus introduced me to S. Lane Faison Jr. ’29, one of the nation’s most influential teachers of art history and a legend at the College. Lane in turn peered over his glasses at me with his twinkling blue eyes and asked, “Where the hell have you been?”

Neither of us did much talking to other people that night. Art was an instant bond we both shared. He suggested that we see the Williams College Museum of Art collection together. Later we visited the Clark, then the Hyde Collection. Over the next 10 years our travels took us to more than 50 museums and exhibitions, including the National Gallery of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago and the Museum of Modern Art. His former students, who became directors of these museums (Rusty Powell ’66, Jim Wood ’63 and Glenn Lowry ’76, respectively), graciously hosted us and joined us on tours of their latest exhibitions.

Lane liked to call us a three-legged team: I would never have gotten to such places without him, and he never would have gotten there without me. Early on, he introduced me to a museum director, saying: “This is Ed Scofield. He is a good painter but doesn’t know anything about art history. I know a lot about art history, but I can’t paint a thing!” He often observed that what was unique about our friendship was that he found me, not vice versa.

What Lane did for me was beyond measure. What did I do for him? I think it is best captured by an old saying: “When you are old enough to know all the answers, there’s nobody there to ask the questions.” I was there to ask the questions. Lots of them.

Ten years’ worth!

After Lane passed away in 2006, I set out to enhance the memory of this extraordinary man with an oil painting of him—something that, to my knowledge, did not exist at the College. The likeness came from a series of photographs taken of him at Brooklyn Poly when he was 85, as well as from photographs of my own. I started out planning a full body portrait on a 38-by-38-inch canvas. What finally emerged was a larger-than-life head and shoulders portrait of Lane. Somehow, the size of it seemed to better fit his personality and befit the size of the impact he made on Williams and the innumerable students he taught here.

In the early and middle stages of my work, most of the colors I used were transparent or semi-transparent hues. The slight tilt of the bow tie was a pickup on his familiar raised left eyebrow. Those twinkling blue eyes peering over his glasses depict a person who had seen and was intimately familiar with great art in all its infinite variety, someone who liked nothing more than to share it and teach it to others.

One of Lane’s favorite quips was: “I don’t mind being a legend; I just don’t want to become a myth!” I sincerely hope this portrait plays a small part in keeping him from becoming a myth—and in maintaining the memory and legend of this extraordinary man.

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GLADDEN NAMED 2010 GATES CAMBRIDGE SCHOLAR

Emily Gladden ’07, paralegal supervisor for the Federal Defenders of New York, will attend University of Cambridge next fall as a Gates Cambridge Scholar. As one of 29 U.S. students chosen out of 800 applicants, she is Williams’ fourth such scholar since the program was created in 2000.

Gladden plans to pursue a Master of Philosophy in criminology at Cambridge and then attend law school in the U.S. At Williams she majored in psychology and English and, since graduation, has cultivated an interest in reducing recidivism and improving rehabilitation efforts in her work with juvenile and first-time offenders in the criminal justice system.

DON’T FORGET TO VOTE!

You can still cast your vote in this year’s alumni trustee and Tyng Bequest administrator elections. Personalized ballots have been sent to you via e-mail or U.S. post (depending on whether the College has an e-mail address for you).

Nominees for alumni trustee are Mario J. Chiappetti ’78, Barton T. Jones ’68 and Robin Powell Mandjes ’82. Candidates for Tyng Bequest administrator are Joseph Bonn ’75, Richard Allan Peinert ’69 and Susan E. Stred ’78.

Polls close on April 2. Please contact alumni.relations@williams.edu or 413.597.4151 for more information.

HOOPS TEAMS SHINE IN FEBRUARY

Men’s and women’s basketball had shining moments in February, with the men clinching the regular-season NESCAC title and a 14-game winning streak and the women beating Bowdoin for the first time in a decade.

With a Feb. 12 win against Amherst, men’s basketball claimed its first back-to-back outright Little Three titles since the 1995 and 1996 seasons. The next day, against Trinity, they finished their first undefeated NESCAC regular season since 2003-04. With a 23-1 record (9-0 in NESCAC), the squad ranked second nationally. Blake Schultz ’10 led NESCAC in scoring with 19.3 points per game (20.9 per game in conference play) and was first nationally in three-point shooting.

In all, Williams raised $10,524 to Amherst’s $7,500 for Partners in Health, which has spent two decades working to bring modern medical care to Haiti and other impoverished nations. Fundraising results were announced at the Feb. 12 women’s ice hockey and men’s basketball games between the two colleges. (The Ephs lost to the Lord Jeffs in ice hockey but won in basketball.)
COLLEGE TO FURTHER REDUCE SPENDING
Interim President Bill Wagner discussed the state of College finances and financial aid in January and February letters to the campus community, outlining the steps Williams is taking to reduce costs.

Riding a wave of unprecedented growth, reliance on endowment spending at Williams and peer colleges increased in the years before the capital markets dropped, Wagner pointed out. The cost of financial aid tripled from $14.6 million in 2000-01 to $43.7 million in 2009-10. Meanwhile, the College's endowment decreased from $1.9 billion in July 2007 to $1.4 billion in July 2009.

Now, Wagner wrote, “The College’s focus is on adjusting to this new reality in ways that protect our core academic mission for the long run, keep Williams widely affordable and accessible and value the great dedication of our faculty and staff.”

To that end, having cut endowment spending in 2008-09 and 2009-10, Williams plans to:
- Postpone the library and Weston Field construction projects until 2011-12, using the time to improve the projects’ financing, sustainability and future adaptability.
- Reintroduce modest loans for some aided students, beginning with students who enter in fall 2011. As was the case before Williams went to a no-loan policy in 2008-09, families below a certain income, and with typical assets, will not be expected to borrow at all. (Dartmouth has announced that it, too, is reinstituting loans.)
- Set a rough annual target for international financial aid that will enable the admission office to admit a diverse group of students while controlling financial aid growth.
- Introduce a program of retirement incentives while leaving a growing number of open faculty and staff positions unfilled.

“I am confident that this period will be looked back on as another in which Williams adapted to its times with care, foresight and a shared sense of purpose,” Wagner wrote.

To read Wagner’s recent letters about Williams finances and financial aid, visit tinyurl.com/presletters. For a detailed look at College finances, go to tinyurl.com/financedetail.

SONDHEIM DISCUSSES LIFE IN THE THEATER
“There are very few young writers in the industry today whose shows get a chance to show on Broadway,” Stephen Sondheim ’50 told New York Times columnist Frank Rich during a January interview in Chapin Hall. “In my generation, you were lucky to get a show on every two years. Now you’re lucky to get a show on every decade.”

They Said:
Opinions and ideas expressed by members of the Williams community.

“The most important thing is to be a good listener to everyone, not only to students but also to the staff you’re working with who have experience that you don’t.” — Karen Merrill, who is stepping down as dean of the College on June 30, discussing the advice she’d give the faculty member chosen to succeed her. Record, 02.10.10

“Now more than ever, our country is ready to begin a critical and honest discussion on the core tenets of education, which … include inspiring minds, fostering creative thinking and changing lives.” — Ed Burger, mathematics professor, upon being named the 2010 recipient of Baylor University’s Robert Foster Cherry Award for Great Teaching. Waco Tribune-Herald, 01.15.10
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HELP FOR HAITI

The Williams-Amherst rivalry took on another dimension from Feb. 5-12, with a Haiti earthquake relief challenge to raise funds for the nonprofit Partners in Health. Williams students planned myriad activities on campus during the week, including:

- A bake sale and coffeehouse concert that drew more than 80 students and raised $714;
- A Williams After Dark activity in which more than 65 students made 200-plus hygiene kits in less than 20 minutes to send overseas (supplies were purchased with nearly $1,300 in funding from campus groups);
- A Valentine’s Day truffle sale in which student volunteers made and packaged more than 3,000 truffles in the Paresky Bake Shop under the guidance of lead baker Michael Menard;

In all, Williams raised $10,524 to Amherst’s $7,500 for Partners in Health, which has spent two decades working to bring modern medical care to Haiti and other impoverished nations. Fundraising results were announced at the Feb. 12 women’s ice hockey and men’s basketball games between the two colleges. (The Ephs lost to the Lord Jeffs in ice hockey but won in basketball.)
“They have shown some great leadership this year, and these results prove that.” — Men’s squash coach Zafi Levy ’01, after seniors Bernard Yaros, Christian Henze, Ethan Buchsbaum and Andrew Bartsch all swept opponents from Amherst in the final home match of their careers to help the Ephs capture their 11th consecutive Little Three title.

“This was the first game where we played our hearts out each period. We were able to persevere through the many momentum changes. … It was an all-around team effort, with everyone contributing to the hard-fought victory.” — Women’s ice hockey coach Marissa O’Neil, after the Ephs pulled off a 3-2 upset of Trinity College, the No. 4 team in the nation, behind a 38-save performance from goaltender Sara Plunkett ’10.

“Will was not only a great guy, but also a close friend and mentor. … He really showed me how to get involved with the community and encouraged me to try and make an impact however I could, so if anything my nomination is a part of his legacy.” — Men’s ice hockey assistant captain Zach Miller ’10, who was a finalist for the BNY Wealth Management 2010 Hockey Humanitarian Award, on former teammate and 2008 award-winner Will Bruce ’08.

“Play the game, listen to your coach and execute your system. The purity of the game is the competition.” — San Antonio Spurs head coach Gregg Popovich, during a surprise pep talk to the Williams men’s soccer team on the day of its NCAA semifinal clash with eventual champion Messiah. (Popovich worked with former Eph basketball coach Curt Tong when both were at Pomona-Pitzer.)

Meanwhile, women’s basketball captain and lone senior Elizabeth Hansen ’10 was honored prior to the Feb. 6 home game against Bowdoin before netting one of Williams’ 10 three-pointers to win 75-54. The Ephs fell to Amherst but then won against Trinity in their final regular-season game, bringing their record to 18-6 (7-2 in NESCAC).

WRESTLER IN NATIONAL SPOTLIGHT
Ryan Malo ’11 is receiving national attention for his performance on and off the wrestling mat. With his team securing its first 20-win season in its history in February, Malo was ranked second nationally in his weight class and had won 38 of his first 42 matches. The 197-pounder also set a school record with 33 pins, eclipsing his 2009 record of 24, the most in the NCAA. His wrestling success, and his work with his team collecting more than 1,000 pounds of food donations for The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts’ “Headlock for Hunger Campaign,” earned him an appearance in Sports Illustrated’s “Faces in the Crowd” on Feb. 1.

CAMPUSS CLAIMS WILLIAMS
The second annual Claiming Williams Day on Feb. 4 was jam-packed with opportunities to examine privilege on campus and beyond. Among the two dozen lectures, forums, performances and film screenings was “Language, Identity and Empowerment” (below), an open-mike session preceding a poetry slam by members of the Nuyorican Poets Cafe.
On a rainy morning last July, Dottie and Fred Rudolph ’42 welcomed three Williams friends to their home in Williamstown. They had gathered with Fred—widely regarded as the dean of historians of American higher education and an authority on Williams history—to examine how the College changed in the years following Mark Hopkins’ presidency. The insights Fred shared that day with John Chandler (Williams president from 1973 to 1985 and a former religion professor), John Hyde ’52 (the Brown Professor of History, emeritus) and Bob Stegeman Jr. ’60 (of the Williams Oral History Project) shed light not only on presidents past, but also on Williams today. Excerpts of that conversation follow.

John Chandler: Let’s go way back to Mark Hopkins. You wrote your Ph.D. dissertation about him, and the Yale University Press published it as a book (Mark Hopkins and the Log: Williams College 1836-1872, in 1956) that received much attention and praise, and it’s still widely read. What led you to write about Mark Hopkins?

Fred Rudolph: I learned that someone else was at work on the thesis topic I had chosen. So my adviser, Ralph Henry Gabriel, an eminent intellectual historian, said, “Fred, what really does it mean—Mark Hopkins on one end of the log and all that stuff? Do we really know? Why don’t you take a look at it?”

JC: When Mark Hopkins retired in 1872 at the age of 70, he continued to teach for another 15 years, and he also was a member of the Board of Trustees, so he was still a formidable presence throughout the tenure of Paul Ansel Chadbourne, Class of 1848 (president from 1872-81) and well into the administration of Franklin Carter, Class of
1862 (president from 1881-1901). What difference did it make that Hopkins was an active presence?

FR: Chadbourne knew that Hopkins had picked him to be his successor. Still, any sign of disagreement with Hopkins was a cause of unpleasantness, and by the end of Chadbourne’s administration my sense is that he and Hopkins were barely speaking. It wasn’t possible to do anything at Williams without implying something must’ve been wrong before. Chadbourne’s tenure was not noted for much in the way of action. Part of the reason was that the Panic of 1873 meant there wasn’t much money. The three modest architectural gestures of the Chadbourne years were embarrassments. While College Hall for the housing and feeding of scholarship students proved that there were poor boys at Williams, the sumptuous fraternity houses that appeared in the Carter years were a stark reminder that the real Williams was being experienced elsewhere. Chadbourne’s frame gymnasium blew down in a gale in 1883, and the cast iron observatory of 1882 rattled to a degree that made accurate astronomical observations impossible. The one thing Chadbourne did to prove that he was his own man was invigorate the College’s discipline. Practically as soon as he arrived, he put up signs: “Keep Off the Grass.” It was an implicit commentary on the Hopkins administration. Chadbourne also helped run a mill on Water Street. The fact that he had time for outside business activity underscored that in the Hopkins era Williams had a teacher, but it didn’t really have a president. It’s not until Carter came that there was a president.

JC: I judge that professor of rhetoric John Bascom, Class of 1849, was one of the more prominent faculty members during Hopkins’ time and that he was still at Williams when Chadbourne arrived.

FR: James A. Garfield’s remark about Mark Hopkins and the log was in response to a speech that Bascom had just made to Williams alumni at Delmonico’s Restaurant in New York. That event in 1871 set the stage for the main story of the presidents in the era that we’re discussing. In effect, Bascom said to the alumni, “You may love the place, but it’s in a mess. It’s got a president who’s sitting on his ass. The place is too close to Pownal, Vt., too far from New York and Boston, where the action is. There’s no library, there are no laboratories, the trustees are too old. The place really needs attention.” That upset Garfield, Class of 1856, and he got up and said, “Well, but the ideal college is Mark Hopkins on one end of a log and a student on the other.” That was the beginning of the argument over whether the future of Williams lay with Bascom’s vision or Garfield’s aphorism. Chadbourne paid hardly any attention to Bascom, who soon left for the University of Wisconsin, where Chadbourne himself had been president before coming to Williams in 1872.

No president since 1872 has been free from the questions raised by that evenings’ contest between Bascom and Garfield over just how much and in what ways an old New England liberal arts college should accommodate itself to challenging developments in society and learning.

JC: What was going on in higher education nationally during that period? I’m referring to movements and trends that you’ve written a lot about—the creation of the land-grant colleges, the development of research universities, debates about whether the Oxbridge classical model was still relevant and growing interest in German higher education, with its emphasis on research and publication. Were these matters being discussed at Williams?

FR: That kind of discussion did go on at Williams, but Chadbourne did not encourage it. In fact, one of the remarkable statements Chadbourne made was, “You know, I could teach every subject in the curriculum.” When Ira Remsen, a newly appointed professor of chemistry and physics, asked if he could have some space for a laboratory, Chadbourne cautioned, “You must remember that this is a college and not a technical institute.” Specialization was the new order, but at Williams deciding how to deal with it was pushed forward into the 20th century. John Haskell Hewitt was named temporary president (1901-02), and the trustees brought Mark Hopkins’ son Henry, Class of 1858, out of a Kansas City pastorate to be president (1902-1908). Williams became a wealthy college in the 1880s during Carter’s administration,
but the Hewitt and Henry Hopkins appointments suggest that the trustees did not yet know in what direction they wanted to go.

JC: You developed some stages to explain the historical movement of Williams through its first two centuries.

FR: I divided the history of the College into three eras: the Christian Era, the Gentleman’s Era and then what I consider the most recent era, the Consumer Era.

John Hyde: So the gentleman’s college really emerged in the 1880s?

FR: It started even under Mark Hopkins. Whatever you think of fraternities, they were intended to be instruments for fostering gentlemanly conduct. The Mark Hopkins era was still principally about students becoming good Christians. There was always an internal war at the College over the question “What are we here for?” The students answered the question by building a program of extracurricular activities, which the presidents and the faculty largely ignored. The extracurricular activities during the Mark Hopkins era loomed so large that the students defined and shaped the College with their fraternities, athletics, mountain climbing and many other things outside the classroom. By the time of Harry Garfield, Class of 1883 (president from 1908 to 1934), the *extracurricular* was so vast that the students began setting limits on how many activities they could get into, in a sense acknowledging that we must be here for some other reason—like classes.

JC: In the transition from the Christian college to the college for gentlemen, did Carter see what was going on? And did he approve?

FR: My impression is that the College has always had somebody who would get up and, referring to scholarship students, say, “This is not a rich man’s college.” And then proceed to do what he could to make sure that it was. Carter at one point said, “Williams College is not a resort for rich men’s sons.” But it was Carter who persuaded Gov. Edwin Morgan of New York to give the money to build Morgan Hall (1882), the poshest college dormitory in the country. It was the first building at Williams with running water. How did a student get a room in Morgan? He bid for it; the rooms went to the students with the most money. Soon after Morgan was built, Lasell Gymnasium
Beyond the Log

went up across the street. And soon thereafter the fraternities started scrapping their little hovels to erect significant buildings. In 1885 the Delta Psi fraternity (St. Anthony) moved into a Stanford White house with a John La Farge stained-glass window and a sculptured likeness of its donor, Frederick Ferris Thompson, Class of 1856, by Augustus Saint-Gaudens.

Carter did a magnificent job of defining the College as an academic institution. On the other hand, he also facilitated the College as a rich man’s institution. Thompson also paid for the new science buildings. And then there’s Thompson Memorial Chapel (1905), given by his widow. The gift for the chapel was announced just as Henry Hopkins was appointed president. To appreciate what’s most interesting about the Gothic chapel is to see it in the light of the construction of Jesup Hall in 1899 because of student initiative. A student, Philip Marshall Brown, Class of 1898, later a Princeton professor, approached Morris Jesup, who was a generous contributor to the YMCA movement, and convinced him to give the money. It was the headquarters for the Williams Christian Association. Its officers had a suite on the top floor. Jesup Hall was a student center with a theater, billiards tables and offices for student organizations and activities. Here was what the students meant as being a Christian. The Christian was worldly. He believed in physical fitness, recreation, wholesome entertainment, social graces. By contrast with Jesup, Thompson Chapel was veneer. It said to the world, Williams is a college for fine gentlemen.

“Williams was no longer telling students that they needed a dramatic conversion experience and then go out and become preachers. It was telling them to go out and be public servants and responsible citizens.”

JC: How did Carter and his successors respond to the growing influence of fraternities?

FR: Throughout this whole period there was a growing concern about the relationships between fraternity and non-fraternity students. Henry Hopkins was troubled that the large fraternity houses were designed not only to house large numbers of the fraternity members but also to feed them. Garfield shared those concerns as he watched the widening chasm between the fraternity haves and the non-affiliated have-nots. Garfield tried to redress the imbalance by assigning Currier Hall for use by members of the Commons Club, the social organization for non-fraternity students. Over more than 50 years the various fixes that were designed to bridge over the chasm only exacerbated the problem. The trustees with whom Carter, Henry Hopkins and Harry Garfield worked were among the staunchest supporters of fraternities, and their gifts helped build those splendid houses.

JH: You said earlier that Carter brought about important academic changes.

FR: As professor of German at Yale, Carter was deeply involved in the efforts to transform a traditional liberal arts college into a research university. He was at the forefront of the professionalization of the American academy, being elected the president of the Modern Language Association the year he returned to Williams as its president.

In 1882 he began issuing an annual president’s report. In subsequent years he had plenty to report—appointment of the first full-time librarian, the first dean of the College, the first registrar, a professor to teach composition to freshmen and sophomores, a college pastor (Mark Hopkins’ son-in-law John H. Denison, Class of 1862).

The Thompson Labs were built in 1893. Greek was dropped as an admission requirement, and that added to the intellectual life of the place because it enlarged the pool of students. Although he was careful to maintain most of the religious traditions, Carter abolished compulsory evening chapel. Toward the end of his administration a number of student initiatives—the honor system, the founding of Gargoyle (1895-1896), an athletic council (1897), and Jesup Hall—demonstrated that the students were trying to deal with the growth of the College and change.

JC: Take us back to the period right after Carter’s 20-year tenure ended and the trustees apparently were having difficulty appointing a successor. That’s when Hewitt became acting president. And then Henry Hopkins was chosen at the age of 64, which even today would be extraordinary. What was going on that they apparently were having such a hard time agreeing upon Carter’s successor?
FR: My guess is that the trustees had to decide whether they wanted another Carter or needed breathing time while they decided how they were going to deal with the clear ascendency of the American university. During that period Dartmouth, under the leadership of William Jewett Tucker (president from 1893-1909), decided it was not going to be a small college any more. Williams, by contrast, decided that it was going to be a good, small, Christian college. Nothing much happened during the Henry Hopkins era. The speeches at his 1902 induction made clear that the College was sensitive to the challenges it was being asked to meet. Henry Hopkins himself came down on the side of “the well-rounded man,” on the side of athletics and Christianity.

JC: Harry Garfield was president from 1908 to 1934, a remarkably long tenure—second only to Mark Hopkins’. It encompassed World War I and a big chunk of the Great Depression.

FR: Garfield was known far beyond Williams, both nationally and then abroad after he founded the Institute of Politics. Meanwhile, he accomplished a lot at Williams. Like Woodrow Wilson, Garfield was a progressive politician. During his administration his concern was for good government and young men taking up lives of public service. Williams was no longer telling students that they needed a dramatic conversion experience and then go out and become preachers. It was telling them to go out and be public servants and responsible citizens.

JC: Given that Garfield went to Washington for a couple of years as fuel administrator and then later devoted a lot of time to the Institute of Politics, is there any evidence that he was bored by his routine presidential duties at the College?

FR: A case can be made that Garfield’s style was to delegate. When he went to Washington he turned the running of the College over to Professor Carroll Maxcy. The 1911 curriculum that Garfield and history professor T.C. Smith created was a significant moment in the history of higher education, because it packaged subject matter into divisions, it created the requisites and sequences and made room for new subjects without obliterating the old ones. The departmental major of sequence courses was topped with a unique double-credit senior seminar.

The Garfield curriculum was an effort to make clear that if you came to Williams you could get an education. In conjunction with the new curriculum was an honors program, so the best students could define themselves on a higher level of intellectual activity than had been true earlier.

Despite its historic importance, the new curriculum didn’t please everybody. Some faculty members in Latin, Greek and English didn’t like the sequence concept, and they continued to give gut courses. There were a lot of “gentlemen C students” at Williams, but there were also serious ones who took advantage of that curriculum.

JC: Dennett’s presidency from 1934 to 1937 was stormy and brief. What happened?

FR: In 1937 Dennett gave a speech to the Boston alumni saying there were too many “nice boys” at Williams. My sense is that he meant there were just too many graduates of private schools and not enough diversity. Williams had the highest percent of private school graduates of any college in the country. A big reason was the four-year Latin admission requirement. But by the time Dennett was made president, even in the prep schools there were many students who did not take four years of Latin. And Harvard, Yale and Dartmouth were also competing for the prep school graduates. The result was that the Williams applicant pool was damn small. Williams was probably taking one out of every two applicants, and it was accepting applications from weak students, just as long as they’d taken four years of Latin. (Interestingly, the trustees reduced the Latin requirement to three years just as Garfield left and Dennett arrived.)

There’s no question about what Dennett didn’t like about the place. In a 1975 honors thesis on the gentleman’s Williams, Guy Breese ’75 documented the background of the student body: In the Class of 1929, 36 percent had traveled in Europe; 1930, 29 percent; 1931, 36 percent. That’s a pretty fancy group. In 1930 there was a Chapin Library exhibit of rare books to which 17 students contributed. In 1935, 37 percent of the upperclassmen had cars. In 1938, almost 80 percent of the freshmen families had servants, only 25 percent of the students had summer jobs, 55 percent came...
from families with two or more cars. In 1934, 44 of the 775 students were in the New York Social Register and four in the Boston Social Register. The Williams Record had fashion issues dealing with men’s clothing. There were three men’s clothing stores on Spring Street for a student body of less than 800. The Stork Club ran ads in the Williams Record.

When Dennett arrived as president, Lehman Hall had just been built. It had beautiful pine paneling and big fireplaces. And the top floor had modest little rooms for scholarship students. The other student rooms—handsome and spacious—commanded the highest rents on campus. At the end of Dennett’s administration, the squash courts were built. I don’t know how many colleges in the U.S. had squash courts in 1938, in the midst of the most serious economic depression in history. Dennett knew that Williams didn’t need them, but the people who gave them insisted. That’s the environment that Dennett hoped to do something about, the environment that he perceived as having little connection with the real America.

He was in office for only three years and gave the “nice boys” speech toward the end. He gained a reputation for being sort of a son of a bitch because of the way he reacted to a lot of things he didn’t like about Williams, including a faculty that distressed him. He insulted one tenured faculty member so brutally that the fellow resigned. Garfield had reduced salaries by 10 percent. Dennett came in and selectively raised salaries, favoring those he approved of. During those three years he handled some campus tragedies with great sensitivity—a part of the Dennett story that you don’t hear about. In his first year a student in Lehman Hall murdered another student and then killed himself. That led Dennett to bring in Austen...
Riggs from Stockbridge to begin a psychiatric service on campus.

JH: Is the story of his resignation pretty straightforward?

FR: As I’ve heard it, it was an argument with the board about who had the final word on, let’s say, a decision such as the buying of real estate. The board wanted to buy the old Greylock Hotel on the corner where the Greylock Quad is now, to protect a prime piece of real estate from inappropriate use, i.e., a gas station. Dennett thought it was wrong to buy real estate at a time when faculty salaries were languishing. Apparently some members of the board said, “We’ll pay for it, the College doesn’t have to.” So Dennett proposed, as I understand it, that trustee decisions be subject to a presidential veto or deferral. At that point, the board said, “Look, we’re in charge, you’re not.” And he submitted his resignation.

JH: Did Dennett make any progress on changing the mix of students at Williams?

FR: Dennett had no problem with upper-class kids. He just wanted a better mix. And with the Latin admission requirement you could not get a mix. Still, he refused federal scholarship money—money intended for poor kids. In addition, he told his admission officer not to accept blacks and Jews because they were not treated fairly here. There was no synagogue for the Jewish students, and black students were treated as second-class citizens. Stopping the admission of Jewish and black applicants was a dramatic step. Since the late 19th century the small but steady stream of black and Jewish students who came to Williams supplied a disproportionate number of academic stars and distinguished alumni. What Dennett was essentially saying was that there were too many nice white boys, and he wanted some white boys that weren’t so nice.

Dennett’s three years have always seemed to me to have shaped everything that’s happened since. The presidents who have succeeded him have had the job of fixing the problem that Dennett identified. In other words, the period that we’re talking about brought about all of the things that helped to define Williams as a rich man’s college. But Williams College is no longer a rich man’s college.

JH: Did Dennett make any progress on changing the mix of students at Williams?

FR: Let’s go back to that evening at Delmonico’s in 1871. Both John Bascom and James A. Garfield were charting the future course of the College. Bascom, alert to developments in higher education, knew that the Williams of Mark Hopkins was going to have to meet the challenges posed by the new president of Harvard, Charles W. Eliot, who was using electives to open up the curriculum to new learning, and to the opening of Cornell in 1867, whose founder Ezra Cornell had announced: “I would found an institution where any person can find instruction in any study.” Garfield, while not denying Bascom’s challenges, reminded his audience that the center of an institution of learning was the relationship between a talented teacher and a willing student. And he gave the College an aphorism with which to remind itself across the years when it grappled with the realities represented by Eliot and Cornell.

In the presidents we’ve considered we found Chadbourne holding the future at bay, Carter transforming Williams into a gentleman’s college that Harry Garfield would clarify and rationalize and that Tyler Dennett would challenge and rethink.

For Fred’s full interview, published in the booklet Beyond the Log: Williams Presidents in the Gentleman’s Era, contact alumni.relations@williams.edu. Or visit tinyurl.com/beyondthelog.
In 1826, Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin published Physiologie du goût, ou méditations de gastronomie transcendante; ouvrage théorique, historique et à l’ordre du jour, dédié aux gastronomes parisiens, par un professeur, membre de plusieurs sociétés littéraires et savantes—known simply in English as The Physiology of Taste. Filled with such memorable aphorisms as “The destiny of nations depends on the manner in which they nourish themselves” and “The discovery of a new dish does more for human happiness than the discovery of a star,” the book changed the way people throughout the Western world think about food.

Now, thanks to Bruce Healy ’68 and his wife Alice, the first edition of Brillat-Savarin’s foundational work resides at Williams as part of a growing collection of books relating to culinary history and gastronomy. With a fund established by the Healys several years ago, Chapin Library acquired one of only two known inscribed copies of The Physiology of Taste, this one presented by Brillat-Savarin two months before he died to his friend and fellow magistrate Girod de l’Ain.

In the book, which has never gone out of print, Brillat-Savarin offers a series of 30 meditations on “transcendent gastronomy” and 27 “varieties,” providing his thoughts on subjects from the “Marvelous Effects of a Classical Dinner” to its opposite, “Disappointment.” In addition to opining on appetite and digestion, he meditates on the difficulties of making chocolate, the influence of gourmandism on wedded happiness, the treatment of obesity (including notes on an “antifat belt”), exhaustion, sleep, dreams and death. He sought nothing less than to articulate a philosophy of the palate and the table, a comprehensive science of gastronomy.

Indeed The Physiology of Taste reflects Healy’s own deep interest in the field. A theoretical physicist by training (he was on the faculty of the Institute for Advanced Study and of Yale University after receiving a Ph.D. in physics from The Rockefeller University), he developed an early passion for French food, particularly pastry. Now he is the celebrated author of three cookbooks, including the classic Mastering the Art of French Pastry (1984).

Wishing to share his passion with Williams, and because their daughter Charlotte ’10 is majoring in art history, Healy and his wife initially helped Chapin acquire two works: an exquisite edition of Brillat-Savarin’s Aphorismes et Variétés, illustrated by Raoul Dufy; and Henry Jean Laroche’s Cuisine, illustrated by Edouard Vuillard and others. Both books were described in The Artist & The Book 1860-1960 (the catalog for the 1961 exhibition at the Boston Museum of...
Fine Arts) as “the most sumptuous tributes of the 20th century to the French haute cuisine.”

When Alice’s great-uncle Albert O. Fenyessey died in 2008, the family decided to make a special purchase in tribute to him. The Physiology of Taste came on the market shortly thereafter. Chapin Library moved quickly, as such a rare book was bound to be snatched up. E-mails and phone calls ensued between Williamstown; Boulder, Colo. (where the Healy’s live); Portland, Maine (where the bookseller was located); and Paris, France (where the edition was on display). Within two weeks the work found a new home in the Berkshires.

Healy says that he and Alice “were delighted to be able to acquire this piece as a true cornerstone of the [College’s] culinary collection.” Already at Williams were early printed editions of Pliny’s Natural History, originally published in the 1st century, which contains references to food; a 1480 edition of Plutina’s On Right Pleasure and Good Health, the first printed cookbook; a 1541 printing of the early Roman collection of recipes known as Apicuis or De re coquinaria; and a 1747 first edition of the famous Art of Cookery, Made Plain and Easy, by Hannah Glasse. Chapin Library’s collection also includes more than 500 American cookbooks, mainly from the 19th century, donated in 1998 by Eleanor T. Fordyce, mother of Robert P. Fordyce ’56.

“Over the centuries French gastronomy has been a quintessential element in the development of French culture and the French contribution to Western civilization,” Healy says. He hopes that in coming years he and Alice “will succeed in creating a distinguished collection of classic French culinary literature in the Chapin Library.”

As scholars of food studies have shown, food is central to our identity, whether individual, communal or national. Brillat-Savarin perceived that truth nearly two centuries ago. As he famously wrote, “Tell me what you eat, and I shall tell you what you are.”

Research provided by Darra Goldstein, the Francis Christopher Oakley Third Century Professor of Russian and editor in chief of Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture, and by Chapin Library.
The privilege of standing inches from an oil painting or scrutinizing a piece of sculpture by holding it in one’s hand—once reserved for art history majors at Williams—has been extended to thousands of students from nearly every academic discipline, thanks to the College museum’s Rose Study Gallery.

I remember sucking in my breath, discarding “contraband” like coffee and crumb-producing items, and pressing my hands to my sides as I stepped into the Williams College Museum of Art’s print study room for a session of Art History 101-102.

We were there to analyze techniques of printmaking—what distinguishes an etching from a lithograph from any other type of print. Works of art, unframed, with no glass protection, were propped on small display shelves in front of me. Some prints were right on the table (hence the coffee and crumb ban), and some were carefully exhumed from storage boxes that protect delicate paper from exposure to light and the ravages of time.

I was about three inches away from the dark black lines of a Rembrandt, comparing it to a drawing of a tennis ball and wanting to feel the fuzzy orb that seemed to pop from the page in front of me. For me, a rabid museumgoer and art and Classics major, these visits to the museum’s “inner sanctum” were a special treat. But the print room of my day pales in comparison to today’s Rose Study Gallery.

The museum’s tradition of offering students access to its treasure trove of artworks predates even my time as a student. WCMA’s early leaders Karl Weston, Lane Faison ‘29 and others knew the power of looking at art carefully. Through up-close analysis, their disciples became
facile in the techniques of formal analysis and could paint a verbal picture of the elements of an art object—from a tiny drip on a Pollock to the burnished surface of an Attic Greek vase. But the privilege of pulling a work of art directly off the wall or of scrutinizing a piece of sculpture by holding it in one’s hand was primarily reserved for those students ready to devote their lives to art history.

The modern-day challenge has been to honor that tradition of up-close analysis while offering the opportunity to as many students as possible from every academic discipline. The controlled and secure environment of the Rose Study Gallery—with its multiple projectors, electronic capabilities, infinitely adjustable lighting systems and myriad display options—also meets new requirements for the safe care and preservation of works of art.

Created in 2004 out of existing exhibition space, the gallery each year draws on average more than 3,000 visitors, including students from some 40 different courses. In 2008-09 alone, students spent class time in Rose viewing nearly 2,500 objects, including a mummy hand, Egyptian grave pots, Romano-Syrian glass and new works of contemporary photography.

“There is no one way of visiting Rose,” says Elizabeth Gallerani, the museum’s coordinator of Mellon Academic Programs, whose job includes promoting the museum’s holdings to faculty and collaborating with them on how to use art to enhance their teaching. “We do our best to ensure that visits … are not just cool museum field trips but are truly integrated into a professor’s syllabus.”

Long before the start of each academic year, Gallerani pores over the course catalog to see which classes might benefit from one or more sessions in Rose. She contacts those professors to suggest artworks that might fit their syllabi. (In the near future, faculty will be able to search the museum’s computerized collections database by subject matter, medium, etc.)

By nearly every measure, Gallerani’s efforts have paid off. In 2008-09, 45 classes from disciplines including computer science, Africana studies, anthropology, English, geosciences, philosophy, physics and theater, in addition to art history and studio art, held sessions in Rose.

One longtime fan of the gallery is neuroscience professor Betty Zimmerberg, whose course “Image, Imaging and Imagining: The Brain and Visual Arts” was born out of a collaboration with the museum. As an undergraduate at Harvard, Zimmerberg studied etching in addition to her science courses. One class met at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, where she analyzed prints of Rembrandt, Goya and Dürer. “There is something about working with original art that’s enormously satisfying to the brain,” she says.

When the Williams faculty voted in 2001 to boost the number of interdisciplinary courses offered as part of a comprehensive strategic plan, Zimmerberg began thinking about designing a new course that would explore connections between neuroscience and art. She delved into questions of seeing and perception, the role of the brain in artistic production and the effects of neurological disorders and mental illness on the creation and interpretation of art. She also searched scientific literature for reading materials she could use in class.

Then she reached out to the museum, collaborating with Gallerani’s predecessor, Stefanie Spray Jandl, Grad Art ’93, and with Gallerani once she joined the staff. The three brainstormed the types of artists and objects to round out Zimmerberg’s
sylabus. After about six months of analyzing the collection, looking at objects and making plans, the 200-level interdisciplinary course made its debut.

“It’s very rewarding and stimulating to do something interdisciplinary at this point in my career,” Zimmerberg says. “The brain finds it extremely pleasurable to make new connections between different subjects.”

One portion of “Image, Imaging and Imagining” involves the study of visual neuroscience—the mechanics behind how we see things. Students study the cells involved in visual processing and how images resolve themselves from dots to lines and beyond. But far more intricate and interesting to Zimmerberg is what happens to the process when what we see gets to our visual center and is then altered by our expectations, memory and emotions. How we perceive images, she says, is a process that is refined as we grow and develop as human beings.

“Working with original works of art gives us the unique opportunity to talk about how we see and perceive,” Zimmerberg says. “It’s something you can’t do with slides. With an original work of art you can see the details of a pointillist dot—which colors the artist has juxtaposed and how that affects our perception. With up-close scrutiny you can move forward and backward from a work and see how it changes. You can walk around a work to see how viewing it from different angles changes your perception of it. This is something you simply cannot achieve in a classroom with a PowerPoint projector, or even in the galleries.”

An added bonus, Gallerani says, is that “students are more relaxed in the Rose Study Gallery than in the exhibition galleries. It feels like a regular classroom space, and they don’t feel that other people, like guards in uniform, are watching them over their shoulders.”

Zimmerberg’s students study face perception by looking at portraits. They study optical illusions by looking at Op Art. They study surrealism—a great example in art history of how images are colored by memory and emotion. The class discusses neurological and psychological disorders and their influences on the creative process.

Zimmerberg also spends time in class analyzing whether artists’ brains differ from those of less creative types. Though it’s hard to tell whether, neurologically speaking, artists are inherently different from other people, she says, it is possible to analyze areas of the brain that may have been enhanced by a career of creating art.

The course is composed of both science and art students, including some pre-med students who are also art history majors. (Recent studies have shown that medical students who spend time looking at art during their studies become much more accurate at diagnosing illness in patients. In short, they become better observers.) And each student looks at art through a different lens. In Zimmerberg’s experience, the studio artists are generally keen on discussing technique right away. The art historians contribute their knowledge of the depth and breadth of the canon. The scientists quickly become conversant about art and have the unique approach of discussing it from the scientific perspective of color perception and the myriad processes they have learned in neuroscience classes.

But despite their differences in backgrounds and skill sets, all of Zimmerberg’s students offer the same suggestion in their course evaluations at the end of the semester—spend more time in the Rose Study Gallery.

As one student wrote in a recent evaluation, “I thought that ... the structure of the course, splitting class time between the Rose Gallery, WCMA, the Clark and classroom was a great use of the resources. ... The diverse backgrounds of the students really added a lot of flavor to the class.”

“Most Williams students who are not art history majors just don’t go to the museum,” says
by Dave Wehner '85 out of a Winter Study comedy writing class he took in his senior year. Someone used the phrase “combination pizza” as a skit punch line, and the group found a name. Dave Allen '89 later shortened it to the snappier “Combo Za.” Now a senior planner in the Seattle Department of Transportation, Allen also instituted the first auditions in fall 1987, when the group’s “recorded” history began. Green’s convinced that Combo Za vies with one other troupe at Yale for bragging rights as the oldest continually operating college improv comedy group in America. As they move out into the real world, “Zalumnos,” as they call themselves, carry “Za” with them, including skit-generated nicknames like Goose, Dr. Doom, Ragin’ Faigin and Wreckin’ Ball. Some have ended up in the improv business. Founder Wehner worked full time as a comic after Williams, opening for Jerry Seinfeld, Roseanne Barr and Rodney Dangerfield, before a seismic career shift that eventually landed him at Mount St. Mary’s University in Maryland, where he is an assistant professor of English.

Cecelia Lederer ’06 performs a long-form improv type called “Harold” with the Upright Citizen’s Brigade house team in New York. Along with her fellow Zalumn Miles Klee ’07, she belongs as well to the independent improv team “Necessary.” “I also do stand-up in sticky bars with expensive drink minimums,” says Lederer, “and am a writer’s assistant for The Colbert Report, on which both I and my dog Tummy have been featured.”

Green (now communications director for the Producers Guild of America) says that while Combo Za’s mind-set has been passed down over the years, performances have changed recently with the ascendance of “long-form” or “montage” improv, in which performers build an entire stream-of-consciousness scene sequence. Still, traditional short-form improv, “where each scene is played out as a discrete entity, often with other funny-inducing rules or restrictions,” is what Green and many Zalumnos still like most and perform best.

Such formal distinctions made no inter-generational differences at Combo Za’s 25th, which was “phenomenal,” according to Green. “I still can barely believe that something so great actually happened.”
Zimmerberg, who, with Kathryn Price, Grad Art ’02, is curating the exhibition “Landscapes of the Mind: Contemporary Artists Contemplate the Brain,” on view at the museum through May 2. But having classes at Rose can spark “the beginning of a desire to engage with the larger world of art.” “Going to an art museum is the best gift you can give yourself,” Zimmerberg adds. “Your brain loves it. The part of your brain that controls addiction is the same part of the brain that lights up when you are finding pleasure in looking at art. It makes you want to look at more. It is an intrinsically pleasurable experience to be with an original work of art. Many students have told me that going to museums will now be a lifetime pursuit.”

ALSO AT THE GALLERY

In addition to neuroscientist Betty Zimmerberg’s popular “Image, Imaging and Imagining: The Brain and Visual Arts,” upwards of 40 courses from nearly every academic discipline are held in the Rose Study Gallery each year. Among the recent ones:

“Sublime Confusion: A Survey of Critical Theory”
Christopher Bolton, comparative and Japanese literature
For this 300-level seminar, students analyzed Pop Art featuring characteristics of the “postmodern sublime.” A week before the class session, students had a two-hour drop-in period in Rose, where Bolton and museum staff could answer their questions. They then wrote papers that became the basis of class discussion.

“Computer Graphics” Morgan McGuire, computer science
Students in this 300-level course were learning algorithms for programs like Photoshop, and McGuire brought them to Rose to see examples of artistic choice and evidence of the hand of the artist. Using magnifying glasses to look at works up close, students saw the distinguishing characteristics of various media, including oil painting, engraving, etching, chalk, charcoal and watercolor. With the pieces displayed across a single shelf, students could directly compare and contrast the techniques and develop an understanding of how to digitally represent them.

“Pop Art” C. Ondine Chavoya, art
Students in this 200-level course utilized the collection of Pop Art for an in-depth class project. At the start of the semester, the class met in Rose so each student could select a work of art on which to focus. They then scheduled individual appointments to study the work. The written assignment was a short paper modeled after the entries in Encounter, the handbook of the museum’s full collection. Students also gave presentations in Rose over the course of two class sessions.

“Approaching the Past: Remembering American History”
K. Scott Wong, James Phinney Baxter III Professor of History and Public Affairs
For the second writing assignment of this 300-level course, students selected a work of art and examined how it represents a concept of memory in American history. Many students chose something on view at the time; others attended drop-in hours and viewed photographs in Rose. Working alone or in small groups, students wrote five- to seven-page papers and a short label text, presenting their assignments alongside their selected works in the museum.

Information provided by WCMA
An Irish dramatist and folklorist, Lady Isabella Gregory hasn’t received nearly as much scholarly attention as her collaborators in the Irish Literary Revival of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. For one thing, her patronage has always tended to overshadow her reputation as a writer, although during her own time she was a very successful playwright. And her creative works are lesser known than those of men including William Butler Yeats, Sean O’Casey, John Millington Synge and George Bernard Shaw, in part because she was a woman.

But there’s another, less obvious reason why her enormous paper trail hasn’t been given greater consideration: Her handwriting was simply awful. “Scholars researching her archive for the first time are invariably full of enthusiasm as they order material up from the catalog but often dispirited after looking through their
When she first began adapting Lei and Kim Xiong’s lavishly illustrated children’s books from Chinese to English several years ago, Clarissa Yu Shen ’99 knew the distance between languages could be a challenge to bridge. Even more difficult, she found, were the cultural aspects of bringing the books, written for a Chinese audience, to life for Western readers.

A former management consultant who now works full time in digital marketing, Shen came to adaptation work somewhat by accident. She was always interested in children’s literature and at one time considered writing and illustrating picture books. In 2004, her mother, who for several years ran a children’s book club in Hong Kong, sent her some of the Xiong brothers’ books. Based largely on traditional Chinese themes and stories, the books were of great interest both to Shen and her husband James Lin, founder of Better Chinese, which publishes and distributes materials for teaching Chinese as a foreign language and culture.

During a trip to Beijing in 2006, Shen and her husband got to meet the Xiong brothers in their workshop, and their conversation quickly turned to one about mutual goals. The Xiongs were eager to attract an audience beyond their country’s borders. Better Chinese was seeking to make Chinese literature interesting and approachable to a new generation. It seemed like a natural collaboration. And Shen was the natural choice to tackle the project.

A native Chinese speaker, Shen was born in New York and lived in Vienna before her family relocated to Taipei, where she was enrolled at the Taipei American School. Her next stop was Williams, where she majored in English with a concentration in environmental studies, followed by a master’s in business administration at Harvard. She now lives in San Francisco.

Shen has since worked on five of the Xiong brothers’ books, four of which contain the Chinese text along with the English, though they are not literal translations and would never work as such. “There’s an economy to the Chinese language,” Shen says. “It would take a long phrase to express in English the same thoughts.”

Then there are the cultural aspects of adaptation. The story behind the Xiong brothers’ Paper Horse, for example, concerns a child who misses his parents, migrant workers who must leave their charge with grandparents while they look for work in the city. The stark yet hopeful tale accurately depicts a reality for many children in modern-day China. But to appeal to an American audience, it had to be relatable.

“I love the story,” Shen says, “but I knew it had to come across in a different style than in Chinese.”

The English version, published by Better Chinese in 2008, employs allusions to the poetry of Robert Frost in both content and form to convey the mood and theme of the original in softer tones:

_In the deep winter snow,_

_Baba and Mama have miles to go_

_To Nainai’s house where I stay Cozy and warm, but far away._

_Another tale, called Dragon Slayers in Chinese, includes references to infanticide—another fact of life in China. In the English version, published in 2008, Shen changed the title to The Dragon Tribe and avoided translating certain phrases altogether. Instead, she says, she referred to “the hardships and rough life the tribe lived through in their early days, before they embraced the culture around dragons.”

"YOU CANNOT JUST DO A LITERAL TRANSLATION. YOU HAVE TO CAPTURE THE STORY’S ESSENCE, THE TONE OF VOICE."
COMBO ZA
Making It Up for 25 years.

By Rob White
Photos by Roman Iwasiwka (unless noted)

>> Click here for text only

From top: John Fagan ’95 hangs out for a Combo Za photo shoot in spring 1992; pre-show prep and a long-form set in January.

On the lip of the stage in Goodrich’s Payne Hall, Mike Leon ’11 is smack in the middle of a plausible Martha Stewart imitation. (“Just feel this towel … as soft as a naked baby!”) A sharp clap from a row of five performers upstage sweeps him aside, and two new players move front and center. They manage to get a few sentences into a macho dialogue between two truckers when—clap!—two other performers take over as young hoodlums, one asking the other if his mom gives AP English exam prep sessions, except suddenly they’re Frankenstein and Igor, and almost immediately replaced by a scrum of pirates…

“Improv”—that all-purpose moniker for skits made up on the fly in response to audience prompts—is better witnessed than described, especially when performed by Williams’ Combo Za. The “suite” above was part of a weekend-long, campus-wide celebration in January of Combo Za’s 25th anniversary. Thirty-one alumni, as well as current Combo Za-ers and students trying their own hand at this fluid art form, all got into the act.

According to Chris Green ’92, who helped organize the event (billed as “ZA 2010: The Year We Make Contact”), Combo Za was formed
Clockwise from top left: Za makes contact in 2010; "dumping" a player in spring of '92; two skits at the 25th.

Rob White is communications director for the Office of Alumni Relations and Development at Williams.

Keith Palsen '10

by Dave Wehner '85 out of a Winter Study comedy writing class he took in his senior year. Someone used the phrase “combination pizza” as a skit punch line, and the group found a name. Dave Allen '89 later shortened it to the snappier “Combo Za.”

Now a senior planner in the Seattle Department of Transportation, Allen also instituted the first auditions in fall 1987, when the group’s “recorded” history began. Green’s convinced that Combo Za vies with one other troupe at Yale for bragging rights as the oldest continually operating college improv comedy group in America.

As they move out into the real world, “Zalums,” as they call themselves, carry “Za” with them, including skit-generated nicknames like Goose, Dr. Doom, Ragin’ Faigin and Wreckin’ Ball. Some have ended up in the improv business. Founder Wehner worked full time as a comic after Williams, opening for Jerry Seinfeld, Roseanne Barr and Rodney Dangerfield, before a seismic career shift that eventually landed him at Mount St. Mary’s University in Maryland, where he is an assistant professor of English.

Cecelia Lederer '06 performs a long-form improv type called “Harold” with the Upright Citizen’s Brigade house team in New York. Along with her fellow Zalumn Miles Klee '07, she belongs as well to the independent improv team “Necessary.” “I also do stand-up in sticky bars with expensive drink minimums,” says Lederer, “and am a writer’s assistant for The Colbert Report, on which both I and my dog Tummy have been featured.”

Green (now communications director for the Producers Guild of America) says that while Combo Za’s mind-set has been passed down over the years, performances have changed recently with the ascendance of “long-form” or “montage” improv, in which performers build an entire stream-of-consciousness scene sequence. Still, traditional short-form improv, “where each scene is played out as a discrete entity, often with other funny-inducing rules or restrictions,” is what Green and many Zalums still like most and perform best.

Such formal distinctions made no inter-generational differences at Combo Za’s 25th, which was “phenomenal,” according to Green. “I still can barely believe that something so great actually happened.”


Gray Land: Soldiers on War. By Barry Goldstein, visiting professor of humanities. W.W. Norton & Co., 2009. The photographer captures the images and words of the U.S. Army 3rd Brigade Combat Team as he follows the soldiers from their training in Georgia and California to Iraq.


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How to Teach Physics to Your Dog. By Chad Orzel ’93. Scribner, 2009. The physics professor explains to his dog Emmy, and to human readers, what quantum mechanics is and how it works.

Williams Track. By Joel Richardson ’82. CreateSpace, 2009. A brief history of the Williams College track and field program, with detailed meet results and behind-the-scenes anecdotes.


An Irish dramatist and folklorist, Lady Isabella Gregory hasn’t received nearly as much scholarly attention as her collaborators in the Irish Literary Revival of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. For one thing, her patronage has always tended to overshadow her reputation as a writer, although during her own time she was a very successful playwright. And her creative works are lesser known than those of men including William Butler Yeats, Sean O’Casey, John Millington Synge and George Bernard Shaw, in part because she was a woman.

But there’s another, less obvious reason why her enormous paper trail hasn’t been given greater consideration: Her handwriting was simply awful. “Scholars researching her archive for the first time are invariably full of enthusiasm as they order material up from the catalog but often dispirited after looking through their
first few folders of documents,” says James Pethica, who teaches in Williams’ English department and is a renowned Yeats scholar and director of the Yeats International Summer School in Sligo, Ireland. “I’m fortunate in that I can read her handwriting.”

Pethica’s skill and patience with the documents have opened untold windows into the life and times of Lady Gregory as well as into the work of Yeats and others. As editor of the Norton Critical Edition of Yeats’ collected works and two volumes of draft materials of Yeats’ work in the Cornell University Press Yeats series, Pethica says he derives a scholarly pleasure in traversing an archive considered outside of the mainstream. Also the editor of Lady Gregory’s Diaries, 1892-1902 (Colin Smythe Ltd., 1996), he is scheduled to publish in 2011 the first authorized biography of Lady Gregory, and he is preparing a two-volume compilation of Lady Gregory’s uncollected short writings, including journal articles, pamphlets, newspapers and book prefaces.

They are significant works not only in the world of literature but also historically and politically. Born Isabella Augusta Persse, Lady Gregory was married to Sir William Gregory, a former governor of what is now Sri Lanka and a member of the British Parliament, representing County Galway in Ireland, where he had his estate. Sir Gregory also had a home in London, where he held weekly salons with leading literary and artistic figures of the day, including Robert Browning, Lord Alfred Tennyson and Henry James. Lady Gregory “was brought up in a relatively remote area of Ireland and was thrust into this creative world,” Pethica says, adding that she also corresponded with Theodore Roosevelt and other key political figures in England and the U.S. as well as with Irish revolutionaries as she increasingly became an Irish nationalist. “I find her a very compelling figure in that respect, transacting powerfully within and between two very different worlds.”

When Lady Gregory met Yeats at age 44, she had no previous literary accomplishments. “There she is, in her mid-40s, suddenly catapulted into a remarkable literary movement,” Pethica says.

“LADY GREGORY’S ARCHIVE IS MAYBE FIVE FEET FROM THE MAINSTREAM. I’M WORKING SQUARELY IN THE WORLD OF YEATS, BUT IN AN AREA OF IT THAT WAS LONG IGNORED OR HIDDEN.”

Her influence on Yeats, in particular, was immense as patroness, collaborator and friend. Two of Yeats’ best-known works, “In Memory of Major Robert Gregory” and “An Irish Airman Foresees His Death,” were elegies to Lady Gregory’s son Robert, who was shot down in a fighter plane in 1918. Critics long have noted in the poems an air of hesitancy, for which Pethica may have uncovered a reason.

After obtaining a diary belonging to Robert Gregory’s wife Margaret, Pethica learned the “perfect man” of Yeats’ prose had cheated on her and continued the relationship after it was exposed. Robert Gregory even landed in a fistfight with his mistress’ husband. “It’s quite clear from this diary that Lady Gregory thought her own son a cad because he cheated on his wife,” Pethica says. “One is obliged to reread the poems to see the tension that swirls in the lines. … [Yeats] quietly, elliptically, subtly signals a level of skepticism and indignation against him.”

The material has provided Pethica with both an opportunity and a challenge. “Having the chance to offer new readings of canonical poems that really shake up the established view of them is, of course, a godsend,” he says. “And having a racy, compelling story to tell certainly helps in attracting a wider audience for my work. But in the end, my task is to … offer a more nuanced account of how biographical, political and other contexts play a part in the creation of a given work of art.”
When she first began adapting Lei and Kim Xiong’s lavishly illustrated children’s books from Chinese to English several years ago, Clarissa Yu Shen ’99 knew the distance between languages could be a challenge to bridge. Even more difficult, she found, were the cultural aspects of bringing the books, written for a Chinese audience, to life for Western readers.

A former management consultant who now works full time in digital marketing, Shen came to adaptation work somewhat by accident. She was always interested in children’s literature and at one time considered writing and illustrating picture books. In 2004, her mother, who for several years ran a children’s book club in Hong Kong, sent her some of the Xiong brothers’ books. Based largely on traditional Chinese themes and stories, the books were of great interest both to Shen and her husband James Lin, founder of Better Chinese, which publishes and distributes materials for teaching Chinese as a foreign language and culture.

During a trip to Beijing in 2006, Shen and her husband got to meet the Xiong brothers in their workshop, and their conversation quickly turned to one about mutual goals. The Xiongs were eager to attract an audience beyond their country’s borders. Better Chinese was seeking to make Chinese literature interesting and approachable to a new generation. It seemed like a natural collaboration. And Shen was the natural choice to tackle the project.

A native Chinese speaker, Shen was born in New York and lived in Vienna before her family relocated to Taipei, where she was enrolled at the Taipei American School. Her next stop was Williams, where she majored in English with a concentration in environmental studies, followed by a master’s in business administration at Harvard. She now lives in San Francisco.

Shen has since worked on five of the Xiong brothers’ books, four of which contain the Chinese text along with the English, though they are not literal translations and would never work as such. “There’s an economy to the Chinese language,” Shen says. “It would take a long phrase to express in English the same thoughts.”

Then there are the cultural aspects of adaptation. The story behind the Xiong brothers’ Paper Horse, for example, concerns a child who misses his parents, migrant workers who must leave their charge with grandparents while they look for work in the city. The stark yet hopeful tale accurately depicts a reality for many children in modern-day China. But to appeal to an American audience, it had to be relatable.

“I love the story,” Shen says, “but I knew it had to come across in a different style than in Chinese.”

The English version, published by Better Chinese in 2008, employs allusions to the poetry of Robert Frost in both content and form to convey the mood and theme of the original in softer tones:

*In the deep winter snow,*

*Baba and Mama have miles to go*

*To Nainai’s house where I stay*

*Cozy and warm, but far away.*

Another tale, called *Dragon Slayers* in Chinese, includes references to infanticide—another fact of life in China. In the English version, published in 2008, Shen changed the title to *The Dragon Tribe* and avoided translating certain phrases altogether. Instead, she says, she referred to “the hardships and rough life the tribe lived through in their early days, before they embraced the culture around dragons.”

**“YOU CANNOT JUST DO A LITERAL TRANSLATION. YOU HAVE TO CAPTURE THE STORY’S ESSENCE, THE TONE OF VOICE.”**
“I thought the illustrations already say a lot about how harsh the world can be,” she says. “Kids can tell their own stories from the pictures. Even pictures that can be scary, they work through that in their own ways. They tell their own stories.”

Shen discusses all changes with the Xiong brothers, who have given her their blessing: “They believe we represent a good East and West sensibility that can understand their work while also being familiar with the Western market.”

So far, some 3,000 of the brothers’ books have been distributed in the West, mainly through the school and Chinese-as-a-foreign-language markets as well as by a few independent bookstores in the Bay Area. Though the effort is admittedly “grassroots,” Shen says, “The Xiong brothers were willing to take the risk and work with us as a little publisher because they believed in the larger vision of the company and trusted us with maintaining the integrity of their work.”
Williams professors and others weigh in on the issues of the day. For a complete listing of media appearances, visit www.williams.edu/admin/news/ithenews

When a comedian such as the Iranian-born Maz Jobrani can successfully get laughs from jokes about all races, “It’s not a question of does this outsider play an interesting and funny game at the border of inside and outside; it’s that you can’t tell what’s inside or outside,” says John Limon, the John J. Gibson Professor of English, in a Jan. 28 Associated Press article about Jobrani that appeared in dozens of publications.

In a response published Jan. 21 to a Chronicle Review query on the state of compensation for university presidents, Gordon Winston, the Orrin Sage Professor of Political Economy, emeritus, says that when presidents earn more than twice the average salary of full professors at their institutions, it “suggests presidential values inconsistent with their jobs.”

Calling into question two widely held assumptions about learning, psychology professor Nate Kornell’s research on failure and testing, cited in the Jan. 21 Globe and Mail, finds that “errors are not necessarily the enemy of learning” and “testing … can, under the right conditions, better promote learning than can studying.”

In a Jan. 14 Wall Street Journal article on whether the Federal Reserve’s low interest rates were to blame for the housing boom and bust, Ken Kuttner, the Robert F. White Class of 1952 Professor of Economics, says “there are lots of instances in which bubbles occurred in the absence of loose monetary policy, and instances in which policy was loose and there was no bubble.”

“After food and shelter, a lot of what we’re buying is appearances, feelings and fictional experiences,” says comparative and Japanese literature professor Christopher Bolton in a Jan. 6 Sphere article about the sale of a virtual space station in the online world Entropia at auction for $330,000 real dollars.

FROM THE BOOKSHELF

Carry a Chicken in Your Lap: Or Whatever It Takes to Globalize Your Business.


Feeding the Soul of the City. With Executive Editor Michael Curtin ’86. DC Central Kitchen, 2008. Recipes and vignettes from the staff, students, volunteers, partners and friends of the DC Central Kitchen, which works to combat hunger and create opportunities in the nation’s capital.


Gray Land: Soldiers on War. By Barry Goldstein, visiting professor of humanities. W.W. Norton & Co., 2009. The photographer captures the images and words of the U.S. Army 3rd Brigade Combat Team as he follows the soldiers from their training in Georgia and California to Iraq.


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READER GROUPS
Can a book help to build community? The answer, according to the Williams Reads program, is yes. Dozens of students, staff, faculty and local residents came together during Winter Study to explore the Pulitzer Prize-winning The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao, published in 2007 by Junot Diaz. Free copies of the novel, which was selected by the Committee on Community and Diversity, were distributed across campus, followed by movie screenings, discussions, performances and even dance and cooking classes—all designed to stimulate conversation and deepen understanding about diversity. Since the program’s inception in 2007, Williams Reads selections have included:

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian by Sherman Alexie (published in 2007)
Parable of the Sower by Octavia Butler (2003)

For more information, visit library.williams.edu/williamsreads/
Ephs—Anytime, Anywhere

Connect with classmates and friends. Discuss issues and interests. View and share photos. Watch videos of professors, alumni and news makers. Get regular Williams updates. All this and more is available at alumni.williams.edu/williamsmedia.

Plus keep an eye out for a new Facebook app that can feed Williams information directly to your profile and let you synchronize your contact info with the College.

Feed your Eph fever at alumni.williams.edu!
We were college roommates for four years. We learned a lot ABOUT each other then. In retrospect, it takes years to appreciate the full impact of what we've learned FROM each other.

We now live on different continents, but it doesn't matter. Your college roommate, however distant, will always be just down the hall to inspire, cajole or share a great joke.

BILL KELLEY ’81 & JEFF SHEPARD ’81