Also: The College’s Work to Diversify the Academy | A New Course Charts the History of the Book | Ethan Zuckerman ’93 Fixes the Internet | Ragamala’s Musical Garlands | Whaling and Williams

Williams

AN INTELLECTUAL COMMONS
Inside the college’s new library
WESTON ATHLETIC COMPLEX
was dedicated on Oct. 11 and "is a dream that came true," says Mike Reed ’75, an All-American hurdler and a relay teammate to Jimmy Lee ’75 during their time at Williams. The new Lee Track is named for Lee’s family. Watch a video about all that’s new at Weston at http://bit.ly/newweston.
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To most effectively educate students of all backgrounds, we need faculty of all backgrounds.

A Pipeline Into the Academy

Readers of Williams Magazine know most of the large effects this small college has on the world. One you may not know about, however, is hugely important to Williams and higher education.

Through sustained work and the support of many alumni and friends, Williams now educates students from a much wider variety of backgrounds than ever before. That’s an important part of the public good we provide. It’s also the case that the more diverse the student body, the richer the learning that takes place—inside and outside the classroom—and the better prepared our graduates are to function in an increasingly diverse world.

But there’s been a lag, at Williams and in the academy, in fostering a similar diversity among faculty. The same educational benefits of broader representation apply: To most effectively educate students of all backgrounds, we need faculty of all backgrounds.

One challenge has been that students who choose academic careers in disciplines taught at liberal arts colleges have included relatively few people of color, first-generation college graduates and women (especially in math and some of the sciences).

Happily, Williams is leading the way in addressing this challenge. “Transforming the Academy” on p. 22 tells the wonderful story of programs developed here that have grown into consortia and have been copied elsewhere.

One key element of this effort is to reach students early. Our summer programs for pre-frosh (one focused on the sciences and one on the humanities and social sciences) do exactly that. Two fellowship programs support Williams students in research mentored by faculty during the academic year and over the summer.

The Bolin Fellowship, a signature two-year residency program that started in the 1980s and recently expanded, brings to campus graduate students from underrepresented groups who are at the dissertation stage of their careers.

Most recently, we helped form a Mellon Foundation–supported consortium that provides our students with summer scholarly opportunities at major research universities and brings newly minted Ph.D.s from those universities here as fellows, so they can experience what it’s like to teach at a liberal arts college.

Each of these programs represents an engagement at a critical moment in the development of a scholar, providing the opportunity, support and mentorship to encourage students on the path to becoming professors. As a result, the pipeline of new faculty for Williams and for liberal arts colleges is now flowing more fully, to the great benefit of young academics and our institutions.

Almost two decades ago, as a young physics professor trying to draw a diverse pool of graduate students, I’d attend the National Conference of Black Physics Students every year. I was impressed by the extraordinary potential of the students and dismayed that my institution did such a poor job of attracting them.

We’ve learned a lot since then about the nature of the pipeline, the barriers that underrepresented students still face and what actions are most helpful. It’s a simple observation: If we want things to change, we have to do something new.

It’s here and at similar colleges that new things are being done. At Williams, the nation’s most talented students—a community more diverse than ever—work closely with faculty, experiencing firsthand the fulfillment of an academic life, inspired by the finest teaching faculty there is.

—Adam Falk, president
THE ALUMNI NETWORK

The tradition of Ephs helping Ephs along the job path is an old one (“The Alumni Network,” summer 2014). My father, Frank Coan, Class of 1911, was helped into a government job by Williams President Phinney Baxter, Class of 1914 and a high official in the Office of Strategic Services. My first job was in the State Department, where my boss was Clinton Knox ’30, head of research for Europe and subsequently an ambassador. My first management job, starting a new marketing division, was for Bill Klopman ’43, president of Klopman Mills and later CEO of Burlington, the nation’s largest textile company. The key recommendation came from my classmate Jack Heineman ’45. Later, in my role as the first full-time fundraiser for the NAACP, I was helped by Robert Allen ’43, treasurer of Cincinnati Bell Telephone, who gathered the movers and shakers of the city to meet the new head of the association.
—Stuart Coan ’45, Greenwich, Conn.

A SPIRITUAL INSTRUMENT

The article on Cole Porter’s piano (“A Spiritual Instrument,” summer 2014) brought back memories of the late fall of 1964, when college librarian Wyllis Wright, Class of 1925, called to ask: “How would you like to go with me and see what Cole Porter has left us?” I joined him at the small house on West Main Street.

In the bedroom, three walls were filled with shelves holding books of American and world literature, many of them signed by the authors with a greeting to Mr. Porter. The main room, where the piano was located, held more shelves filled with books about music and musical scores. The Bechstein piano, from before WWIII, was not in great shape—the sounding board had some cracks in it, and the action and tone were uneven. We put it into the salon of what today is Weston Hall. It turned out that the parts to fix and bring the piano up to a fine standard would have to be handmade, a very pricey thing. Spare parts had been destroyed in the Berlin air raids, and there was no love of Bechstein, Frau Bechstein was one of the earliest and most generous of Hitler’s patrons. So now the instrument sits in the shape in which we inherited it, subject to the up and down humidity levels of big college buildings. Better for us were the musical scores that Mr. Porter left to us, which form an interesting and unusual part of our musical collection in the Sawyer Library.
—Kenneth Roberts, professor of music, emeritus, Bennington, Vt.

I very much enjoyed the article about Cole Porter’s Bechstein grand piano in Thompson Memorial Chapel.

In my day, the piano was in the language lab next to Perry House, and William Finn ’74 played it—fortissimo—every night. And the result? Multiple Tony awards, Falsettos, The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee, etc. I have no doubt Cole Porter would be pleased.
—Grace Paine Terzian ’74, Oakton, Va.

JEWES AT WILLIAMS

I read with much interest “Gentlemen Jews” (summer 2014), excerpted from the book by Benjamin Aldes Wurgaf. It is a fascinating subject. I admit to having a particular interest, as I am the granddaughter of Edward S. Greenbaum, Class of 1910. The statement that “Greenbaum met with Williams President Harry A. Garfield, Class of 1885, and offered to screen Jewish applicants to ‘keep away the undesirable sort’” piqued my curiosity, as it seems very much out of character for my grandfather. Edward S. Greenbaum worked his entire law career to prevent such discriminatory practices. If this incident at Williams occurred as reported, it may show insight into his chosen career. Or is it possible that Lawrence Greenbaum, Class of 1909, is being referenced? Both are Williams graduates, each the son of a judge but somewhat different in worldview and personality.
—Susan D. Greenbaum, Lebanon, N.J.

Editor’s note: It’s not entirely clear whether Edward Greenbaum ’10 or Lawrance Greenbaum ’08 offered to review Jewish students’ applications for President Garfield. Benjamin Wurgaf surmises that the idea more likely originated with Edward, who was a senior when six Jewish students of Eastern European descent arrived as part of the Class of 1914, prompting some anti-Semitic sentiment that Garfield spoke out against. Wurgaf adds that screening applicants was common practice in higher education at the time and “might have been regarded (by its agents) as nothing more than the maintenance of social networks rather than a hostile effort to discriminate.”

DROPPING THE “F” WORD

As an alumnus, former class treasurer and former class agent, I was tremendously disappointed to see that the summer 2014 Williams Magazine included at least three instances of the “F” word (“Higher Edukation”). What is wrong with you? Why has the college embraced the race to bottom? There is nothing artistic or redeeming in publishing profanity. Where is truth, beauty or goodness exemplified in the use of such a crude term, and why should I continue to support an institution that displays such terrible judgment?

SUMMER KUDOS

I took a few minutes this morning to read Williams Magazine (summer 2014) and be amazed one more time at the depth and breadth of the college’s impact on so many lives that then drives their contributions to the world. It is difficult to imagine how three times per year the magazine staff is able to produce such a rich document of the lives of the college and seemingly do better each time. I am very appreciative of that reminder throughout the year.
—David A. McCarron ’67, Portland, Ore.

Great issue! Prior to reading President Adam Falk’s column (“A Powerful Network,” summer 2014), I had forgotten that Zephaniah Swift Moore founded Amherst College in 1821 after resigning from Williams’ presidency. This must just goad the Jeffs. I wonder if they ever considered calling their teams the “Zephs” to do battle against our Ephs!
—Cal Collins ’54, Salem, Ore.
CONVOCATION CELEBRATES SENIOR CLASS, DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI

The college marked the start of the academic year and the accomplishments of the senior class and alumni at convocation on Sept. 20. During the ceremony six alumni received Bicentennial Medals for distinguished achievement in fields relevant to The Book Unbound, a yearlong initiative celebrating Sawyer Library. The medalists were (clockwise from top right) Kenard Gibbs ’86, CEO of Soul Train Holdings and co-founder of MadVision Entertainment; Ethan Zuckerman ’93, director of the Center for Civic Media at MIT, who gave the convocation address; Steven Rothstein ’78, former president of the Perkins School for the Blind (pictured here with Williams President Adam Falk); David Spadafora ’72, president and librarian of the Newberry Library in Chicago; Kristen Anderson-Lopez ’94, Oscar-winning songwriter for the Disney movie Frozen; and Mary Cotton ’01, pseudonymous author of 11 best-selling novels for young adults and owner of Newtonville Books in Newton, Mass. For more on convocation visit http://convocation.williams.edu.

Williams Dedicates Sawyer Library

On Sept. 20 the Williams community celebrated the dedication of Sawyer Library with a musical performance, readings from selected works in the college’s collection and remarks by Dean of the College Sarah Bolton, President Adam Falk and Newberry Library President David Spadafora ’72.

“Sawyer Library is, most fundamentally, the academic crossroads of Williams,” Falk said during his remarks. “And, as such, it is truly the heart of the college, reflecting and embodying our deepest ideals.”

Said Spadafora: “Here, reading, research and dialogue founded on a collection brought to life by systems, experts and teachers will yield new knowledge and perhaps even new ways of knowing. … It is in fact just what we want from a real library.”

Grant Aids Net-Zero Goal

A $161,260 grant from the National Science Foundation will help Williams monitor energy usage in its new environmental center and use the data to implement standards that will help it to meet the Living Building Challenge (LBC).

Computer science professor Jeannie Albrecht and Sarah Abramson ’15, Pamela Mishkin ’16 and Abbie Zimmermann-Niefield ’15 are determining the best sensors to install in Kellogg House, currently under renovation. The sensors will allow them to monitor energy usage in the building and develop models to predict real-time energy consumption. The group is developing ways to present its data to building occupants.

The goal of the LBC is net-zero energy usage. The environmental center must produce as much or more energy than it consumes, one of the requirements set forth by the International Living Future Institute. The building must achieve high performance standards for a year before meeting the challenge, including generating electricity from solar or other carbon-free resources and capturing and treating water on site. If the center, whose main structure was built in 1794, meets the requirements, it will be the first historic building in the country to do so.

Majumder Receives NSF Grant

A three-year, $347,000 grant from the National Science Foundation will help physics professor Tiku Majumder continue his precise spectroscopic studies of atoms—research ultimately aimed at testing the Standard Model of particle physics.

Majumder’s project will measure the properties of the heavy-metal atoms indium and thallium in unprecedented detail using semiconductor diode lasers. The data Majumder collects will improve theoretical understanding of these complex atoms, and his experiments will help reinforce results produced by scientists at large particle accelerator facilities.

Students have been involved in all aspects of the research. They design and test laser, optical and signal processing systems, they work with electronic and vacuum system components, and they collect, model and analyze data.

Majumder has been teaching at Williams since 1994. He’s received nearly $1.35 million in funding for his research since 1998.

The Student Body

It’s difficult to quantify the world of individuals who bring their intelligence, talents, perspectives and aspirations to Williams. But the Student Profile of 2014-15 provides useful facts and statistics about the student body. Here are some highlights.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High School Origins</th>
<th>49% Public</th>
<th>34% Private</th>
<th>14% Parochial</th>
<th>3% Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14% 1st-Generation Students</td>
<td>51% Female</td>
<td>49% Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14% International Students</td>
<td>14% Asian-American</td>
<td>1% Native American</td>
<td>11% Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>11% Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37% U.S. Students of Color</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| Four-Year Graduation Rate | 91% |
| Receive Financial Aid | 52% |
| Top 10 States Represented | NY 404 | CA 258 | MA 248 | CT 133 | NJ 124 |
| FL 83 | PA 72 | IL 66 | TX 63 | MD 62 |

86 COUNTRIES REPRESENTED

Source: Williams Office of Admission
In Memoriam

On Oct. 18 the Williams community gathered in Thompson Memorial Chapel to pay tribute to James MacGregor Burns ’39, the college’s Woodrow Wilson Professor of Government, who died on July 15 at the age of 95.

Burns was a renowned presidential historian and leadership scholar. He began his career as a congressional aide in Washington, D.C., and served in the U.S. Army during WWII as a combat historian. He earned his Ph.D. from Harvard (1947) and completed postdoctoral work at the London School of Economics before publishing his first book, Congress on Trial: The Legislative Process and the Administrative State, in 1949. He cowrote Government by the People, which for many years was the most widely used college textbook on American politics. His 1978 book Leadership is credited with launching the cross-disciplinary field of leadership studies at Williams and at many other colleges, business schools and universities, including the University of Maryland’s James MacGregor Burns Academy of Leadership.

Burns wrote nearly 20 books, including biographies of John and Edward Kennedy and the seminal two-volume F.D.R. biography, Roosevelt: The Lion and The Fox (1956) and Roosevelt: The Soldier of Freedom (1970), which won the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award. He served on the Williams faculty from 1947 until his retirement in 1986. With his coauthor and longtime companion Susan Dunn, the college’s Preston S. Parish ’41 Third Century Professor in the Arts and Humanities, Burns continued to teach Winter Study courses on the Roosevelts that included research trips to the FDR Library in Hyde Park, N.Y.

He lectured widely in the U.S. and abroad, appeared frequently in the media and served as president of the American Political Science Association and the International Society of Political Psychology. He was politically prescient, warning against the decline of parties, the rising importance of political money and the deleterious effects of midterm elections. His 1963 book The Deadlock of Democracy was closely studied by Presidents Kennedy and Johnson and foreshadowed the deadlock in Washington that exists today.

His last book, Fire and Light: How the Enlightenment Transformed Our World, was published in 2013. Williams awarded Burns the Bicentennial Medal in 1993 and a Doctor of Humane Letters in 2003. His survivors include Dunn, three children and four grandchildren, including Teresa S. McHugh ’11.
On a sunny Friday in August, Schow Science Library is crammed with people. One hundred seventy-five students who spent the summer conducting in-depth research as part of the college’s Summer Science Research Program have distilled their work into 3-by-4-foot posters full of charts, diagrams and photos. Now the buzz of hundreds of individual conversations fills the space as visitors make their way from poster to poster, learning from students about climate change, spin resonance dating and quantum theory.

Kelly Tellez ’17 stands before a poster with photos of honey-colored microfossils, steel-gray shale beds and detailed maps. She answers questions and describes research she conducted with geosciences professor Phoebe Cohen. The work involved looking at microfossils of green algae from the time of the Late Devonian mass extinction event in the Kellwasser beds of Lancaster, N.Y. They found changes in fossil size, shape and abundance across the time period. The next step in their research will be to find out whether that variation is a true biological signal relating to the extinction event.

The poster presentation is “a unique way of sharing science,” says Tiku Majumder, Science Center director. “For an undergraduate doing scientific research, it’s a nice alternative to an oral presentation. It’s more friendly and open—a celebration of all their hard work.”

Working closely with Majumder, Ben Augenbraun ’15 spent the summer researching the question: If one passes a particular pair of laser beams through a collection of indium atoms, what exactly will be the pattern of absorption?

Using quantum theory, Augenbraun says, physicists can independently predict what his observations ought to be. So his work acts as a stringent test of the mathematical methods used by professional theorists “and advances our understanding of quantum theory” in these complex atoms. His research also advances his senior thesis. “It was really nice to have a summer to focus solely on this work,” he says.

Cohen calls the summer research program “a real strength.” It’s less regimented than graduate school work, and Williams students can gain general experience or lay the groundwork for future projects.

There’s another benefit, too, which is easily seen in Schow as students, faculty and staff stop in front of poster after poster, asking questions and leaning in to listen. Says Cohen: “Students start to build their own intellectual community.”

The Poster Session: Scientific Research at a Glance

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The poster is a common platform researchers use to present their work, especially at academic conferences. While an invited speaker might give an hour-and-a-half talk about the details of his or her findings, most researchers have only 10 minutes to explain their work. Posters offer an immediate impression of their research.

For Williams students, the posters often become the basis for coauthored academic papers and senior theses. Some 50 students coauthor scientific papers with their professors each year, which helps them to build their portfolios for graduate school.

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“Here is a centrally located place, to which students will be drawn as by a beacon from inside its glass curtain walls.” That’s how David Spadafora ’72 described Sawyer Library during its dedication on Sept. 20. Named for John E. Sawyer ’39, the college’s transformative 11th president, the library extends the Williams ethos that we are a community of scholars and ushers in a new era of teaching and learning. It encompasses old and new: A renovated Stetson Hall and a major addition together total more than 176,000 square feet. On the following pages we pair photographs of the spectacular, light-filled spaces with the words of Spadafora, president of the Newberry Library in Chicago and the recipient of a Williams Bicentennial Medal this fall for distinguished achievement.

“Here they will flock for group project work and class meetings that employ library materials, because much space is intentionally provided for these activities, because rare and special collection materials are integrated with everything else and expected to be used for education and research.”
“Here they will find and use side by side physical books, digital simulacra and technology, including technology that connects this place with other libraries and classrooms far away.”
“This library will serve the college as an INTELLECTUAL COMMONS, and rightly so. For we need a commons if we are to work together—students with students, students with faculty, both with library staff—on the problems posed and opportunities offered by PROLIFERATING INFORMATION AND RAPIDLY EVOLVING KNOWLEDGE.”
## History of the Book

“No object has so broadly and deeply represented the capacity for humans to create, preserve and transmit knowledge, information and ideas as the book,” states the description for “The History of the Book,” an ambitious new course taught by Chinese professor Christopher Nugent and Classics professor Edan Dekel. Part of the yearlong Book Unbound initiative celebrating the dedication of Sawyer Library, the course explores “aspects of the material, social, cultural and intellectual history of the book, from the invention of the earliest writing systems through the modern development of digital media.” *Here the professors share some of the most important moments.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2ND CENTURY</th>
<th>1ST CENTURY</th>
<th>COMMON ERA</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Trajan's Column" /></td>
<td><strong>113</strong> This inscription at the base of Trajan’s Column in Rome is the most famous example of Roman capital letters and was a model for inscriptions, manuscript writing and printing typefaces for centuries.</td>
<td><strong>1ST–3RD CENTURY CE</strong> Ink sticks were rubbed on flat ink stones and mixed with water to produce liquid ink. This one, shaped like a pine cone, comes from the Eastern Han Dynasty and was likely made with pine resin as a binder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CA. 50–121</strong> Cai Lun (depicted in this stylized woodcut) is the eunuch traditionally credited with inventing paper. It’s now known that paper was developed centuries earlier; Cai Lun likely improved its manufacture and quality.</td>
<td><strong>1ST CENTURY</strong> The codex was invented by the Romans to replace the scrolls used throughout the ancient world. Made up of sheets of writing material stacked together and bound in covers, it has remained the most widespread book format for 2,000 years.</td>
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<tr>
<th>5TH CENTURY</th>
<th>8TH CENTURY</th>
<th>19TH CENTURY</th>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Cai Lun" /></td>
<td><strong>8TH CENTURY</strong> Alcuin of York (735–804) was a scholar, teacher and abbot of the monastery at Tours in France, where he established a scriptorium during Charlemagne’s reign and ushered in the Carolingian Renaissance. Under his direction, scribes developed the script “Carolingian minuscule,” the source of lowercase forms of the Roman alphabet.</td>
<td><strong>1884</strong> The Linotype machine, invented by Otto Mergenthaler, produced an entire line of metal type at once, greatly expediting the arduous process of composing and setting type by hand. It became the standard mode of typesetting for newspapers, magazines and books.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5TH–15TH CENTURY</strong> The chief material for medieval European manuscripts was parchment made from the skins of animals. The finest and most expensive type was vellum, made from calf skin.</td>
<td><strong>7TH CENTURY</strong> Woodblock printing (text carved in reverse on wooden blocks that are inked and pressed onto paper) was developed in China, probably from carved Buddhist charms, stones and name seal “chops.”</td>
<td><strong>20TH CENTURY</strong> Offset printing has become the most common commercial printing technology in use. An image is inked by a modern lithographic process and then transferred from a plate to the printing surface, usually paper, which is either fed into the machine in single sheets or from a large, continuous reel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9TH CENTURY</strong> This form of folded-paper book, concertina sutra, was popular for compact Buddhist texts carried by travelers.</td>
<td><strong>20TH CENTURY</strong> The electronic reader is the first book format to pose any viable challenge to the printed codex. The possibility of holding a virtually unlimited library in one’s hand appeals to many, though issues of form and function are still being addressed.</td>
<td><strong>19TH CENTURY</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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3000 BCE Cuneiform, the earliest human writing system, was developed by the Sumerians in Mesopotamia and consists of wedge-shaped markings impressed into clay tablets.

1200 BCE Hot pokers pressed into the bones of animals created cracks that were interpreted by diviners. The diviners' names, questions asked, predictions, etc., were inscribed on these “oracle bones” and are the earliest remaining examples of writing from China.

259–210 BCE The rule of Emperor Qin Shihuang led to the standardization of script, weights, measures and axle lengths. It also may have led to “Qin bibliocaust,” in which he allegedly confiscated and burned the works of philosophical schools he considered dangerous to his rule.

5th–3rd century BCE Evidence indicates that animal-fur brushes have been used for writing since Neolithic times. Strips were bound together by strings of hemp or leather. It’s believed that the Chinese convention of writing in vertical columns arose because of the use of bamboo.

1398 This library at the Haeinsa Temple in South Korea was built to house the printing blocks for the full Tripitaka Koreana—a complete set of the scriptures of Buddhism—carved in 1251. The blocks number 81,258 in total.

15th century Johannes Gutenberg (1398-1468), a German goldsmith, engraver and printer, invented a mechanical movable type system and combined it with wooden press technology to make possible the mass production of printed books in Europe.

15th century This is the printer’s mark of Aldus Manutius (1449-1515), Venetian publisher and printer whose Aldine Press developed the first italic typefaces. His press also was the first to print books in the octavo size (similar to a modern paperback) and to edit and print scholarly editions of most of the major Greek and Roman authors.

17th century The printer’s type case holds all the individual pieces of metal type used to set a text by hand, with small letters in the “lower” part of the case and capital letters in the “upper” part.

15–16th century Early printing presses were hand-operated screw presses that applied pressure evenly to the paper below. A pair of printers working in tandem could produce as many as 3,500 pages per day.
As colleges and universities work to diversify their faculties, Williams has emerged as a leader in building a pipeline to the professoriate.

Reported by Denise DiFulco

TRANSFORMING the ACADEMY

An undergraduate fellowship from Williams allowed Drew Thompson ’05 to choose his passion—researching HIV/AIDS and public art in South Africa—over a lucrative job offer.

An invitation to take classes and work closely with faculty the summer before her freshman year helped Amy Prieto ’96 complete a double major she thought was beyond her reach.

A graduate fellowship at Williams gave Darby English ’96 the time and resources to finish his dissertation and gain valuable teaching experience.

And for Ashley Brown Burns ’07, it was a freshman-year class with professor Cheryl Hicks, the first black Ph.D. she’d ever met, that inspired her to pursue the life of the mind.

All four are now college and university professors, a career in which people of color—as well as women (in some fields) and first-generation college students—traditionally have been underrepresented. All four, along with hundreds of other alumni of color, benefited from a collection of programs at Williams that offer mentorship, opportunity and support at critical moments in students’ scholarly lives, encouraging them along the path to academia.

The programs create a pipeline that begins before most students arrive on campus and continues through their graduate study to tenure-track positions at Williams and elsewhere. The length of the pipeline and its longevity—from programs established nearly 30 years ago to one that just launched in the fall—have made Williams a leader in the work to transform the academy.
CLOSING THE GAP

WILLIAMS MAGAZINE

Williams faces a pivotal moment: Roughly a third of its faculty is expected to retire in the next decade or so, with similar turnover projected among tenured professors at other colleges and universities nationally. This year alone, the college is conducting searches for 17 existing full-time, tenure-track positions among its faculty of 246. Who fills these positions now and in the future is critically important.

“Williams has a singular opportunity to build a more diverse faculty, not just in terms of racial, ethnic and gender composition, but also taking into account research backgrounds and interests and teaching methods,” says Denise Buell, dean of the faculty and professor of religion. “This is an institutional priority.”

There’s no doubt Williams’ faculty has grown more diverse over the years, both in terms of who the professors are and what they’re teaching, which benefits the entire student body. As of June 2013, 20 percent of the college’s full-time tenured and tenure-track professors identified as American people of color, and 42 percent were women (up from 14 percent and 33 percent a decade before).

Yet the numbers haven’t kept pace with diversity among the student body, which turns over every four years. Thirty-seven percent of students identify as American people of color, and 51 percent are women.

Williams is working to close the gap, both on campus and more broadly, and the results are impressive. Consider the college’s two summer research programs for students from underrepresented groups who are contemplating academic careers. The Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship is a national program launched on campus in 1989. And the Allison Davis Research Fellowship grew out of the federally funded McNair Scholars program, which began in 1996. The fellowship was renamed two years ago for W. Allison Davis ’24, the renowned social anthropologist and psychologist whose work paved the way for Head Start and affirmative action.

Nearly all of the college’s 119 Mellon Mays fellows and 93 Allison Davis fellows have gone on to graduate school or professional school. Thirty have completed Ph.D.s, and another 39 are in the process of completing them. Only two doctoral candidates have decided to withdraw from their studies. Nationally, meanwhile, the Ph.D. completion rate is 50 percent.

Another Williams program aimed at traditionally underrepresented groups, the competitive Gaius Charles Bolin Fellowship, brings graduate students from around the country to Williams for two years to finish their dissertations and teach. Of the 61 fellows who have completed the program since its start in 1986-87, at least 51 are now tenured or tenure-track professors, including three who received tenure at Williams.

And the college is doing far more than adding diversity to the faculty ranks within higher education, says Mike Reed ’75, who served for eight years as the college’s vice president for strategic planning and institutional diversity, working to develop and unify new and existing pipeline programs.

“It’s about having people with broader perspectives and points of view teaching in the academy, which enhances the curriculum for everyone,” says Reed, now the vice president for institutional initiatives at Dickinson College. “And it’s about providing role models who can also encourage students to pursue majors and/or study in those areas.”

AN EARLY START

Amy Prieto ’96 found exactly that kind of support even before her first semester began, thanks to the college’s Summer Science Program. Along with her letter of acceptance, she received an invitation to the intensive, five-week introduction to Williams, which is offered to all incoming students of color and first-generation college students who express an interest in science. Since its inception in the late 1980s, 460 students have participated.

In July, before most of the rest of her classmates arrived for first-year orientation, Prieto dove into classes in calculus and English as well as labs in chemistry, physics and biology. She toured the campus, visited area businesses and received counseling about financial aid.

“I was excited about getting to be on campus early and figuring out how everything worked,” says Prieto, who was born in Colombia and came to the U.S. when she was 4 years old. Today she’s an associate professor of chemistry at Colorado State University.

The most beneficial aspect of the program, she says, was getting to know her professors, who helped her select her fall courses. Based on her performance in the summer classes, they encouraged her to skip two semesters of introductory calculus. “That was really helpful, because I knew I wanted to double major,” says Prieto, who earned a degree in chemistry and philosophy with a concentration in women’s studies. Without her professors’ guidance, she says, “I don’t think I would have been so ambitious.”

Over the years, the Summer Science Program and its counterpart, the Summer Humanities and Social Science Program, created in 2000, have expanded to include four courses and related labs. Up to 24 incoming science students and 18 humanities and social science students participate each summer. They live in two houses on campus with upperclassmen who, along with a core group of professors, serve as guides to academic and student life.

“It’s a preview of the ideal semester experience,” says Molly Magavern, the college’s director of special academic programs. “It’s for students who are interested in doing real academic work during the summer so that they can thrive and become active participants in intellectual life on campus.”
They’re also developing a rapport with professors before the crush of the academic year. As a result, they’re more comfortable, Magavern says, when the time comes to ask for a letter of recommendation or to seek out a mentor, particularly in fields where students of color or female students are underrepresented, like some sciences.

As a student, Prieto found a mentor in Lee Park, who joined the chemistry faculty in 1993. Working alongside the young professor in her lab helped Prieto “fall in love” with the research that ultimately led to her current work, which focuses on renewable energy sources, including battery cells and hydrogen storage.

“I had so much support from Williams at a critical age,” Prieto says.

Now she encourages the undergraduate and graduate students who work in her lab to continue on to careers in science and teaching. “We have a lot of first-generation kids,” she says, “and it’s really important for me to help them.”

AN INTELLECTUAL COMMUNITY

Ashley Brown Burns ’07 arrived at Williams with plans for a career in medicine. But coming from a public school outside New Orleans with a limited understanding of how to navigate college, she was overwhelmed by her first semester. With a loaded schedule of economics, calculus and a writing-intensive seminar, she left the pre-med track after Biology 101 proved too challenging.

“I felt that I was in over my head,” she says. “But I admired my history professor, Cheryl Hicks. She was a black woman. She had a Ph.D. from Princeton. I remember looking at her and thinking, later on, ‘If not medicine, then I want to be a doctor of something else.’”

It’s a powerful experience, recognizing your own potential in someone who looks like you, says Reed. And he believes it’s critical to future success. As one of roughly 35 African-American students at Williams in the 1970s, Reed says he still remembers the influence black professors Robert Stepto in English, Joe Harris in history and Reginald Gilliam in political science had on him. He stayed in touch with them for many years after graduation.

“They were people whose classes we gravitated toward,” Reed says. “They weren’t just faculty members but also mentors and friends. They were sensitive to the additional kinds of challenges we faced, and they extended themselves to help us manage those additional barriers.”

Burns found that kind of support through what at the time was called the Williams College Undergraduate Research Fellowship, now the Allison Davis Research Fellowship. The fellowships are open to students of color, first-generation college students and non-U.S. citizens of African, Hispanic or Asian descent. Participants carry out 10-week independent research projects after their sophomore and junior years. They also receive skills development in advanced research methods and written presentation, preparation for the GRE and graduate school, and financial support to eliminate the need for a campus job and to cover travel for research, conferences and graduate school visits.

The program also connects fellows closely with faculty—and with each other. There are 20 fellows at a time, 10 sophomores and 10 juniors. Burns says they became her intellectual support system.
“If it weren’t for that fellowship, it’s hard for me to conceptualize how I would have navigated my way through Williams to completing the Ph.D.,” Burns says. “You’re in this intellectual community where your colleagues are doing independent research, thinking about the GRE and applying to graduate school. You’re all going through the same process. So it felt easy, even though it should have been really hard.”

Burns majored in political economy with a concentration in Africana studies and went on to complete a master’s and doctorate in public policy at Duke University. She’s now an assistant professor in the political science department at Amherst College.

Her research and teaching interests, which focus on social stratification and public policy, remain tied to those she developed at Williams. Burns also sees herself as a role model for students from underrepresented groups.

“When I got that fellowship, it was the first opportunity I had to feel like I was a scholar,” she says. “So I try to do that for my students up front, because I know well that feeling of wondering whether you are good enough or smart enough.”

FUELING DISCOVERY

Like Burns, Drew Thompson ’05 began college with a plan. Fresh from a summer internship with a law firm in his hometown of Washington, D.C., he was going to major in history and go to law school. But it quickly became apparent that his path was not as straightforward as he’d imagined.

History Professor Kenda Mutongi recognized Thompson’s interest in art and activist causes and suggested he apply for a Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship. Available to sophomores and juniors, the program is funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation as its signature initiative to build diversity among faculty ranks. Mellon Mays fellowships offer programming, mentoring, stipends and loan repayment of up to $10,000 for aspiring doctoral candidates.

In 1989 Williams was one of 18 schools to receive funding for the program, which aims, in the foundation’s words, to “reduce over time the serious underrepresentation on college and university faculties of individuals from certain minority groups, as well as to address the attendant educational consequences of these disparities.” It’s open to all U.S. citizens and permanent residents who are underrepresented in their fields of study or who are committed to reducing underrepresentation on faculties. Forty-two schools now participate in the program.

Mutongi recommended it to Thompson—“not thinking about it in terms of graduate school, but in terms of doing interdisciplinary research that the normal curriculum may not necessarily allow,” he says. Thompson went on to double major in history and art history.

Though he’d been courted by an investment-banking firm in New York, Thompson says support from the fellowship allowed him to pursue the passion he’d developed at Williams. With the Mellon Mays, he spent three months the summer after his junior year in Cape Town, South Africa, researching HIV/AIDS and public art. The experience led him to apply for and receive a slew of post-graduate awards, including a Thomas J. Watson Fellowship for his project “Listening to the Unheard: AIDS Education and Therapy Through Public Art.” He later received a Fulbright scholarship.

The Mellon Mays experience led Thompson to a Ph.D. at the University of Minnesota. He was then selected by Williams for a prestigious Gaius Charles Bolin Fellowship. Named for the college’s first black graduate, a member of the Class of 1889, the program was created in 1985 as a stepping stone for graduate students from underrepresented groups into the academy. Some 200 people apply each year for one of the two two-year residencies, which provide support for them to finish their dissertations and develop their academic portfolios at Williams.

After a year Thompson was offered a position as an assistant professor in Africana and historical studies at Bard College.

“One day you decide to go to graduate school,” he says, “the support becomes even more critical.”

A PLACE IN THE CLASSROOM

Merida Rúa was working on a Ph.D. in American culture at the University of Michigan in 2003 when Williams appointed her as a Bolin fellow. The college had just began building its Latino/a studies program, and Rúa was a perfect fit. She worked on her dissertation “Claims to ‘The City’: Puerto Rican Latinidad amid Labors of Identity, Community and Belonging in Chicago,” and taught a course. She also received mentoring from professors across academic disciplines, including history, political science and American studies.

“They made me feel like I was part of an intellectual community,” Rúa says. “My colleagues were incredibly generous, asking me tough questions and pushing me to think about my work in different ways.”

In addition to Rúa, Williams has hired five Bolin fellows into tenure-track positions: Armando Vargas in comparative literature; Jacqueline Hidalgo in Latino/a studies and religion; Rhon Manigault-Bryant, now tenured in Africana studies; Shanti Singham, a tenured history professor; and Devyn Spence Benson, now an assistant professor of history and African and African-American studies at Louisiana State University.

Darby English ’96, who in July 2013 was named Starr Director of the Research and Academic Program at the Clark Art Institute, is also a former Bolin fellow.

English, who majored in art history and philosophy, returned to Williams for the residency in 2001 while he was immersed in his graduate work in visual and cultural studies at the University of Rochester.

“It was an ideal setting in which to work on my dissertation full time,” says the Chagrin Falls, Ohio, native. “That kind of time is the ultimate gift for an academic. It also was a huge boon to my process to be among some of the same people who inspired me to pursue an academic career. I learned how to become not just a peer but a friend to those pedestal figures. Having successfully integrated into a community of intellectuals, I was quite secure in the choice I made.”

As a Bolin Fellow, English collaborated with political science and American studies professor Mark Reinhardt, with whom he eventually edited a book and curated an exhibition at the Williams College Museum of Art. English next spent a decade teaching art history at the University of Chicago, where he received tenure in 2007. He became a consulting curator at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 2013. A leading scholar of American and European art with a specialization in works by black artists, he now hopes to strengthen the ties between the Clark’s research and Williams’ academic programs.

As Reed points out, “Many Bolin Fellows do their dissertations in areas that pertain to their own racial or ethnic identity and experiences. Their expertise and scholarship obviously help to expand the curriculum.”

A new postdoctoral program at Williams holds similar promise of transforming the academy. The Creating Connections Consortium (C3) was launched this past year in partnership with the Liberal
Arts Diversity Officers Consortium, an organization co-founded by Reed. C3 is a reciprocal program in which undergraduates from underrepresented groups at 20 liberal arts colleges have the chance to participate in summer research internships at the University of California at Berkeley and Columbia University. Meanwhile, graduate students at those universities can apply for two-year postdoctoral positions at Williams, Middlebury College and Connecticut College. Williams welcomed its first three C3 postdocs in the fall. After their residencies, they’ll be encouraged to apply for faculty positions at any of the participating liberal arts colleges.

Bolin Fellows (and C3 postdocs, eventually) bring their experience of teaching at a small liberal arts college like Williams to dozens of other institutions of higher education across the country, including Boston University, Columbia, Harvard, MIT, Princeton and Stanford.

Thompson says the values Williams instilled in him as an undergraduate and as a Bolin Fellow remain with him.

“The Bolin Fellowship cemented my idea about my place in the classroom and the place of the classroom within my research, both to experiment with ideas and engage with students,” he says. “As a grad student, I sometimes forgot that classrooms aren’t only about imparting knowledge, but that imparting happens through the conversation.”

BEYOND difference

With a third of Williams’ faculty retiring in the next decade and the demographics of the students who might one day take their place shifting, the college is paying close attention to how its pipeline programs may evolve to meet future demand.

One of the most difficult areas in which to recruit are the so-called STEM fields (science, technology, engineering and math), where the percentage of underrepresented faculty remains in the single digits. Williams is exploring ways to enhance the pipeline with existing skills workshops and mentoring. New opportunities like the Luce Research Scholars Program, which provides fellowships for up to eight women conducting scientific research during the summer after their sophomore and junior years, can help to encourage underrepresented students to pursue graduate school in STEM fields.

The college is also looking closely at its pre-frosh summer programs, which are capped to keep the faculty-student ratio low. “We have more interest in these programs than we can meet,” says dean of the faculty Buell. “We have to look at the capacity of our faculty.”

Williams is moving forward deliberately and asking tough questions because, as Reed says, “We’re not just creating diversity. It’s about assessing equity, access and full participation. So we’re ‘X’ percent students of color. Fine. But are those students of color fully participating? We’re ‘X’ percent women. Great. But where do those women show up? Are they leaders for key student organizations, or the representatives on the foremost institutional committees? Are they proportionally represented as majors in physics and chemistry, for instance?”

Inspired by those same questions, the alumni who were launched into the academy through Williams’ pipeline programs are committed to ensuring that students on their own campuses are thriving, too.

Burns says she works to create as many opportunities as she can for her students at Amherst. She encourages them to collaborate with her on research projects, knowing that it’s a critical opportunity for them to gain valuable analytical skills, confidence in their own scholarship and even to earn money for the academic year.

“Now that I’m a professor,” she says, “I realize what a difference I can make.”

Denise DiFulco is a frequent contributor to Williams Magazine. Her last feature story was “A Monumental Achievement” in the fall 2013 issue.
Ethan Zuckerman ’93 once considered himself to be a “cyberutopian.” His career began with successful commercial and nonprofit Internet startups. And he believed the web was “going to make the world smaller and better connected. It was going to lead to more international understanding.”

But in researching his book *Rewire: Digital Cosmopolitans in the Age of Connection*, out this month in paperback, he found the opposite to be true.

“As we’ve gotten access to more information from around the world,” he said during his convocation address at Williams in September, “we’re actually choosing to encounter less of it.”

Zuckerman has made it his mission to figure out why this is the case and how to fix it.
“This is a really interesting moment—the 25th anniversary of the web and the 20th anniversary of the commercial web. I think a lot of us aren’t really happy with what we see. And if we don’t like it, it should be fixable.”

FROM his home in Lanesborough, Mass., Zuckerman writes the blog “My Heart’s in Accra” and runs the citizen media site Global Voices. The media scholar also commutes to Cambridge several days a week as director of the Center for Civic Media, part of the M.I.T. Media Lab.

“This is a really interesting moment—the 25th anniversary of the web and the 20th anniversary of the commercial web. I think a lot of us aren’t real happy with what we see. And if we don’t like it,” Zuckerman says, “it should be fixable.”

Figuring out how to fix the Internet involves an approach Zuckerman has used throughout his career. “I’m not a natural scholar,” he says. “So when I find a problem that I’m interested in, I try to push it forward through a combination of conducting experiments out in the world and reading helpful texts in the field.”

Right now he’s interested in how having access to an abundance of global information is changing the ways in which we engage with the world.

“We have to make thousands of decisions every day about whether we read a story about Ebola, a tweet from Ferguson, a Facebook update from a high school classmate,” he said during his convocation address at Williams. “When we’re given a wealth of choices, we have a really strong tendency to opt for the familiar.”

The result can be something of an echo chamber. It’s a “tribal” instinct, one that “made a whole lot of sense 500 years ago, when we were all living in villages—seeing the same 100 people every day of our lives—and anyone who was from the outside was a threat,” he said in his address. “But it’s a deeply maladaptive strategy for the connected world we live in right now. We may not know anyone in Monrovia, Liberia, but it’s a really short plane flight to the United States.”

Zuckerman had a hunger for the wider world even as a student. Attracted by the promise of the early Internet, the philosophy major was a fixture in the computer lab. But Kusika, the African dance ensemble, was the “center of my community,” he says.

Inspired by Kusika and its founder, Sandra Burton, the college’s director of dance, Zuckerman spent a year after graduation at the University of Ghana on a Fulbright grant, studying xylophone music and gaining an understanding of West African culture.

He returned to the States and got involved with Tripod Inc., one of the first webpage hosting services. The Williamstown-based company was founded by Bo Peabody ’92, Brett Hershey ’94 and economics professor Dick Sabot.

Zuckerman recalls his four years at Tripod in the August 2014 issue of The Atlantic. In his essay “The Internet’s Original Sin,” he recounts how he played a role in the advertising-supported model of the web that he now decries.

“The business model that got us funded was advertising,” he writes. “The model that got us acquired”—by Lycos, in 1998, when Tripod was valued at $58 million—“was analyzing users’ personal homepages so we could better target ads to them.

“Along the way we ended up creating one of the most hated tools in the advertiser’s toolkit: the pop-up ad. I wrote the code to launch the window and run an ad in it. I’m sorry. Our intentions were good.”

After Tripod merged with Lycos, Zuckerman headed back to Ghana to figure out the answer to “what seemed like a silly question. In this little town in Massachusetts, we built a business that had a global audience. Could you do the same thing in Accra?”

The short answer was yes. He co-created GeekCorps, a “Peace Corps for geeks,” where, instead of building bridges and water systems, thousands of volunteers from developed nations mentored Internet service providers and other technology businesses in developing nations, primarily in West Africa.

GeekCorps “brought me out of the commercial web and into the world of tech for social change,” Zuckerman says. “I find the whole nature of the commercial world inhibiting. If you put out a product and it doesn’t work, you pivot. You end up doing a different business than the one you expected to do.” Tripod was initially built to market “tools for life” to recent college grads but turned into a webpage hosting service driven by pop-up ads.

“I’m not interested in pivoting from core values. I’m interested in iterating and figuring out what works,” adds Zuckerman, who spent five years with GeekCorps, now a division of the Executive Service Corps.

“What does the Internet look like if your goal is to protect human rights? To protect free speech?”
ZUCKERMAN made his next career transition from the dot-org world of nonprofits to the dot-edu world of education. He spent time at Harvard Law School’s Berkman Center for Internet and Society, thinking deeply about the “attention economy,” meaning “how the Internet has—and has not—made it easier to find out about the broader world.”

Studies have shown a 30 percent to 50 percent decline in foreign news coverage in U.S. newspapers over the last four decades, which “is really bad news,” Zuckerman says. But if more people than ever in, say, Nigeria, are using the Internet to post updates, opinions, photographs and videos about their daily lives, he says, “Shouldn’t that somehow lead to more information coming out of that country than when there were two or three news correspondents reporting from there?”

The question led to a hypothesis and then to a project. Zuckerman figured he needed to “grease the wheels” to “make it easier for everybody to find the smart Nigerians talking about politics,” thereby attracting U.S. media coverage.

So in 2005 he co-founded Global Voices, now a leader in citizen media, with nearly 900 bloggers and editors. As stated on the organization’s website: “We curate, verify and translate trending news and stories you might be missing on the Internet, from blogs, independent press and social media in 167 countries. Many of the world’s most interesting and important stories aren’t in just one place. Sometimes they’re scattered in bits and pieces across the Internet, in blog posts and tweets, and in multiple languages. These are the stories we accurately report on Global Voices—and translate into up to 30 languages, including Malagasy, Bangla and Aymara.”

Nearly a decade later, Zuckerman says Global Voices has been “an incredible success in terms of being a high-functioning community. But in the sense of having any impact on the media, it’s been a total failure.”

A case in point is coverage of the Arab Spring in Tunisia. Among Global Voices’ bloggers were “a number of Tunisian activists who promoted the protests and helped overthrow the government,” Zuckerman says. “So we were right in the heart of it.”

The American media, however, initially failed to pick up the story. “We’d been sitting there for three weeks waving our arms,” Zuckerman says of Global Voices’ bloggers. “We couldn’t get anybody to report on it.”

Only when it became clear that the Tunisian government would fail did Global Voices staff receive a flood of interview requests from American news outlets. But those three early weeks of media silence, Zuckerman says, constituted an eternity in an age of instantaneous news.

Zuckerman came to realize that boosting the supply of international coverage wasn’t enough. “We had to think about how to increase demand,” he says.

That led him to M.I.T. and his research for his book Rewire and the shedding—almost—of his cyberutopian mantle.

DURING convocation in September, Zuckerman received a Bicentennial Medal for distinguished achievement. President Adam Falk noted some of his many accomplishments: being named a Foreign Policy “top global thinker” and receiving M.I.T. Technology Review’s Technology in the Service of Humanity Award. Falk noted Zuckerman’s dozens of articles, essays and speeches, which include the July 2010 TED talk “Listening to Global Voices,” viewed nearly 530,000 times.

“You have become, in a way, the conscience of the Internet,” Falk said, “pointing out its shortcomings and helping imagine and develop tools through which new media can become not just social, but civic.”

With convocation focused on the dedication of Sawyer Library, Zuckerman spoke of our changing relationships with books and with information more broadly. “It’s directly parallel to the problems librarians have been having since the dawn of time—the problem of engineering serendipity,” he said. “It’s making the library—or, in my case, the Internet—a place where you can take a deep dive into a subject you care about and also … discover something unexpected and life changing.

“We’re always going to have to make choices about who we know, what we read, what we care about,” Zuckerman said. “But we can make decisions to choose a wider world.”

Jill U. Adams is a science journalist who lives in Albany, N.Y.

Teaching to Learn

The students in Susan Langman’s third-grade class at Williamstown Elementary School are trying without success to remove food coloring from water with small, plastic pipettes. But their many exclamations over the impossibility of the task—which simulates removing pollution from the ocean—are cut short when Intekhab Hossain ’17 holds up a crystal-clear glass of water and announces: “I have a pollution-free ocean right here.”

The chorus of “How did you do that?” is quieted when one pupil asks, timidly, “You didn’t put any pollution in there in the first place, did you?” Hossain thanks the child for summing up the point of the day’s lesson—the second in a semester-long inquiry into weather and climate change. In the coming week, Hossain and his co-teacher, Cindy Le ’15, will explain humidity and precipitation using sponges.

Williams students have been teaching and supporting science instruction in area elementary schools for two decades. But the scope of their work will expand dramatically, thanks to a new collaborative venture with the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MCLA) and North Adams Public Schools.

Funded by a four-year, $810,876 grant from the National Science Foundation, the project brings together students from Williams and MCLA with college science professors and teachers in North Adams. They’ll be working to develop instructional units based on the Next Generation Science Standards currently being adopted by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Williams and MCLA students will teach the new curriculum in K-7 classrooms.

The undergraduates and local teachers will also participate in joint professional development to deepen their understanding of the nature of scientific inquiry and science teaching. “We are filling another niche as we connect college students with the elementary schools and allow them to learn science through teaching it,” says MCLA professor Nicholas Stroud, lead investigator of the effort.

Over the summer, Williams and MCLA students began developing hands-on lessons and toolkits like the one Hossain and Le used in Langman’s class. Le, who also taught science to elementary schoolers last year, says she drew from that experience as she worked to update a lesson on the water cycle based on the new standards. “Last year, the lesson involved building a terrarium, but my partner and I couldn’t get the water to evaporate when we tested it,” says the Asian studies and economics major. “So we heated up water in a beaker and showed the students how it condensed on an aluminum lid.”

Le incorporated the beaker experiment into this year’s new lesson plan on the water cycle. “I knew it worked better,” she says.

The weekly lessons are reinforced with reading and language arts activities that correlate with the new science standards, says Jennifer Swoap, director of elementary outreach for the Williams Center for Learning in Action (CLiA), a partner in the project. “Science’s wonderful vocabulary, rich nonfiction reading and clear frameworks for experimentation set the stage for creative thought,” she says. “When kids are asking why and how, we know they are engaged and thinking.”

Says Hossain, who taught English at an orphanage and physics at his old high school in Bangladesh during a gap year before Williams: “I love spending time pondering complicated concepts until I understand them well enough to explain them to anyone.”

—Julia Munemo
A Recipe (Book) for History

Joshua Morrison’s ’16 research of a privately held recipe book assembled by the famous Civil War author and diarist Mary Boykin Chesnut may uncover new details about domestic life in the South.

Chesnut, the wife of a wealthy South Carolina planter and former U.S. senator, was an eyewitness to major developments in the Civil War. Her widely published, detailed narrative of life during wartime in the Confederacy has been the subject of intense study, including in the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War*, by C. Vann Woodward, and the PBS documentary series *The Civil War*, by Ken Burns.

Morrison first learned about Chesnut in the course “History of the Old South,” taught by Williams history professor Charles Dew ’58. Then, during a Thanksgiving dinner with close family friends—the Collinses, who are descendants of Chesnut’s sister—Morrison heard about the manuscript, which had never been shared publicly. He asked to see it.

The book was in Wyoming, where another Chesnut relative lived. The family had it delivered to Morrison’s Chapel Hill, N.C., home during his spring break.

Morrison discovered a treasure trove of material, including approximately 500 recipes clipped from newspapers and 70 written by hand, as well as medicinal remedies, guidance on caring for animals and details about the running of Chesnut’s household.

With the help of Dew and Professor of Russian Darra Goldstein—and with funding from a Russell H. Bostert Memorial Fellowship research grant that gives preference to Williams history majors—Morrison spent last summer poring over the book, visiting archives and meeting with Southern historians and food writers.

The history and Arabic studies major plans to do his senior thesis on the book. He’ll analyze recipes and gather details about cooking techniques, how much help Chesnut had in the kitchen, the availability of different foods and what tools were used to put meals together.

Goldstein, a noted culinary expert and the founder of *Gastronómica: The Journal of Food and Culture*, says many of her peers are excited to see what information Morrison gleans from the cookbook. “Once you start reading the recipes as an entrance to (Chesnut’s) life and times,” she says, “you can excavate all sorts of information about America’s most distinctive regional cuisine, including its roots in African foodways.”

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Creating and Connecting

This month noted poet Craig Dworkin is visiting the Williams College Museum of Art, enlisting students to, as he puts it, “exhaustively collect, catalogue and analyze language found within WCMA’s walls, opening our minds to the oft-unnoticed language around us.”

He’ll then turn the students’ documentation into an original work “that’s part poem, part sociological survey, part architectural analysis.” The resulting piece will be printed in the Publication Studio, an on-demand press that prints, binds and publishes works of all kinds, which is in residency at WCMA through Dec. 19.

Founded in 2009, Publication Studio is based in Portland, Ore., with 11 satellite locations around the U.S. In September, the studio set up shop in WCMA’s rotunda—home of the college’s first freestanding library—as part of The Book Unbound, a yearlong celebration of the dedication of Sawyer Library.

A platform for public and curricular use, the studio is hosting workshops, readings and projects throughout the semester designed to foster discussion about the ever-changing nature of the book.

Delusions of Regime Change in Iraq

Michael MacDonald started writing what would become *Overreach: Delusions of Regime Change in Iraq* (Harvard University Press, October 2014) the day after he returned from a yearlong sabbatical. He’d just completed *Why Race Matters in South Africa* (Harvard University Press, 2006). And the crumbling regime of Saddam Hussein was in the headlines. MacDonald, a professor of political science at Williams since 1983, was captivated.

Though his primary areas of study were apartheid in South Africa and political violence in Northern Ireland, he taught courses on geopolitics in the Middle East with Jackson Professor of Religion William Darrow. Iraq’s history of British Colonialism was similar to those of South Africa and Ireland, he says. And the close ties to Parliament, created when British leaders and settlers moved into all three countries, had lasting effects on their national identities.

MacDonald spent six years writing *Overreach*, delving deeply into the history of Iraq and learning about U.S. counterinsurgency strategy, all while the war there was “a moving target,” he says. He posits in the book that the U.S. was shortsighted in its plans for regime change and reconstruction. Policymakers “wanted regime change,” MacDonald says, “but they didn’t know or agree on what they meant by ‘regime.’” Nor did policymakers anticipate that democracy in Iraq would turn out to mean something far different from the idealized notion of democracy in the U.S.

Now, as ISIS grapples for control over the region, MacDonald says he wants to extend his research and writing on Iraq—possibly via articles or op-ed pieces, or a course on foreign policy in the Middle East.

“The story is not ending,” he says. “There are all these other ideas that piled up as I was writing it.”

The war [in Iraq], however, was a big bet. Why, then, did policymakers make it; why did they get wrong the stakes they were wagering and the odds they were facing; and why did they misunderstand the value to the United States of democracy in Iraq?

The idealizing of interests thesis outlines the answer. The geopolitical motive for war was to entrench American power, and the neoliberal motive was to implant global capitalism in Iraq and its neighbors. But the key to the decision to go to war is that American policymakers did not recognize their interests as interests or their ideals as ideals. Instead, they translated geopolitical and neoliberal interests into ideals and then expected Iraqis would embrace the interests that they idealized as the answer to universal stirrings in the human spirit. Thoroughly befogged by this idealization, American policymakers then lost sight of the very interests that spawned the ideals at the outset. In other words, the United States bumbled into a self-subverting war because policymakers, in an atheoretical, unexamined, obvious-beyond-notice kind of way, conflated American interests and ideals, associated American ideals with universal values and then imagined that the power they had idealized was a godsend to the world (and sincerely expected Iraqis to concur). When Iraqis disagreed, the United States had no fallback position. It had planted the flag in quicksand.

—From *Overreach: Delusions of Regime Change in Iraq* (Harvard University Press, October 2014), by Michael MacDonald, Williams’ Frederick L. Schuman Professor of International Relations

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**Other books**

**Zombies and Calculus.**
Calculus is the ultimate survival tool in this novel about a zombie apocalypse at a liberal arts college in Western Massachusetts.

**The Vault of Dreamers.**
In the first installment of a new psychological thriller series, a first-year student at an art school that doubles as the set of a reality TV show learns what really happens during the 12 hours she and her schoolmates are forced to sleep.

**Belgium: Long United, Long Divided.**
By Samuel Humes ’52. Hurst, 2014.
A 2,000-year history of Belgium explains how the nation developed a sense of identity, common government and a centralized nation-state and why it may be torn apart by the Flemish-Walloon schism.

**Beijing Bastard.**
The American-born author travels to China, the land her parents fled before the Communist takeover in 1949, and discovers a city rebelling against its roots—just as she is.
Why Liberal Arts?

Amid a national conversation about the value of a college degree—and of the liberal arts, specifically—Williams has launched a yearlong effort to examine and discuss the educational experience it provides.

"Why Liberal Arts?: Challenging, Transforming, Connecting" is an initiative of the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) that focuses on how students experience the liberal arts, how they make their way through the curriculum and whether they are taking full advantage of all the college has to offer.

The committee—led by Peter Low, professor of art, and made up of seven faculty members, six students and four staff members—focuses on the college’s curriculum and makes recommendations on policy related to it. This new initiative sees the CEP widening the angle of its lens. "Why Liberal Arts?" arose, in part, because the committee is interested in the reasons behind an increase in double majors and some sense that students feel compelled to graduate with a set of credentials.

Lee Park, who is a professor of chemistry, associate dean of the faculty and past chair of the CEP, says the initiative essentially looks at "what it is we do and, in a broader sense, why we do it."

These broad questions are being explored through public lectures—including one in October titled "Justice, Privilege and Elite Education" by Harry Brighouse, author and University of Wisconsin philosophy and education policy professor—small dinner conversations, op-ed pieces in the student newspaper and a presence on Tumblr (http://williamswhyliberalarts.tumblr.com). It’s all meant to engage students and faculty in questions about why it matters to “think liberally,” Park says.

She adds that students will continually amass the practical skills needed to succeed in careers, but the time they spend in college offers a chance to explore widely. “The hope is that these public discussions will inspire the community to take maximum advantage of the Williams curriculum while they’re here,” Park says.

Follow the “Why Liberal Arts?” initiative on social media throughout the year using #whyliberalarts.

Sex Work and Sports Events

Greg Mitchell has been researching sex workers in Brazil for nearly a decade, beginning with ethnographic studies of male prostitutes and, more recently, studying the marginalization of female sex workers during global sporting events. Now, the professor of women’s, gender and sexuality studies is expanding his focus beyond Brazil.

While working on his Ph.D. in performance studies at Northwestern University, Mitchell interviewed male sex workers in Brazil, where prostitution is legal but poorly regulated, to better understand marketing aimed at gay tourists. Interviews with the men, many of whom identify as heterosexual and support their families through commercial sex, are the basis of Mitchell’s forthcoming book Tourist Attractions: Performing Race & Masculinity in Brazil’s Sexual Economy (University of Chicago Press, 2015).

When Brazil was awarded the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympics, Mitchell and several other researchers founded the Prostitution Observatory at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, hoping to broaden the national conversation about sex workers’ rights. Many of Brazil’s more than 1 million prostitutes say they choose the work for its earning potential but nonetheless face violence and brutalization at the hands of corrupt police.

"With the global eye on Brazil, we knew the government would start to crack down violently to reduce the visibility of the red-light district," Mitchell says. It’s a pattern he observed in the U.K. and South Africa, where police forcibly cleaned up the streets when the Olympics and World Cup, respectively, brought global attention.

Mitchell recently received a National Science Foundation grant to continue his research in Brazil. He’ll also be traveling to South Africa, the U.K. and Russia—host of the Winter Olympics and the 2018 World Cup—hoping to find out what happens after a global sporting event ends. “Does the red light district pop back up?” he asks. “Do the safety networks re-form? Where did the women go, and are they better or worse off now?”

He also wants to know why similar patterns surround global sporting events in other countries and what policies countries—including the U.S. during the Super Bowl—can develop to create safer conditions and protect sex workers.

—Julia Munemo
“Musical Garlands: Ragamala” provides many opportunities for students to learn about South Asian music, culture and history.

Musical Garlands: Ragamala

The sound of a sitar emanates from a first-floor gallery of the Williams College Museum of Art, beckoning visitors to an exhibition of 16 tiny Indian paintings that meld art, music and poetry. The people depicted in the paintings are without expression, but the worlds—and words—around them are rich and colorful.

The paintings are part of the museum’s collection and come from the centuries-old tradition of ragas, which are improvised melodies based on five or six musical notes. Each raga is associated with a different season and a different time of day. The ragas were played in courts across Northern India. Poets personified the ragas, keeping in mind their specific scales, pitches and melodies. Then artists in the late 15th through 19th centuries created paintings of figures inspired by the poetry, depicting kings and their wives, deities and hunting scenes, often inscribing the text of the poem around the edges of their artworks. The paintings were bound into collections—called ragamalas, which is Sanskrit for “garland of ragas”—for the wealthy and powerful to view.
WCMA’s exhibition “Musical Garlands: Ragamala,” on view through Jan. 4, provides many opportunities for Williams students to learn about South Asian music, culture and history. In October, W. Anthony Sheppard, professor of music, presented an overview of the ragas that featured a live performance by Veena and Devesh Chandra, who, as part of the music department’s new offerings in Asian instrument lessons, teach sitar and tabla to students.

Meanwhile, history professor Aparna Kapadia has incorporated the exhibition into her fall-semester course “History and Society in India and South Asia” as a way to demonstrate the aesthetic connection between music and art that emerged in India from the 14th century onward.

“It’s very important to give students an idea of the visuals the court produced,” Kapadia says. The way artists depicted kings, for example—always bigger, often as gods—“gives you a glimpse into the idealized life of a king or court.”

It’s also important, Kapadia says, for students to think about how these paintings came to be museum pieces. “Several ragamalas were originally in the private albums of royal courts but were later bought by collectors of art to bring to a museum,” she says. “It changes their meaning. How does an object (traditionally) used in a ritual become one to appear in a museum space? Do we look at it as art, as a mutual object”—in this case, combining art, poetry and music—“or as a museum piece?”

—Francesca Shanks


Listen to a raga and learn more about its poetic and artistic connections at bit.ly/ragaWCMA.
This past May, the Charles W. Morgan—the last remaining wooden whaling ship in the world—set sail for the first time in nearly a century. Its 38th voyage was unlike any that came before it.

The ship once roamed every corner of the ocean in pursuit of whales. But it spent last summer sailing the New England coast, hosting artists, scholars and scientists—85 in all. Selected by Mystic Seaport, with funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities, these “38th Voyagers” were engaged in a public history project to raise awareness of America’s maritime heritage and to call attention to issues of ocean sustainability and conservation.

I led shipboard science, gathering information on the weather, water, birds, mammals and even trash we encountered along the way. Though we used modern instruments like GPS to determine our location and a microscope to analyze plankton, we recorded our observations in a log much like the ones used by generations of seafarers before us.

We collected plankton with a net and looked at it under a small microscope on board. We plunged thermometers into the water we collected with a bucket. Traditional observations like these were and are important for both safe navigation and finding whales at sea; our log will join the Morgan’s others as a new piece of history in Mystic Seaport’s collection.

I also coordinated a group of nine 38th Voyagers who took part in a day sail out of Provincetown, Mass., to the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary on July 11.

At the sanctuary we witnessed minke and humpback whales—the first whales to be seen from the Morgan’s decks in nearly a century. It was a whale watch like no other.

The day was filled with lively discussions. Beth Schultz, a poet and Melville scholar, spoke passionately about whale poop with biologist Joe Roman. Schultz’s project was inspired by the smells she remembered from a 1975 whale watch, and Roman has spent years documenting the importance to the ecosystem of whale “fertilization” at the ocean’s surface.

Midway through the afternoon, I helped another 38th Voyager map ocean currents by deploying GPS-enabled drifters, a modern version of a message in a bottle, while another voyager worked on melodies inspired by the sounds of the rig. We were all collecting data: the scientist with a bucket, the artist with watercolors, the journalist with a notebook.

Since then, my group has produced a great deal of work based on its experience. Schultz has finished 19 new poems in the voice of Melville’s Ishmael. String musician and NOAA biologist Gary Wikfors has composed 16 original melodies. Artist and animator Evan Turk has created dozens of pen-and-ink and watercolor illustrations. Middle school teacher Taylor Sahl is producing a video. Award-winning photographer Barbara Bosworth has made large-format prints. And University of Connecticut oceanographer Mike Whitney has tracked the surface drifters we released, which have now traveled hundreds of miles.

Yet the voyage is hardly over for any of us; we all continue to process our “data.” Our journey on the Morgan was designed to represent many perspectives, an interdisciplinary approach very similar to that of Williams-Mystic. This is no accident. Susan Funk, the executive vice president of Mystic Seaport, is one of several Williams-Mystic alumni heavily involved in the 38th Voyage. Mystic Seaport asked voyagers to examine every aspect of the journey—to consider the perspectives of those who sailed this ship in the past and to think deeply about how whales, the environment and society are connected today.

What have I learned so far from the voyage? From a scientific perspective, you may be disappointed to hear that we didn’t discover a new whale species, detect a toxic algae bloom or trace an unknown oil

Uncharted Waters

By Lisa Gilbert
spill. What we were able to do was document some physical, chemical and biological properties of a portion of the North Atlantic at a moment when every baseline measurement is crucial for comparison as we watch the ocean change and consider our roles in these changes.

More broadly, the 38th Voyage reminds us of the value of many voices. The voyagers have recorded their thoughts and their findings for future generations studying America’s relationship with the sea. They’ve shared their passion with each other and posed a great challenge to us all: to learn from our past and try to see a sustainable future for whales and for ourselves from as many perspectives as possible—which, as it happens, is exactly what we try to do each semester with our Williams-Mystic students.

Lisa Gilbert is an associate professor of geosciences and marine science. She has been teaching at the Maritime Studies Program of Williams College and Mystic Seaport since 2002. As part of the Williams-Mystic program, she regularly sails as chief scientist in the Atlantic and Pacific oceans and leads interdisciplinary field seminars to changing coastlines in the U.S., including those of Louisiana, California, the Pacific Northwest and Hawaii.

Whale Tales

Shortly after moving to Arrowhead, his farmhouse on the outskirts of Pittsfield, Mass., Herman Melville wrote to a friend: “I have a sort of sea-feeling here in the country, now that the ground is covered in snow. I look out my window in the morning when I rise as I would out a port-hole of a ship in the Atlantic.”

The year was 1850, the peak of commercial whaling in the U.S. The bustling ports of Nantucket and New Bedford, Mass., were the industry’s early centers; across the state, Melville contemplated the view from his study of a snowy Mount Greylock, which is said to have inspired his white whale.

Today several important works by Melville, along with books about whaling that influenced him, are part of the collection at the Chapin Library. Among them is a first edition of Owen Chase’s Narrative of the Most Extraordinary and Distressing Shipwreck of the Whale-Ship Essex, of Nantucket, an important book in the literature of whaling and a primary source for Melville in writing Moby-Dick, says Wayne Hammond, assistant librarian at the Chapin.

Chase’s descendant O. Stuart Chase ’54 gave the book and the rest of his whaling collection to the Chapin in 2004. A retired headmaster of the Eaglebrook School in Deerfield, Mass., the alumnus “wants more people to be able to see it,” Hammond says. “And he believes in the value of using rare books to serve the college’s educational mission.”

The gift added important context about whaling to the library’s Melville works, which in 2001 were the basis for an exhibition commemorating the 150th anniversary of Moby-Dick. The Chapin holds most of the author’s writings in first editions, as well as several of the best-illustrated editions of Moby-Dick, Hammond says.

“Melville is a major American author,” he says, “and we’re interested in books that influenced him but also more generally with the economic and social aspects of whaling.”

The Chapin’s collection, Hammond adds, “provides historical background for the continuing issue of commercial whaling and wildlife preservation.”