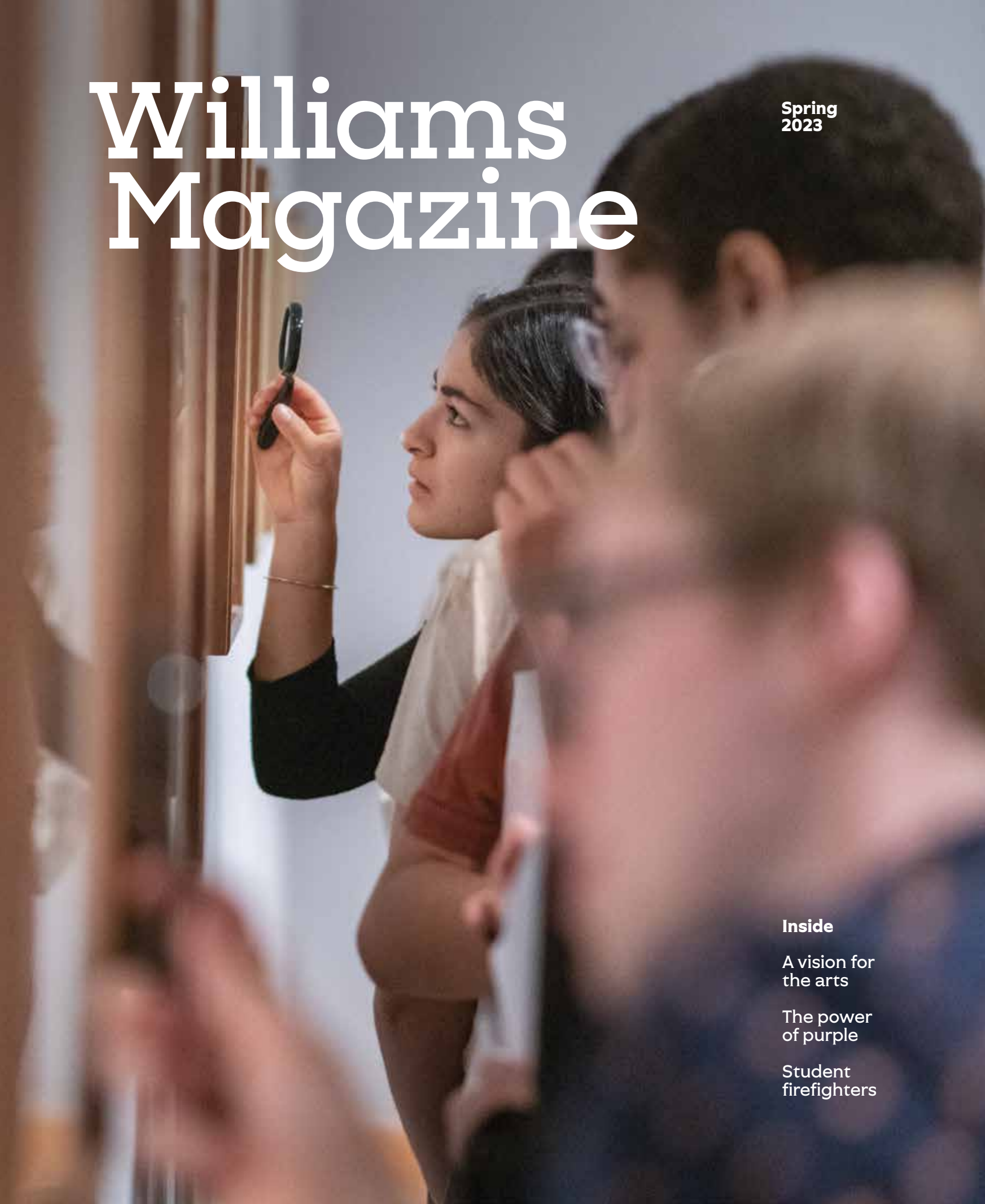
# Williams Magazine

Spring
2023



**Inside**

Williams College

**Spring 2023**
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**"Having a good mentor and being involved in interesting research has made me confident in my decision to pursue science as a career."**
*Read more from Shania Gonzalez '25 on page 32.*

**Heather Hansen** is an award-winning, independent journalist and author based in Colorado. Her latest books are *Walking Great Britain* and *Wildfire: On the Front Lines With Station 8*.

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FRONT COVER:
*Object Lab in the Williams College Museum of Art*
*Photograph by Beth Mickalonis*

# Inside the Issue






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# On Campus

## Global Scholars

Twelve students will travel to Paris in January 2024 as the inaugural cohort of the college's new Global Scholars program.

Magnús Bernhardsson and Aparna Kapadia, the program's co-directors, selected the group from a pool of 68 students who submitted applications in March—"a remarkable number that represents about 12 percent of the first-year class," says Bernhardsson, the Brown Professor of History. "It suggests that there's a lot of interest and demand for this type of experiential learning, despite the stringent academic requirements to participate in the program."

Among the requirements are an introductory course on global perspectives, four to five foreign language classes and an independent study on a topic selected with a program faculty advisor.

Under the umbrella of Williams' longstanding Global Studies program, this new academic initiative—an outcome of the college's Strategic Plan—takes an interdisciplinary approach to exploring important global trends and issues. Students begin participating in the multi-year program at the start of their second year and are expected to continue until they graduate. Throughout, they will receive regular mentorship and will have access to funds for research, internships and intensive language programs.

"As Global Scholars, students will gain deeper and more nuanced perspectives on not just themselves and their areas of study but also the rich complexities and interconnectedness of our ever-changing world," says Kapadia, associate professor of history. "Learning to be—and, ultimately, becoming—a global citizen adds value to a liberal arts education that can't be understated."

Illustration by The Project Twins

## Curricular Expansion

Starting in the fall of 2023, Williams will offer a new major in Africana studies and a concentration in Asian American studies. Both are the culmination of extensive advocacy, research and planning and were approved by faculty votes last fall.

Students have pressed for an Africana studies major for decades, advocacy that initially led to the creation of an Afro-American studies program in 1969. The new major builds on the current Africana studies concentration, which will no longer be offered starting in 2026, once the new major is fully implemented.

"While the new major places Williams at the forefront of liberal arts education, there remains an urgency to continue to expand the scope of Africana studies for our learning environment," says James Manigault-Bryant, chair and professor of Africana studies.

Beginning in the early 1990s, students also advocated for developing an Asian American studies program.

"Something this momentous needs to be a collaborative effort, and I'm so glad to say it was," says Jan Padios, chair and associate professor of American studies, who presented the proposal for the Asian American studies program to the faculty in December.

She adds, "I am not alone in hoping that Africana studies and Asian American studies at Williams become a way to strengthen how students and the larger campus community understand race and racism, colonialism and empire, immigration and diaspora, war and militarism, and so much more."

## New Leadership

Lara Shore-Sheppard, the Kimberly A. '96 and Robert R. '62 Henry Professor of Economics, will become the new dean of the faculty starting July 1. She succeeds Safa Zaki, the John B. McCoy and John T. McCoy Professor of Psychology, who has been named the 16th president of Bowdoin College.

Deputy Chief Investment Officer Abigail Wattley '05 will succeed Chief Investment Officer Collette Chilton, also starting July 1. Wattley has been a member of the investment team since 2007. Chilton will serve as senior advisor to the trustees' Investment Committee during the transition.

*From top: Lara Shore-Sheppard and Abigail Wattley '05*

## Affording Change

"As we serially expanded our aid program, we weren't thinking just in terms of dollars and cents; we saw aid as an inclusion strategy, and we crafted our aid programs to be welcoming and supportive of the people we wanted to be at Williams," President Maud. S. Mandel said upon accepting the inaugural 1vyG Institutional Changemaker Award earlier this year at the University of Pennsylvania. The award recognizes administrators who have set new norms for how higher education supports first-generation and low-income students, according to the organization's website.

**"We saw aid as an inclusion strategy, and we crafted our aid programs to be welcoming and supportive of the people we wanted to be at Williams."**

Mandel was recognized for her work making Williams the first college or university in the U.S. to offer all-grant financial aid. Launched in April 2022, the initiative permanently eliminated loans, campus work requirements and mandatory summer contributions for all aided students.

"We're still in the first year of the all-grant program," Mandel told those gathered at the 1vyG event. "But the early evidence is that it's helping."

## ENDURING RECOGNITION

Like news of a solar eclipse, the Nov. 20 passing of Field Memorial Professor of Astronomy Jay Pasachoff made headlines in media outlets across the country, including *The New York Times, The Boston Globe* and *The Economist*—all of which highlighted the astronomer's passion for traveling the globe to study major celestial events. Those in the Williams community who knew him well also paid tribute to his legacy and life's work, which included observing 74 solar eclipses, 36 of them total.

Kevin Reardon '92, a scientist at the National Solar Observatory and an adjunct professor at the University of Colorado Boulder, and Dan Seaton '01, a principal scientist in the department of solar and heliospheric physics at the Southwest Research Institute, honored their former professor by completing an article about sunspots that Pasachoff began prior to his death and publishing it in *Physics Today*.

And at the monthly faculty meeting in February, Karen Kwitter, the Ebenezer Fitch Professor of Astronomy, Emerita, read a tribute to her friend and former colleague. Listing Pasachoff's many accomplishments, she noted, "Of all Jay's honors, the one I find most fitting is the naming of an asteroid after him—formally, Asteroid 5100 Pasachoff—a seven-mile-wide space rock that has been and will be orbiting the sun for eons. That's enduring recognition."

*Photograph courtesy of Pasachoff family*

## ON THE BOOKSHELF


A homestay in Damascus more than a decade ago planted the seeds for José Ciro Martínez's '10 new book, an ethnographic study of the Jordanian state through the lens of the staple *khubz 'arabi*—Arabic for pita bread.

In *States of Subsistence: The Politics of Bread in Contemporary Jordan*, Martínez takes a deep dive into the welfare program that ensures the leavened flatbread's widespread availability. More than 9 million residents of Jordan eat a total of about 10 million loaves per day.

Martínez spent a year during his homestay working in a bakery in the capital city, Amman. "The grind was addictive, the camaraderie unexpected," he says of the experience in an April 2022 interview with the Arab Studies Institute's digital magazine *Jadaliyya*. "As an object of inquiry itself, bread has been largely overlooked. And so I wondered, what would an account that centered subsidized bread illuminate and reveal?"

In *States of Subsistence*, published by Stanford University Press in April 2022, Martínez investigates the entities large and small, from bakeries to bureaucracies, that undergird subsidized bread. Though states are usually understood to be structured and solid, he found a system with "ambiguous regulations, haphazard standardizations, convoluted decisions and fluctuating ingredients," as he tells *Jadaliyya*. "The book seeks not just to interrogate the state's apparent unity or expose its inconsistencies but to think through some of the ways the state maintains its solidity and inevitability."

A lecturer in politics at the University of York whose research explores the politics of food, welfare, drugs and political authority in the Middle East and North Africa, Martínez spoke at Williams this past April during a colloquium sponsored by the Oakley Center. The center supports research across the humanities and social sciences.

As an undergraduate, Martínez received Watson and Dr. Herchel Smith fellowships among other honors and awards. In 2013, he was named both a Gates and a Fulbright Scholar.

*See more books from our community at today.williams.edu/books.*

# Women of Williams

Three hundred alumnae of all ages and stages of life gathered on campus in May for the three-day Women of Williams conference. Celebrating more than 50 years of coeducation at Williams, alumnae connected, shared stories and learned from one another at sessions addressing women's health, climate change, career pivots and more.

*To view conference content and learn more about the history of coeducation at Williams, visit alumni.williams.edu/women.*



# First Destinations

Six months after their graduation, most members of the Class of 2022 report that they're employed full time or in graduate school and are happy with what they're doing—and Williams helped get them there. The information comes from the most recent Class of '68 Center for Career Exploration's First Destinations survey and is based on answers from nearly 80 percent of the class, as of January 2023.

"We were blown away by this year's results," says Don Kjelleren, executive director of the '68 Center. "They speak volumes to the viability of a Williams liberal arts degree in today's world."

**92%**
of recent Williams graduates have plans within six months of graduation

**81%**
had internships as students—and of those,

**69%**
had multiple internships

**77%**
connected with Williams alumni for their internship or post-graduation plans

**75%**
are employed across a vast range of roles, in dozens of industries and across a wide field of organizations, from small start-ups to Fortune 100 firms

**5%**
received prestigious fellowships, including one alum who will travel to Australia, India, Senegal and South Africa to study traditional medicine and its contributions to the global health field

**$93,110**
is the average compensation package, with tech and finance reaching

**$180,000**
and higher

**13%**
are enrolled in graduate school

*Read the full details of the First Destinations report at bit.ly/first_destinations.*

Illustration by Dean Rohrer

# Together at Williams



**OPPOSITE:**
*Students celebrate the grand opening of the Williams Outing Club Bouldering Barn, located in the garage of Pond House.*

**THIS PAGE, FROM TOP:**
*On the final day of his weeklong artist residency at the Williams College Museum of Art, Lama Tashi Norbu (left) and students Daisy Rosalez '25 (center) and Isaac Rivera '26 prepare for a Tibetan Sacred Tattoo performance with smudging, a Native American ceremonial practice.*

*A flock of sheep visits campus to mark the start of Earth Week and spark research and conversation among classics students and others about the ancient Roman celebration Parilia.*

Photographs by Bradley Wakoff

# The Power of Purple

by
Maud S. Mandel

As she begins her sixth year as president and faculty member, Maud S. Mandel discusses how the college is actively addressing the challenges and harnessing the opportunities shaping Williams, higher education and society.



**AS AN EDUCATOR**, I love challenging students to answer difficult questions. And as a lifelong student, I love being challenged to answer them myself. Wrestling with complex issues is a pleasure in its own right and an opportunity to hone important skills: the ability to assimilate information, assess evidence, think creatively and communicate clearly. Regardless of who we are—from the newest student to the most senior faculty member or administrator—the experience makes us into more nuanced thinkers and fuller versions of ourselves.

At the end of my first five years as president and faculty member, I can happily confirm that Williams continues to excel in challenging our students. Over and over I see them, guided by faculty (and often staff and alumni), contending with intellectual and ethical complexity. In disciplines from art to economics, today's students bring to bear on the big questions of the day the same earnest curiosity, hunger for learning and yearning for truth that we have long valued and sought to nurture.

It is our duty and privilege to support each new cohort in developing these qualities. The demands of a rapidly changing world require that we reaffirm our commitment and make sure we are using this education to prepare students for their lives and careers.

To this end, I have developed a set of questions that I think we, as a great learning community, should be asking ourselves. The answers are distilled from our strategic planning process and societal conversations about the present and future of higher education. And they include examples of our ongoing efforts to become, as it were, a fuller version of ourselves.

## What should a well-rounded liberal arts education look like today?

As a president, a professor and a parent, I cannot count the number of times I have benefited from my training as a historian. It enables me to look at evidence, consider precedents and parallels, and imagine how human processes unfold over the *longue durée*. Like many humanists, I also think such an education prepares students extraordinarily well for the world of work. Williams, with its investment in small class sizes and high faculty-student ratios, intensive learning and advanced research opportunities, is especially well equipped to introduce students to the virtues of the liberal arts.

We do this particularly by inviting students to become partners in the process of discovery: changing them from consumers of ideas into producers of them. We are expanding labs, tutorials, funded research and other hands-on learning opportunities and investing in experiential learning through long-standing programs such as Winter Study and new opportunities like the Summer Arts and Museums Immersion Program, in which students gain experiences with careers in the arts during nine weeks of full-time, paid work at the Williams College Museum of Art (WCMA).

Indeed, Williams' commitment to the arts is central to our model. Many of our alumni in finance, medicine or media have told me about being transformed by encounters with art at Williams and how those experiences opened them to new ways of understanding the world—often while helping them in their careers, too.

WCMA is a center for this work on campus. In the Object Lab, for example, faculty and students in 14 courses this year engaged with our world-class collection in an endless variety of ways: from considering the importance of perspective to studying the properties of materials. Demand for access to the collection from courses across the curriculum has expanded beyond our current capacity in Lawrence Hall, which is no longer ideal for continued display and conservation. A new museum and center for education in the arts will be capacious enough to support our superb program in art and art history, enable use of WCMA's holdings by students in a vast array of disciplines and invite public consideration through opportunities for innovative work in collections, exhibitions and community programming.

**UPDATE ON WCMA AND THE ARTS:** As the centerpiece of an arts-infused community that cultivates close relationships among scholars, artists and students, the Williams College Museum of Art (WCMA) is a catalyst for studying art and, by extension, the world through a lens that spans time and discipline. As the college's approach to teaching art history has evolved (see "Art Work," p. 12), so too have the museum's collection and the opportunities for all students to engage with art regardless of their academic interests.

After years of planning, Williams has partnered with SO-IL, an architecture firm that thinks boldly about arts and education and is a leader in sustainable design, to develop a new museum building designed for teaching to replace the historic facility it has outgrown. Located on the site of the former Williams Inn, at the intersections of routes 2 and 7, the new building is slated to open for the 2026-2027 academic year in celebration of WCMA's centennial.

## How can students be taught to appreciate their connections and responsibilities to their communities, both local and global?

The "Purple Bubble" is and probably always was a myth. New members of our community have never abandoned their beliefs, relationships or identities at the campus gates. For decades, the Davis Center (previously the Multicultural Center) has served as a campus home where students can explore who they are and who they want to be in the world

and to engage with peers—often across quite significant types of personal differences. With a major new home slated to open in the fall of 2024, plans are underway to expand these programs further and to support the vibrant development of both campus community and campus communities, plural.

Complementing the Davis Center's work on campus and regionally, our new Global Scholars program will give students extraordinary experience exploring critical global trends and issues via a multi-year, cohort-based combination of interdisciplinary courses, intensive language studies, research, travel and study away opportunities, and post-graduate projects [see "Global Scholars," p. 2].

Students are already showing strong interest. Sixty-eight of them—12% of the first-year class—applied for one of 12 spots in the inaugural cohort. Starting in the fall, those students will take a course on global perspectives together as preparation to spend Winter Study in Paris. They will then move as a group through the rest of their time at Williams, taking four or five foreign language courses and completing an independent study project, among other work. The potential learning opportunities from this cohort-based approach are tremendous.

**UPDATE ON THE DAVIS CENTER:** A $20 million expansion and renovation of the Davis Center (formerly the Multicultural Center) is due to be completed in early 2024. The three buildings that served nearly two dozen student groups on campus will grow in size by nearly 8,000 square feet, creating an inclusive, sustainable and accessible hub of activity and programming.

The growth of the Davis Center's physical home and the expansion of programs and initiatives within it reflect Williams' deep commitment to ensuring that students, faculty and staff of all identities and perspectives thrive. Learn more about the Davis Center Initiative at giving.williams.edu/davis-center.

## How should Williams equip students to become independent thinkers, resistant to the pressures of categorization and polarization?

Across the country and around the world, educators and policymakers are asking what needs to be done to teach students to listen actively, think critically and debate their views confidently. Such work happens every day in Williams classrooms. In my own courses, I have pressed students to discuss issues such as the role of historical memory in politics and public policy. Indeed, I think that our emphasis on small classes, intensive learning and research make Williams an appealing setting for such work. And thanks to the new Rice Center for Teaching [see "Excellent Teaching," p. 22], faculty now have a place where they can exchange ideas and practices for teaching such skills and fostering intellectual exchange in their classrooms.

**"We can lead by demonstrating the value of principled exchange and by valuing such experience as an educational outcome."**
—PRESIDENT MAUD S. MANDEL

Beyond the classroom, many students are also involved in campus conversations about how values that people often see as conflicting—such as free inquiry and inclusion, academic rigor and wellness, and participatory culture and effective decision making—can actually coexist and reinforce each other. Going forward, I would like us to ensure that we are providing these opportunities to *every* student, equivalent to the way we provide experience with research, analysis, communication and so on. We can lead by demonstrating the value of principled exchange and by valuing such experience as an educational outcome.

## How can we ensure that a Williams education teaches students to value their physical, psychological and spiritual well-being in parallel to their intellectual and professional aspirations?

A crucial role of a college is to prepare students to live well. We excel at this through our liberal arts approach to academics, and we are devoting similar attention and resources to providing students the skills they need to support their physical and mental well-being.

Most if not all of our students participate in club and intramural sports, the Outing Club, yoga classes and other physical activities. Forty percent of students are members of our varsity teams, for whom we define success not only in terms of records and trophies but also character, capacity for teamwork and fair competition, leadership and strategic thinking.

Our Integrative Wellbeing Services team does field-leading work in supporting our students' mental health and wellness. Their efforts are complemented by our Chaplains' Office, the Davis Center and many other departments on campus. We are furthering our investment in suitable programs and facilities—including an upcoming overhaul of our field house. All of this contributes to a campus-wide vision of student wellness that prioritizes care for mind, body and spirit in whichever ways a student feels are best suited to their life and interests.

## Who should have access to this ideal of education?

The liberal arts emerged as a training ground for lifelong engagement in a democratic society. Thousands of years later, education is still a major gateway to career success and an engaged life. And now, more than ever, we know the role it plays in preparing students for the work of building an inclusive, equitable world. Those opportunities ought to be available to any student with the academic dedication and intellectual curiosity to succeed. Through our pioneering All-Grant Financial Aid program and commitment to a broad vision of what we call true affordability, Williams has again led the nation in reducing financial barriers to an excellent education for low- and middle-income families.

We are not finished. As I suggested in a speech at the University of Pennsylvania earlier this year, in education one never gets to the point of having all the answers. Our satisfaction comes from continually working toward the next set of still-better questions. Having taken a major stride forward with true affordability, we are now in a strong position to look to the next horizon for access. For Williams, this will include efforts to attract community college transfers, veterans and other nontraditional students whose journey to Williams may not be linear but who are ready to make the most of what we have to offer—and whose life experiences contribute to campus diversity in many ways.

**VALUING ARTS AND HUMANITIES** in the liberal arts. Teaching students to build campus and global communities. Cultivating inquisitive, independent thinkers. Encouraging the development of mind, body and spirit. Ensuring affordable access to all this and more. A central duty of leadership—and we are all leaders in this together—is to imagine timely approaches to such timeless goals. The projects I have just described here are but a few examples of how we are doing so at Williams.

I am often asked why I am so optimistic about this work, when the value of what we do is being challenged from every side. My answer is that I see that challenge as an opportunity rather than a threat—an invitation to freshly rearticulate the importance of our work and to ensure that our methods are both true to who we are as an institution and relevant to the needs of our students and society today.

That responsibility includes the work, both angsty and joyful, of teaching students to engage with complexity. In lieu of simple binaries—black or white, pro or con, the metaphorical red pill or blue pill—Williams will continue to demonstrate the Power of Purple: an educational vision spacious enough to contain multitudes, visionary enough to educate each of them well and excellent enough to earn their devotion in exchange for ours to them.

**UPDATE ON TRUE AFFORDABILITY:** In April 2022, Williams became the first college in the country to eliminate loans and work requirements for all students receiving financial aid. The goal was to level the playing field so all students can participate fully in campus life while relieving pressure on families. The all-grant initiative increases the college's financial aid budget by $6.75 million annually to $77.5 million—one of the most generous per capita in the nation.

The all-grant initiative is just the latest development in the ongoing work to make Williams truly affordable. The college has long been committed to attracting exceptional candidates regardless of their ability to pay and to meeting 100% of students' demonstrated need. In recent years, the college has expanded its financial aid program to cover all kinds of costs beyond tuition, room and board, including career preparation, health insurance, study away and textbooks. Williams adjusted financial aid calculations to better reflect the financial circumstances of low- and middle-income families and expanded funding for unpaid summer internships, Winter Study opportunities and other activities that take place outside the academic year.

**UPDATE ON NONTRADITIONAL STUDENTS:** As part of its broader work to ensure access and affordability and to diversify the student body, Williams is committed to building a sustainable program to enroll about a dozen U.S. military veteran, community college transfer and other students who do not apply to college directly out of high school in each entering class.
These students bring to campus real-world experiences and a commitment to pursuing higher education.

The college is developing and strengthening partnerships with organizations that serve as pipelines for nontraditional students, including the Warrior-Scholar Project, which offers a summer "boot camp" for military veterans to learn about liberal arts colleges. In addition to allocating about $4.2 million annually in financial aid for this group, Williams is exploring ways to support students who need more flexible living arrangements and developing initiatives including a transfer student orientation and summer academic bridge programs.

1



The art history department and college museum share an expansive, multidisciplinary vision for the arts at Williams.

BY LARA EHRLICH

# ART WORK

Two students huddle over an image depicting musicians shaking tambourines, drunken men lolling in bushes and revelers in turbans dancing at a tavern party overseen by angels.

In this 16th-century folio, *Allegory of Worldly and Otherworldly Drunkenness*, Persian painter Sultan Muhammad illustrates verses by the poet Hafiz with a sense of humor that, many students in the class acknowledge, stands in contrast to their ideas about Islam.

1 ALLEGORY OF WORLDLY AND OTHERWORLDLY DRUNKENNESS, *Folio from the Divan of Hafiz. ca. 1531–33. Opaque watercolor, ink and gold on paper. Jointly owned by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY, USA and Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Harvard University. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Stuart Cary Welch Jr., 1988. 1988.430 + L.2019.55*

2

"One of the major prohibitions in Islam is alcohol," Williams professor Murad Mumtaz explains to the students in his tutorial, What Is Islamic Art? "So the question is, how is this art Islamic?"

He goes on to explain that the role of alcohol in Muhammad's painting is more complex than it first appears. The angels swooping down to offer wine to the revelers are symbolic of divine love and inspiration, he says.

The discussion, the painting and the very fact of the course itself all illustrate a substantial shift in how art history is taught at Williams. It's an evolution that began decades ago and continues to take place throughout the discipline, globally. Art historians are reconfiguring the so-called "canon"—works of a given artist, period or school, typically from a Eurocentric aesthetic and practice, that are accepted as intellectual anchor points by scholars and connoisseurs alike. Areas of study, and scholars' intellectual approaches to them, have broadened to include African, Indian, Latinx and Indigenous art and artists, among others.

> "Art is not a passive, consumable topic. It's put to work to help answer questions that have been serious forever."
>
> —MICHELLE APOTSOS, art department co-chair and chair of art history

"Most of our courses put art in conversation with social questions, political questions and questions of identity and faith that students have," says Michelle Apotsos, art department co-chair and chair of art history. "Art is not a passive, consumable topic. It's put to work to help answer questions that have been serious forever."

### A NUANCED INTERPRETATION

Mumtaz's spring-semester tutorial, cross-listed with religion, introduces students to a range of faiths, cultures and countries that have contributed to Islamic art's own 1,400-year evolution. Students consider various traditions, comparing Western art historiography with traditions that arose simultaneously in the Ottoman Empire, China and South Asia. They also examine how a variety of artworks, from ancient manuscripts and mosque architecture to Sufi graffiti and prayer mats, are used and interpreted.

In another spring course, Abstraction in Action: Global Modern and Contemporary Art, Assistant Professor of Art Mari Rodríguez Binnie and her students explore how at various historical moments "abstraction has signaled formalist rupture, cultural co-optation, revolutionary politics as well as racial, feminist and queer critique," according to the course description. A specialist in modern and contemporary art with an emphasis on Latin America, Binnie also teaches courses including the Postwar Avant-Gardes, Cold War Aesthetics in Latin America and Intro to Latin American and Latinx Art.

"There is a hunger for these kinds of examinations and critical analyses of the canon," says Binnie, who, along with Mumtaz, joined the faculty about five years ago. Their scholarship—together with that of Apotsos, who specializes in African and Afro-Islamic art and architecture, and of two new hires in East Asian and Native American and Indigenous arts expected to join the faculty in the fall—reflects an increasingly expansive and multidisciplinary vision for art history.

"Western European art history is part of our history," says Mumtaz, who is originally from Pakistan and is also a visual artist trained in the traditional practice of North Indian miniature painting. "At a time when we are constantly polarizing ourselves and others, I'd like for students to develop nuanced interpretation and, through that, gain empathy for individuals they might not agree with. We should acknowledge the coexistence of other histories that need to be engaged with equally. It shouldn't be this versus that."

Adds E.J. Johnson '59, the Amos Lawrence Professor of Art, Emeritus, "Today the world is not as focused on Europe and North America. There is obviously a future for art history, and the way it's taught needs to change with the people who teach it. The whole discipline has changed, and all for the better."

Johnson says that expansiveness has long been an element of Williams' approach to art history, which has served as a conduit to the art world for many who never considered studying the subject. During the 1960s and 1970s, for example, Johnson's course European Art Before 1700 was so popular that it averaged 200 students a semester.

Williams' art department rose to prominence as a leader—if not the leader—of the field as it emerged after World War II. (Before the 1930s, art history was rarely taught in the U.S.) The program flourished under S. Lane Faison Jr., Class of 1929, William Pierson, and Whitney Stoddard, Class of 1935. Playfully referred to as the "Holy Trinity," the trio of professors introduced many students to the field, students who would go on to become leaders at museums and galleries including the Chicago Art Institute, MASS MoCA, the Museum of Modern Art, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation and the Williams College Museum of Art (WCMA). These alumni, in turn, came to be known as the "Williams Art Mafia."

Williams continues to feed its graduates into museum and gallery leadership, a pool that has grown more diverse over time. According to a 2022 report by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, women now constitute 66% of museum leaders, and 20% of leadership are people of color. But there are still imbalances as museums reckon with equity in pay, representation across different areas of work and types of institutions, racism and sexism.

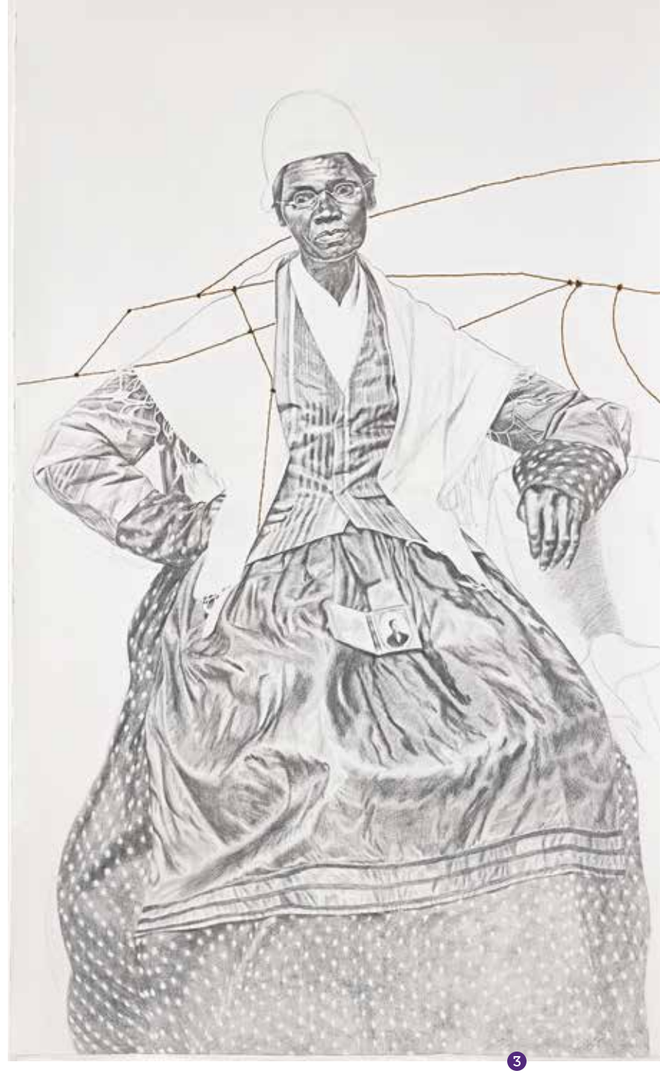
Williams arts educators and leaders agree that more work is needed to ensure that art history as both a discipline and a career is inclusive and representative.

"We're taking a hard look at not only who we are as a community but also the community that we're meant to serve," Apotsos says. "We're focusing on creating a department where students can see themselves reflected as not just participants in these histories but in many cases as authors and facilitators as well."

### CLOSE COLLABORATION

Encouraging these types of understandings in both theory and practice is also a goal for WCMA. Not surprisingly, the museum's strategic plan—written in anticipation of its centennial in 2026—echoes much of the vision for the art history department. It includes nurturing cross-disciplinary arts, diversifying the field of arts leaders, "involving every Williams student with the museum" and "creating experiences with art that inspire lifelong learning."

"Activating the collection" is another goal—something that happens naturally when professors in art history and many other disciplines engage the museum and its collection in their teaching.



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2 KEENE VALLEY, ADIRONDACKS, *1876. Oil on canvas. Hermann Fuechsel, born 1833 in Brunswick, Germany; died 1915 in New York City, N.Y. Museum purchase, proposed by students in the course Acquiring Art: Selecting and Purchasing Objects for WCMA, fall 2015, through the Fulkerson Fund for Leadership in the Arts. M.2015.20*

3 SOJOURNER TRUTH, *2022. Silverpoint on prepared paper with gold thread and embroidery by Sabrina Nelson. Mario Moore, born 1987 in Detroit, Mich. Museum purchase, Wachenheim Family Fund. M.2022.20*

"Direct study of works of art is key to art history," says Pamela Franks, the Class of 1956 Director of WCMA. By looking closely at an original object, she says, students can observe its materiality, condition and scale along with the techniques used in its creation—something they can't get by looking at slides in a lecture or reproductions in books.

Object Lab, a long-standing collaboration between WCMA and faculty members from a variety of disciplines, is a dedicated gallery space in the museum where students can study art up close. The space can hold an entire class for one or several sessions in the museum, or students can visit independently to view the artwork associated with their course—and all the other courses making use of the gallery that semester. It's not uncommon to see Object Lab exhibitions for courses in environmental studies, history, neuroscience and political science alongside those for art history.

Faculty can draw upon the museum's 15,000-piece collection, which holds a range of artworks from Egyptian grave pots dating to 3800-3000 BCE to the 2022 multimedia piece *Sojourner Truth* by Detroit-based figurative painter Mario Moore.

In addition to Object Lab, the museum offers many other ways for students to access its collection, including internships for undergraduates and graduate students as well as exhibitions of seniors' work during their final spring semester. In March, WCMA partnered with Williams' Asian American Students in Action group for an Ekphrastic poetry workshop. Students wrote poetry in response to Tibetan Buddhist thangka paintings on view in the exhibition "Across Shared Waters: Contemporary Artists in Dialogue With Tibetan Art From the Jack Shear Collection," which runs through July 16.

The collaborations inform the museum's work to ensure that the collection represents the full range and diversity of the community at Williams and beyond. Another priority for WCMA is acquiring works by previously underrepresented artists, Franks says. A 2017 gift from Clarence Otis '77 and his wife, Jacqui Bradley, for example, has facilitated the purchase of works by Black artists, including photographer James Van Der Zee, who documented the lives of African Americans in New York City and the Berkshires, and Maren Hassinger, who experimented with combining sculpture, movement and non-traditional materials.

> "It's amazing to have a new core audience of students every four years, because their perspective is always fresh. It's a great opportunity for us to hear their concerns and calls for change, to learn from them and to move forward."
>
> —PAMELA FRANKS, the Class of 1956 Director of the Williams College Museum of Art

WCMA curators are also expanding the museum's holdings in various movements and traditions. In the course Acquiring Art: Selecting and Purchasing Art for WCMA, taught by curator Kevin Murphy and economics professor Stephen Sheppard, students help seek out and fill gaps in the museum's collection. In addition to writing a research paper on an aspect of the art market, they spend a weekend in New York City interviewing gallery owners and artists. They also visit galleries and auction houses to find works of art that align with the museum's collecting priorities and present them to WCMA staff for potential acquisition. The museum purchases those deemed most impactful for the collection.

In 2016, as a result of students' work in Acquiring Art, WCMA acquired Hermann Fuechsel's landscape *Keene Valley, Adirondacks*, 1876, which Murphy describes as "a Hudson River School painting from the 1870s, when artists like Albert Beirstadt and Frederic Church painted grand, epic vistas of famous places in American nature. WCMA has wonderful Hudson River paintings but none in this grand mode."

4

To date, the museum has acquired more than a dozen works of art proposed by students in the course, including *Opening 13*, a 2016 black-and-white print on Korean mulberry paper by photographer Jungjin Lee that depicts a stone or barren island in a gently rippling sea. The students, who visited Lee's gallery in New York, selected the work in part because they knew WCMA is "working to diversify its collection," says Mira Kamat '23, who is originally from Mumbai and took Acquiring Art in 2021.

Engaging students in this way is central to the museum's mission, Franks says. "It's amazing to have a new core audience of students every four years, because their perspective is always fresh," she adds. "It's a great opportunity for us to hear their concerns and calls for change, to learn from them and to move forward."

Through collaborations with the museum and in their art history classes, Williams students from all disciplines are learning how art relates to, enhances and even informs many aspects of their daily lives.

"Every artwork is trying to tell a story and engage in contemporary topics, like feminism, equality and socioeconomic [issues]," says Kamat, who was scheduled to graduate in June with majors in art history and English. Like generations of Williams students, she had a life-changing experience in an introductory art history course. In Kamat's case, that course was Art and Architecture From the Age of Enlightenment to the Present.

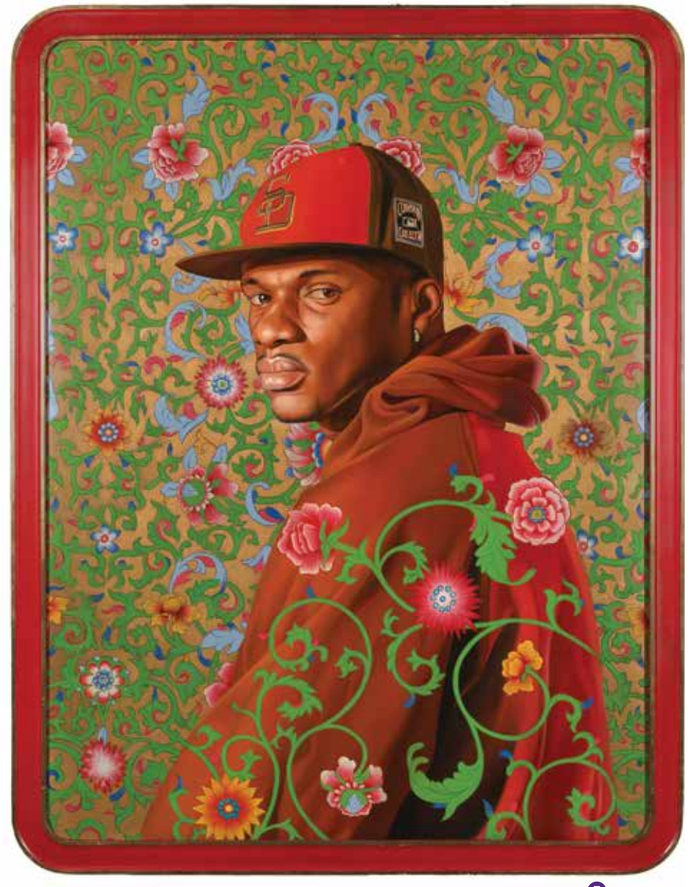
Co-taught by Michael J. Lewis, the Faison-Pierson-Stoddard Professor of Art, and lecturer Catherine Howe, the course examines works by Rembrandt, Bernini, Maya Lin, Frank Lloyd Wright, Vincent Van Gogh and Kehinde Wiley, among others. Lewis typically focuses on an artwork's formal properties, while Howe presents its social context and encourages students to think about how a piece's meaning has changed over time.

"Many people want to know the answer of how to look at something," says Howe. "I'm very clear that I'm not trying to tell students what a good work of art is and what they should like. Rather, I want them to understand a work of art and find it thought-provoking."

Adds Lewis, "You cannot look at art in isolation."

For Kamat, there's no question Art and Architecture changed her trajectory at Williams.

"Coming out of high school, I would have never thought about the art history major," she says. "But at Williams, it's crazy not to take art history classes. It's been one of the highlights of my time here."



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4 GRAVE POT, *3800-3000 BCE. Terracotta, Nile region (in present-day Egypt). Maker(s) not known by WCMA. Acquired through the Egypt Exploration Fund through the efforts of Professor Richard Austin Rice, 1881-1903. SEG.10.24*

5 CHEICK I, *2007. Oil and enamel on canvas. Kehinde Wiley, born 1977 in Los Angeles, Calif. Gift of Susy and Jack Wadsworth '61. M.2017.3*

Rupert Lloyd Jr., Class of 1930, blazed a trail as the first Black foreign service officer ever to serve in Europe.

# AT THE CROSSROADS OF HISTORY

By Heather Hansen

When Rupert Lloyd Jr., Class of 1930, arrived in Monrovia, Liberia, in March 1941, it was nearing the hottest time of year there. The dry, dusty "Harmattan" winds would have been blowing in from the Sahara Desert, and the sun was likely baking everything in sight. The wide, bustling, tree-lined streets of the West African port city would have been buzzing with the news of the completion of the new American Legation building, similar to an embassy but lower in rank.

Lloyd was 33 years old and a newly minted clerk for the U.S. Department of State. The slight, bespectacled man, photographed in a light-colored suit and striped tie, would have been among the first members of the diplomatic corps to set foot in the building where he would work for the next eight years. Liberia, which welcomed about 16,000 African Americans throughout the 19th century and was governed by Black leadership, was poised to play a pivotal role in global politics—and Lloyd had a front-row seat.

In fact, throughout his 23 years in diplomatic service, Lloyd seemed to have a knack for being where important events were happening, and he was well prepared for being at those crossroads of history. He was one of the first African American foreign service officers to serve in places other than Africa, entering a field in which Black officers to this day make up only 6% of the corps.

RUPERT ALSTYNE LLOYD JR. was born in Manassas, Va., in 1907, the son of a physician and a homemaker. He had three brothers—Earl, Blanchard and Sterling. Rupert's niece (and Sterling's daughter) Marilyn Lloyd Price recalls hearing stories from her mother about Rupert as a young man. He liked to poke fun at his mother, a devoted churchgoer, about her requirement that everyone at the dinner table recite a Bible verse before eating. His choice invariably referenced "wine, women or song," Lloyd Price recalls. "My grandmother would glare at him with daggers in her eyes, and he would just broaden his smile and say, 'It's in the Bible, Mother.'"

Lloyd played chess and violin and became a ham radio operator. He was outgoing and self-confident but didn't insist on being the center of attention, says Lloyd Price. Education was highly valued in the Lloyd household, and Rupert and two of his brothers left their small town of Phoebus, Va., for Washington, D.C., to attend Dunbar High School, the first public high school in the U.S. for Black students. Dunbar was prized for its high academic standards, and many graduates went on to prestigious colleges and universities. Both Rupert and Sterling went to Williams; Sterling, who followed his father into medicine, graduated in 1934. Rupert's nephew Sterling Lloyd Jr. '68 and great-niece Lauren Price '93—daughter of Marilyn Lloyd Price—are also Williams alums.

Photographs courtesy of Alex Lloyd

Rupert Lloyd Jr. was active with the college orchestra, the radio club, the Classical Society and the Outing Club. He majored in the classics and graduated valedictorian and Phi Beta Kappa. He earned a master's degree in classical philology from Harvard in 1931 and went on to the University of Bordeaux in southwestern France. After returning to the U.S. in 1932, Lloyd taught French for several years at three historically Black colleges: Miner Teachers College, Morehouse College and Morgan State University. Between teaching at Morehouse and Morgan State, he spent a year studying French language and literature at the Sorbonne. Lloyd pursued a doctorate in French, but a declaration of war interrupted his studies.

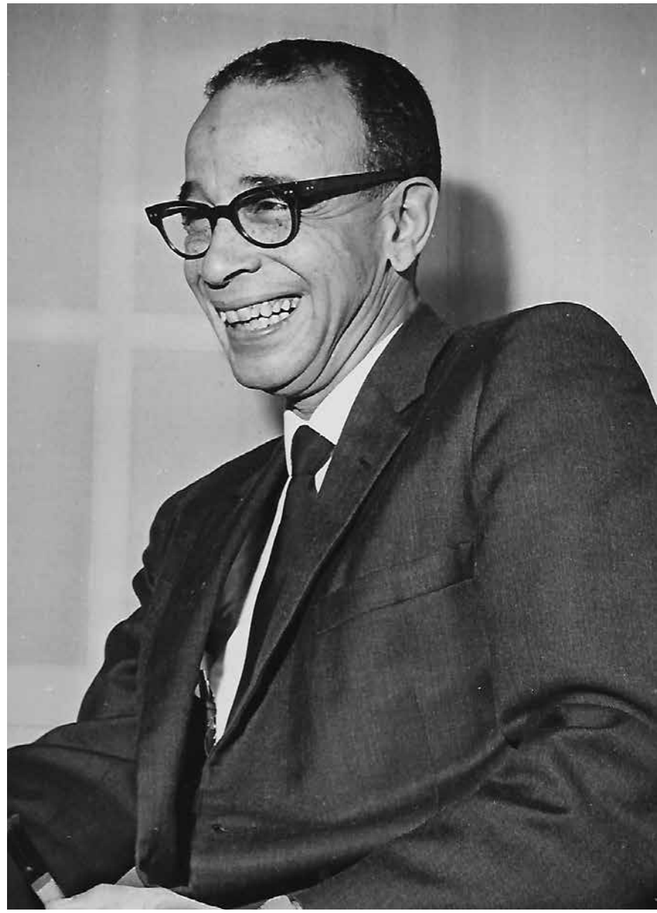
No one knows exactly why Lloyd turned to a career in foreign service, but it was likely for several reasons, according to Michael Krenn, professor of history at Appalachian State University and author of *Black Diplomacy: African Americans and the State Department, 1945-1969* and *The Color of Empire: Race and American Foreign Relations*. Many of the former diplomats of color Krenn has interviewed over the decades have talked about service, patriotism and progress as motivators for joining the diplomatic corps. "The people who went into [foreign service] were people who had a genuine interest in international relations," he says. "They had a genuine interest in diplomacy. This was the work they wanted to do."

That mission was often more complicated for people of color. "The racial discrimination of the State Department was pretty well known," Krenn says. "African American newspapers referred to it as the 'lily white' club." The number of people of color pursuing careers in the foreign service was extremely low—just a handful at the time Lloyd began—and those who did so were siloed into a few locations and largely overlooked for advancement.

"Nearly every African American foreign service officer (FSO) was sent to Monrovia as their first posting," Krenn says. "And then they got trapped in what was referred to at the time as the 'Negro circuit.'" That meant postings in Liberia, the Azores, Madagascar and the Canary Islands, where many would remain for their entire careers while their so-called "pale, male, from Yale" counterparts saw the world. Still, Krenn says, the pull to serve outweighed the obstacles.

Soon after arriving in Monrovia, Lloyd was promoted to vice consul. He likely spent his time reviewing and verifying visa applications, responding to inquiries regarding consular activities, maintaining good relationships with officials of Liberia and other nations, being a touchstone for Americans in-country, reporting back to Washington, D.C., and helping to develop policy proposals. He also would have represented the U.S. at official functions and assisted with visits from high-level officials.

One such visitor, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, arrived in January 1943. Liberia's significance had begun to rise after the onset of World War II; in 1942, the U.S. signed a defense agreement with the country, leading to an influx of American troops, mainly Black soldiers, to build roads,



*Rupert Lloyd Jr., Class of 1930, taught French for several years at three historically Black colleges before turning to a career in foreign service.*

a deepwater harbor and an international airport. Liberia was seen as a gateway to Africa worthy of safeguarding, and its plantations were one of the Allies' only sources of natural rubber, which was critical to military success. On his trip to Liberia, FDR rode in a jeep alongside Liberia's president and greeted U.S. troops and workers at Firestone's rubber plantation.

Liberia declared war on Germany and Japan in 1944. Not long after, Lloyd took the career foreign service officer's exam. He achieved one of the three highest marks and was the first African American to become an FSO in the prior 20 years—one of only a handful in U.S. history up to that point. Despite his various achievements and State Department policy to reposition diplomats every few years to different parts of the

globe, Lloyd remained in place. Real change was coming, says Krenn, "and Lloyd was one of the people who helped break that down, but it certainly took some time."

In 1947, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People submitted to the United Nations the paper "An Appeal to the World" asking the body to address human right violations committed by the U.S. against its Black citizens. The effort was led by W.E.B. Du Bois, who wrote, "It is not Russia that threatens the United States so much as Mississippi. Internal injustice done to one's brothers is far more dangerous than the aggression of strangers from abroad."

Amid that powerful rhetoric, Black FSOs began to make real progress in 1948, when Edward R. Dudley was appointed first U.S. minister to Liberia and, in 1949, promoted to ambassador—the first African American to serve in that role. Almost immediately upon arriving in Monrovia, Krenn says Lloyd and his colleagues told Dudley, "'No matter how good we do, no matter how well we perform, no matter what we say, what we accomplish, we're trapped in this Negro circuit until we retire.'"

Dudley and the others knew that racism was the Achilles heel of the U.S. at home and on the global stage (and that President Harry S. Truman was actively trying to court the African American vote). A May 1949 *Ebony* editorial drove home the point: "If America's self-assumed role as No. 1 champion of world democracy is to be accepted by other nations, it is time that America demonstrated in its foreign service that it practices what it preaches."

Dudley was aghast at revelations about the Negro circuit and worked with Lloyd and others to document the systemic discrimination. They sent a damning memorandum to Washington, D.C., about the assignment and transfer of personnel of color in the foreign service. When Krenn interviewed Dudley in 1995, the former ambassador called Lloyd "brilliant" and said, "These fellows knew how to push and what to push and what buttons to push." Dudley gave credit to Lloyd and others for breaking down the Negro circuit and told Krenn he believed they could be a "living, breathing example of America's commitment to civil rights."

*From left: Rupert Lloyd Jr., Class of 1930, with U.S. Attorney Gen. Robert Kennedy during the Ivory Coast's first independence celebration in August 1961.*

Six months after the memo, transfers began to come through, and Rupert Lloyd moved on to a prestigious post in Paris. It was the first time an African American FSO had ever served in Europe. Lloyd was routinely promoted over the next four years and held many diplomatic positions in France. During that time, he shared an office with Seymour "Max" Finger, who later served as ambassador in the U.S. Mission to the United Nations.

In his memoir *Inside the World of Diplomacy: The U.S. Foreign Service in a Changing World*, Finger reflected: "Rupert's assignment to Paris was a sign that [the Negro circuit] was finally being terminated. He was a superb choice. He was completely fluent in French, well steeped in French culture. Understandably, he was very popular with the French. He also had a delicious sense of humor and a marvelous belly laugh."

Finger said the two became friends and, during that time, he learned that "there was a somber side to Rupert. He had felt many lashes of race prejudice in his native Virginia. When his father, a physician, developed an illness that proved to be terminal, the local hospital would not admit him because of his color."

Lloyd was sent to Budapest in mid-1953, just six months after the death of Joseph Stalin, chief architect of Soviet totalitarianism. At that moment, the West was keen to liberate the region from Soviet control, and mass protests and uprisings fueled that hope. Lloyd was again living history—both as the first African American ever posted to Hungary and as a representative of freedom and democracy at a pivotal moment. Journalist Kati Morton, in a book about her family's persecution and ultimate escape to the U.S. from Hungary, wrote about her parents crossing paths with Lloyd: "As first secretary and then counselor, he quickly established himself as a respected member of Budapest's diplomatic community. No doubt Lloyd's high-profile presence was a source of annoyance to the regime's propaganda office."

In 1954, Lloyd was transferred to Karachi, Pakistan, as a supervisory intelligence research specialist. His three years there coincided with a time when the U.S. was working to maintain and strengthen the stability of the non-communist regime and to deny the nation's resources to Soviet bloc countries. (Communist activity had been on the rise since the USSR established its embassy in Pakistan a few years earlier.) From Karachi, Lloyd was posted in Washington, D.C., as chief of the Western European Branch in the Division of Research for Western Europe.

Lloyd returned to West Africa in 1960, this time to Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast), just two months after the country had gained independence from France. A seasoned foreign service officer by then, he became deputy chief of mission alongside Ambassador R. Borden Reams. Lloyd, then 53, lived in the capital Abidjan, where new roads and buildings were cropping up along the banks of the Ébrié Lagoon.

Of the more than 3,700 FSOs at the time, Lloyd was one of just 17 Black officers, according to his direct report Brandon Grove, who wrote the book *Behind Embassy Walls: The Life and Times of an American Diplomat*. Grove went on to serve as acting U.S. ambassador to East Germany, and he and Lloyd often discussed racism within and beyond the U.S. diplomatic corps: "He was subjected to racial segregation whenever he returned home and spoke bitterly to me of these experiences," Grove wrote. "One evening on my terrace above the lagoon, we talked over brandy about our lives and how he felt about his career. As we spoke and watched the dark shapes of logs floating downstream to the mill, any tensions between us melted. I understood Lloyd's feelings of uniqueness that sometimes made him prickly. He never complained about his situation as an African American, wanting to be thought of as no different from anyone else."

> "I see no reason in the world why a Negro should not be able to serve competently in any consular or diplomatic post to which he may be sent."
>
> —RUPERT LLOYD JR., CLASS OF 1930, AS QUOTED BY HIS BIOGRAPHER

During the Ivory Coast's first independence celebration, Lloyd served as an interpreter for Robert F. Kennedy, recently appointed U.S. attorney general. A photo in the Aug. 24, 1961, issue of *Jet* shows Lloyd seated beside Kennedy at a press conference. A correspondent for the magazine wrote that during the event, the attorney general was asked frank questions about African Americans "not being able to ride buses and eat in restaurants" in some parts of the U.S. Kennedy answered, "The important thing, in fact the most important thing, is that the United States government and the vast majority of people are trying to do something about the [race] problem."

In February 1962, Lloyd returned to Paris for six months of intensive study in the economic, military, social and political history and status of NATO member countries at the NATO Defense College. That same year, a U.S. House of Representatives labor subcommittee held hearings concerning the "whiteness" of the Department of State. Reading the writing on the wall—the intensifying U.S. civil rights movement and the Soviet Union's backing of national liberation movements in Africa—the foreign service corps began actively encouraging African Americans and women to sign up.

That October, an *Ebony* article accompanied by a photograph of Lloyd stated: "While the foreign service may now be democratic at home and abroad, it still must seek the cream of the crop." Citing criticism that the test was biased toward white men, the piece noted that 5% to 6% of the 119 African American candidates taking the FSO exam at the time were expected to pass it (compared to a third of whites). Despite the State Department's recruitment push, not a single African American would enter the foreign service for the next two decades.

Lloyd finished his coursework and was posted as consul in Lyon, France—a role he enjoyed immensely, according to his niece: "It was the highlight of his career, in a country that he truly loved."

Just two years later, in 1964, Lloyd retired from the foreign service and moved to Argelès-sur-Mer, roughly 10 miles from the Franco-Spanish border, known for its long, sandy beach and seaside promenade. He continued to express his belief that Black people could and should pursue careers in the foreign service. In the 1966 volume *Negroes in Public Affairs and Government*, Lloyd told his biographer, "I see no reason in the world why a Negro should not be able to serve competently in any consular or diplomatic post to which he may be sent."

Yet, in 1970, the year before Lloyd's death at age 63, the FSO corps was only 1% Black (34 out of 3,084), and Black officers were still disproportionately being dispatched to Africa and Latin America. The Foreign Service Act of 1980 and several State Department fellowships aimed to break down those walls over time, but the needle barely moved. Among roughly 8,000 FSOs in 2022, African American representation remains at 6%.

Recently, several prominent figures have called on President Joe Biden's administration to improve equity in diplomatic ranks. In an important step in early 2021, Secretary of State Antony Blinken named Ambassador (ret.) Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley as the department's first-ever chief diversity and inclusion officer.

The move gives Krenn hope that the boundary-breaking work begun by Rupert Lloyd and his colleagues in Liberia many years ago will bring lasting change: "You now have what one would hope would be a permanent office that is going to deal with this," Krenn says.

That's in part why Lloyd's niece, Marilyn Lloyd Price, thinks it's important to tell stories like his at this moment in time: "It's still a struggle to get young people interested in the foreign service," she says. "And it's important that young people, in particular, learn about those who have had careers like Uncle Rupert's and had some success in them."

# EXCELLENT TEACHING

BY **GREG SHOOK** • ILLUSTRATION BY **THE PROJECT TWINS**

**The new Rice Center is the college's first centralized hub of programs and resources focused solely on pedagogy for all faculty.**

What are the most effective active learning strategies in the classroom? How can professors design a course schedule that promotes student well-being and flexibility throughout the semester? What are the implications of artificial intelligence (AI) on coursework and grading?

The college's new Joseph Lee Rice III 1954 Center for Teaching, now in its second semester, is addressing these questions and more through conversations, workshops and other programs designed to support faculty across all disciplines and at all stages in their careers.

Teaching and professional support programs are not new to the college, but they often have focused on new faculty. (Take the Program for Effective Teaching, established in 1995, and, later, First3, designed for faculty and fellows in their first three years at Williams.)

The Rice Center, meanwhile, takes a more comprehensive approach. The emphasis is on learning from one another, from staff members with expertise in student learning and from invited guest speakers.

"We want the center to provide faculty with the space, time and resources to enjoy conversations about teaching," Susan Engel told the *Williams Record* in September. Engel, who is serving a two-year term as the center's senior faculty fellow, is also a senior lecturer in psychology and the Class of 1959 Director of the Program in Teaching. "Most of us work [at Williams] because our scholarship and our teaching feed one another. The center should nourish our love of working with undergraduates."

The Rice Center will also have a physical home, slated to open this fall in a renovated space on the main level of Stetson Hall. The space is made possible by a $10 million commitment from Rice, a member of the Class of 1954 and Williams trustee emeritus, and Franci J. Blassberg.

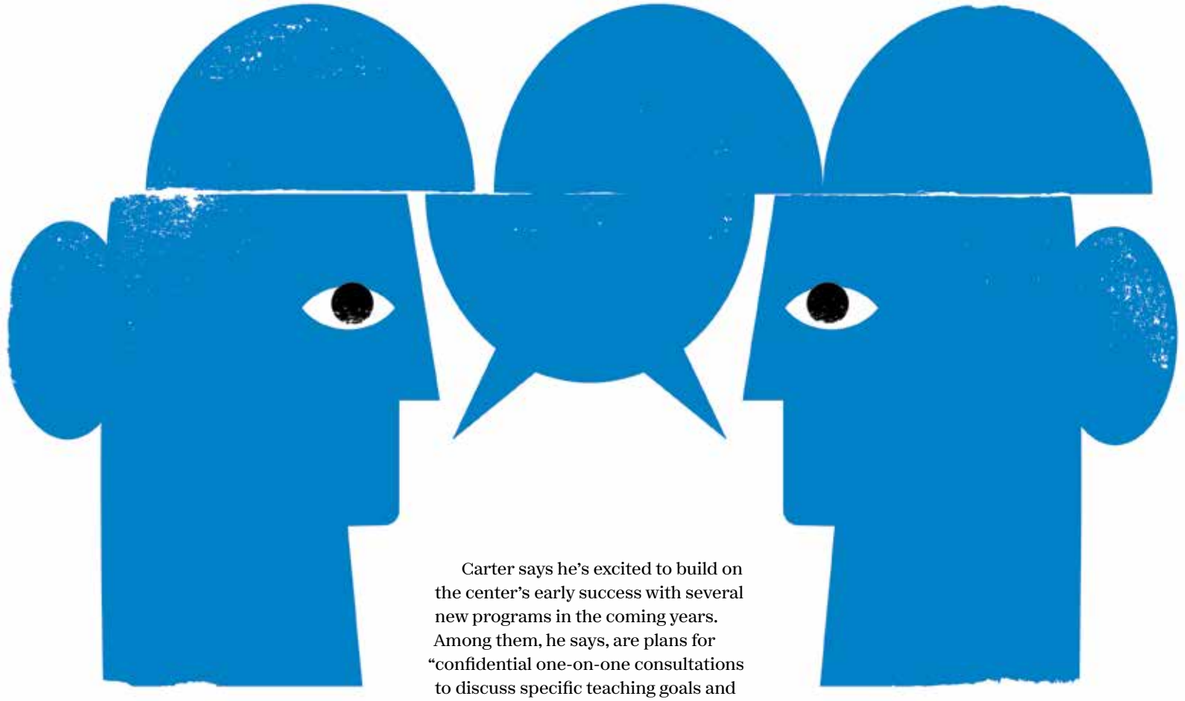
More than 150 faculty members have already taken advantage of Rice Center programs so far. In January, about 75 faculty members attended the center's first major program—two workshops with author and educator James Lang, professor of English and director of the D'Amour Center for Teaching Excellence at Assumption University. Lang shared ideas from his books *Small Teaching: Everyday Lessons From the Science of Learning* and *Distracted: Why Students Can't Focus and What You Can Do About It.*

More recent programs have included a forum examining how AI platforms such as ChatGPT can aid in information acquisition and writing assistance; a workshop on strategies for managing student academic accommodations; and a discussion about teaching diverse populations within the Berkshires community and how to collaborate on community initiatives.

In May, the center planned a workshop with bestselling authors Kelly A. Hogan and Viji Sathy on teaching strategies that emphasize how structured, active learning can create more equitable classrooms and improve learning outcomes for all students.

"The Rice Center arrives at a time when a couple of major events—the pandemic and advent of large language models—may change the landscape of teaching forever," says computer science professor Rohit Bhattacharya, who joined the faculty in 2021. "ChatGPT is forcing many of us to rethink what we ask of our students and how. Keeping pace with new developments in technology and pedagogy is central to the center's mission, so I'm glad it's here to help ease the transition into what I think is going to be an interesting new age of pedagogy."

Tomas Adalsteinsson, assistant professor of physical education, says the Lang workshops and others organized by the center are prompting healthy discussions about ways to improve teaching and learning at the college.



"Younger faculty members have shared fresh ideas and new perspectives on teaching, while more experienced faculty members have contributed their insights on effective teaching methods," says Adalsteinsson, who is also head coach of women's golf. "This exchange of ideas and learning from one another ultimately benefits our students and enhances the overall quality of education at Williams."

In addition to Engel, the center is administered by a director selected from the faculty and a full-time staff person. Biology professor Matt Carter is serving a three-year term as faculty director, and Cait Kirby, who came to Williams in November 2022 from the University of Pennsylvania's Center for Teaching and Learning, is the associate director.

Carter says he's excited to build on the center's early success with several new programs in the coming years. Among them, he says, are plans for "confidential one-on-one consultations to discuss specific teaching goals and offer personalized feedback, and also mechanisms for teaching observations such that colleagues or teaching center staff can observe classes and provide feedback."

In addition, the center will develop what Carter calls "faculty learning communities," small groups that discuss teaching strategies, share experiences and collaborate on projects. It also hopes to offer a set of curated online resources—articles on teaching, teaching guides and links to helpful resources on teaching—and "course design clinics" in which faculty can develop new courses in collaboration with each other and Rice Center staff.

"By listening to everyone's input," Carter says, "we are collectively working to design a teaching center that has something to offer everyone."

*To learn more about the Rice Center for Teaching, visit williams.edu/teaching-center.*

**"Keeping pace with new developments in technology and pedagogy is central to the center's mission, so I'm glad it's here to help ease the transition into what I think is going to be an interesting new age of pedagogy."**

**–Rohit Bhattacharya,** assistant professor of computer science

# On Call

**Student volunteer firefighters fill a crucial need in the community and gain important life skills in the process.**

BY
**KAREN CORDAY**

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
**BRADLEY WAKOFF**

**ON AN UNSEASONABLY WARM APRIL EVENING,** 28 firefighters, each clad in 40 pounds of gear, are gathered outside of Williamstown Elementary School. They practice carrying 160-pound ladders in formation, moving in circles and around corners. Then they take turns climbing ladders 35 feet into the air, hooking a leg around the top rungs so their hands are free to wield a tool. By the time they load up and head back to the station to debrief several hours later, it's after dark.

Drills like these are a common occurrence at firehouses around the country, where the majority of firefighters are volunteers. What makes the Williamstown Fire Department different from many, however, is that more than a third of its force consists of Williams students—the highest percentage in nearly 50 years of the partnership—thanks in large part to Grant Gattuso '23 and Will Titus '23. Both joined the force their first year at Williams and, in March 2022, founded the Williams College Firefighters' Association.

Neither had previous firefighting experience, but, like most students who have volunteered over the years, Gattuso, a biology major, and Titus, who is majoring in political economy, were interested in serving their communities. As is also the case for most of the student firefighters, the two say the experience has been life-changing.

Says Titus, who, one wintry night after a long day of classes, accepted a friend's last-minute invitation to meet with Chief Craig Pedercini about volunteering: "That was probably the best decision I made in my four years here."

**STUDENTS AREN'T NEW TO** the Williamstown Fire Department. Assistant Chief Michael Noyes, one of the longest-serving members, recalls one or two per year volunteering with the department since he joined in 1975.

In the past, students might learn about the opportunity by word of mouth, whether from a classmate or a college staff member. Noyes was a painter at the college for 30 years. Among other long-time firefighters, Assistant Chief Richard Daniels has served for 20 years on Williams' custodial staff, more than half that time as a lead custodian. Deputy Chief Robert Briggs has worked at the college for almost 25 years, first in fire

*Will Titus '23 (right) demonstrates to Santiago Ferris '26 (center) and Isaac Leslie '25 a technique for advancing a hoseline into a building.*

> “To be clear, when we are in class, we are college students. When we get on the fire engines, we are Williamstown firefighters.”
>
> WILL TITUS ’23

safety, security and telecommunications, and now as a network and systems administrator in the Office of Information Technology. Pedercini was a carpenter until 1998, and then a part-time preventive maintenance mechanic until 2002.

But none of the veteran firefighters recall a time when 10 students served on the force at once, as they do now.

“They’ve breathed new life into the department,” says Briggs, one of the co-advisors of the Williams College Firefighters’ Association. “They have so much ambition and mean so much to the fire department. It’s just amazing.”

As a registered student group, the association receives a nominal amount of funding and the ability to borrow college vehicles to attend training sessions at the state fire academy. They also began tabling alongside other student groups looking to recruit members at the Purple Key Fair.

After the 2021 fair, the department hired six students. The next year, 63 students signed up to receive information about volunteering. During meetings and interviews, the members of the department looked for students with backgrounds in community service, ropes work or rock climbing, “which tells us that they’re not afraid of heights,” Pedercini says. Three students ultimately joined.

Among them was Alexandra Riggs ’26, who signed on after connecting with Kendall Rice ’25 to discuss what it’s like being a woman in the department. Both describe the atmosphere at the station as “inclusive and supportive.”

“Grant once told us, ‘You want your absence rather than your presence to be remarked upon,’” Rice says of Gattuso. “The department and the community rely on us, and it’s up to us to commit to showing up when we’re needed.”

The students have also shown up for the department itself. Earlier this year, the town held a community vote on a plan to replace the 73-year-old fire station. Titus encouraged the student volunteers to change their voter registration to Massachusetts so they could participate. The vote passed, and construction is expected to begin in the fall.

At the standing-room-only town meeting the night of the vote, Titus addressed the crowd: “To be clear, when we are in class, we are college students,” he said. “When we get on the fire engines, we are Williamstown firefighters.”

**THE INFLUX OF NEW STUDENTS** is filling a gap that volunteer fire departments are experiencing all around the country. The number of volunteers reached a record low in 2020, according to the National Volunteer Fire Council. Among the factors for the decline are increased demands on firefighters’ time, more rigorous training requirements and more dangerous working conditions caused by modern household and automotive materials. Meanwhile, the number of calls nationwide has more than tripled in the past 35 years.

Just like their counterparts, students are expected to be prepared at a moment’s notice to answer a call at any time of day or night. While their studies and student activities come first—Gattuso and Titus have both been members of the track and field and cross-country teams, for example—students say professors and coaches are typically understanding. Likewise, the fire department understands when students have to take time off during exams or focus on their coursework.

Though they can’t drive fire trucks or enter burning structures without specialized training, students do nearly everything else expected of a firefighter. The department receives about 250 calls per year, and students are on the scene for most of them. Two years ago, Williams students assisted in putting out the largest brushfire Massachusetts had seen in decades.



*Opposite, from left: Alexandra Riggs ’26, David Luongo ’25 and Grant Gattuso ’23 practice search and rescue. Above, from left, Gattuso, Riggs and Luongo debrief after the drill.*

They attend all-department drills and meetings each Monday, and then, every Tuesday, they meet up at the firehouse for their own sessions, alternating between training and cooking and eating meals together.

The day after the ladder training at the elementary school, the students held a search-and-rescue exercise. They donned their gear and crawled through barriers placed in the firehouse garage to practice rescuing a 200-pound CPR dummy. They also ran a drill that involved unfurling a heavy, unwieldy fire hose and carrying it over obstacles as a team, eventually spraying it into the station driveway to practice control and aim. Throughout, they gave and listened for commands, learning how to communicate and look out for one another while also developing key firefighting skills.

One week students might learn how to handle hydraulic rescue tools like cutters, spreaders and rams used in automobile accidents or how to strategically break down walls and doors during fires. Another meeting might involve taking inventory of equipment on the trucks or cleaning gear. Each task is important and requires deep trust and dedicated teamwork.

“All that training, all that time together leads to a strong bond,” Pedercini says. “Once you’re a member of the fire department, you’re a part of it forever.”

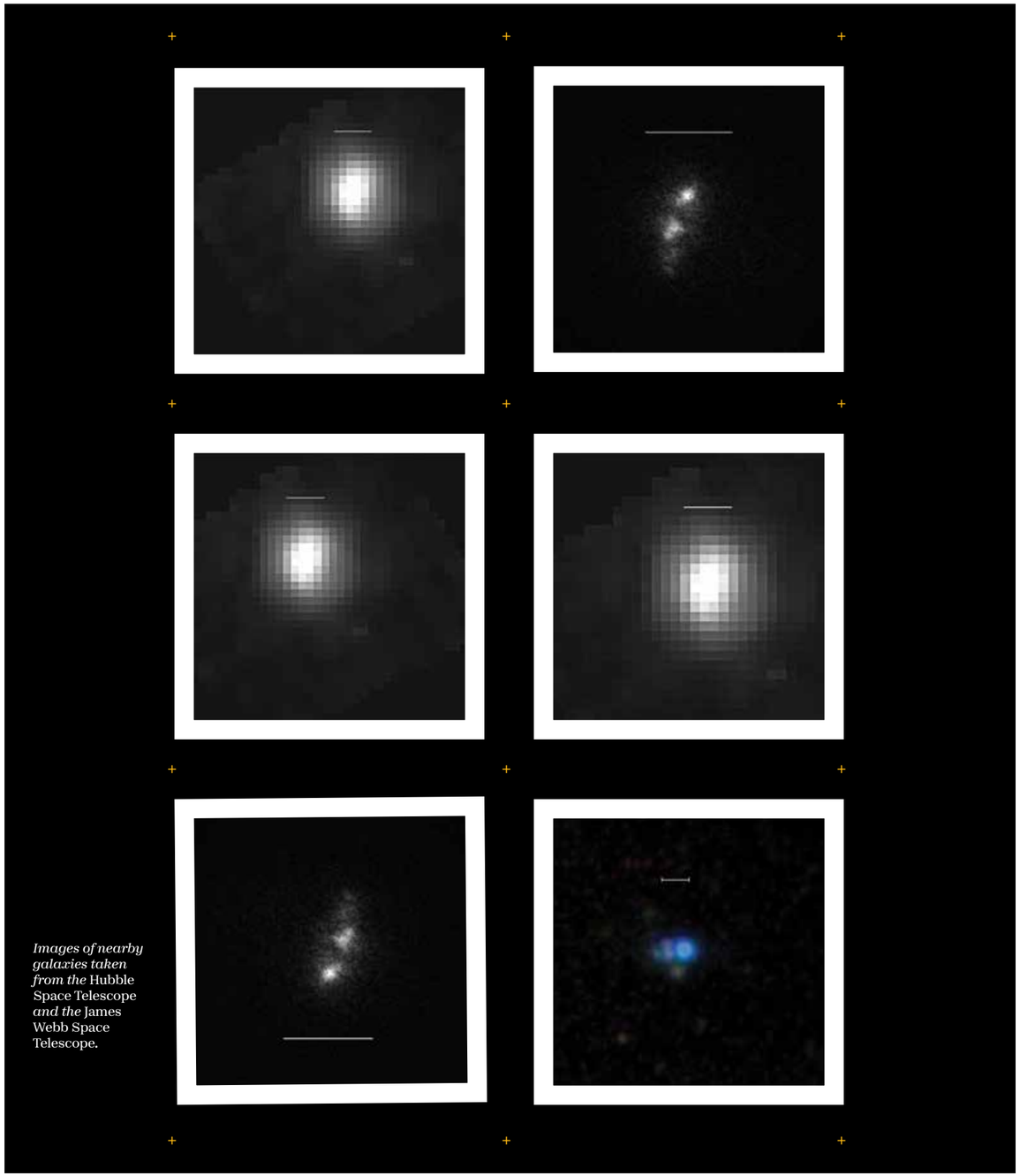
That’s been the case for Erryn Leinbaugh ’99, who grew up in northern Idaho and served on the local forest service’s fire crew before coming to Williams. In addition to joining the Williamstown Fire Department, the English major worked 40 hours per week to support himself in college—including with Village Ambulance Service—and belonged to the Williams Outing Club and the cycling team.

After graduation, Leinbaugh worked full time as a firefighter in the Denver area, but he dislocated a shoulder halfway through his academy training. He shifted gears to attend the Brown University School of Medicine, continuing his work as a paramedic and EMT. Ten years ago, he returned to the region to work as an emergency medical physician with Berkshire Medical Center.

“As soon as the moving truck unloaded everything, I walked down to the fire station and applied again,” Leinbaugh says.

Pedercini says several other former students have gone on to become either volunteer or professional firefighters after Williams. Titus extended his training when the Williams campus went remote in spring 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, receiving his Firefighter I certification with his local fire department in New Jersey. As he weighs his future plans, which may include teaching English in Spain on a Fulbright scholarship, he expects to continue working as a firefighter.

“I put a lot into it,” Titus says, “and I’ve gotten a lot out of it.”



*Images of nearby galaxies taken from the* Hubble Space Telescope *and the* James Webb Space Telescope.

# Star Stories

**By**
**Kim Catley**

## Astronomy professor Anne Jaskot ’08 uses the James Webb Space Telescope to explore previously unknown details about the universe.

The *James Webb Space Telescop*e—the largest ever sent into space—launched in December 2021 and took a month to reach its orbit position 1 million miles from Earth. With its ability to detect light beyond what’s visible to the human eye, its first images stunned and captivated people worldwide when they were released on July 12, 2022.

Scientists the world over submitted nearly 1,200 proposals to conduct research using the *Webb*. Among the 266 approved projects was one from Williams astronomy professor Anne Jaskot ’08, who is studying six nearby galaxies in hopes of under-standing how stars, black holes and supernovae lit up the gas in early galaxies.

The *Webb* telescope “is suddenly opening a new window on the universe that we didn’t have access to before,” Jaskot says. “This is the first time I can see galaxies like this glowing in infrared and get that piece of the puzzle.”

Jaskot was awarded 24 hours on the telescope, distributed between March and June. Her research is supported by a three-year, $82,150 grant from the Space Telescope Science Institute and includes funds for an undergraduate assistant.

By studying the nearby galaxies, Jaskot hopes to gain a better under-standing of our own galaxy as well as the conditions of the early universe. Her research might also lead to more knowledge about how stars form, evolve and die.

“One of the cool things about astronomy is that you can look back in time,” she says. “If you look far enough away, light has taken so long to reach you that you actually see the universe as it looked billions of years ago.”

Since childhood, Jaskot has been interested in the ability to look deep into the past, whether at a billion-year-old fossil or using a telescope orbiting the Earth. She majored in anthropology and astrophysics at Williams, where she first studied galaxy gases and used spectroscopy—the science of decoding the atomic makeup of objects and gases from the light detected with a telescope.

She still recalls her first time using the *Hubble Space Telescope* as a graduate student at the University of Michigan. Located outside the Earth’s atmosphere, Hubble offered a much clearer view than telescopes on the ground.

“It was so exciting to see something that had been just a blur from the ground suddenly crystallize,” Jaskot recalls. “One of the things we learned was how compact and tiny the galaxies were. They were these tight knots of actively forming stars. I remember being surprised with how things were so much tinier than I expected them to be.”

Unlike ground telescopes, *Hubble* and *Webb* are more reliable. Rather than a telescope user adjusting for, say, the challenges of a cloudy night, Jaskot receives an email notification from *Webb* that a galaxy she’s interested in has been observed and that the data is available for download.

The datasets show a spectrum of light split into varying colors, each coming from a different atom, which “would tell you about the composition of the galaxy,” Jaskot says.

The patterns reveal not only the presence of elements like neon and sulfur, which could result from star gases turning into stars, but also the specific kinds of elements.

“We’re looking for—and we think we might see—quadruply ionized neon,” Jaskot says. “Kicking four electrons off an atom requires energies so high that stars can’t produce them. Something like supernova explosions or black holes would have to be present in our galaxy to give us that type of neon.”

Jaskot says she chose the six galaxies she’s studying because “they’re similar in their composition, but they also show some interesting differences in terms of what energies of light seem to light up their gas. We’ll compare our findings with some of the model predictions to see which scenarios match what we’re observing. Do we see the energies we would expect if it were just hot stars? Or if the energy is from material heated by a black hole?”

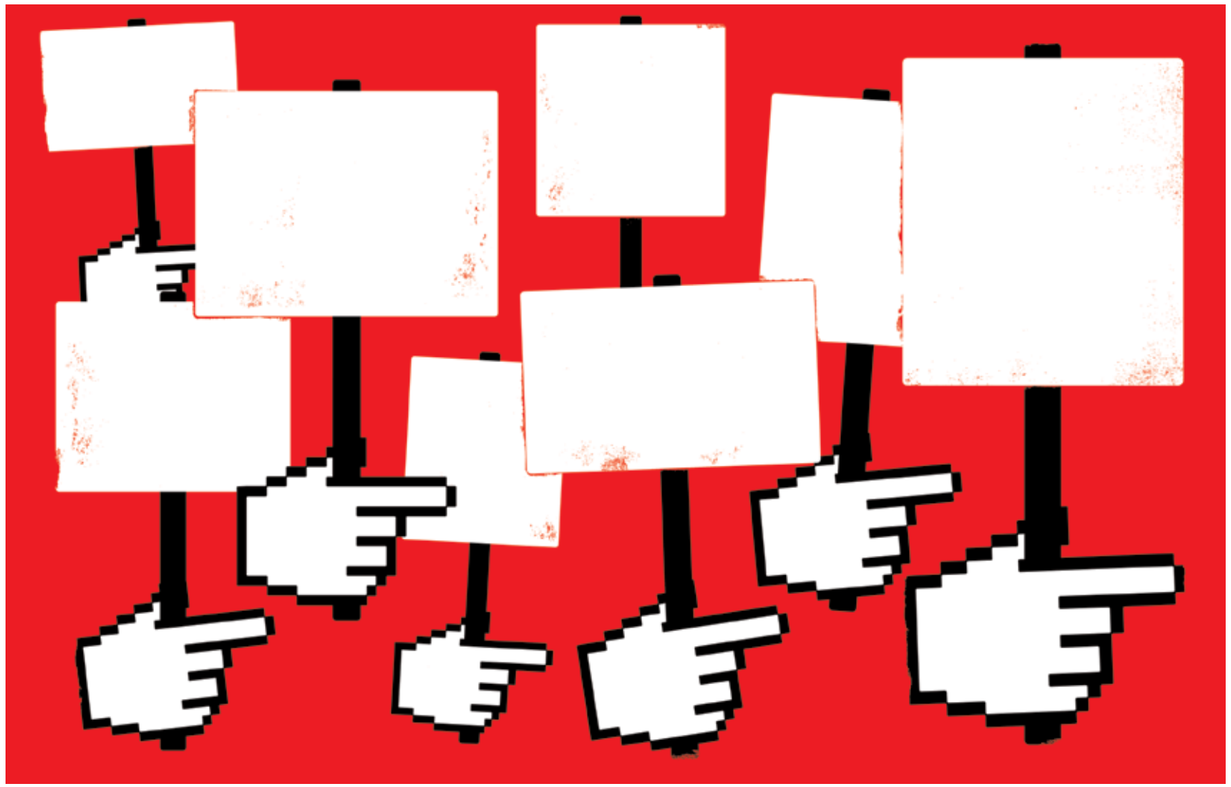
As she awaits the last datasets from all six galaxies, Jaskot says she is immersed in the magic and mystery of a previously unseen corner of the universe.

“It’s always fun when you’re not doing any scientific measurements—when you’re just looking for the first time to see what you have,” she says. “There are things you expect to see and things that you weren’t looking for but which will now become a part of the story.”

Photographs courtesy of Anne Jaskot ’08

# Recoding Power

By
Greg Shook



A new book examines how tech workers can develop the strategic capacity and economic leverage necessary to defend against the threat of job loss.

Growing up the child of computer programmers in San Francisco, political science professor Sid Rothstein witnessed firsthand how the tech industry changed the dynamics of his city and economies around the world. Then, as a student at Reed College and the University of Pennsylvania, he examined how the booming economic growth during the dot-com bubble did little, if anything, to shield tech workers from mass layoffs.

"Even though tech workers generally earn a lot of money, they don't have a lot of power, and that really stuck with me," says Rothstein, whose current research focuses on the politics of digital transformation. He seeks to explain how the transition to the knowledge economy reshapes relationships of power and patterns of inequality in different countries.

In his latest book, *Recoding Power: Tactics for Mobilizing Tech Workers* (Oxford University Press, 2022), Rothstein examines headline-making mass layoffs at IBM Burlington, IBM San José, Infineon and Siemens. The case studies show how workers succeeded and/or fell short in their efforts to "develop creative tactics to 'recode' management's discursive techniques for control, transforming them from obstacles into resources for collective action," as the publisher's website states.

"One of the arguments I'm trying to make is that if we want to understand capitalism and potentially change it, we need to think a lot more about the workplace," Rothstein says.

He shared insights from his research and teaching with *Williams Magazine*.

**What can be learned from the tech sector when it comes to understanding workplace structure?**
Starting around 2014, I began trying to figure out how it is that tech workers can establish more horizontal democratic governance—flatter organizational structures that provide greater employee autonomy—in the workplace. Much of my work comes across as being critical of tech, which is maybe unavoidable when you study mass layoffs. But there's a lot about the sector that is also admirable. One example is that some of the management practices in tech are more effective than those in other sectors. One of the most difficult challenges we face as humans is figuring out how to work together in an effective way. And some tech firms have figured it out, at least for a period of time. I was particularly interested in that, not just for organizational effectiveness but also for the democratic elements of these organizations. Especially when it comes to innovative processes, horizontal structures and environments where people feel free to share their ideas and work their ideas out collaboratively really are effective in fostering creative organizations that adapt and come up with new ideas.

**How does your book intersect with your teaching?**
A common thread through my teaching and the book is trying to connect the macro level and the micro level and to illustrate the ways in which we can exercise agency over our lives in the context of capitalism. I teach a tutorial, Silicon Valley: Digital Transformation and Democracy, that explores the tensions between Silicon Valley and a conception of what democracy could be in the contemporary moment. Some of those tensions are at the macro level. The Silicon Valley model for economic growth leads, in many cases, to economic inequality, which is corrosive of what we understand as being democracy. We also look at the workplace to try to figure out what are the working conditions associated with tech in different countries.

I also teach a course called The Firm that puts the firm at the center of our analyses of contemporary political economy, and that comes directly out of the book. The workplace and the point of production are where a lot of the power relations unfold that shape overall firm behavior, macroeconomic trends and the everyday ways that we experience capitalism.

**What do you hope people will learn from reading *Recoding Power*?**
Ultimately, I hope that it helps workers in every sector exercise power. I want those who don't generally see themselves as workers—for example, professionals who might feel they have more of an equal relationship with their managers—to learn from the experience of these tech workers who did push back when facing the threat of mass layoffs. They realized that they're in an employment relationship, and the only way that they can protect their rights and their working conditions is by organizing.

One of the big takeaways of the book is that economic determinism is not a fact about the world but a belief that is constructed. If workers have access to their firm's economic data, they don't have to take managers at their word that cutting jobs is unavoidable; they can run the analyses themselves and see that there are alternatives. Even in the face of serious economic challenges, we don't have to shed all these workers. We can retain the workforce.

Illustration by The Project Twins

# Personal Connection

By
Chau Tu

## In mentoring transfer and Latinx students—and in his research—psychology professor Victor Cazares draws from experience.

Psychology professor Victor Cazares credits his career in academia to his community college experience in his home state of California, where he was inspired by the small classes and hands-on engagement with faculty. At Williams, he has aimed to recreate that same close-knit learning environment both inside and outside the classroom, especially for transfer and Latinx students.

In addition to teaching courses such as Feelings and Emotions: Shaping the Brain and Society, Experimentation and Statistics, and From Order to Disorder(s): The Role of Genes and the Environment in Psychopathology, Cazares is a faculty advisor for Williams' newly formed Transfer Student Union. The college is seeking to enroll about a dozen transfer students, veterans and other nontraditional students in each entering class as part of its broader work to increase access and affordability for everyone. The club and groups like it are helping to ensure these students can thrive.

"Transfer students enrich the college experience of all students and may be uniquely positioned to peer-mentor other students," Cazares says.

Cazares is also involved with SUBE, a newly formed student-run organization at Williams focused on empowering Latinx students to develop professional pursuits in STEM+ fields, where they are historically underrepresented.

"Truly one of the most gratifying parts of my job is being able to support students going through similar experiences as I did," says Cazares, whose research examines how interactions between genetic background and the environment alter neurophysiology and risk for exhibiting pathological behaviors.

As with mentoring, Cazares' interest in brain behavior stems from a deeply personal connection. After seeing his father, who has schizophrenia, live through experiences far divorced from reality, Cazares says he wanted to study how the brain learns and stores memories.

"When you think about what makes us human, it's the memories we recall and the new ones we create," he says. "It's fundamental to who we are as organisms."

While behavioral neuroscience related to learning and memory has been studied for decades, it's only recently, through new technological advances and cellular imagery, that scientists have been able to see the populations of brain cells that store information and what happens to those cells when memories are changed.

Cazares is using these advances to study the brain's responses to fear and the role of memory. Research has shown that when people are repeatedly exposed to fear, the brain can eventually develop a new memory that suppresses the fear response. (This process is the principle underlying exposure therapy for people who are diagnosed with anxiety disorders.) But often, that fear-suppressing memory will be forgotten or dulled over time, resulting in the return of the fear.

Cazares wants to know why and how this happens. He's discovered that changing contexts can help the brain learn, and he's developed a theory that introducing subjects to new environments in exposure therapy could train the brain to better recall that fear-suppressing memory. With support from a three-year, $435,000 grant from the National Institutes of Health, he will be testing the theory using new video imaging technology developed at UCLA. He plans to conduct research there with Williams students during Winter Study in 2024. Ultimately, he hopes his research can help inform treatment approaches for anxiety disorders such as phobia or post-traumatic stress disorder.

Shania Gonzalez '25 first met Cazares at Williams' Summer Science Program for incoming students and joined his nine-person lab her first year. She started out by running experiments for upperclass students but is now conducting her own project on the role of dopamine in memory learning.

"Having a good mentor and being involved in interesting research has made me confident in my decision to pursue science as a career," Gonzalez says. "Professor Cazares really cares about his students' development as scientists, and he gives them every opportunity he can to gain experience and skills to succeed."

Photograph by Bradley Wakoff

# The Power of Place

By
Greg Shook

Two classics professors plan a travel opportunity to Crete based on popular Winter Study courses in Greece and Rome.

Travel during Winter Study is a staple of classics courses. Next May, students will also have an opportunity to spend eight days in Crete as part of a new course developed by classics professors Sarah Olsen and Amanda Wilcox.

In January 2017, students traveled to Rome with Wilcox, who is chair of the department, and classics professor Edan Dekel for a course focused on ancient Rome as a cosmopolis. During Winter Study in 2020 and 2022, about a dozen students in Olsen and Wilcox's course Presence in Place: The Greek Dramatic Imagination, read tragedies by Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides before spending two weeks in Greece. Each student delivered a short presentation about a reading at the site where the text was set and originally performed. Locations included the Athenian Acropolis, the theater and sanctuary at Epidaurus and the Temple of Aphaia on the island of Aegina. The group consisted mostly of classics majors and students interested in ancient Greek civilization who had not traveled abroad previously.

To help make the trips accessible to anyone who wants to participate, students' travel costs are fully covered by the college's Global Ventures Initiative Fund.

"One of our major goals is to give students an experience they can't have in Williamstown, to help them appreciate the challenges and the benefits of immersing yourself in a new and different place," Olsen says.

Adds Wilcox: "When the students are out of their familiar setting, they are more willing to use the direct evidence of their senses to make inferences that may challenge or enrich their understanding of information and ideas they first encountered in books."

Eva Dailey '22, an art and classics major, took Presence in Place in 2020 and says the experience gave her a sense of wonder that can't be replicated in the classroom.

"It was completely different to read about these sites and then to see them *in situ*," says Dailey, who is attending Williams' Graduate Program in the History of Art. "My research is mainly focused on mythos-making in the landscape, so, for me, site specificity is integral to my academic experience."

Travel directly impacts student engagement in the classroom, Olsen and Wilcox say.

"After encountering sites such as Argos, Delphi and Aegina repeatedly in historical and literary contexts, students are willing to make intellectual and imaginative leaps that they might never risk in seminar," says Wilcox. Students "very quickly build trust" with one another, something that normally would take weeks in a conventional classroom setting, she adds.

**"I don't think I'll ever get tired of witnessing students' first reactions to a famous or iconic site—the moment when we arrive in Athens and they say 'Wow, that's the Acropolis, it's actually right there!'"**

—SARAH OLSEN, CLASSICS PROFESSOR

With support from a 2022-23 fellowship from the Marion and Jasper Whiting Foundation, Olsen and Wilcox planned to travel to Crete in May to explore logistics and delve into the archaeology, literature, history and culture of the southern Greek island. They expected to visit museums, educational centers, national parks and archaeological sites.

Among their planned stops is the Samariá Gorge. Located in Crete's White Mountains, the island's largest mountain range, the site is included in UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves.

"I want students to think carefully about how the topography of the island has shaped its history," Wilcox says. "I want them to become better acquainted with the way environment drives cultural adaptations and the delicate balancing act of protecting unique and pristine natural habitats weighed against the economic dependence of the modern Cretan economy on tourism."

Another site on the itinerary is the Diktaean Cave, also called Psychro Cave, located inland, toward the eastern side of Crete. Archaeological evidence shows the cave was a religious site in the Bronze and Iron ages.

"It's also one of the places associated, in myth, with the birth and early childhood of the god Zeus," Olsen says. "In that sense, it's a really promising site for exploring the intersection of myth, ritual and topography on Crete, which is one of the key topics we hope to consider in the course."

Photo by Vasilios Muselimis / Unsplash

# Writing as Thinking

**By**
**Julia McKenzie Munemo**

As the director of the writing center at Williams, I'll admit to having reached out to colleagues at other colleges earlier this semester with a message that said, more or less, "We're toast."

That's because no essay produced by the artificial intelligence chat bot that has unsettled so many of us in higher education will contain a typo, misplace a modifier, overuse the comma or—and on this you can defiantly depend—misspell an adverb. By and large, those are the issues students visit my writing center to discuss. We've come to see the goal of writing as getting to our point quickly, making a strong argument and concluding carefully, all with perfect grammar and syntax. But anyone who has revised a paper or come back to an idea after a sleep or a walk or a shower will tell you that the true goal of writing is to clarify, understand and experience our own thinking.

The Bot will steal that from you. My message to students is: Don't let it.

I'm not wringing my hands about the end of writing, literature or even the excellent academic essay. But students for whom writing feels like a transaction or a chore will no longer be motivated to practice it. (Writing is, above all, a practice.) With The Bot, you can effortlessly and almost instantly produce essays that one faculty colleague described as surface level and formulaic but solidly in the B range.

Students who care more about their GPA than muddling through ideas and learning how to think will run to The Bot to produce the cleanest written English. It won't matter that the ideas The Bot spits out aren't their own.

When, on the other hand, writing is seen as an iterative process that helps students figure out what they think, the goal is to work through thoughts and further research and revision to land on something potentially messy but deeply thought out. Writing as thinking becomes the process and the result.

With The Bot's arrival, we're now in a bifurcated world. On one side are students who will use The Bot to create the clean writing they think their professors want. On the other side are the students who will continue to write the old-fashioned way. Some argue this levels the playing field: Everyone's sentences are clear, all paragraphs are well structured and build to a natural conclusion, spelling is perfect, and grammatical errors are absent. After all, writing is an equity issue. Faculty judge students from under-resourced schools alongside those from prep schools, neurodivergent students alongside "mainstream" thinkers and multilingual writers alongside native English speakers. How wonderful would it be if faculty members' implicit (or explicit) biases could be squashed by uniformly well-structured essays?

Yet all bifurcation leads to someone's oppression. Name a faculty member who can't spot surface-level thinking and formulaic writing. Rather than leveling the playing field, I believe we are dangerously close to creating two strata of students: those whom we deem smart, insightful and deeply thoughtful and those who seem less engaged with the material—or less able to have serious thoughts about it. Yes, writing is an equity issue, but it's not just about using Standard American English and "properly" structuring essays. Students who let The Bot speak for them aren't doing themselves any favors in the long run.

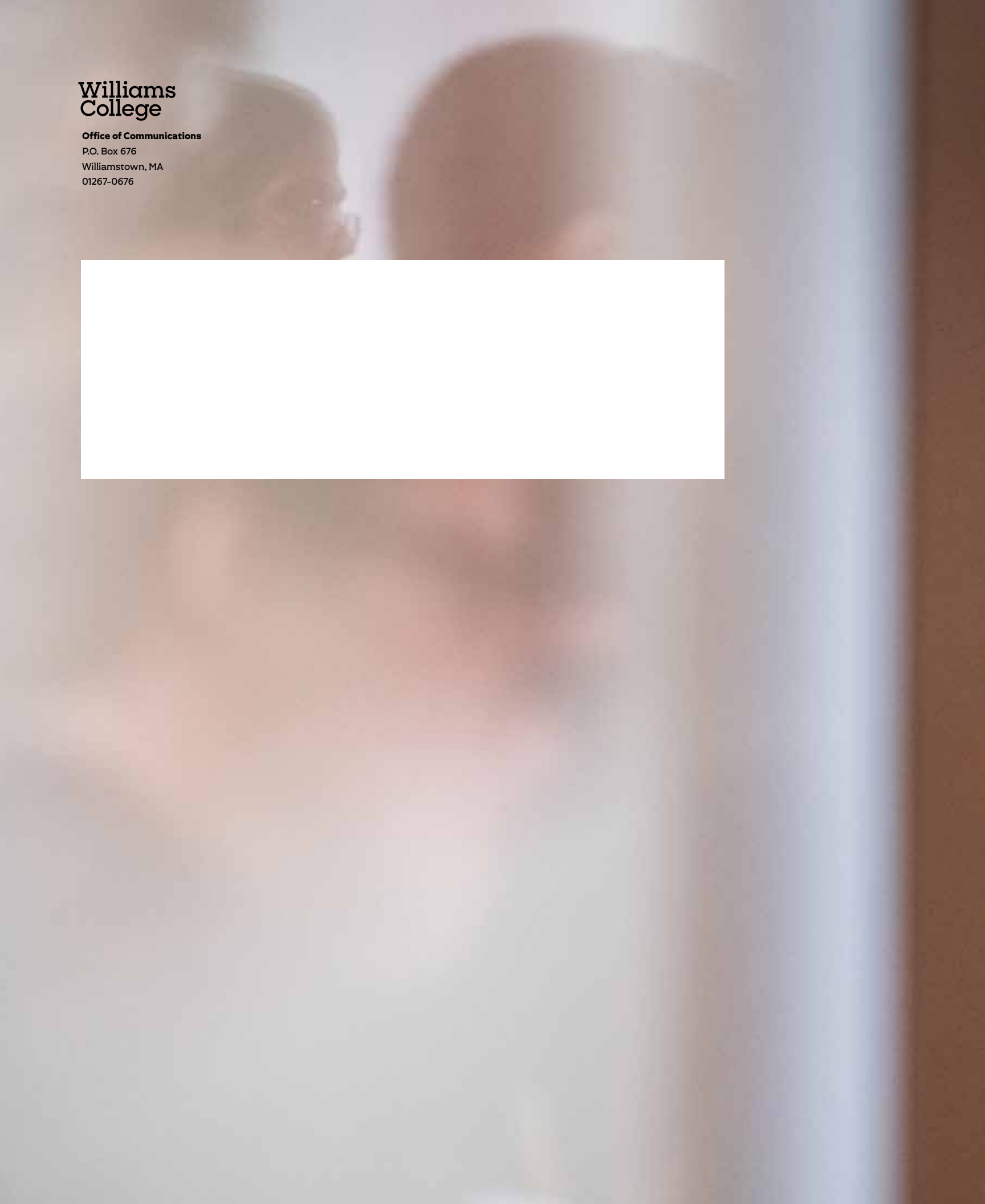
Writing is hard. We hit walls, stare at the blank page, return to our research, underline new ideas, come back to the blank page. It's daunting and overwhelming and, at least in my experience, fills me with self-doubt. I have never written anything—not my college thesis, my master's thesis, any article I wrote over a 15-year freelance career or even my book—in which I knew what I thought about the topic for a pretty long time before I'd written about it.

Students: Don't rob yourself of the chance to understand—and expand—your own brain. Don't waste your years in college looking for shortcuts. Don't let The Bot do your writing about books or big ideas or science experiments for you and let what you could have learned from them disappear.

Writing is thinking. Practice one to sharpen the other. It may not be the only way to a college degree, but it's the best way to get the most out of it.

*This essay is edited and reprinted from* Inside Higher Ed, *Jan. 23, 2023. The original is available at bit.ly/writing_as_thinking.*

Illustration by The Project Twins



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