

Affirming our Actions

A historic moment for the College (the launch of a campaign to support our strategic plan) coincides with a more fundamentally historic moment for American higher education. I'm referring to the U.S. Supreme Court's endorsement of race-consciousness in college admissions.

The cases involving admission to the University of Michigan's undergraduate programs and law school affirm in a majority ruling the principles articulated in 1978 by a single justice, Lewis Powell. Powell argued that there were compelling educational reasons for colleges to take race into account in admitting students, but that the process must operate without fixed quotas. The majority opinion in the Michigan law school case, written by Sandra Day O'Connor, reinforces the idea that racial diversity is a compelling educational interest and adds that colleges can work toward building a "critical mass" of minority students on campus as long as the admission process focuses on the individual assessment of applicants.

Supported by the Powell decision, Williams dramatically remade itself for the better. U.S. minorities were 10 percent of the Class of 1977 and are almost 30 percent for the Class of 2007. At the same time, the academic talent of the student body has grown in every measure. We've expanded educational opportunity: Our curriculum is richer and our campus life more lively and varied. The diversity of the campus has enhanced our capacity for empathy and flexibility of mind, broadening what we know and how we know it. The education we offer all our students has been greatly improved.

For all these reasons, Williams, along with other colleges, had filed with the Supreme Court an amicus brief affirming these principles in the University of Michigan cases.

Supported even more strongly by the new rulings, we will continue in our admission process to individually assess applicants to build an entering class of great talent *and* great diversity. We will continue our programs designed to increase the number of students from underrepresented groups who pursue academic careers. We will review those programs to ensure they are in the spirit of the new court rulings, but our commitment to these programs and their goals remains firm.

Also unwavering is our commitment to recruit and retain a diverse faculty and staff, a goal we have met with less success despite considerable long-term effort. Among this year's faculty, 39 percent are women and 17 percent are people of color.

In the current hiring season we must recommit ourselves to hiring talented faculty *and* to increasing the faculty's diversity by working even harder to broaden each applicant pool and to ensure that every promising applicant of color receives the level of review he or she deserves.

We are compelled to pursue racial and other forms of diversity by the best of our history. This includes the call by President Paul Chadbourne in 1872 that the College "will not be rich enough until . . . able to bring the education [it offers] within the reach of the poorest young man in the land;" the admission of the College's first Black student, Gaius Charles Bolin, in 1885; the decisions in the 1960s to recruit more black students and to phase out fraternities; the subsequent move to coeducation; and the broader expansion of racial diversity in the 1980s under the leadership of President Frank Oakley.

We are also compelled by our future. The world that Williams exists to serve will grow even more diverse. For us to continue to prepare our students as leaders, we have to embody that growing diversity on our campus.

We have in this pursuit much encouragement. The best prospective students are attracted to diverse campuses. Our faculty and staff have long embraced this goal and worked hard toward it. Our alumni overwhelmingly support it as a requirement for the College in a world that they know all too well grows more complex by the year.

Our strategic plan, supported by The Williams Campaign, is designed to improve every aspect of the College. To achieve that lofty goal, the continued diversifying of our campus community must be woven into every change we make. True to the College's highest values and buoyed by these historic court rulings, let all of us at Williams recommit ourselves to the hard but vital work necessary to make that happen. Our success as a college truly depends on it.

—Morty Schapiro

EPH'S BOOKSHELF

Their Wildest Dreams. By Peter Abrahams '68. Ballantine Books, 2003. 291 pp. \$24.95. A suspense novel whose characters are embroiled in mystery, murder, blackmail and intrigue in a Mexican border town.

Who Owns Native Culture? By Michael Brown, Lambert Professor of Anthropology. Harvard University Press, 2003. 336 pp. \$29.95. A documentary of indigenous people's efforts to redefine heritage as a proprietary resource.

Helen Richard Coyle: Road to Montevideo. Pub. by William T. Coyle '70. Power Press, second printing 2003. 368 pp. \$9.95. A posthumous publication of journals kept by the author's mother during a one-year bicycle jaunt in South America during World War II.

To the Point: A Tribute to Pointing Dogs. By Tom Davis '79 et al. Stackpole Books, 2003. 176 pp. \$40. An exploration of the history, personality, physical characteristics and distinctive attributes of pointing dog breeds. Includes an overview of the training process and an appreciation of field trials.

Roanoke: The Renaissance of a Hoosier Village. By Pete Eshelman '76 et al. Guild Press Emmis Books, 2003. 112 pp. \$24.95 Describes the revitalization of Roanoke, Ind., beginning in the 1990s.

Transatlantic: Samuel Cunard, Isambard Brunel and the Great Atlantic Steamships. By Stephen Fox '66. HarperCollins, 2003. 512 pp. \$29.95. A history of the rapid development of transatlantic steamships—from paddle-wheelers to the sleek luxury greyhounds of the modern era—and the men who designed and ran them.

Entrepreneur. By William W. Garth IV '67. Self-published, 2002. 169 pp. \$15.95. A biography of the author's father, who transformed the printing industry at the dawn of the computer age.

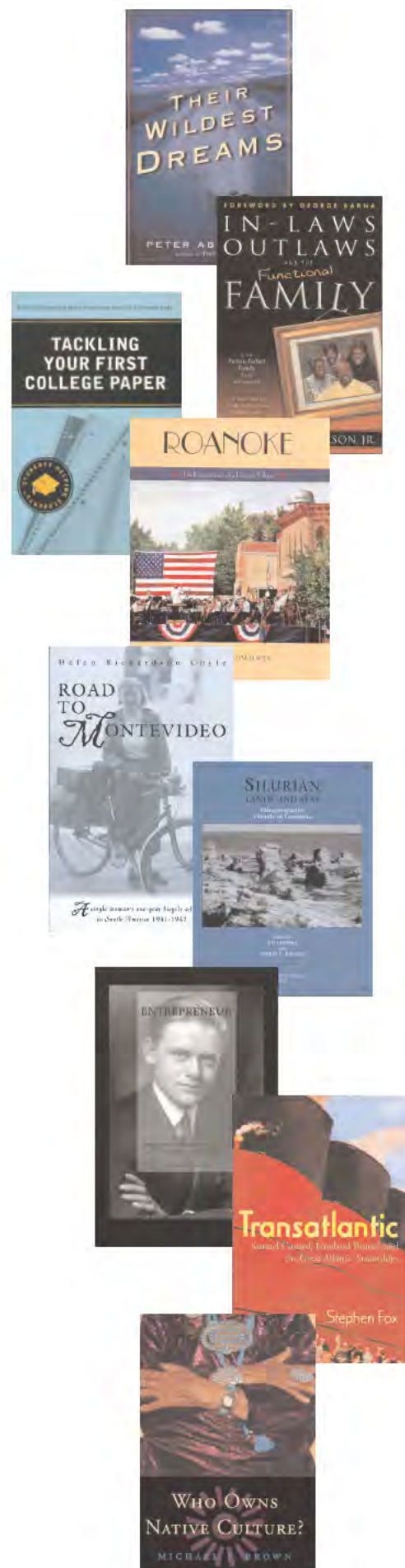
Tackling Your First College Paper. By Scott Grinsell '04. Independent Publishers Group, 2002. 96 pp. \$6.95. Advice from college students and recent graduates on writing papers in college.

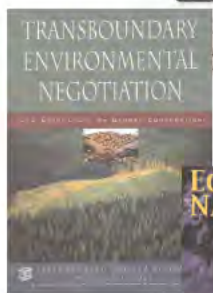
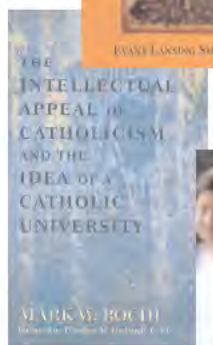
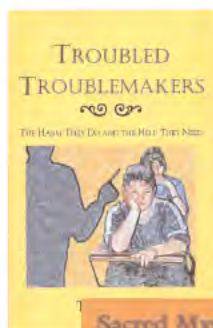
In-Laws, Outlaws and the Functional Family. By Harry R. Jackson Jr. '75. Regal Books, 2002. 216 pp. \$12.99. A spiritual guide to resolving family issues such as confrontation, sexuality and parenting.

Silurian Lands and Seas: Paleogeography Outside of Laurentia. Ed. by Markes E. Johnson, Charles L. MacMillan Professor of Geology. New York State Museum, 2003. 400 pp. \$54.95. An up-to-date synthesis of plate tectonics, paleogeography, biotic distribution and geologic history of the 20-million-year Silurian geologic period.

Radical Space: Building the House of the People. By Margaret L. Kohn '92. Cornell University Press, 2003. 224 pp. \$19.95. An analysis of the role space plays in democratic theory and how different sites of working-class mobilization in Europe destabilized the existing patterns of social life, economic activity and political participation.

World Class Parasites: North American Parasitic Zoonoses. Ed. by Peter J. Krause '67 et al. Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002. 224 pp. \$165. An overview of the etiology, epidemiology, pathogenesis, diagnostic tests, treatment and control procedures, and recent advances and challenges in the field of parasitic infections and diseases transferred to humans by animals in North America.





American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting 1834-53.

By Meredith L. McGill '83. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002. 376 pp. \$39.95. An exploration of the legal arguments and political struggles that produced an American "culture of reprinting" that persisted for two decades.

Transboundary Environmental Negotiation: New Approaches to Global Cooperation.

By William Moomaw '59 et al. Jossey-Bass, 2002. 464 pp. \$75. A collection of scholarly articles examining the ways in which global environmental treaty-making can be improved.

Troubled Troublemakers: The Harm They Do and the Help They Need.

By Ted Oviatt '55. Xlibris Books, 2003. 184 pp. \$30.99. The author's 40 years as an educator help shed light on ways to address the growing problem of discipline in schools.

The Roman Years of a South Carolina Artist: Caroline Carson's Letters Home, 1872-1892.

Ed. by William H. Pease '47 et al. University of South Carolina Press, 2003. 308 pp. \$39.95. A volume of letters written by Unionist and American expatriate Caroline Carson describing her intellectual and artistic pursuits in Italy.

The Intellectual Appeal of Catholicism and the Idea of a Catholic University.

By Mark W. Roche '78. University of Notre Dame Press, 2003. 64 pp. \$7.95. A look at the role of Catholic higher education and Catholic identity in society.

On Human Nature: A Gathering While Everything Flows.

Ed. by William H. Rueckert '50 et al. University of California Press, 2003. 389 pp. \$60. A compilation of essays,

autobiographical reflections, an interview and a poem by the late literary theorist and cultural critic Kenneth Burke.

One in a Million: Bringing Out What is Wondrous in Your Child Through Trust, Understanding and Respect.

By Julie Moss Scandora '74. Hara Publishing Group, 2003. 208 pp. \$14.95. A parenting book that examines life from a child's perspective.

Echo and Narcissus.

By Mark R. Siegel '71. Aardwolf Press, 2003. 256 pp. \$14.95. A debut novel spins a dark fantasy tale melding magic, drugs and rock 'n' roll.

Sacred Mysteries: Myths About Couples in Quest.

By Evans Lansing Smith '72. Blue Dolphin Publishing, 2003. 179 pp. \$17.95. An exploration of symbolism in myths and folktales about marriage.

Classics in Total Synthesis II: More Targets, Strategies, Methods.

By Scott Snyder '99 et al. John Wiley & Sons, 2003. 656 pp. \$95. An organic chemistry textbook examining the methods chemists use to synthesize complex molecules, many of which are used for medicinal purposes.

Northern Lights: The Stories of Minnesota's Past.

By Nancy O'Brien Wagner '95 et al. Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2003. 342 pp. \$50. A sixth-grade textbook, workbook and annotated teachers' edition on the history of Minnesota, encouraging students to analyze primary source materials on their own.

ON COMPACT DISC:

Telling Stories. By Tom Lee '82. Red Branch Audio, 2003. \$14. A performance of four tales of transformation by the Brothers Grimm: *The Twelve Windows*, *Jorinda & Joringle*, *Rabbit Bride* and *The Crystal Ball*.

A Poet Among Us

On Oct. 21, Louise Glück, the Margaret Bundy Scott Senior Lecturer in English, began her appointment as U.S. Poet Laureate, succeeding Billy Collins, who held the post for two one-year terms.

Glück, author of nine books of poetry, and whose chapbook *October* was to be published in November, is the 12th Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to be appointed by the Library of Congress and the third woman to hold the post

since the program's inception in 1986.

Glück was surprised to learn of the appointment, as she does not seek publicity. But she accepted the post without hesitation, saying that she felt her life needed to be "disturbed and surprised."

As she has done since 1983, Glück will continue to travel from

Cambridge to Williamstown one day per week to teach courses such as "The Writing of Poetry" and "Contemporary American Poetry." She says she enjoys working with Williams students, whom she considers to be "gifted, eccentric and ardent." "I have some amazing minds to work with; they force me to think," she said of her students in 2001, the year she won Yale University's Bollingen Prize in Poetry for her 1999 book *Vita Nova*.

Glück also won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry and was a finalist for the National Book Award for her 1992 collection *Wild Iris*. Her other awards include the National Book Critics Circle Award for *The Triumph of Achilles* (1985), The American Academy of Arts and Letters in Literature for *Descending Figure* (1980), and a Lannan Literary Award for excellence in poetry. She has received fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts, and she was the Vermont state poet. In 1997 she was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and in 1999 she became a chancellor of the Academy of American Poets. She currently is a judge for the Yale Series of Younger Poets.

"Her work is inward-looking, rigorous in its relation to language, fine-tuned and often searing," says Chris Pye, Williams' Class of 1924 Professor of English and chairman of the English department. "She has gotten as far as she has because of her unwavering attention to her craft and her own sense of where it's going."

Star Black

Louise Glück

THE SILVER LILY

The nights have grown cool again, like the nights of early spring, and quiet again. Will speech disturb you? We're alone now; we have no reason for silence.

Can you see, over the garden—the full moon rises. I won't see the next full moon.

In spring, when the moon rose, it meant time was endless. Snowdrops opened and closed, the clustered seeds of the maples fell in pale drifts. White over white, the moon rose over the birch tree. And in the crook, where the tree divides, leaves of the first daffodils, in moonlight soft greenish-silver.

We have come too far together toward the end now to fear the end. These nights, I am no longer even certain I know what the end means. And you, who've been with a man—

after the first cries, doesn't joy, like fear, make no sound?

From *Wild Iris* (1992)

Curtains Up

As a theater major at Williams, Robert Baker-White '80 says he "began to understand what the theater was really about in an intellectual and cultural sense."

These days, he's working to impart that knowledge to undergraduates as the new chair of Williams' theater department. He spoke with news director Jo Procter about his role and the intersections between theater and the life of the College.

What is your job? Teacher? Writer? Theorist? Administrator? Manager?

Those are all things that I will do. I'm definitely going to teach a range of courses from acting to directing to dramatic literature to drama theory.



Robert Baker-White

I've written about the theater and dramatic literature for the last 15 years, and I definitely want to continue that.

I'm in the middle of trying to formulate a book about American drama.

There is significant work to do in terms of helping to coordinate a unified approach to the opportunities provided by the new '62 Center for Theatre and Dance. It's going to have performance, rehearsal, and, indeed, classroom facilities, on a scale much grander than we had before. We need to explore how the theater department and the dance program, which also is getting a tremendous boost from new performance space,

can work best together. And the theater department needs to figure out how to work with all parts of the campus community, to look for crossovers in terms of programming. The challenge is to formulate a strategy and a program for the best use of the space that will involve collaboration with people all across the campus.

What are the most important issues for the theater department?

That's a complicated question. Part of the opportunity that the '62 Center for Theatre and Dance gives us is a chance to think about expanding our program, giving it a little higher profile, finding ways to make the productions and artistic

Symbols and Signs

More than 75 years ago, New Mexico lawmakers chose as the centerpiece of the state flag a “sun symbol,” composed of a red circle radiating four lines in each of the cardinal directions. Inspired by a 19th century piece of pottery created by a member of the Zia Pueblo, the symbol represented what state officials called the “perfect friendship among native cultures.”

Yet for the Zia, an Indian community about 35 miles north of Albuquerque, the friendship was not so perfect, according to Williams anthropologist Michael Brown. “Aside from their concern about the inappropriate use of a powerful religious symbol,” he writes in his latest book, *Who Owns Native Culture?*, the



Southwest Airlines' New Mexico “logo” jet

Zia “were angry because no one had asked their permission before adopting the symbol for the state flag.”

In *Who Owns Native Culture?*, Brown uses case studies like that of the Zia to explore whether aspects of

indigenous people’s heritage and culture—such as art, religion or medicine—can and should be protected from use by outsiders. Any answer, he says, must respect the rights of native communities without blocking the open communication essential to the life of pluralist democracies.



Michael Brown

To supplement the book, and as chairman of Williams’ Center for Technology in the Arts and Humanities, Brown created a Web site that allows readers to follow in his research footsteps. Visitors to www.williams.edu/go/native will find in the chapter on the Zia a photograph of the sun symbol; a press release from Southwest Airlines, which worked closely with the pueblo to reproduce the symbol on its New Mexico “logo” jet; and a link to the Canadian Intellectual Property Office database, which shows the “official mark” registration for a petroglyph created by the Snuneymuxw first nation.

Brown, the James N. Lambert ’39 Professor of Anthropology and Latin American Studies, came to Williams in 1980 after completing a doctorate in anthropology at University of Michigan. He began researching intellectual property rights of native populations a decade later, studying the New Age movement and designing a seminar on the cultural ownership of knowledge in the United States, Australia and other developed countries. He also teaches classes such as “North-American Indians” and “Native Peoples of Latin America.”

Other books by Michael Brown:

The Channeling Zone (1997); *War of Shadows* (1991); *Tsewa’s Gift* (1986); *Una Paz Incierta* (1984)

output of the program even more central to the life of the College and integrated with other disciplines. Part of the challenge is related to thinking through how we want the department to grow.

Why did you want this job?

After getting my doctorate, I taught at Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas, for 11 years. That was a wonderful experience, but a couple of years ago I had the opportunity to head the theater program at Georgetown University. Georgetown was building its own new performing arts center, and I was involved in the same type of work that is going on here now. When I got wind of this opportunity, my wife (Tracy ’80) and I decided

there probably wasn’t anywhere else that we would rather be than at Williams and in Williamstown. I can’t imagine a better professional situation than directing this program and teaching at this college in terms of being part of a dynamic learning community and being able to contribute to its artistic life.

Is the theater a way of thinking?

Absolutely. It is one of the most integrative ways of thinking that you can have. I would like every student on campus to take a beginning acting class. When we get students from other disciplines into acting classes, 99 percent of them say, “Wow! I had no idea what was involved. I had

no idea of the ways in which you have to think, the ways in which you have to integrate your mental activity with your physical activity with your emotional life.”

Theater was interdisciplinary long before people talked about things being interdisciplinary. That is one of the great reasons for having theater on a college campus. When we do Brecht’s play *Galileo*, it’s a wonderful opportunity for us to talk to the astronomy and physics departments. With a Shakespeare play, we can go to the history and English departments. When we do a contemporary political drama, we can go to other places on campus where people have appropriate expertise.



Corner of the Exeter College Library and the University's Bodleian Library, viewed from the Fellows' Garden.

Among the Dr

On the 75th anniversary of Williams' affiliation with Exeter College, students are more fully integrated in Oxford life than ever before.

From a height above a narrow street in Oxford, England, a corner of the Exeter College fellows' garden overlooks the Bodleian Library. Each year the architectural landmark becomes as familiar to a select group of Williams juniors as Stetson or Griffin Hall.

Yet in the nearly two decades that Williams has been sending undergraduates to Exeter, their access to the internationally renowned library has been limited, often forcing them to scramble for research materials.

Until now.

Thanks to an agreement between the two colleges, strengthening already healthy ties, Williams students spending the year abroad at Oxford University will enjoy virtually all the privileges of their Exeter counterparts, including full access to the Bodleian's more than 7 million books.

"Williams is the sort of institution that can merge very nicely with the colleges here," says Marilyn Butler, rector of Exeter. "We've always been able to tell how good the students are."

The connection between the two colleges dates to 1927, when the John Edmund Moody '21 fellowship was established at Williams. The fellowship—one of the first graduate scholarships ever offered by the College—supported two years of study at Exeter.

In the ensuing years another three graduate fellowships were created to support study at Exeter and Worcester College (one of the other colleges of Oxford University). According to alumni records, at least 227 Williams graduates have come to do graduate work at Oxford.

BY CAROLYN FARRAR
PHOTOS BY DAVID TOLLEY



earning Spires



Exeter College Library.

Among the Dreaming Spires



The Hall at Exeter College, built in 1618.

Exeter opened its doors to Williams juniors in 1985. Lord Crowther-Hunt, Exeter's rector at the time, called the creation of the yearlong study abroad program "the most important development this century for our respective institutions."

The program was designed to blend independent study with tutorials, in which a student and a faculty member meet weekly to explore a subject in depth. As is the case with Williams tutorials, introduced in 1988, Oxford tutorials require the student to master an extensive reading list each week and prepare an eight- to 10-page essay based on the material. The faculty member, or tutor, works with the student each week to plumb the depths of the given topic and refine the essay. The 25 or so Williams students attending Exeter each

year take at least four eight-week tutorial courses and one four-week tutorial course, spread over the three terms of the academic year.

Originally, in order to give Williams students the flexibility to explore subjects that weren't available back home—and so that their grades would count toward their Williams requirements—the juniors were classified as "associate students" at Oxford. As such, they had access to many, but not all, of the resources and services available to Exeter students.

For instance, it was sometimes difficult to secure the appropriate tutor to work with a Williams student on a particular subject. Though students could lunch at Exeter, they were restricted to two dinners per week in the dining hall. Their research time at the Bodleian was limited to weekdays from 4 to 10 p.m. and Saturday mornings. (The Bodleian is not a lending library, and it can sometimes take hours for students to receive books they've requested.) And access to certain "faculty," or departmental, libraries was prohibited.



Students at work in the recently renovated library in Ephraim Williams House.



A chalking on Exeter College walls marking its successes in Oxford rowing competitions.

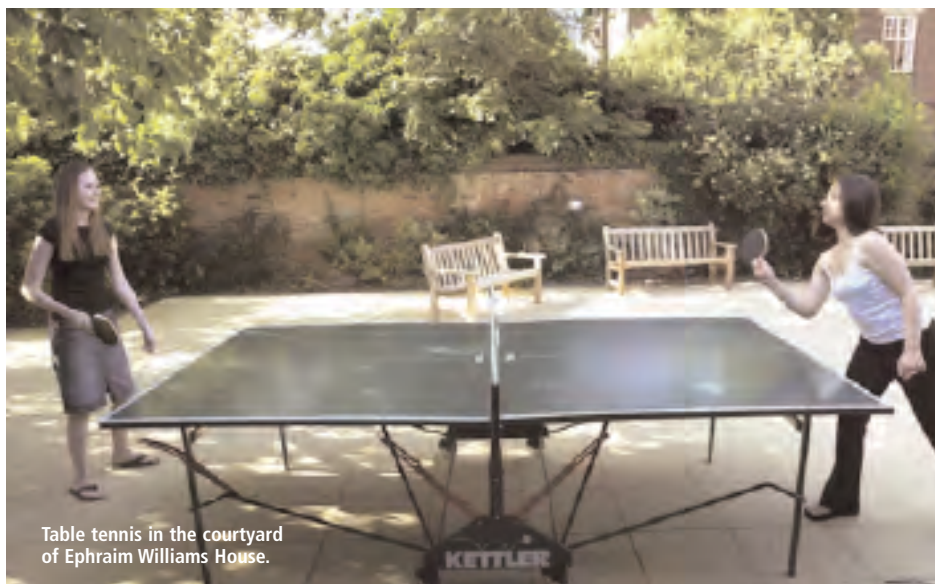


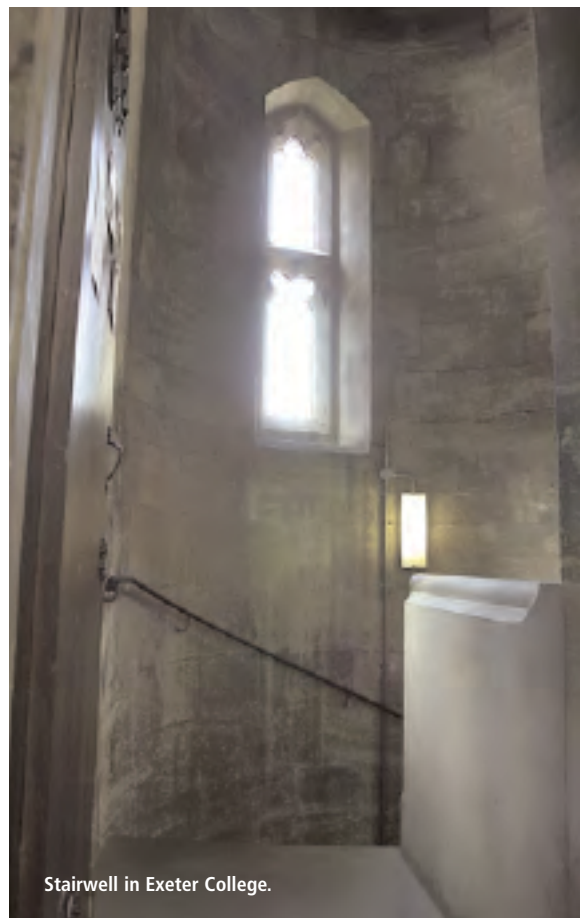
Table tennis in the courtyard of Ephraim Williams House.

Over time, many Oxford colleges began accepting increasing numbers of U.S. students via study abroad. Known as “visiting students,” they were considered full members of the university during their year at Oxford, enjoying access to virtually all of the facilities, resources and services available to undergraduates.

Administrators at Williams discussed upgrading its juniors to visiting students as well, but the change involved a considerable increase in the program’s annual operating expenses—costs that, at the time, seemed to outweigh the benefits.

But as visiting students became the norm at Oxford, “Our students felt increasingly marginalized,” says Chris Waters, Williams’ Hans W. Gatzke ’38 Professor of Modern European History and current director of the program at Exeter. “Associate students, like those from Williams, declined as a percentage of the total number of American undergraduates in Oxford and began feeling isolated from their American peers.”

Meanwhile, mounting criticism began to appear in the British press about American programs in Oxford that charged exorbitant fees but were not sanctioned by the university. Though the programs used Oxford’s name, students enrolled in them had no connection to the university. The discrepancy prompted



Stairwell in Exeter College.



Students relax in the Fellows’ Garden of Exeter College.

Among the Dreaming Spires

Oxford to establish a working committee in early 2001 to assess the status of its associate student programs. Richard Repp, a 1957 Williams graduate and master of St. Cross College at Oxford, was named the committee's chairman.

As Oxford was conducting its review, Williams faculty voted in May 2001 to institute a sweeping set of curricular initiatives that emphasized writing and analytical thinking, experiential learning, interdisciplinary programs and an increase in the number of tutorials. Because tutorials were already a central part of the Williams experience at Oxford, the College was eager to strengthen its flagship study abroad program.

So when Oxford's working committee released a report last year recommending that the university phase out associate student programs over a five-year period, Williams requested that Oxford accept its

juniors as full visiting students, beginning with the 2003-04 academic year. Oxford approved the new Williams-Exeter Programme at Oxford University in June.

Repp is quick to point out that Oxford never had concerns about the quality of the Williams program. "Williams has always been on the side of the angels on this," he says. "It has always been very scrupulous."

"Williams was really committed to making this a flagship program, in which our students are fully integrated in the life of Exeter and the university as a whole,"



Exeter College Chapel.

says Waters, who, in addition to serving as director of the Williams-Exeter Programme, is Exeter's tutor for visiting students, reporting to Exeter on student progress and working closely with Exeter's various subject tutors.

"It's a change that everyone will be able to feel," says Elisia Lau '04, who spent last year at Exeter. Better access to the libraries means "the nature of studying will be perhaps easier," she says.

Students also will carry Oxford ID cards and will be entitled to university computing accounts, gaining access to information on the Web available only to Oxford students. The changes, Lau says, will "put you more in sync with the rest of the Oxford students."

The students will continue to maintain their separate residence in Ephraim Williams House, a four-building complex



An Exeter tutorial.

a little more than a mile away from Exeter. Williams purchased the property in 1984 and, last year, invested about \$230,000 to refurbish the dining room, renovate and expand the library, replace the courtyard and wire all of the rooms for Internet access. Three Exeter students also live in Ephraim Williams House each year, as does the program director.

The four houses that make up the complex front three different streets, but green lawns and gardens connect their backyards. In addition to a basketball hoop and bicycle rack, there is a collection of garden gnomes, each representing a member of the Ephraim Williams House staff. In the middle of the collection sits a vividly purple cow.

Inside the complex are a library, a computer lab, lounges, kitchens, a dining room where the students convene each Wednesday for dinner, and student bedrooms.

The students are responsible for scheduling their time and can choose to participate in a variety of college and university clubs and organizations and on athletic teams. A cultural fund provides them with £200 sterling—roughly \$315—to cover attendance at plays, classical concerts, museums, cricket matches and other sporting events. In the past two years Williams also sponsored two trips in March—one to San Sebastian and Bilbao, and one to Nice—during a break between academic terms.



The Purple Cow garden gnome in the courtyard of Ephraim Williams House.



Ephraim Williams House bedroom.

But work remains the focus. “I spent a lot of time reading and thinking, and that gave me a taste of what it would be like to become a professor,” says Kathryn Kent ’88, an associate professor of English at Williams who spent her junior year at Exeter in 1986-87, the second year of the program’s existence. Her independent study, she says, “brought together my interest in literature with my interest in gender studies in ways I hadn’t quite imagined before.”

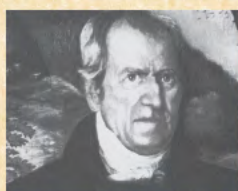
Matthew Ellis ’03, who spent his junior year at Exeter and returned this past fall to Oxford on Williams’ Donovan-Moody fellowship to study philosophy and

Middle Eastern studies, recalls his first tutorial, with esteemed history professor John Darwin. “The first week I was very self-conscious,” he says. “But I learned to enjoy being challenged and being stumped.”

That type of intellectual challenge has been one of the program’s great advantages for Williams, says Thomas Kohut, the College’s acting provost.

“We want to make very sure that our students and our faculty go out into the world and bring it back to keep Williams refreshed and renewed,” he says. “Our students have this experience at Oxford and then come back for their senior year. I think this place is changed as a result, in small but not insignificant ways.” ■

Carolyn Farrar is a free-lance writer based in Letterkenny, Ireland.



MY FAVORITE MARK HOPKINS

Last spring we asked
alumni and students
what made their
Williams experience
so special. Their
answers inevitably had
a common denominator
— the faculty.

CLIMB HIGH
CLIMB FAR
YOUR GOAL
THE SKY
YOUR AIM
THE STAR

Photos of alumni and students by
Kevin Bubriski, Kevin Kenefick, Nathan Mandell and Rick Rabe

My favorite class that I have taken here is Shawn Rosenheim's "Feature Film," English 204. It's an awesome, awesome class, especially for people who are not used to studying film like they study books or text or history. Shawn



Shawn Rosenheim

Rosenheim is the funniest, sharpest, smartest man. Every day in class he would go up there and talk about a film, and I would sit in my seat in the auditorium, astounded. He's so smart, and his ideas really are not confining. His method of teaching is so nurturing for your own thoughts.

I took a class called "Three Directors" with Shelley Salamensky, who works for the theater department. She epitomizes what I love most about this school. We've had coffee dates—she has her office hours in the coffee shop—and it's just such a comfortable environment for me to approach her with questions. More than once she's asked me about how I'm doing with my friends or with my family, and it's so nice to know that professors do care about you in more ways than on paper, and they really show it.



Shelley Salamensky

One class I was interested in was called "Psychoneuroimmunology." It looked very daunting. So I went to the professor, Elliot Friedman, because it sounded really interesting, but I had this fear of science. I said, "I'm thinking about taking this class next semester. Can you tell me what we're going to be covering and if you think I can do it?" (I'd had a class with him before.) He said, "It's going to be hard. The first three weeks is a crash course in immunology. But we're all going to be working really hard, because we are all starting at the same place. I'm in this right



Cindy Wong '04
*Theater and
psychology double
major, Williams*



Elliot Friedman

with you. We're all going to find out what we're going to explore, what we're going to learn, together. Yeah, I think you can do it." So I took the class, and it was hard—it was really hard—but I feel so awesome that I accomplished something that I was psychologically so freaked out about beforehand. I ended up taking an independent project on exactly the same thing the semester after.

I took Prof. Laurie Heatherington's class on abnormal psychology and psych disorders. She has such a nice demeanor and makes you feel comfortable sitting in class learning from her. One of her students would raise questions about something she didn't know, and I remember being really surprised by her saying, "I don't know the answer. I'll go check on that and get back to you." She kept her word every time.



Laurie Heatherington



Charles Dew '58
*Charles R. Keller Professor of History,
Williams*

Bob Scott got me seriously interested in southern history, not just as a Civil War buff—most kids who grew up in the South in my day became fascinated by the Civil War. But I took an honors seminar with Bob that got me profoundly interested in trying to understand the South. I think I have Bob to thank for my career choice.



Bob Scott

The other professor I remember vividly was Bob Waite, who taught German history and Russian history. Bob Waite served me wonderfully well in a critical moment. I was interviewing for a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship—which would just be fabulous as far as my graduate education went if I could land it—down at MIT. One of the first questions that came out of the interviewer's mouth was, "What does it take to make a



Bob Waite

good teacher?" I called up Bob Waite's image in my mind and described him, and that got me off to a flying start and probably won me the fellowship. Bob Waite has sort of stayed in my mind's eye as the quintessential college teacher.

I told the committee that Bob brought passion to the classroom—that you could feel the electricity because he was so interested in what he was talking about. It was clear that he was just alive with curiosity and interest about the subject matter that he was teaching, and when that happens in the class you can't help but get excited about it. You get charged, you absorb some of that electricity, and Bob had it in ways that were really quite remarkable.

MY FAVORITE FACULTY

**Lucy Calkins '73**

*Professor of English education
and founding director of the
Teachers College Writing
Project, Columbia University*

I remember Nathaniel Lawrence and Binks Little, John Eusden, Frank Oakley—history and religion and philosophy faculty. All four were just incredible at one-to-one mentoring and at promoting small cadres of students studying together.



Nathaniel Lawrence

What I remember most are the long evenings in the library writing and trying to piece together my own thinking and ideas that I would find in books and in the courses. All four of those faculty members really respected composition and asked students to compose their own fabric, to piece together their own meaning. The first philosophy course I ever took with Nathaniel

Lawrence, he had us thinking about the difference between perception and memory. And I remember my mind being so full. I had never stopped to think about perception and memory and how similar they are.

Frank Oakley had a real presence in the classroom, and he would tell stories with a twinkle in his eye and be so unabashedly enthusiastic about whatever he was teaching. I remember his stories, his questions and the way he would listen.

I would often see John Eusden. I'd be



Frank Oakley

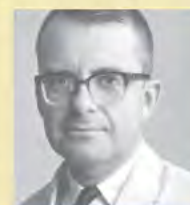
out walking, and John would come biking by and pause. Standing there, he leaning against his bike and me holding my books, John and I



John Eusden

would talk. He always stayed abreast of what was happening in my life. Often, a group of students would meet in his living room, and we'd sit around the crackling fire and talk. There was a tremendous closeness and camaraderie.

Those of us who were religion majors came to know Binks Little really well and to feel that we had the most brilliant adviser that anyone could ever have. He usually would write a page or a page-and-a-half of comments on our papers. Even if the paper was an A, he would have a tremendous number of critical comments where he would get right to the heart of how we could have done an even better job. It was always a compliment to be able to know you'd written a good paper and that he would value it by talking back. We always knew he was tough, and we loved his toughness and felt that he brought out the best in all of us.



"Binks" Little



Harry Sheehy '75
*Director of athletics,
Williams*

I remember Bob Gaudino, because it was a political philosophy course in which we were reading all the great books. But the books were like wading through cement, and I stepped in to take an exam one day—and I had studied—and I just froze. He was proctoring the exam and said, "Mr. Sheehy, what are you waiting for?" And I said, "Prof. Gaudino, I'm waiting for divine intervention." He said, "Mr. Sheehy,

you never take an exam seriously." It broke the ice. I wrote a heck of a C-minus exam for him.

His class, the atmosphere in it was so charged. He was so bright, so intelligent, and as you were struggling with a question



Bob Gaudino

he would actually tell you what page the answer was on. He wanted you to wrestle, and he wanted you to really try to understand, but he was willing to massage questions and help you. That's probably one of the more difficult classes I took here, but one that I enjoyed the most. He could be intimidating, but just when he knew he was on the verge of knocking you out of the room, he would bring you right back into the center of the class.



Fred Rudolph

I got to know Fred Rudolph, in American studies. I was an American civilization major, and he was just terrific as a mentor. He is responsible for getting me into graduate school. It was the University of Washington, and I was interviewing to get into the educational policy and governance master's program. I don't know if the interview was going horribly, but it wasn't going well, and I threw Fred's name out. The gentleman immediately perked up and asked if I actually knew Fred Rudolph. Fred then wrote a letter of recommendation.

Prof. Edward Epping of the art department is a phenomenal man. He's working on the anti-war effort. He's involved in so much of the campus activity. I've painted all my life, but I never had a formal art class. He



Edward Epping

was my first formal art professor.

He is a water colorist, and I recently asked him via e-mail if we could meet to talk about a job in the art department.

We went out to breakfast. Then I went to one of the most incredible lectures of my life, by Prof. Eva Grudin of the art history department, on Caravaggio. After that I went over to Prof. Epping's office, and we were just talking for about two-and-a-half hours about everything, from what I was going to do in the future to



Tim Crawley '05
*Art and economics
double major, Williams*

the war effort to the job I was looking at in the art department. He told me at one point, "You know, Tim, you've got a lot of different interests. Don't ever limit yourself too early. That's why you are here at Williams—because you have a lot of different interests and you have a lot of different doors you can walk through. Just don't make the decision too early, because once you head off to grad school you are kind of setting yourself in stone." He said, "Maybe after college,



Eva Grudin

take a year or two off, join the Peace Corps, either that or the military if that's for you, or even take a trip down to Central America and see a different part of the world, because it will buy you some time in finding out what your true passion is in life."



AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

Arthur Levitt '52
*Former U.S. Securities
and Exchange
Commission chairman
and author of Take on
the Street*

Elliott Grant was my French professor and one of my first clients as a fledgling broker. I don't know how much French I learned from Elliott, but I learned a general appreciation of values that went beyond mere academic values. Charlie Compton was a freshman chemistry professor, and I probably had a higher average in chemistry than in my major, which was English, or any of the other courses I took. I sense that captures the essence of Williams: An individual teaching a subject that you probably would not spend your life or career on can make an impact on you. Charlie had an excitement about him that made chemistry seem interesting. He also had a wonderful sense of humor and a broad array of interests.

Irwin Shainman, professor of music, was able to take a subject I didn't know much about and make it exciting, to share his enthusiasm and his ability to interpret it without patronizing. Irwin was the kind of individual that I would enjoy going to the opera or symphony with and talking about issues that were not merely academic but were matters of inner feelings. He was part of the soul of Williams, a function of a special relationship between



Elliott Grant



Irwin Shainman



Dave Bryant

faculty and student. And Dave Bryant, who ran the theater department—I was a fledgling actor, passionately interested, not much talent, but David put me in bit parts in a variety of Cap and Bells productions and allowed me to meet people like Nick Dunne '49 and Steve Sondheim '50 and John Frankenheimer '51. I wrote a part of a musical play that Sondheim wrote and directed—just think of the joy that brought me in later life!

I worked with an extraordinary teacher named Jack O'Neill. Jack was passionate about what he taught, which was contemporary American literature. He made it possible for me to write an honor's thesis on the works of Lillian Hellman and indeed do work with Lillian Hellman for a part of it. And I guess that experience led me to careers that were unlikely for an English major.

The fact that, when I returned to Williamstown in subsequent years, a visit to the Grants was a regular part of my schedule is a



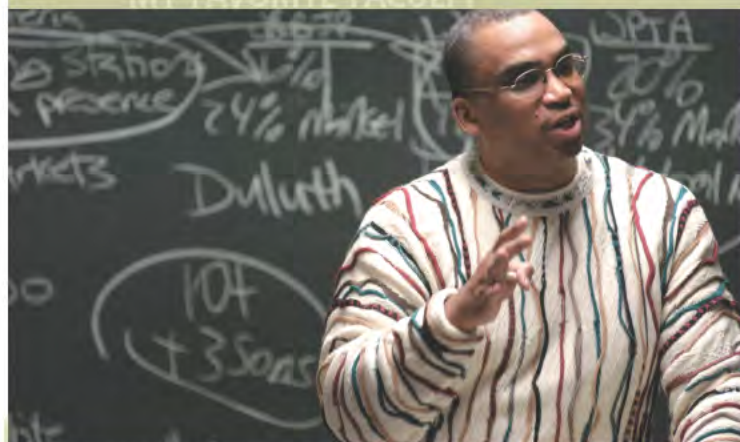
Charlie Compton (right)

source of great satisfaction. Charlie Compton and I and his wife Ida went to the theater together, traveled together. We became good friends long after that freshman chemistry course. And just about all of the people I've mentioned I had enduring relationships with once I left Williams. That says a lot.



Jack O'Neill

MY FAVORITE FACULTY

**Steve Rogers '79**

Gordon & Llura Gund Family Professor of Entrepreneurship, clinical professor of management & finance, and associate director of the Heizer Center, Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University

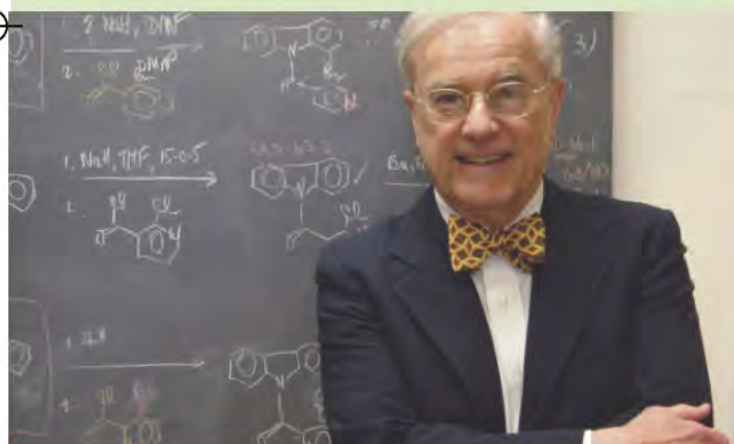
The professor that stands out in my mind is Dennis Dickerson. He's no longer at Williams, but I believe he was there for over 20 years as professor of African-American history. I absolutely loved that class; he knew the material, he was a researcher, did his Ph.D. work in the field of African-American history. The interesting thing about Dennis Dickerson was that at the time he came to Williams, which was probably my sophomore year—I didn't know this at the time—but he was only a few years older than the

students. So we sort of grew with him. It was really pleasurable when I came to visit four years ago with my daughter to see him on Spring Street, and to see him as this mature man. We can both look at each other and see that we have some of the same features now that come with age: a receding hairline, and the hair that we do have is graying a little bit. I loved the class, I loved the topic and I loved the professor.

I was aware of the fact, very quickly, that he was master of the material. He

knew the content. He was an expert in the field that he was teaching, and so I learned to do the same and make sure that I exude that same confidence. He

was an outstanding professor relative to oral communications. It was a class that you would go into and leave highly motivated, filled with energy and not feeling like you wasted your time.

**Dennis Dickerson****J. Hodge Markgraf '52**

Ebenezer Fitch Professor of Chemistry, Emeritus, Williams

It wasn't until I came to Williams that I really learned how to think. In my very first year here, I had Bill Gates '39, who was an economics professor, and Fred Stocking '36, who was an English professor. They

**Bill Gates****Fred Stocking****Lane Faison**

got me launched in critically thinking about data and analysis, even in poetry and short-story analysis. Later on I had Lane Faison '29 and Whitney Stoddard '35 in the art department. They opened up venues that I had never been exposed to in a Midwestern high school. Whitney left me with a love for modern architecture in a senior-level course I took with him. I don't have many outside interests other than organic chemistry, but modern architecture is one.

Larry Beals '29 taught me in at least three different philosophy courses. The methodology was one of close reading of the text and analytical thinking in matters philosophical. All of that taught me that the life of the mind was something one could spend a lifetime on. I didn't know one could do that. The neighborhood I grew up in—people were more focused on manufacturing and the production of things. So the legacy I got from the faculty here is a debt I can never repay to them.

Bob Barrow in the music department taught me how to analyze music from virtually a physics point of view. He's a music professor, but during World

LIFE AT WILLIAMS

In 1949, Ralph Crane visited the Purple Valley, camera in hand, to document life on campus. The result was a nine-page spread in the Jan. 24, 1949, issue of *Life* magazine, featuring photos and text that today remind us not only how much Williams has changed since then, but also how much it has remained the same. As Crane observed, "Williams is a small college in a small town and it wants to stay that way." Here is some of what he saw.

The following is excerpted from the original Life magazine article.

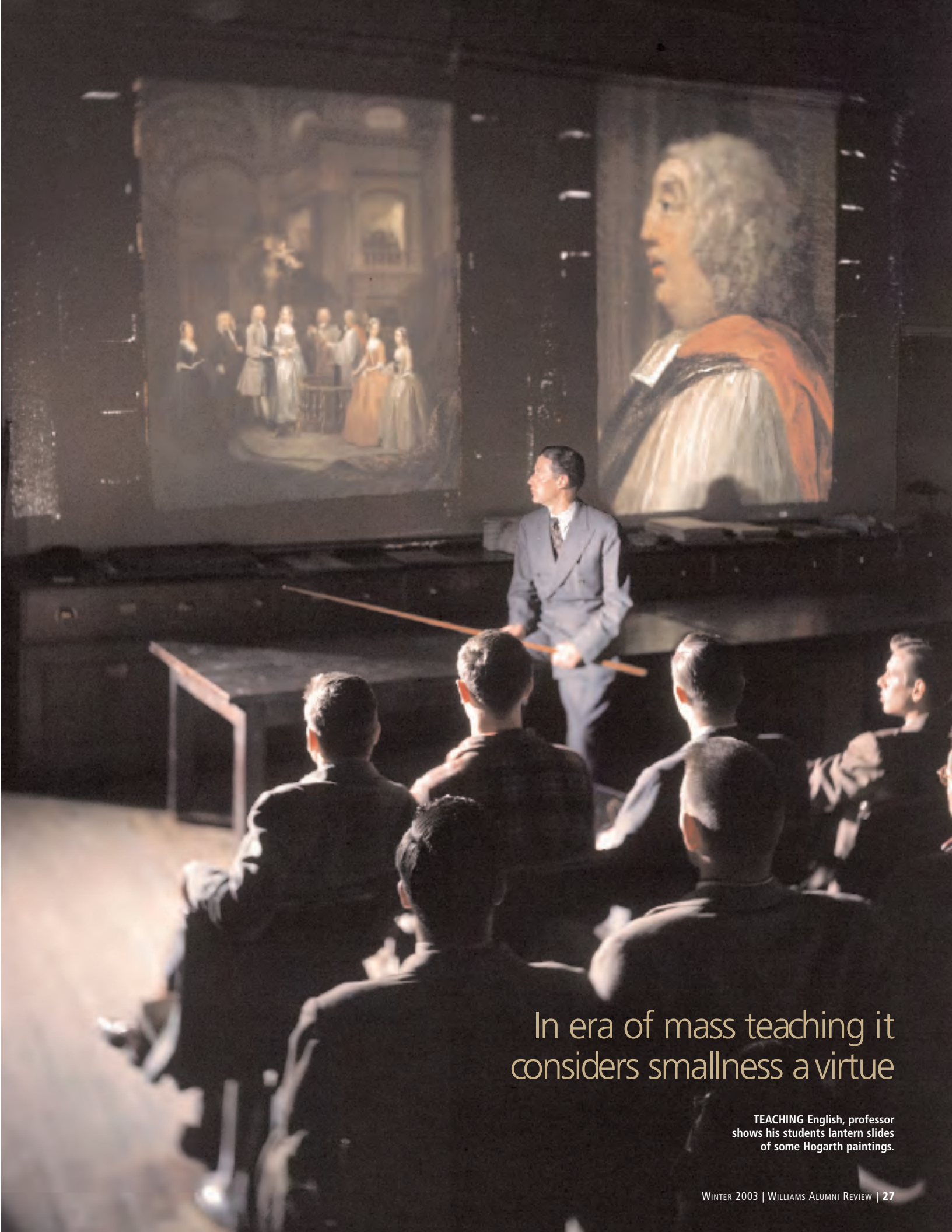
This year as the winter term begins, Williams College finds itself nearly smothered with students. They are swarming over the pretty campus at Williamstown, Mass., jamming their cars into every available parking space, lugging skis, skates and suitcases into their dormitories and fraternities. Altogether there are 1,123 of them. This is less than the enrollment of the freshman class at a big university like California (*Life*, Oct. 25). But it is the biggest Williams has ever seen, and as far as Williams is concerned it is far too big.

Williams is a small college in a small town and it wants to stay that way. It was founded in 1793, under the will of Colonel Ephraim Williams, killed in the French and Indian War. It has always believed strongly in small classes and the need for a

friendly intimacy between its students and its faculty. Its famous Mark Hopkins, president from 1836 to 1872, was especially insistent on class discussion. It feels an enrollment of 850 is just about right. But in a time when U.S. colleges are moving more and more toward mass education, this sort of custom-made learning is an expensive luxury. Today hundreds of small liberal-arts colleges like Williams, unable to depend on state funds and unwilling to expand or raise tuition, must now get out and beg for money or shut up shop.

PHOTOGRAPHS FOR LIFE BY
RALPH CRANE

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In era of mass teaching it
considers smallness a virtue

TEACHING English, professor
shows his students lantern slides
of some Hogarth paintings.

IN PROFESSOR'S HOUSE members of creative-writing class sit around living room while Professor Roy Lamson (under lamp) reads their short stories aloud.



UNCROWDED LIBRARY is one advantage of a college like Williams. All students have free access to the stacks.

Faculty

It has a close and friendly relationship with students

Possibly the most familiar remark ever made about U.S. education was made about Williams. Speaking about Williams President Mark Hopkins, U.S. President James A. Garfield, Williams 1856 (who was assassinated on the way to a Williams commencement), said, "The ideal college is Mark Hopkins on one end of a log and a student on the other." Not much more than the length of a log separates teacher from student at Williams today. Professors are often guests of students and some of them occasionally hold classes in their own houses. Because the classes are small (average: 20), most can call all their students by name.

TWO PROFESSORS combine to teach a political economy course to a class of only 16 students. They are (head of table) Professors Schuman (left) and Gordon.

FACULTY PARTY, an old-fashioned square dance, is given by Dean Robert Brooks (right, checked shirt). Teachers do a lot of entertaining among themselves.



PUSHING CAR out of a snow bank is the usual occupation the morning after a snow. After a winter at Williams most students are adept at ice driving, putting on chains, changing snow tires on their cars.

Campus

Its elm-lined streets
are lovely in the snow



A visitor to Williams 146 years ago observed that “the situation of the college is a decent, thriving country town” where there are “comparatively few temptations to dissipation and vice.” Williamstown today has grown a lot, but it is still small and still a college town. It is an important part of Williams education. A Williams man sees a lot of his campus in four years. Because he is allowed only three chapel cuts each term and because he is not within easy range of a big city, he is apt to participate in more sports and attend more college functions than his opposite number in a big city college. In the winter, when the first snow falls, he gets out his skis and joins the rest of the college on the ski slope. In the evenings, when there is not much to do, he goes to the town movie house or drinks beer in the local bar. After he graduates he never forgets the lovely campus and the elm-lined streets of the town.

AFTER A SNOWFALL students walk down Main Street to classes. The college campus is on both sides of the street. At left is the town's Congregational church.



FRATERNITY ROW is on Main Street. Houses here are (left to right) DKE, Phi Delta Theta, Alpha Delta Phi. Phi Delt donors stipulated it must be tallest.

PINK ELEPHANT made of snow in front of the Zeta Psi house is hardened with water. Ice sculpture blossoms around Winter Carnival weekend.





SHOVELING SNOW off a fraternity roof is one of the jobs usually relegated to freshman pledges. This is the Sigma Phi building, an old mansion which was moved piece by piece to Williams from Albany.

CLASSROOMS ARE BRIGHTENED in winter by the loud sweaters and woolen shirts which almost all Williams men wear. These students are taking notes at a biology lecture, one of the few big lecture courses, where about 130 students meet once a week. The rest of their work is done in labs or in small sections.



ON GUEST NIGHT in St. Anthony house (below), student wives and faculty members are invited to fraternity candlelight dinner. This happens about once a week.



HOW TO Climb

President Morty Schapiro on the Campaign for Williams.



"So what's new at Williams?" It's a question President Morty Schapiro is asked on a regular basis.

These days, his answer is The Williams Campaign, a new five-year, \$400 million effort to fund six major initiatives that will strengthen the essence of the Williams experience—that is, the myriad ways, formal and informal, that students learn from the faculty and from each other.

Shortly after the campaign was announced, the *Alumni Review* sat down with Morty to talk about the initiatives behind the numbers.

Alumni Review: So what do you say to alumni who find it hard to imagine why you need to improve on a Williams education—especially to the tune of the \$201.5 million earmarked for curricular reform?

Morty Schapiro: This campaign represents an opportunity to make a great leap forward by building on exactly those things that have always set a Williams education apart. Curricular reform is a case in point. The faculty spent a year analyzing how to make the curriculum stronger, and one of the things they focused on was the tutorial program.

Williams has offered intensive, Oxford-style tutorials for a long time. They're so powerful that we want many more students to take them. We hope eventually to offer as many as 60 tutorials, up from 21 just three years ago. We're also creating many more tutorials for sophomores, because building a deep rapport with a faculty member early on makes a tremendous difference in students' intellectual confidence and engagement.

But tutorials are a huge time commitment. At Williams, a professor teaches 10 students per tutorial, meeting with those students in five pairs for 90 minutes every week. So increasing tutorials inherently means increasing the faculty—and that's expensive.

The faculty also focused on improving students' writing and on building their quantitative and formal reasoning skills by implementing new course requirements. These new classes will have no more than 19 students, which is absolutely necessary for the kind of work students will be doing. At the same time, we're broadening our interdisciplinary and team-taught course offerings, and we're developing more ways to connect coursework to real-world experiences. All of this costs real money.

The strength of the new curriculum also depends on the quality of our facilities. We need spaces that facilitate team-teaching, tutorials and experiential education. And we hope to create those spaces in the new '62 Center for Theatre and Dance and with the renovation and reconfiguration of Stetson Hall and Sawyer Library.

AR: Of the \$400 million campaign total, the student life objectives in the strategic plan account for \$142.5 million. What are these initiatives and why are they necessary?

MS: As any Eph on earth will tell you, what makes Williams unforgettable is the students—their enthusiasm, their intelligence, and their amazing range of experiences and backgrounds. To sustain

far.

that wonderful mix, we're pushing aggressively to strengthen our commitment to admitting great students regardless of their financial circumstances. We're boosting our financial aid program to help the most needy students and also to make sure middle-class families aren't unduly squeezed. And unlike practically any other U.S. college, we're extending our need-blind admission policy to international students. We're already seeing the benefits. The Class of 2007 is one of the most broadly diverse in Williams' history.

Once you bring all these incredible young people to campus, you do everything possible to help them learn as much from each other as they can. That's why we've modified room draw to make sure each residence reflects the student body as a whole. Copying the best of the Junior Advisor system, we've also hired four community life coordinators. These young adults live right in the dorms, so they're in a unique position to get student leaders thinking about more ambitious and thoughtful dorm activities.

We're also working on the dorms themselves, with an emphasis on creating a more open feel. New common rooms and study lounges will encourage the kind of spontaneous interaction that really creates a sense of community. We completely renovated Mission Park last summer, and we'll do the same for Prospect House this summer and next.

As we looked at improving student life, one thing jumped out at us: that Williams needs a real student center, a kind of "family room" for the whole community. Even at a place as friendly as Williams, it's too easy to get boxed into a small set of friends with identical interests, or to surf yourself into isolation on the Internet. Students need a



relaxed, central place to just be with each other—and that's the vision for our new student center. In addition to housing offices for student groups and services and places to grab a meal or a cup of coffee, we want to be sure the new center includes plenty of space for people to just hang out.

AR: Some of the projects supported by The Williams Campaign are well under way. Why do we need more resources for them?

MS: Williams is in the rare position of having the internal resources to launch some key initiatives even in advance of the campaign. Why? Because of our endowment. In the late 1990s, the endowment grew impressively. Our spending remained

Climb far.



prudent. That financial strength allowed us to get started on certain things quickly, when timing really made a difference. For example, to implement our new skills requirements, increase tutorial offerings, and expand interdisciplinary and experiential courses—without watering down what we already offer—means increasing the faculty by 30 new professors. Over the past two years we moved aggressively on doing so. The timing was perfect. We were hiring while many colleges and universities were forced to freeze or cut faculty slots. In field after field, we were able to get our first-choice candidates. Their caliber is extraordinary.

To learn more about The Williams Campaign

- Visit the campaign Web site: www.williams.edu/alumni/campaign/.
- Review the College's strategic planning process: www.williams.edu/go/strategicplanning/.
- Read this year's Report from Williams, which you should have received recently in the mail. (If you haven't received a copy, e-mail arcomm@williams.edu or call 413.597.4669.)
- Read EphNotes, sent monthly via e-mail to all alumni and parents for whom the College has e-mail addresses. (If you'd like to receive EphNotes, send your e-mail address to alumni.office@williams.edu.)

In effect, the endowment gave us a running start on realizing our strategic plan. But we absolutely cannot finish the race—or sustain new initiatives for the long term—without an additional \$400 million in philanthropic support. That is the ultimate purpose of The Williams Campaign.

AR: How do the Alumni Fund and Parents Fund figure into the campaign?

MS: Both are critical. Of course new buildings and major initiatives require some big gifts. But the cornerstone of The Williams Campaign will be the incredibly generous and sustained support of our Alumni Fund and Parents Fund. Collectively these gifts—large and small—give Williams the financial resilience and, frankly, the nerve to take on the ongoing costs of new strategic initiatives.

This means that we're asking all Williams alumni, parents and friends—including those who make major targeted gifts—to support the campaign through larger and more consistent contributions to the Alumni Fund and Parents Fund. Between the two, we hope to raise \$56 million over the five years of the campaign.

AR: At a time when nonprofits and other organizations with a much broader reach than Williams are struggling, folks might be wondering how a small liberal arts college merits \$400 million?





MS: Every member of the extended Williams family could compose a long list of vital causes that urgently need support—and as someone who makes gifts to a range of charities, I would never dissuade a friend of Williams from giving to any of them. But I believe that a gift to Williams is an investment in the future. What justifies the concentration of resources on our students is that, relative to their numbers, Williams graduates have a vastly disproportionate positive impact on the world.

In that context, it's our responsibility to equip our students with the knowledge, experiences, empathy and integrity to be effective, thoughtful, inspiring leaders—leaders prepared to “solve problems whose shape we cannot yet define,” to quote President Jack Sawyer '39.

That responsibility requires substantial resources. The vast majority of these resources will come from people whose lives have been directly touched by a Williams education. We present The Williams Campaign to the College's remarkably loyal supporters as an opportunity to help prepare some amazingly talented young people to tackle the complex problems of a complicated world.

AR: Given the current state of the economy, is now the best time for Williams to embark on a \$400 million campaign?



MS: Our early efforts say yes, resoundingly. During what's known as the “quiet phase” of the campaign, we were able to secure gift commitments of nearly \$160 million. To put that in perspective, Williams' Third Century Campaign, which ended a decade ago, raised a total of \$174 million.

This early success is a very encouraging endorsement of our strategic plan. But more than that, it's a testament to what makes this place really unlike any other—a worldwide family of alumni, parents and friends with a deep affection for what Williams has always been, the highest possible expectations for where it should go next, and an open-hearted willingness to help us get there. When this campaign succeeds, our remarkable community will be the reason why. ■

The Williams Campaign

Alumni Fund	(\$56 million total)
<i>Unrestricted annual gifts from alumni, parents and friends support all of the campaign objectives below.</i>	
Curricular Innovation	(\$201.5 million total)
Curricular Development	\$ 24 million
An Expanded Faculty	\$ 62.5 million
The Stetson/Sawyer Project	\$ 75 million
'62 Center for Theatre and Dance	\$ 40 million
Student Life Objectives	(\$142.5 million total)
Need-based Scholarships	\$ 90 million
Residential Life Initiatives	\$ 16.5 million
Student Center	\$ 36 million
TOTAL	\$ 400 million

He Had So Many More Stories to Tell

Before I knew it, I had a large stack of books on my lap—books about paradigm shifts and non-Euclidean geometry in modern art. “If you’re interested in what I’m saying, you need to read these,” Kirk said. “Then forget about it all and just look at the art.”

I had encountered Kirk Varnedoe ’67 on the front cover of *Rugby Magazine* months earlier, and as a fellow rugger with a mind for art history, I wanted to meet him. All I knew of Kirk I had read in *Rugby* and in *Art Forum*; he was like one of Richard Serra’s *Torqued Ellipses*: His salient and valued attributes needed to be experienced to be understood. Passages from *The History of the Williams College Rugby Football Club* report endless “songfests led by the tireless Varnedoe.” Entries from the club’s 1968 tour to England describe how the team “had time to visit a number of the museums in London and [how] having an art historian of Kirk’s now international stature certainly made these visits more educational.”

For all his later distinction, Kirk’s teammates were quick to observe: “Anyone that knew Kirk in the 1960s would find it hard to believe that he is now so well respected in the art history world.” On the flight to England, “I think we were actually roped off in the rear of the plane to protect us from the other passengers who had heard Varnedoe’s rendition of ‘Eskimo Nell’ one too many times!”

My interaction with Kirk began with rapid-fire e-mails, then phone calls and eventually a visit with him in June, during which we ruminated about what art history could hold as a career. Throughout those exchanges, Kirk offered me his time and sound advice. All I could offer him was a jersey I won off an opposing Amherst scrum-half my senior year—a fine contribution, he assured me.

Most of my exposure to Kirk occurred this past spring at the A.W. Mellon Lecture Series at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. During the series, I marveled that someone as distinguished as he would introduce himself week after week. Each time he arrived at the podium, it was: “Thank you for coming. I am Kirk Varnedoe.”

During the fourth lecture, however, I realized that even in a crowd of hundreds of informed patrons who had waited hours to gain admittance, recognition was not guaranteed. Following Kirk’s self-introduction, the group sitting next to me dissolved into murmurs, having learned it was Kirk Varnedoe lecturing, and not the author Kurt Vonnegut. True to form, by the end of the hour Kirk had the befuddled literary enthusiasts so enraptured with his treatise for abstraction, that I noticed the group returned to wait in line for each of the subsequent lectures.

I related the story to Kirk and he laughed, adding that the confusion was common enough. He told me he once ran into Vonnegut at a party; the novelist admitted that people frequently challenged his approach to modern art. Vonnegut, a painter himself, professed honor in being mistaken for the much respected director of MoMA.

In the Mellon lectures, Kirk drew listeners into the vocabulary of abstraction, the terms of modern art, which so many people find frighteningly arcane. With arms outstretched, head back, eyes closed, he spoke to the ceiling, offering up energy and content. While he was physically demonstrating the giant cursive lines of Cy Twombly—the act, the repetition, the obsession—Kirk almost knocked over the podium. Unfazed, he steadied the dais, then launched into a comparative criticism of Twombly and Jackson Pollock, how the complexity of each demanded to be understood on its own terms—a perspective needed even when reading the intricate mind of a Williams rugger:

work hard, play hard, on the pitch and off, *nihil in moderato*—a credo Kirk catapulted to a new level.

Following the lectures and my visit with Kirk, I sat down with his former student Jeffrey Weiss, chief curator of modern and contemporary art at the National Gallery, to whom Kirk had referred me. Our discussion, originally intended to be an informational session on modern art, rapidly resembled two kids discussing their favorite superhero; we were discussing Kirk. “He has always had an infectious sense of urgency and excitement about art history,” Weiss said. “He’s a large reason why many people are in the field.”

I understood. My brief encounters with Kirk have led me to write numerous essays on his theories and lectures. My writing projects rest mid-conversation—critiques of the Mellon series that he prodded me to hone; his last e-mail to me includes addresses where I was to send them. I’m sure his point was to get me writing, thinking. He always said that art history needs better stories. “You need to look and think harder,” Kirk advised. “Art is not dead. It is more sophisticated than ever. You need to see we are getting smarter.”

“I’ve seen things you people wouldn’t believe,” Kirk said during his last lecture. He quoted Rutger Hauer’s character, Roy Batty, in *Blade Runner*. “Attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion as bright as magnesium; I rode on the back decks of a blinker and watched c-beams glitter in the dark near the Tanhauser Gate. All those moments, they’ll be lost in time, like tears in the rain. . . .”

“I feel like this,” Kirk said. “I have told you many stories about abstraction, about Cy Twombly and Jasper Johns . . . and I have so many more to tell,” he explained to the crowd. “But I have run out of time.”

Seth Thomas Pietras '01 is a reporter in Washington, D.C.