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Traffic at the Career Center picks up in the spring, with students looking for summer internships and jobs. But new programs directed at first-years, in particular, are helping students think earlier—and more strategically—about life after Williams. It all starts with these questions: Who am I? Where am I going? How do I get there? And (to mentors) how did you get there? Counseling, workshops, info sessions and alumni panels all guide students to the right paths. Alumni can also make use of the center by visiting Mears House or careers.williams.edu.
OK WAVE
FEATURES

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Animating the past is important, especially with a history as rich as Williams’ and particularly when passing major milestones.

As readers of the magazine know, the college is experiencing the 50th anniversary of a decade of extraordinary change that, not coincidentally, occurred during the Williams presidency of John E. Sawyer ’39. This change included the phasing out of fraternities, the admission of women, the racial broadening of the student body, the introduction of non-Western studies and the launching of Winter Study, environmental studies and the graduate program in art history.

We’re determined to celebrate this history the best way that an intellectual community can—by understanding it better and applying its lessons to our future.

The effort began in the January 2012 issue of the magazine with a discussion of Jack Sawyer’s form of leadership by historian Michael Beschloss ’77 and President Emeritus John Chandler. You can read the interview at http://alumni.williams.edu/adefiningdecade.

We continue in this issue with a feature on a remarkable artifact—a film made in 1964 by CBS News of a conversation with Sawyer and Harry Ransom, who was then chancellor of the University of Texas. In the film Sawyer, whom most of us know only as legend, comes alive. Clips of the broadcast are available at http://bit.ly/whatsawyersaid. (Or you can request a link to the full video by emailing communications@williams.edu.)

Beginning on p. 12 of this magazine, members of the college community respond through the lens of the present to several points Sawyer made in the film that bear particular relevance today.

Indeed, the degree to which the issues Sawyer and Ransom addressed a half-century ago remain significant today is remarkable. One such matter is something I’ve been thinking and talking about often: the role of technology in teaching and learning at a college like Williams.

What Sawyer said in the film about the effect of emerging technology on education in his time still applies: “We must not let ourselves be deluded into thinking that there can be endless mechanical substitutes for the essential human input.”

Education always has been and always will be a social activity, an irreducible magic found in the interaction between committed teachers and talented students. At Williams, we’ve examined what inputs to learning correlate most highly with self-reported advances in fundamental skills such as critical thinking and written expression. The result of our study is striking. By far, it’s the degree of personal interaction that a student has with faculty. If that reminds you of Mark Hopkins and the log, it should, because Williams has long been the standard-bearer for this personal approach.

There is no doubt that new technologies will continue to enhance how we teach and learn in significant and exciting ways. But nothing can effectively replace the educational model that Williams stands for—a model that we will continue to defend no matter which way the winds of fashion blow.

That commitment is one of the many principles that the Williams of Jack Sawyer’s time got right and that guided his era’s imagining of the Williams of the future. Such principles need to be among those that guide the imagining that we do now.
Some Redesign Kudos...

Thank you to the group of people who produced the fall 2012 issue of Williams Magazine. You have done an outstanding job inspiring, entertaining, informing and stretching a reader. It’s truly like a liberal arts education condensed into 40 pages—just add water, read and enjoy.

—Malinda Bergamini Chapman ’80, Ticonderoga, N.Y.

I knew that the Magazine Working Group had been working very hard and imaginatively on the redesign for at least a year and that it was going to be very good. But this is one of those very rare occasions where high expectations have been significantly surpassed by the reality that has emerged. It strikes a wonderful balance among ideas, issues and developments that are of interest to alumni and then makes connections to the Williams community where appropriate. It is substantial and written and designed very well. Congratulations on a wonderful success.

—Bob Stegeman ’60, Williamstown, Mass.

...And One Concern

I like the new magazine design, but I don’t like the new size. I retain prior issues of the Alumni Review, and the new size doesn’t fit the shelf.

—Guy Verney ’54, Madison, Conn.

A Time of Transition

The illustrations for “A Time of Transition” (fall 2012) were not only beautiful—magnificent would be a far better word! The article was thoughtful, and as proud as I am as a Williams graduate, the story reminds me of how great Williams College really is—a place for many to attend in our very diverse world. Thanks for being the Williams College of today as it was in the past, a truly great institution of learning.

—Sandy Singer ’47, Evanston, Ill.

Game Changer

As the 77-year-old winner of a gold medal in diving at the 2005 World Masters Games, I am very familiar with Title IX (“In the Game,” fall 2012). The revolution in collegiate sports since 1972 has been dramatic and particularly advantageous for women’s roles in varsity competition, and very deservedly so. But there have been some downsides for men’s participation in varsity sports, particularly non-revenue sports, and particularly at public universities.

Williams was quite flexible in handling Title IX. But as swimming and diving programs were dropped at University of Illinois, University of Miami (Florida) and University of California, Los Angeles—which all previously had supplied an impressive number of Olympic champions—there has been an unfortunate impact on ongoing U.S. Olympic competition.

—Bill Hanwood ’49, Evanston, Ill.

I’m puzzled by negative references to the past state of women’s crew. I rowed from 1973 through 1977, when women’s and men’s crew were club sports. We were supported by gracious alumni and parents, plus we raised our own funds. We shared most equipment, which was generally in “experienced” condition. We drove personal cars and stayed with family or on the couches of friends for away races. Both crews competed favorably against well-funded varsity programs. In particular, Nancy Storrs ’73 and Sue Tuttle ’78 went on to much success with USA National Teams. It was tougher for our coaches due to very low compensation.

I wish crew had been a varsity sport during my time at Williams, but then I might not have had the great experiences I enjoyed. I graduated, got a job and donated a boat. It was my way of thanking the alumni who made my opportunity possible.

—Dan Fox ’77, Chagrin Falls, Ohio

Lessons from the Grid

Kudos and gratitude to the magazine and the faculty contributing to “The Well-Tempered Grid” (fall 2012). The article is a veritable proof of the practical value and importance of the liberal arts today. By studying Sol LeWitt’s art, one hones skills of abstraction, enumeration and integration—so critical to information technology. By studying the dance of Martha Graham, one learns to “rediscover” rather than “invent” elements and then recombine them to express new constructions—so central to the packaging of financial products. By studying archaeology’s progression from grid-based recording of finds at a dig to the artful interpretation of their meaning, one embodies the very essence of strategic management, medical diagnosis and more.

The value of the liberal arts for their own sake is widely acknowledged—as a means to a fulfilling life of curiosity, self-creation and glorious contemplation. But when we talk about the creative economy, our future national prosperity, one’s career earnings potential—all this “practical” stuff—the liberal arts are more important than they’ve been in a century, possibly ever. Perhaps this was the editors’ and authors’ purpose, or perhaps not. Regardless, you nailed it!


A Cool Visualization

Satyan Devadoss’ “Visualizing the Liberal Arts” (fall 2012) is about the coolest thing I’ve seen in any publication in a very long time. I went to the website, where its “coolness” only grew. Thank you for publishing that—I’ve shared it with my kids (both committed liberal arts majors, too, and facing uncertain career opportunities these days).

—Jim Christian ’82, Gunnison, Colo.
A Living Building

The nearly 220-year-old Kellogg House—soon to be the shared home of the Center for Environmental Studies and the Zilkha Center for Environmental Initiatives—will undergo a “green” renovation and expansion. And in February the campus learned that the college is pursuing the extraordinary designation of “Living Building,” a status attained by only a handful of projects and never before attempted with a historical renovation. Among other things, Living Buildings aim for net-zero use of both energy and water. Learn more at https://ilbi.org/lbc.

Artist rendering of Kellogg House courtesy of Black River Design.
“She did it all by herself for a long time. All the recruiting, film watching, film breakdown. She was always accessible. And she has done a really great job of instilling pride in the history of the program. She had an interest in us as kids as well as people and was more than happy to spend time with us on and off the court. Now I appreciate all that she did even more. My four years playing basketball defined my experience at Williams. I’ll always call her Coach.”

—Rebecca Brooks ’00, head coach of girls’ basketball at the Putney School in Connecticut, on Williams women’s basketball coach Pat Manning, who has led the team for 22 years. On Feb. 16 Manning became the first Williams basketball coach ever to record 400 wins.

iam.williams.edu

“I Am Williams,” an ongoing photographic exhibition that grew out of the Diversity Initiatives of 2004, now has a dynamic new home online. So far the website includes about half of the project’s 350 participants, who were photographed during professional shoots starting in 2006. Along with printed posters hanging all over campus, the website serves as the beginnings of a living, evolving collection of the individuals who, together, form the Williams community. Check it out at http://iam.williams.edu.

BY THE NUMBERS

Feeding Students

On a typical day, the college’s three main dining halls serve 4,300 meals to 2,000 students. Those meals are healthier and fresher—with ingredients more likely to be locally sourced—than ever before, says Bob Volpi, director of dining services. Students can even use a tool available on the web and mobile devices that helps them compare meals, plan a balanced diet and screen menus for allergens (http://bit.ly/VzXNMS). Here’s what they’re eating:

2.8% of food products are gluten free
compared with 1.3% in 2009

14.3% of food is locally sourced
compared with 4% in 2009

FIVE MOST POPULAR MEALS

Caesar salad
Coconut curry chicken
Grilled beef, chicken, fish
Sautéed vegetables from the vegan Teppanyaki Grill
Taco bar

MOST REQUESTED FOOD ITEM

Battenkill Brittle from Pownal, Vt.
Burger Named President of Southwestern

Edward B. Burger, the college’s Francis Christopher Oakley Third Century Professor of Mathematics, will become the 15th president of Southwestern University in Georgetown, Texas.

Burger has received numerous national awards, including the 2010 Robert Foster Cherry Award for Great Teaching from Baylor University, the 2001 Deborah & Franklin Tepper Haimo National Award for Distinguished College or University Teaching of Mathematics and the Chauvenet Prize from the Mathematical Association of America. In January 2013 he was inducted as one of the first fellows of the American Mathematical Society.

He will begin his tenure as Southwestern’s president on July 1.

In Memoriam

The Williams community notes the passing of four members of the faculty since last fall: John A. MacFadyen ’45, Philip K. Hastings ’44, Olga “Ollie” Beaver and Henry Bruton.

MacFadyen, the Edna McConnell Clark Professor of Geology, Emeritus, died on Sept. 1, 2012. During his 31 years on the faculty, “Black Jack,” as he was known, updated the geology department and introduced oceanography to the curriculum. MacFadyen spent his retirement working as a research associate at the Mystic Seaport Museum.

Hastings, a professor of psychology and political science, emeritus, died on Nov. 13. During his more than 35 years as a faculty member, he championed interdisciplinary academic work and founded the Roper Center, the largest archive of polling data worldwide. After his retirement Hastings remained in Williamstown for 20 years, running a global consulting firm that analyzed polling data.

Beaver, despite advancing illness, taught until just weeks before her death on Dec. 7, 2012. She joined the math department in 1979, not long after her husband Donald deB. Beaver became a Williams professor of the history of science. Beaver dedicated herself to assisting women and minorities in the sciences, including by helping to found and then direct the Summer Science Program. Her research focused on measure and probability theory, and she was the second person ever to win the Louise Hay Award from the Association for Women in Mathematics.

Bruton, the John J. Gibson Professor of Economics, Emeritus, died on Jan. 31, 2013. He joined Williams’ economics department in 1962 and taught a core course on economic development at the Center for Development Economics that drew on his personal experiences in Iran, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Egypt, Malaysia, Indonesia, Nigeria and the Philippines. He also helped to establish the Oakley Center for the Humanities and Social Sciences.
Running the Show

It's a dark, chilly night outside the '62 Center for Theatre and Dance. The front lobby and main hallway are eerily quiet; just a few students pass through on the way to dinner. But open a door to the backstage area, and a riot of sound bursts out.

Rhythmic pulses emanate from an MP3 player in the women’s dressing room. Doors swish open and slam shut. Nervous laughter erupts from the groups of performers scurrying back and forth between the dressing rooms, the MainStage wings and the stage itself.

It’s the start of “tech week,” and 101 performers from the dance department’s four companies, their accompanists and the marimba band will spend 20-plus hours over the next four nights running through every aspect of their late November/early December show. There are lots of moving parts—and still much left to iron out before the curtain goes up for the All Companies Concert on Friday and Saturday nights.

Snippets of frenzied conversation rise above the din:
“Who has what colors?”
“Homework? Do we have time?”
“Can you tell me what size this is?”
“We need scissors for the belts!”
“There’s this new step in the dance!”

The students aren’t merely learning the latest choreography or song lyrics in preparation for the performances. They’re also playing a central role in running the show—managing lighting and scenery and setting up chairs and instruments for their fellow performers. And many have never done these things before.

Initially, it appears that chaos reigne. But watching Mary Pfister, production manager for the dance department for nearly 10 years, it’s obvious that a meta-choreography is taking place. She and the other professionals working during tech week keep rehearsals moving with a crisp efficiency and a wicked sense of humor.

“You’re going to work on this, right?” Pfister calls out over the noise after members of Sankofa, the college’s step team, flub a curtain call and exit the stage. “Hint, hint!”

She switches gears and turns her attention to the marimba band, which has changed its set-up and is engaged in an impromptu jam session at stage right.

“Hey!” Pfister calls out. “Are these spikes in front or back?”

Throughout the rehearsals, the refrain “Thanks, Mary!” follows each group filing onto and off of the stage.

“We just do what Mary tells us,” says Iman Lipumba ’14, an Arabic studies and religion major who dances for Kusika, the African music, dance and storytelling troupe now hustling onstage. “That’s tech week.”
What Sawyer Said...

How the words and ideas of John E. Sawyer ’39 continue to inform the Williams of today—and tomorrow.

When CBS News rolled into Williamstown in February 1964 for an interview with President John E. Sawyer ’39 and University of Texas Chancellor Harry Ransom, the college was on the cusp of a decade of transformation.

Some elements of Sawyer’s legacy to Williams, such as the phasing out of fraternities, were already being implemented. Other changes were yet to come: the admission of women and diversification of the campus community; the expansion of the curriculum; the end of compulsory chapel; and the beginnings of the Winter Study program and the graduate program in the history of art.

Throughout the hour-long interview, which aired that March on the weekly public service program One of A Kind, Sawyer offered his insights into the challenges facing society, higher education and Williams, in particular. His ideas and ideals—and the eloquent case he made for the liberal arts—were remarkably prescient and continue to resonate today.

We asked members of the Williams faculty to lend their voices to the conversation Sawyer began all those years ago. On the following pages, they discuss his words in the context of his time and from the vantage point of ours.

“American higher education has to be mindful ... that the vocational demands of an increasingly complicated civilization don't press back into and cut away some essentials of the liberal arts program. ... We have to mount the defenses to protect and preserve the range and variety and richness of the undergraduate years, to keep the liberal arts core, which has been its traditional strength, remaining at the heart of the enterprise.”

Denise Buell, Chair and Professor of Religion

Sawyer’s words certainly ring true to me. Exposure to multiple ways of thinking and multiple interpretive tools with which to understand the world remains a hallmark of the liberal arts. Being stretched to engage a wide range of disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives enables liberal arts graduates to become more nuanced and effective in any profession they ultimately pursue.

Indeed, Sawyer argues for the kind of “elasticity” a liberal arts education produces. A liberal arts education trains students to think more flexibly about the complexity of—and in—the world rather than providing them with narrower technical expertise that’s likely to become obsolete or with single-disciplinary specialization that limits their capacity to respond to challenges or to see the larger picture. Learning how to approach a problem with a varied set of tools is a skill of great use in the practical world, where comprehension can rarely be achieved through a single approach.

This is true in my own multidisciplinary field of religion, which straddles the humanities and social sciences (and, increasingly, other scientific fields). A liberal arts education challenges students to encounter a range and variety of subject areas and approaches, thus helping them to “look widely,” as Sawyer puts it. Even more than this, at its best, the liberal arts equip students to negotiate and work successfully with competing perspectives.

Strikingly, Williams has strengthened its curriculum precisely in ways that sustain investigation of the questions Sawyer identifies as central for students in his day. These include questions about the relation of America to the world, about intra-American racism, immigration and economic disparity. The college should continue to articulate the core values of the liberal arts while also embodying curricular elasticity—asking students to encounter radically different time periods, languages, methods and techniques, as well as to identify and confront directly ongoing, present challenges. In this way we can ensure the relevance of the liberal arts.
What Sawyer Said...

“What we have to keep our mind clearly on is the purposes of it all. We’re ultimately concerned not with facilities but with people, with the growth of young men and women, and in that we must keep a very clear eye on the qualitative part of the problem to be sure we don’t sacrifice essentials of quality before the onrush of quantity.”

Will Dudley ’89, Provost, Professor of Philosophy

Jack Sawyer remains exactly right about the purpose of a liberal arts education: We’re concerned with the growth of young men and women. I think of the college as an incubator designed to cultivate human potential. Every September we inject 550 carefully selected teenagers into this special environment. It’s small, isolated, residential and resource intensive. It’s populated with extraordinarily talented students, faculty, coaches and staff. It’s alive with an astonishing variety of curricular and extracurricular activity. In June we eject 550 22-year-olds from the incubator and watch with pride as they begin to make their ways in the world.

How are these young people different, in virtue of spending four years at the college? We know that they are older. But are they wiser? Have they refined their understanding of which goals are worth pursuing? Are they well prepared? Have they acquired the knowledge and skills that will be necessary to achieve their aspirations? Have they developed the character traits and habits required to persevere when doing the right thing proves difficult? Are they happier? Do they approach the future with confidence, satisfied with the paths on which they are embarking?

Building, maintaining and operating an incubator that reliably nurtures young men and women in all of these ways is expensive. It takes libraries, labs, classrooms, residence halls, performance spaces and athletic facilities. It takes students chosen for their abilities to contribute to the college community rather than their abilities to pay. And it takes the very best, most deeply dedicated teachers and mentors we can find.

The primary signal of our success is the passion of our alumni, who express their gratitude for the four years they spent growing at Williams by supporting the college in every imaginable way. The breadth and depth of that support ensure that we will continue to serve Jack Sawyer’s purpose for generations to come.
“America is the first country and society that has ever attempted to put as many as 30 to 40 percent of each age group into higher education. This is a national decision, rooted deep in our history and our philosophy and our conception of the precepts of American life. It is out of this that the problem of numbers has come, and it is out of this dedication to it that I think we’re going to find ways of meeting it.”

K. Scott Wong, James Phinney Baxter III Professor of History and Public Affairs

It is remarkable that this conversation took place right before a watershed period in American history that would bring significant changes to our society, changes that are still unfolding today. Both Sawyer and Ransom readily acknowledge the changes wrought by the Second World War, and they both defend the cause of a liberal arts education in the face of increasing post-war professionalism.

When this interview was recorded, President Kennedy had already been assassinated and the Beatles had come to the U.S., but there was no way Sawyer and Ransom could have imagined the transformative events that would take place later that decade that rocked both of their campuses and the rest of the world: the ravages of the war in Vietnam and the subsequent anti-war movement, the height of the Civil Rights movement, the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy, the women’s movement, the student movement and its demands for educational reform, and substantial changes in American immigration policies.

All of these events and larger social movements had lasting influences on what people believed the “American Dream” could be and should be. While our civic discourse had always paid lip service to the core ideals of “liberty and justice for all,” it took until the ’60s for these ideals to begin to reach fruition. President Sawyer would act decisively to abolish the fraternity system, increase minority enrollments, increase the number of women and minorities on the staff and faculty, and even cancel the last two weeks of classes in 1970 in protest against the American bombing of Cambodia. And yet we as a society, and our campus in particular, are still grappling with these issues—the role of a liberal arts education in the face of the power of “big money,” the goal of diversifying our campus in terms of students, faculty and staff, many of whom come from a wider range of countries and backgrounds than ever before—all the while keeping true to the goal of nurturing an informed and compassionate citizenry.
The honest answer to the question of [whether the child of poor parents has as much of a chance at a good education as the child of wealthy parents] is no, he does not. There have been very substantial efforts in this direction, and the trend is a favorable one. … The opportunities are opening up all the time.

But for children from very poor families, there’s no question there’s a handicap.”

Sarah R. Bolton, Dean of the College, Professor of Physics

Thirty years ago, only 19 percent of students in the lowest quarter of U.S. family incomes entered college, and 5 percent of those students completed it. Now 29 percent of students in that income quartile start college, and a little less than a third of them complete it. These shifts certainly represent progress. But they also show us a great deal about the work ahead.

Sawyer framed his comments in terms of equity. And in those terms, the U.S. has not gained significant ground over the past 30 years. Students in the top quartile of U.S. family incomes remain almost three times as likely to enter college as students in the lowest quartile. Students from high-income families are more than six times as likely to complete college as their low-income peers. Indeed, a low-income student with above-average test scores is less likely to complete college than a high-income peer with below-average scores.

What does this landscape have to do with Williams? Williams holds a particular, privileged place in higher education. We must constantly improve equity of opportunity on three fronts—access, support for our students and engagement with the national context.

We are a relatively wealthy institution, which allows us to address aggressively equity of access. We meet the full financial need of every student we accept, and we also accept students independent of their financial circumstances. The increase in the number of Williams students receiving financial aid from 25 percent in Sawyer’s time to 53 percent today is in large part due to outreach to high schools serving lower-income students. It’s also due to the exceptional generosity of our alumni, whose donations make it possible for us to maintain our access commitments.

But getting low-income students to college is only half the story. Nationally, fewer than a third of low-income students who start college go on to complete it. At Williams, we must continue to understand and reduce the barriers that affect these students’ thriving and success—whether they arise from financial constraints, under-resourced high schools or the particular challenges of being the first in a family to attend college.

Williams has the opportunity and the obligation to alter the national context through the learning and work of our students. They leave this place with the potential to change the educational opportunities of individuals and of communities. Indeed, they can change the landscape of educational equity entirely.
William R. Darrow, Cluett Professor of Religion

The past can seem like a foreign country. Listening to this conversation on the verge of a doubling of higher education seems unreal. “The Times, They Are A-Changin’” echoes in one’s head. As with a Mad Men episode, one watches the interview unfold with either 20/20 hindsight or with a cringe of recognition. But in the talk of growth, the rumbling “youth revolt” and the noticeably gender-inclusive language—the intentional use of both “men” and “women”—we can hear the rhetorical bases for making Williams co-ed that is Jack Sawyer’s major legacy.

We think of what lies ahead: the Vietnam War and the economic, technological and cultural shifts we label “globalization.” Williams’ membership in the Associated Kyoto Program, Williams in India, Georgia, Cairo and Oxford, and the diversification of the curriculum, faculty and students.

But such 20/20 hindsight might miss what’s already there. Sawyer has just returned from a tour with business leaders to Western Europe and the Soviet Union. The Center for Development Economics is three years old. The Haystack scholarship has brought a few international students each year. The basis is there already, though today the curriculum has been thoroughly internationalized, almost 50 percent of undergraduates study abroad, international presence in the faculty has grown, and this year the international student population is 144. When I arrived at Williams in 1981, I recall the international student population was about 50, with approximately half from Canada!

Still there are moments of cringing recognition. Characterizing this new mood as generational does hold the seeds for marginalization and a culture war. This is reinforced by a “West vs. the rest” assumption. Need the political saliency of the idea of an “Atlantic community” be translated into an “educational legacy?” Is all outside the same and primarily “interesting,” rather than part of a much more complicated human narrative? Finally, the conversation turns to the social revolutions already under way at home. Ransom’s rejection of the metaphor of a mosaic to envision diversity in the United States is impressive. But internal and world diversity are not the same thing, and the equation of the two may leave us with insufficient tools to understand both ourselves and the “wide world.”
“The students now entering our institutions are going to be carrying responsibilities well into the next century. The kinds of problems they’re going to face … simply cannot be foreseen.

And the **elasticity** of the liberal arts type of education, awakening the capacity to see and understand and respond over as wide an arc as possible, is the kind of education that I feel very deeply is the most durable and … most practical training we can give.”

Satyan Devadoss, Associate Professor of Mathematics

Reading these lucid words, I find myself nodding in constant agreement. As a mathematician, my research has blended art and visualization with studies in cartography, genetics, computer science and geometry—a potpourri that in no small part is due to my years as a liberal arts student. Now my life as faculty at Williams is best summarized by the proverb from *Spiderman*: “With great power comes great responsibility.”

I am given enormous freedom to design my own courses, develop my research interests and pursue academic excellence. My charge, on the other hand, is to guide, equip and shape our students to interpret and transform the world around them. And I am convinced this begins with the tearing down of academic walls, an intrinsic feature of the liberal arts education.

I am not deluded into thinking lives are transformed when my students understand the gradient of a function or the eigenvalue of a matrix. Nor am I arrogant in believing that mathematics alone holds the keys to unlocking the future. A true liberal arts education equips us not only to understand mathematical form and structure but also to craft a thoughtful essay, to appreciate a performance or painting, to juggle molecules and matter and, dare I say, to compete on the athletic field. Indeed, the extraordinary gift offered by the liberal arts is the ability to reasonably converse in the languages of all disciplines—to focus on ideas across categories and not just the particulars of one.

There is a natural corollary to this perspective, which I pose as a challenge to the reader: Your college major does not matter. From personal experience, having written hundreds of letters of recommendation and having seen the triumphs of these students over numerous careers, what seems crucial to success are the usual traits: curiosity, determination, adaptability. The recent visual graphic showcasing the major-career trajectories of 15,600 Williams alumni highlights this point: Each major branches nearly equally to every career category (see [http://bit.ly/Devadoss](http://bit.ly/Devadoss)). The Williams graduate is trained to adjust, conform and thrive in a complex evolving landscape.
Into our age, when the digital capture of people’s lives runs practically from birth canal to columbarium, drops this rare animation of a key figure in the college's history. It’s fascinating.

Reading Jack Sawyer’s often eloquent words is one thing; seeing him think out loud is another. He presents himself in this film as almost everything a 21st century college president could never be—deferential, low-key, laconic. Philosopher king has always been a good gig, if you could get it, and Sawyer looks here like someone who maybe did.

After seeing him on screen, you can let your mind project back to the young Jack Sawyer, showing early promise, being culled from the privileged New England class and prepared for leadership with a long and elite education. He was appointed Williams president at an early age with what would now seem scant administrative experience.

Unlike modern-day college presidents, who are expected to be half CEO and half Dad (or Mom), Sawyer’s persona was alien to this member of the Class of 1972, since if he’d ever shown up at a student event, we’d have assumed the world was coming to an end. He was instead, I assume, as with Plato’s ideal ruler, off mulling “the eternal and unchangeable,” his hand guiding the ship of state.

That hand, by all accounts, was a firm one. We’re told that Sawyer never entered a meeting without knowing where all the votes were. And don’t forget, his training included a stint during World War II with the OSS, precursor to the CIA.

Future generations won’t have to wonder what Adam Falk was like. His manner will be there for all to experience, by then perhaps in Princess-Leia-like holography.

But almost all we have of Jack Sawyer is this one-hour film, and it’s tantalizing in the ways that it brings him to life.

You wonder what it’d be like to see a film of Mark Hopkins. Would we marvel? Be appalled? Both?
Hoping to equip first-year students with the collective wisdom of Ephs past, the Office of Alumni Relations asked writer/illustrator duo Matthew Swanson and Robbi Behr (both Class of 1997) to create an illustrated “map” of the things a student must do before graduation. Highlighting places and experiences that define the Purple Valley years, the map was handed out to every member of the Class of 2016 in February and in the future will be given to students during their first Winter Study. Take a look at some of our favorite items on the to-do list.
WANT YOUR OWN BUCKET LIST?

The map is available as a poster and fine art print. Check it out at www.idiotsbooks.com/bucketlist
The defendant’s hair was in pigtails. She wore a red dress and warm Ugg boots, and she clutched a doll as though it was her most prized possession.

“You could barely see her head above the table,” says Wendy Young ’83, who was in the Baltimore courtroom that day last summer. “The judge asked her a few questions while she looked at him silently, obviously confused and frightened. The only question she was able to answer was the name of her doll.”

The 5-year-old had been charged with entering the U.S. illegally, a violation of federal law she could barely understand. She was too scared and intimidated to talk. But a pro bono lawyer working on behalf of Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)—a national legal advocacy group serving immigrant children—persuaded the court to grant the girl legal status through the Special Immigrant Juvenile Program for children who have been abused, abandoned or neglected.

While the moment was dramatic, it was far from unusual. Prosecutions of young, unaccompanied immigrants have surged over the past year or so, with more than 14,000 children facing deportation proceedings in 2012—about double the number from previous years. Few of them have legal representation, and some 40 percent end up being sent back to their home countries, says Young, the founding executive director of KIND. Often these children are returning to places of dire poverty, brutal violence and escalating drug problems.

But three Williams alumni—Young, journalist and advocate Sonia Nazario ’82 and attorney Richard Berney ’82—have joined forces to raise awareness of the issue and offer assistance to undocumented immigrant children caught up in the system.

The surge of unaccompanied minor immigrants contrasts with the nation’s overall immigration flow, which slowed sharply as economic opportunities in the U.S. dried up in the Great Recession. Officials estimate that as many as 50,000 children, most from Mexico and Central America, crossed the border last year without a parent or guardian and without documentation. Fewer than a third of them were caught by border agents. Some children come to reunite with parents who left them behind in search of work. Others are fleeing drug- and gang-related violence in their neighborhoods.

The children form a slice of the broader—and politically inflamed—issue of illegal immigration, including an impasse over the DREAM Act, a legislative plan that would create a six-year path to citizenship for undocumented residents who entered the country at age 15 or younger and meet other criteria. Also making headlines are a set of immigration reforms proposed by the president and a bipartisan coalition in the U.S. Senate, which are expected to come to a vote in late March.

On the state level, nearly 1,000 immigration-related bills were introduced and 156 laws enacted in 2012, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. And the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in Arizona v. United States over the summer that federal law preempts most of the provisions of Arizona’s stringent immigration enforcement laws.

Amidst all the political controversy, Young says, undocumented youths continue to pose difficulties for immigration courts around the country. Some of the immigrants are infants or toddlers, and few of any age understand what’s happening to them when they get caught up in the legal system. Unlike in criminal courts, the young defendants have no right to an attorney during immigration court hearings to determine whether they can stay in the U.S. or will be deported.

That’s where KIND comes in. Founded in 2008 by actor Angelina Jolie and Microsoft, KIND serves as a resource and matchmaker for the detained youths and pro bono lawyers working in large law firms, corporate legal offices and law schools. Young oversees a staff of 27 in seven field offices that support more than 5,000 volunteer lawyers from 130 law firms and corporate legal departments and about 20 law schools.
“A lot of law schools have clinics, and immigration’s a popular area for schools to develop a clinic in,” Young says. “Students, if they’re under the supervision of a lawyer, are allowed to actually practice in immigration court, which is unusual.”

KIND’s offices are scattered among cities where immigration is a persistent issue: Los Angeles; Houston; Washington, D.C.; Baltimore; Newark, N.J.; New York City; and Boston. There’s also an “affiliate” office in Seattle, and the organization is looking to expand to Dallas and Atlanta.

One hurdle volunteers face is that most aren’t versed in the details of immigration law, which Young says can be as inscrutable as tax law. “You really need to know how to navigate the system, and that’s what my staff does for the volunteers. They support them and help them as they represent the child,” she says. And it makes a difference: Kids with lawyers at their sides during their hearings are three times more likely to win permission to stay.

Young, a fourth-generation Williams alum who grew up in Saranac Lake, N.Y., first became interested in immigration issues while in high school, when Haitian boat people fleeing to the U.S. were detained at federal facilities near her hometown. “My French teacher used to go in and teach them English,” she says. “So I became aware of refugee issues early on, and I always wondered about these poor Haitians ending up in jail in Saranac Lake.”

She spent her junior year of college as a U.N. intern in Vienna and, through another Williams program, taught English in Japan for two years after graduation. “I started getting interested in human rights work literally from the day I started college,” she says. “Williams really connected me to the rest of the world.”

After returning from Japan, Young earned a joint law degree and master’s diploma in international relations from American University in Washington, D.C., and then went to work for a think tank focused on refugees before joining up with the National Council of La Raza, a Hispanic civil rights group. She eventually worked for the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees and for U.S. Sen. Ted Kennedy as an immigration expert.

After she joined KIND’s staff four years ago, Young became a key resource for Nazario, who was writing stories about immigration at the L.A. Times. In 2003 Nazario won a Pulitzer Prize for her six-part series “Enrique’s Journey,” which she expanded into a critically acclaimed book.
of the same title. The project followed the migration of a young Honduran boy who rode the tops of freight trains north in an effort to find his mother, who’d left him behind 11 years earlier. Nazario retraced Enrique’s steps by riding atop the trains with boys as young as age 7 who faced bandits, armed gangsters and the threat of falling off—or under—the trains.

Nazario’s journalism, for which she received a Bicentennial Medal from the college in 2004, moved her into the role of advocate. Now a board member of KIND, she often speaks on immigration issues to colleges and activist groups, and she spreads the word about KIND’s work to law firms and other gatherings of lawyers.

“It helps that I have an immigrant background,” says Nazario, the daughter of an Argentine father with Syrian roots and a Polish mother who migrated to Argentina as a young girl with her Jewish family. Nazario’s parents married in Argentina, moved to Wisconsin, where Nazario was born, returned to Argentina until she was 6 years old and then moved to Kansas.

Nazario’s father died when she was 14, and her mother moved the family back to Argentina. By then, in the mid-1970s, the country was in the throes of the “Dirty War,” in which the military regime arrested and “disappeared” tens of thousands of Argentines, including friends of Nazario. She decided to become a journalist the day two neighbors, newspaper reporters themselves, were killed in the street outside her home in Buenos Aires. Within two years, she and her family returned to Kansas.

“Having lived through the Dirty War, and having friends of mine disappear,” Nazario says, “I can really empathize with what a lot of Central Americans have been through and what’s driving them to leave.”

These days more and more children are making their way to the U.S. as a result of increasing gang violence in their home countries, particularly those in Latin America. Ironically, much of the increase in gang recruitment and activity is rooted in Latino gang culture displaced from barrios in Los Angeles and other American cities. “If you’re a 12-year-old boy” in Central America or Mexico, Nazario says, “they forcibly tattoo you or they say, ‘You either join with us or we’re going to kill you or your family or we’ll rape your sister.’”

In a new pilot program, KIND hopes to help children who’ve recently been deported—and those who never left—to navigate their own neighborhoods more safely by establishing a presence in Guatemala, in cooperation with Guatemalan authorities. The idea is to help deported kids resettle in their neighborhoods with everything from educational support to family counseling. “Basically anything that helps the child to remain home safely,” Young says.

But the bulk of KIND’s work is in American courtrooms, with a growing cadre of lawyers, like Berney, stepping forward to offer expertise. A real estate attorney at the Cozen O’Conner law firm in Manhattan, Berney saw an update about Nazario in an issue of Williams People that mentioned KIND, and the nature of the organization’s work struck a chord. Berney’s firm, which employs more than 500 lawyers in 23 offices around the country, encourages staffers to do 60 hours of pro bono work per year. After getting in touch with Nazario, he started recruiting his colleagues to join KIND’s bank of volunteers.

So far, Berney says he’s matched up about 10 colleagues from the firm’s Manhattan office with KIND. Combined, they put in as many as 300 hours per year aiding detained youngsters.

“It’s a valuable and widening experience,” he says, and one that differs from the law he and his colleagues practice regularly. “You have a client who needs you so badly. … People who have gone through the worst experiences, who have gone through vile and terrible lives.”

With the number of children crossing the border showing no signs of abating in the future, the need for volunteers to help them in the courtroom is even more acute.

“They’re struggling to meet this demand for all these kids,” Nazario says of KIND, adding that the issue is not immigration but rather access to legal representation. “I think that most people can agree that, whatever your politics are, kids shouldn’t have to represent themselves in an immigration court in this country.”

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KIND founding executive director Wendy Young ’83 (left) and journalist/advocate Sonia Nazario ’82.

“Whatever your politics are, kids shouldn’t have to represent themselves in an immigration court in this country.”

—Journalist and advocate Sonia Nazario ’82

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Scott Martelle is a veteran journalist based in Irvine, Calif., and the author, most recently, of Detroit: A Biography.
January at Williams is Winter Study, an intentional break between the fall and spring semesters that allows students and professors time to stretch their intellectual muscles in ways they might not during the regular academic year. Ways that include studying the art and science of glassblowing in a converted chemistry lab. Or making a group exercise of reading *War and Peace* in its entirety. Or practicing aikido and then applying its principles to political speech. These classes, depicted in the photographs on the following pages, are just a sampling of the opportunities available to students during Winter Study. For more, visit http://bit.ly/winterstudy2013.
SCIENCE AND ART • Nathan Bricault ’14 focuses on the hot, red tip of a glass rod he’s shaping into a model of a bacteriophage, a microscopic virus that attacks bacteria. Didymium glasses allow him to see the details of his work within the bright orange-yellow flame issuing from the torch before him.

Like most of the 10 students taking “Glass and Glassblowing” in a temporarily converted chemistry lab, Bricault loves to work with his hands. A physics and computer science major, he wants the models he’s building—the bacteriophage (its head formed by 20 equilateral triangles) as well as a long, slender neuron—to be “artistic,” he says. “But I equally want them to be scientifically accurate.”

Blending science and art is at the heart of the class, which Jay Thoman ’82, the J. Hodge Markgraf Professor of Chemistry, has taught nearly every January for the past 15 years. In addition to their daily work in the lab, Thoman’s students are required to write a 10-page paper on topics such as fiber optics, the uses for glass during the Roman Empire and glass in modern architecture.

Thoman’s own love of glass was sparked in childhood, and in graduate school he worked in a glassblowing lab down the hall from his chemistry lab. Ever since, he’s been shaping small connectors and adapters for the vacuum lines he uses in his own research.

Thoman instructs the students on proper techniques as well as the chemistry behind, say, what causes the color of the bright orange spine that Julia Cline ’15 is now attaching to the back of a red dragon.

Whether they’re majoring in computer science, astrophysics, music or math, Thoman’s students have at least one experience in common: having a piece of glass shape up to be something very different than expected. As Cline, who plans to major in physics and math, works the flame, she realizes the benefit of that experience. “In the more traditional classroom,” she says, “I will appreciate all of the pieces—of a written paper or a problem set—even if they turn out very differently from how I anticipated.”
READING FOR LIFE • “Books possess a magical, elusive quality that we often overlook when we read as scholars,” says Rudi Yniguez ’16. “In a typical class, our time is spent screening sentences for symbolism or analyzing syntax instead of allowing the natural rhythm of the book to pull or push us along as it’s intended to do.”

So when the opportunity presented itself to read Leo Tolstoy’s War and Peace—all 1,296 pages of it—Yniguez jumped at the chance.

For three days each week, Yniguez and 14 classmates get together to read the volume translated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky, the “A-team of Russian-to-English translation,” says Cassandra Cleghorn, senior lecturer in English and American studies. There are also optional, all-day drop-in-and-read sessions on Mondays.

Winter Study is “the perfect occasion to lose and then find oneself in the enormous world of a book many people consider the greatest novel of all time,” says Cleghorn, who, herself, had never before read War and Peace. “I’m reading the novel not as an expert but as a liberal arts student, as a lover of literature. This class is about learning how to read for life.”

Cleghorn had her students sign a contract agreeing to complete the novel by the end of Winter Study, all the while marking off their progress on posters hanging on their classroom wall. And they’re reading in all sorts of ways: individually and as a group; with guest lecturers providing context on Russian pronunciation and military strategy (complete with classic toy soldiers); and in different settings.

One afternoon, the class takes a sleigh ride to a forest cabin, where they light a fire and read aloud from the novel. “To feel the sensation of being pulled on a 19th century wooden sleigh through snowy fields and forests, and then to read aloud Tolstoy’s account of a horse-drawn sleigh ride, helps us become more active and imaginative readers,” Cleghorn says.

For theater and comparative literature major Sarah Sanders ’14, the class “has reminded me how much I love books. It had been a long time since I’d stayed still for more than two hours at a time, reading a novel.”

Says Yniguez, the only first-year student in a class of juniors and seniors whose majors include Arabic studies, art history, math, political economy and psychology, “I had no choice but to allow each page to wash over me. War and Peace has reminded me of the immense power of literature to not only introduce me to a world that I would not otherwise have been able to experience, but also to provide an escape from the one in which I reside.”
SPRING 2013

SPEAK SOFTLY AND CARRY A BOKEN • Maija Lindaas ’16 steps onto a mat and takes her place beside 20 other students kneeling in the sunlight that streams into Currier Ballroom. As they bow to a photograph of Morihei Ueshiba, the founder of aikido, and then to Robert Kent ’84, their instructor, the seeds of their final class projects are germinating.

“Aikido and the Art of Persuasive Political Speech,” the most recent of seven aikido-based courses Kent has taught during Winter Study over the last eight years, challenges both students’ bodies and minds. Daily two-hour training sessions involve stretching, rolling, attacking, defending and practicing with weapons. Twice-weekly luncheons bring students together to analyze current events using the principles of aikido that they’ve learned on the mat. Among them: Don’t embarrass your opponents, redirect their power to your own benefit, and understand what’s driving them.

“Aikido combines the samurai arts of sword and grappling with the philosophical desire to forge a path of harmony in the midst of chaos,” says Kent, a philosophy and religion major at Williams who studied aikido in Japan after graduation. “The most effective politicians understand the principles of aikido.”

For their final projects, Kent’s students are using these principles to research, analyze and write about issues like education reform and environmental policy. Teams of students are required to produce framing and strategy analyses, a legislative opposition and support survey, a 50-word elevator pitch, a 100-word State of the Union paragraph and two speeches.

Lindaas, a harp player and crew team member who plans to major in math and anthropology, is studying the Keystone Pipeline with her group. In building a case against the project, she recalls a recent class in which Kent demonstrated how to use a wooden sword called a boken. “Ask yourselves why you are defending yourself from this attack,” Kent instructed the students as they took turns being the attacker and the defender. “Dig deep to understand your own motivations as well as your opponent’s.”

His words stayed with her. “The goal,” Lindaas says, “is to use the attacker’s power against him. We need to find out the real reasons pipeline supporters want it and then use those reasons to redirect them.”
Going Home Again

As a young girl growing up in Chicago’s Puerto Rican neighborhoods, Professor Mérida Rua took “field trips” every Sunday after church to study her family’s history. Her father steered their Buick through the struggling neighborhoods of his 1950s childhood to the “places of his aspirations”—the skyline of Lake Shore Drive and the imposing walls of the University of Chicago. Rua and her mother, two sisters and grandmother listened, rapt, to his stories, which spoke to the larger Puerto Rican experience in Chicago.

Today, as a researcher and associate professor of Latino/a studies and chair of American studies, Rua has returned to her home city to explore the impact of postwar Puerto Rican migration on Chicago and on Puerto Rican identity. She discussed her research—the basis of her book *A Grounded Identidad: Making New Lives in Chicago’s Puerto Rican Neighborhoods* (Oxford University Press, 2012)—in February, during the college’s annual Faculty Lecture Series. A winter tradition now more than 100 years old, the series gives faculty an opportunity to explore “big ideas” that transcend disciplinary boundaries.

“My research blends history and ethnography—using the past to tell the story of the present,” Rua says. At her lecture, she focused on her experience living above Chicago’s first Puerto Rican-owned funeral home while researching her book. Listening to and recording stories told about the deceased at wakes and services, Rua discovered a novel lens through which to view the history of Puerto Ricans in Chicago and the neighborhoods they lost. “They were hopeful stories of resiliency and strong connection to community despite obstacles and struggles,” she says. —Clorinda Valenti

Uncovering Dirty Politics

Since 1998, Antonia Foias, chair and professor of anthropology at Williams, has directed multifaceted archaeological research at Motul de San José in Guatemala. Now, with a grant from the National Science Foundation, she and an international team of scientists will return over two summers to explore the causes of the political dynamism of Maya states.

Along with fellow archaeologists as well as specialists in soil studies, chemistry, ecology, zooarchaeology and archaeobotany, Foias hopes to use Williams’ $286,188 portion of the grant to understand better whether Motul de San José, the capital of a small Late Classic period Maya state in Northern Guatemala, ruled over its peripheries by forming alliances with local groups or through conquest and annexation of territories. “Maya archaeologists know a great deal about the large cities of the Maya world,” says Foias, “but much less about the small communities that sustained them.”

“Our project,” she adds, “will inquire how the farmers in the hinterland were integrated with the elites and royal families living in the cities, and specifically with those at Motul de San José. We want to explore how these commoners participated in the larger polity centered on Motul.”

Foias hopes to learn “how political agency combined with environmental exploitation … within a polity determines the stability and longevity of that particular state, or its collapse, offering us lessons for the present time.”
A Perspective on the Papacy

Francis Oakley takes the long view on the pope’s recent resignation.

The resignation of Pope Benedict XVI on Feb. 28 was a dramatic moment in the history of the Roman Catholic Church and of the papacy, and few people know that history more deeply than does Williams President Emeritus Francis Oakley. An esteemed scholar of medieval political thinking and church history, Oakley shares his views on the current news as seen through a historical lens.

Oakley on precedence… The real precedent, which seems quite analogous to Benedict’s resignation as pope, is that of Celestine V in 1294. He was a hermit, lived all his life in a cave. At the time of a protracted papal vacancy—the church was having a great difficulty in making an appointment—the cardinals dug him out and appointed him. Though a rather saintly figure, he was utterly unprepared for the task and overwhelmed by it. As a result, he resigned after about three months amid mounting chaos. In resigning, the statement he made was not dissimilar to that of Benedict XVI—in effect, he acknowledged that he was in over his head. He couldn’t discharge the heavy responsibilities thrust upon him. Interestingly, Benedict has some sort of veneration for him. Apparently he has visited Celestine’s tomb three times. It seems reasonable to think that resignation may have been on his mind for some time.

On rewriting history… The Catholic Church has an ancient tradition, but it is, oddly, a remarkably presentist institution, and that preoccupation with the present casts a long shadow over the past. As a result, its history tends to be rewritten to bolster present-day policies and beliefs. The official list of popes is a good example of that process. As a precedent for Benedict’s resignation, commentators have pointed to that of Gregory XII in 1415, but in Gregory’s case there was a very complicated micro-politics involved. As far as I’m concerned, he was simply a claimant to the papacy at a time when there were three lines of claimants. He happened to be the Roman claimant, but it is only since around the time of the French Revolution that the Vatican has moved consistently to rehabilitate the Roman line and to claim retroactively that it had been the true line all along. Insofar as historical evidence counts, that is simply not correct. At the time of the disputed election of 1378, no one knew who the real pope was; that is why there was a crisis. Moreover, Gregory XII and his opposite number in Avignon were both deposed in 1409 by the Council of Pisa, which then elected Alexander V. For a while it looked as if that would succeed in ending the schism. Then Alexander, who was well respected, died suddenly and was succeeded by John XXIII, who was not. He turned out, in fact, to be a somewhat corrupt figure. In 1415, as a result, and even though it viewed him as the true pope, the Council of Constance deposed him as a criminal. Though it viewed neither Gregory XII nor his Avignonese rival as legitimate pope, in order to clear the decks it offered both of them a chance to resign. The Avignonese claimant declined the offer and, as a result, was deposed. Gregory XII went along with it and by doing so saved himself from a similar fate. There’s a sort of Orwellian aspect to the way in which this whole confused piece of history has been handled in the official histories ever since the First Vatican Council in 1870. Even the currently official list of popes (which dates only to 1947) is in some degree an ideological statement. It lists both the Avignonese and Pisan lines as antipopes, a judgment historians have been unable to make. But outside sources such as the Encyclopedia Britannica have bought into it.

On demystifying the papacy… So far as Benedict is concerned, I take his statement about why he is resigning at face value. He’s old, clearly not well, and, after all, he watched his predecessor hang on disastrously when he couldn’t do the job out of some sort of misplaced mystification of the papal office. This led to factions, chaos, all the rest. So I think it does Benedict credit to make this move, and I think it will have a demystifying effect on what is, after all, an administrative job. That would be healthy. The pope is not a super-priest. He’s just a bishop like other bishops. What distinguishes him is simply the preeminence of his administrative and teaching role.
### Williams Reads

Even before classes began last fall, more than 40 faculty and staff met with first-year students to host discussions about Barbara Ehrenreich’s *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*, this year’s selection for the Williams Reads program. The book recalls the writer’s attempt to understand poverty in America by spending the year working in low-wage jobs and living on her own in cities across America.

First-year students received a copy of the book over the summer to read in preparation for discussions of topics including risk, community and predator pricing. Sarah Bolton, dean of the college and professor of physics, asked the students in her group to consider “what you are willing to risk in order to understand—really understand—the experience of another person.” Gretchen Long, associate professor of history and chair of Africana studies, asked, “How would [Ehrenreich’s] experience have been different if she had lived with other people?” And, focusing his discussion on one of Ehrenreich’s employers during her yearlong experiment, Henry Art, the Rosenberg Professor of Environmental Studies and Biology, asked, “Has your view on Walmart changed?”

Discussion about the controversial book continued throughout the fall semester, with a variety of events including a talk by the author in November and a lunchtime dialogue during Claiming Williams Day in January.

Economics professor Sara LaLumia included *Nickel and Dimed* in her senior seminar on income distribution in the U.S. Beyond the theoretical lenses for measuring poverty that her students typically study, the book added another dimension—“a human element,” says LaLumia, that “provided the chance for more politically charged conversations than we would otherwise have had.”

—Julia Munemo

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### Sexy Songs

Few people have given as much thought to how bird songs change over time as Heather Williams, the college’s William Dwight Whitney Professor of Biology. In a recent paper in the scientific journal *Animal Behaviour*, she and her co-authors examine how and why Savannah sparrow songs have evolved over a period of 30 years.

As is the case for many songbirds, only the male Savannah sparrow sings. They reach out vocally to attract a female mate, adapting parts of their songs to compete with other males and better communicate their desirability.

Working on Kent Island in the Bay of Fundy, Williams and her team recorded the songs of specific male birds tagged by researchers with colored leg bands. They also tracked the number of offspring for each bird.

Williams found that some parts of the sparrow song changed little, if at all. Other segments varied rapidly over time. Still other sections changed systematically across generations. In these sections, where cultural evolution was evident, the “vocal virtuosos” learned to sing several clicks in rapid succession. These “sexier” songs attracted more females, and, as a result, these males had the most offspring.

Daring to Ask

What might the historical and literary records of 19th century France have to tell us about gays in the military?

Growing up watching war films with his military father, Brian Joseph Martin says he saw how soldiers survived the hardships of combat by “relying on the affectionate care of their buddies and comrades in the trenches.” Later, studying French language and literature during the “gays in the military” debates in the early 1990s, he began to recognize these “bonds of soldier friendship” as a “ubiquitous and self-evident fact of military life,” from medieval texts to contemporary film.

Now an associate professor of French and comparative literature at Williams, Martin has published a book on the emotional and sometimes erotic relationships between French soldiers from 1789 to 1916. Based on extensive research in French and American archives, his 2011 book Napoleonic Friendship: Military Fraternity, Intimacy & Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century France recently won the prestigious Laurence Wylie Prize, awarded biennially to the best book in French social or cultural studies.

Echoing the historical record of gay soldiers in the U.S., Napoleonic Friendship is the first book-length study on the origin of queer soldiers in modern France. It was also one of the first books published on gays in the military following the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” in 2011.

Currently on sabbatical in Québec and France, Martin is at work on his next book project, tentatively titled Lumber Literature: Moving from the homosocial life of military camps to the masculine camaraderie of lumber camps, this new book looks at a “largely unexamined figure of literary representation: the forester, logger or woodsman,” he says, “from 17th century French fairy tales like Little Red Riding Hood to the 19th century Québécois legend of Paul Bunyan and his 20th century migration to American folklore. “At a time when the planet is menaced by the effects of deforestation and global climate change,” he adds, “I hope that this examination of the wooded past might offer some perspective on what we hope will be a greener future.”

In March Professor Brian Joseph Martin will accept the Wylie Prize at New York University’s Institute of French Studies, where he’ll also give a guest lecture titled “Queer Napoleon: From Napoleonic Friendship to Gays in the Military.”

Other recent books...


On Effective Leadership: Across Domains, Cultures and Eras. By G. Donald Chandler III ’72 and John W. Chandler, Williams president, emeritus. Palgrave MacMillan, 2013. Based on a Williams leadership studies course taught by the authors, this book uses case studies to articulate what constitutes effective leadership.


Immortal Lycanthropes. By Hal Johnson ’95. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012. In this novel, a disfigured 13-year-old who is trying to fit in discovers that he is an immortal lycanthrope who can transform from human to animal form.

Gangster Squad: Covert Cops, the Mob and the Battle for Los Angeles. By Paul Lieberman ’71. St. Martin’s Press, 2012. Based on the author’s L.A. Times newspaper series, this book was the basis for a movie of the same name about the secret police unit that waged an anything-goes war to drive Mickey Cohen and other undesirables from L.A. after WWII.


Visit ephsbookshelf.williams.edu to see more works by members of the Williams community and to learn how to submit new publications.
A 750-million-year-old fossil discovered by geosciences professor Phoebe Cohen may hold clues to how life has changed the earth and how earth has changed life.

Following up on work done by scientists in the 1970s, Cohen and a fellow Harvard University graduate school student traveled to the Yukon in 2007 to study rock formations and found a veritable gold mine of fossil-containing rock. Advancements in scientific tools and instruments in the last 40 years allowed Cohen to examine the fossils in a new way, by dissolving the carbonate rock in acetic acid rather than looking at a sliver or cross-section of the rock, as had been done in years past.

"After the carbonate dissolves away, what's left is organic matter," Cohen says. And what she was able to see in the organic matter amazed her: three-dimensional "bones" of what might be one of the earth's first eukaryotic single-celled organisms to make hard parts.

Eukaryotic cells have a nucleus and organelles, just like animal and plant cells but unlike bacteria cells. The fossil Cohen discovered measures about one-tenth the width of a human hair. She named it Quadrireticulum palmaspinosum, which loosely translates to "four-sided net with palm tree spine."

Why did a creature so tiny need bones? Cohen's theory is that at a certain point in history, single-celled organisms needed to "biomineralize"—or create a type of exoskeleton—in order to protect themselves from being eaten by other single-celled organisms. Later, these biomineralized organisms, weighed down by their hard parts, sank to the bottom of the ocean.

As the organisms became buried in sediment, the carbon they contained was locked away with them, reducing the levels of carbon in the ocean and the atmosphere. Over the next 750 million years they developed into the giant rock in the Yukon that Cohen studied. The process may have caused the earth to cool, perhaps eventually contributing to what Cohen and other scientists call "a snowball earth event," when ice covered the entire planet for millions of years.

With the help of research assistants Nakita VanBiene '15 and Kim Kiplagat '16, Cohen is now studying snowball earth events. She's in the process of writing a grant proposal to research the time periods before, during and just after the two major snowball earth events in our planet's history, which took place 717 million and 635 million years ago. With her research Cohen hopes to better understand the relationships between evolutionary events, such as biomineralization, and events in the earth's system, such as climate change.

"This work helps us understand how life has evolved through time in response to both other living things and to the environment," Cohen says. "We are working toward a better understanding of the dynamics between evolution and changes in the earth's climate over geologic time scales."

— Julia Munemo

“Life Changer

We are working toward a better understanding of the dynamics between evolution and changes in the earth’s climate over geologic time scales.”

— Phoebe Cohen, assistant professor of geosciences
Palm Tree
The spikes probably made the organism harder to ingest. They may also have affected its buoyancy by creating an envelope around the cell, “like little umbrellas,” Cohen says.

Spine
The long spine increased the effective diameter of the cell, making the organism harder for hungry amoeba to ingest. The spine also might have made the organism more buoyant, helping it to float to the surface.

Neting
Geosciences professor Phoebe Cohen theorizes that the porous surface of *Quadrireticulum palmaspinosum* might have weighed less, allowing the organism to float to the surface to collect nutrients or access sunlight. The netting also might have allowed nutrients to get in and waste to get out of the cell.
I remember my classmate Myong-Ku Ahn ’63 as a pleasant guy, rather quiet. I didn’t know him well, but sophomore year we did share meals at the Alpha Delta Phi house, where several classmates and I had pledged that fall. Ahn, who was from South Korea, was assigned to the house as a “social member,” a way for foreign students to be affiliated with a fraternity.

In the spring of 1961, I approached our president, Bruce Grinnell ’62, to propose that Ahn become a bona fide brother. After all, Ahn ate with us every day; on occasion he came to our parties. But he couldn’t vote on fraternity business. He couldn’t live in the fraternity house. Nor could he enter the “goat room,” the secret sanctum reserved for the brethren.

It was in that paneled goat room, with Bruce’s nod of approval, that I stood up before my brothers and suggested that Ahn be elevated to full membership. All hell broke loose.

By my count, more than half those assembled supported the proposal, maybe even two thirds. But several individuals insisted that full membership would never happen as long as they were Alpha Delts. One fellow suggested that Ahn didn’t know English well enough to join. Another said, “If you make him a brother, I’ll never be able to bring a date to the house.”

Bruce and I and several others couldn’t believe what we were hearing.

As the debate rolled on, I offered an ultimatum: If Ahn wasn’t given membership, I’d quit the house.

Trouble with Greek life at Williams had been brewing on a larger scale for years. The college’s 15 fraternities housed and fed more than 90 percent of upperclassmen, which made Williams dependent on the fraternities for functions most other colleges controlled. The system created a campus hierarchy, with social status defined by the presumed but generally agreed upon desirability of the houses young men were affiliated with. Among the tiny group of non-affiliates were a handful of people who voluntarily rejected the fraternity system. But far more of them had been rejected by the system. None of this social inflation and deflation seemed necessary in our small, “elite” liberal arts college. Yet Greek life persisted.

Now here we were, facing a vote on whether Ahn could become our brother. Technically Alpha Delt didn’t have a “blackball,” in which a single, anonymous vote blocked membership. But it did have the “butter,” which required three negative votes. Ahn got buttered.

I left the meeting in an angry fog and met with Bruce and Morris Kaplan ’63 in the snack bar. Morris recalls me saying, “This is the last straw. What are we going to do about fraternities?”

We proposed a meeting for that night and spread the news carefully, by word of mouth. Morris and I circulated around the campus, approaching students we thought might be sympathetic to our nascent rebellion. Bruce, a junior advisor (JA), brought the question to his fellow JAs, who were in prime—if potentially corrupting—positions to recruit new brothers to their frats. Fortunately, most JAs did not abuse the privilege.

At that point no one knew the extent of the opposition to Greek life. But when we convened a subsequent meeting in the physics lab auditorium at midnight, I felt a huge lift when 40 young men filed in. Among them were a fraternity president and first-string quarterback (Bruce), officers representing several fraternity houses, leaders and members of the senior honor society Gargoyle, the chairman of the Athletic Council, the president of the Williams Chapel Committee and several JAs.

We drafted what’s come to be known as the Grinnell Petition, calling for “the immediate establishment of a committee … to investigate the social system and to recommend the plan they feel will be most effective” in meeting the objectives we outlined. Many of the original 45 signers had distinguished records at the college and represented constituencies of consequence.

On July 1, 1961, when John Edward Sawyer ’39 officially became president of the college, on his desk was the Grinnell Petition. To the petitioners’ delight, Sawyer quickly appointed the Angevine Committee

““This is the last straw. What are we going to do about fraternities?””
—Robert J. Seidman ’63

Band of Brothers
By Robert J. Seidman ’63
to study the matter. One year later, the committee made its recommendation “for the college to assume full responsibility for the housing and feeding of all students,” which the Board of Trustees approved in time for our return for senior year in the fall of 1962. The phrasing was inspired—it was a way of recommending the abolition of fraternities without saying so.

Not to overstate this, but for some of us the ’60s were born in the physics lab basement that night in the spring of 1961. We’d entered a college that was a preppy, conservative, relatively complacent institution. One of the great privileges of being at Williams then was that we came to believe in our right to resist unfair and/or nonsensical policies and the need to make an effort to change them. If that’s not the privilege and burden of democracy, what is?

Robert J. Seidman ’63 is an Emmy-winning screenwriter and novelist. His third novel, Moments Captured, was published in the fall. Read his full essay about his fraternity experience at http://bit.ly/seidmanessay. Myong-Ku Ahn ’63 was listed in the class’s senior yearbook as belonging to Alpha Delta Phi, though he was never officially a member. He went on to complete a Ph.D. in chemistry at Yale and become a professor of chemistry at University of Indiana.

It’s All Greek

The college’s Archives and Special Collections include more than 82 linear feet of material documenting 13 of Williams’ 15 fraternities. Among the collection are typical items such as minute books, photo albums, pledge pins and paddles. But there are some unconventional pieces as well, such as this 150-year-old ballot box used by brothers of Delta Kappa Epsilon to vote on prospective members. A single black ball placed in the box would end a student’s bid for membership. There’s also a key that James A. Garfield, Class of 1856, received as a member of the Anti-Secret Confederation (also known as the Equitable Fraternity), which eventually became Delta Upsilon. Membership in this social group, established at Williams in 1834 in opposition to the two secret societies operating on campus, was based on merit. Another item in the college’s collection is a portrait of Philip Spencer—founder of Chi Psi at Union College—that was donated to Williams’ chapter in 1934. According to former Chi Psi president Phil Wick ’56, who served for many years in the college’s admission office and then as director of financial aid, the painting was sometimes used for knife-throwing practice, as the large tear in it can attest.

Above and opposite page: Fraternity Ballot Box, Delta Kappa Epsilon, 1864, Williams College Archives & Special Collections.