

With Access Comes Excellence

"Our colleges will not be rich enough until they are able to bring the education they offer within the reach of the poorest young man in the land."

This is as true now (with the addition of "young woman") as it was when it was claimed by Williams President Paul A. Chadbourne at his induction in 1872.

More than 100 years later, Williams and a small number of similar colleges and universities thought we had accomplished this important goal by admitting students without regard to their ability to pay and promising to meet 100 percent of their demonstrated financial need.

Things, however, were not that simple. Research conducted by Cappy Hill '76, provost and professor of economics; Gordon Winston, director of Williams' Project on the Economics of Higher Education and professor of economics emeritus; and Stephanie Boyd, research associate, shows that of the students attending the highly selective colleges and universities that belong to the Consortium on Financing Higher Education, including Williams, only 5 percent come from families in the lowest 20 percent of the U.S. income distribution, and only 10 percent come from those in the lowest 40 percent.

We can do better than that, and we must.

To maximize its educational excellence, Williams needs to attract to campus the most able students from all segments of the population. Since students do so much to educate each other, all of them gain as the student body grows stronger. At the same time, the health of our society requires that Williams and similar colleges serve as engines of social mobility. America and the world need the contributions that smart, motivated students from modest financial backgrounds will someday make.

Researchers are still trying to understand fully why relatively few low-income students attend these colleges, but some things are clear. One is that academic preparation correlates positively with family income—richer students benefit on average from more educational opportunities. But it is also clear that there are more high-ability, low-income students out there who are not applying to these schools.

Williams, for one, is now going after them more actively. We are using neighborhood census data to determine which high school students to target with mailings tailored to low-income families and which schools admission staff should visit. With the help of alumni donors, we can enable more low-income families to make that all-important visit to campus early in the process.

We also began working this year with the QuestBridge Scholars Program, a California-based organization that turns out to have an uncanny ability to locate high-ability, low-income students from Maine to Hawaii.

As a result of these efforts, the Class of 2009 will already look different from its predecessors (see "Inside Admission," p. 16). The percent receiving Williams grant aid jumped to 48 (typically this figure was in the low 40s), and the average aid award has increased by more than \$2,000, to \$30,675.

Williams aid packages now contain larger grants than they used to. Three times in recent years we've lowered loan expectations, especially for low-income students. Now some of our financial aid students will graduate with no loans, others with \$3,700. The most loans any will face is \$13,800.

The admission office tracks students from lower socioeconomic families based on parents' education and employment (they don't have access to information on income). In one year that number has increased by almost half. At the same time, the academic firepower of the class also has risen. For instance, the average combined SAT score rose 12 points.

Meanwhile, the dean's office is adjusting the ways in which it will support this differently configured entering class.

So far the story looks good: Faculty research discovered a way in which Williams was not living up to its aspirations, and with swift action we have begun to address the issue with measurable success.

One year does not constitute a trend, however, and we will need to continue to focus our energy, creativity and resources to ensure that Williams is indeed accessible to all the brightest young men and women in the land.

—Morty Schapiro

SCENE & HERD

NEWS BITS

Williams the **best liberal arts college in the country**. It's also the 15th consecutive year the College received the magazine's highest rating for academic reputation. Amherst and Swarthmore were second and third overall, respectively. ■ Seventeen professors, including six minorities and five women, were hired this year, **fulfilling the College's goal of adding 30 faculty members**.

*“visual culture study ...
to enable visitors to ‘read’
the world around them”*

In the past decade, the size of the faculty has grown 21 percent—to 245 professors—and the numbers of minority and women faculty have grown by 45 percent and 44 percent, respectively. ■ It was a **record year for admission**, with 5,822 applicants to the Class of 2009. Of the 1,095 accepted (18.8 percent, the lowest ever), 539 enrolled, among them: 283 women, 256 men, 56 Latinos, 53 Asian Americans, 48 blacks, three Native Americans and 34 international students. The students represent 41 states and 21 foreign countries, and their average SAT score is 1425. ■ Lisa Corrin, former curator and deputy director of the Seattle Art Museum, is the new **Williams College Museum of Art director**. A past chief curator of The Serpentine Gallery

For the third year in a row, *U.S. News and World Report* named



Lisa Corrin

in London, her goal at WCMA is “to use visual culture study at the museum to enable visitors to ‘read’ the world around them.”

■ The **45th Annual Alumni Golf Tournament** attracted 216 golfers July 29-30. A storm Sunday kept players off the green, so prizes were based on Saturday's standings. For results, visit www.williams.edu/alumni. Click on the Golf Tournament link beneath “Of Note.” ■ Golfers also took to the links in June during the **Dick and Denise Baxter Reunion Golf Trophy Competition**. Ten classes and 158 players participated, with 19 members of the Class of 1965 taking first with a score of 65, 18 from 1980 finishing second with 66, and 21 from 1985 coming in third with 67. ■ The fall brings **new administrators to the Dean of the College's staff**. James Noble

of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government is now Williams director of career counseling. Assistant dean Carole Hsiao of University of Wisconsin at Madison will support international students, advising for minorities and First Days.

And Joyce Foster of Brown is the new director of the Academic Resource Center, which will provide support in study, test

taking and time management. ■ A new **Zeiss Skymaster planetarium projector** in Old Hopkins Observatory will allow the positions of thousands of stars and several planets to be projected accurately over time spans of decades. The projector, supported by the Class of 1958 Fund for Faculty Development, replaces a 42-year-old one that no longer worked. 🐷

For more information on any of these stories, visit www.williams.edu and enter the topic into the search field.

In Memoriam

Dick Sabot, the John J. Gibson Professor of Economics, emeritus, died July 6. He was 61.

Sabot came to Williams in 1984 from the World Bank and International Food Policy Research Institute. He was chair of Williams' Center for Development Economics before leaving in 1999 to pursue business and charitable interests. He was co-founder and board chairman of Tripod Inc., an Internet venture purchased by Lycos in 1998. He co-founded eZiba.com Inc., which sells handcrafted goods from artisans worldwide, and was chairman of its board until his death. He was a board member at Lycos, board chairman of Geekcorps (a private nonprofit committed to expanding the Internet in developing countries) and a founding member of the executive committee of the Center for Global Development, a D.C. think tank dedicated to reducing global poverty. In 2003 he and his wife Judith purchased Cricket Creek Farm in Williamstown, which they were transforming into an ecologically sound dairy. In addition to Judith, Sabot's survivors include four children, among them Christopher A. Sabot '99.



Dick Sabot

Williams will inaugurate the '62 Center for Theatre and Dance with a 10-day celebration beginning Sept. 30, featuring theater, dance, readings and musical performances by visiting artists, students and alumni. For a full schedule, visit www.williams.edu/go/62center.

SCENE & HERD

New Trustees Join Board

The College Board of Trustees welcomes three new members: César J. Alvarez '84, Yvonne Ping Hao '95 and William Edward Oberndorf '75, each of whom will serve a five-year term.

Alvarez is senior VP of legal affairs at Twentieth Century Fox Film Corp., where he is a production attorney. He previously was a paralegal with the D.C. firm Williams & Connolly, received a law degree from University of Michigan-Ann Arbor in 1990 and was a production attorney with Walt Disney Co. before joining Fox in 1994 as senior counsel.

As a Williams volunteer, he was on the Executive Committee of the Society of Alumni from 2001-04 and as an alumni trustee is an ex officio member. He has served on the L.A. Regional Executive Committee since 2001 and has been an associate class agent since 2004, an Admission Regional Chair since 1998 and an admission representative

since 1995. He shared the Copeland Award in 1999 for efforts to recruit inner-city L.A. students. Alvarez is on the Williams Latina/o Alumni Network Steering Committee and the Alumni of Color Task Force. He lives in L.A. with his partner, Paul Stephen Wicht.

Hao is VP of global marketing for Honeywell Security, focusing on strategy, growth and operations for global Fortune 100 companies. She received a master's in economics from Emmanuel College, Cambridge University, in 1997 and joined the Chicago office of McKinsey & Co. In 1999 she transferred to D.C. to lead a one-year pro bono study, Vital Voices, with Hillary Rodham Clinton and Madeleine Albright to develop programs to support women leaders around the world. In 2000 she was named an associate partner of McKinsey, co-leading the nonprofit sector in its L.A. office.

Hao was co-founder of Williams' Asian

American Theater Project and president of the Chinese-American Students Organization. She also was on the crew team and was president of the College's Phi Beta Kappa chapter, a 1993 Ford Mellon research grant recipient and a Herchel Smith Fellow and Hutchins Fellow.

In L.A., Hao co-founded the Hope Street Group to encourage "expanding opportunity in the context of robust economic growth" by stimulating a new governing consensus in America bridging party lines. She lives in Manhattan with her husband Mark Wu.

Oberndorf is a managing director of SPO Partners & Co., an investment firm that specializes in the acquisition of public and private equity positions with a value orientation. He is a director of the ProQuest Co., Hotel Equity Funds and Rosewood Hotels and Resorts. He is director

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César J. Alvarez



Yvonne Ping Hao



William Edward Oberndorf

Farther Afield

In the May 8 *Los Angeles Times*, Asian studies professor [Sam Crane](#) addressed [Chinese criticism of Japan](#) for whitewashing its militarist history: "What Japan did in World War II is horrible. But the embarrassing fact for [China's] Communist Party, and one that is not taught in Chinese schools, is that the party itself is responsible for many more deaths of Chinese people than those caused by Japanese militarism."

The June 19 *Baltimore Sun* quoted economics professor [Elizabeth Brainerd](#) on [declining life expectancies and birth rates in Russia](#) since the fall of the Soviet Union: "[In] other countries that have gone through an economic crisis, you typically see an increase in mortality among the elderly and infants. ... It's nothing like you see in Russia, where it's prolonged and primarily among middle-aged men."

In a June 22 *Houston Chronicle* article about [celebrities endorsing Scientology](#) and therefore attracting their peers, religion professor [Glenn Shuck](#) said: "It makes it into a chic religion, just like Madonna has done with aspects of cabalism."

Highlights of recent, known appearances by Williams in the media outside the College's local area, compiled by the Office of Public Affairs. For a complete listing, visit www.williams.edu/admin/news/inthenews.php

In a July 8 *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* article about the economic effects of the previous day's [subway bombings in London](#), political economy professor [Darel Paul](#) said the terrorists' motive was "to not only kill a lot of people but to damage the whole system. Their goal is mainly political, but there are economic ramifications—and they are intended."

After speaking at Commencement, Pulitzer Prize-winning author Thomas Friedman touted the [importance of the College's George Olmsted Jr. Class of 1924 Prize for Excellence in Secondary School Teaching](#) in a *New York Times* column: "Imagine if every college in America had a program like Williams', and every spring, across the land, thousands of great teachers were acknowledged by the students they inspired?"

The *New York Times* ran a May 26 essay by art professor [Michael Lewis](#) discussing the [aesthetic effects of the Chrysler Building's](#) arrival in 1930 and its extensive renovations 75 years later. He writes: "Only now ... are the building and the public fully prepared to receive each other."



Peruvian weaver Edwin Sulca spent several weeks working in the sanctuary of Thompson Chapel last spring, creating a tapestry acknowledging the multifaceted spiritual life of the College. His design, which now hangs in the sanctuary, incorporates indigenous iconography with contemporary symbols, using Andean wool hand-colored with natural dyes. His visit was part of "Re-imagining Sacred Space," a yearlong series of events celebrating the chapel's centennial in 2005.

New Trustees continued.

emeritus of Plum Creek Timber Co. Inc. He joined SPO Partners' predecessor San Francisco Partners after receiving a master's in business administration from the Stanford Graduate School of Business in 1978.

Oberndorf is a member of The Williams Campaign Steering Committee and is West Coast campaign chair. He was co-president of his class until September 2005, chairman of the San Francisco Major Gifts Committee from 1994-2002 (having been a member since 1989) and a member of his class's 25th Reunion Fund Committee. He also was an admission representative from 1984-98.

Oberndorf has done fundraising for Stanford. He is vice chair of the University of California-San Francisco Foundation and was co-chair of its \$1.4 billion campaign, and he is chair of Thacher School's \$70 million campaign. He is a founding director and board chair of the Alliance for School Choice. He also is a trustee of his high school alma mater, the University School in Cleveland. He and his wife Susan Coleman Oberndorf live in San Francisco and have two sons, Peter '08 and William.

They Said:

A collection of opinions and ideas expressed in Web blogs and in *The Williams Record*, which can be found online at www.williamsrecord.com

"Every Sunday, me and my posse head down to Sweetbrook Nursing Home to chill with the old peeps. ... Out of all the community service I've ever done, I'd say this probably is the most rewarding. Our unofficial motto is, 'One hour of your time can make a person's whole week.' Community service is how we roll. Sweetbrook, represent." —*Phillip A. Raab '06, on opportunities for students to volunteer at Sweetbrook. Blog excerpt, 6.26.05*

"As a Muslim who is black ... I have no idea what *Islamic* food is. To me Islamic food was fried chicken and potato salad and homemade 7-Up cake. It was what everyone else ate, minus the pork. I don't know *traditional* Islamic games because to me that's just freeze tag or football." —*Jonaya D. Kemper '07, on the assumption that most U.S. Muslims are Arab or Asian despite research showing 42 percent to 49 percent of them are black. Blog excerpt, 8.1.05*

"Our group operated under the premises that second-hand effects of alcohol abuse are significant, that tolerance would diminish if the incidence of such effects was more widely known." —*Jim Kolesar '72, director of public affairs, on a report submitted by the Alcohol Task Force to Dean Nancy Roseman last May. (The report is available at www.williams.edu/resources/committees/cul/reports/2004.pdf.) Record, 5.10.05*

"The College is being a good neighbor to farmers in the region, obtaining the healthiest food, while teaching students to be good stewards of the environment." —*Mark Petrino, associate director of dining services, on Williams' plan to increase the quantity and variety of organic and local foods served in dining halls. Record, 5.3.05*



Amy Lovett

Celebrate the Jewish Religious Center's 15th anniversary! In addition to a kickoff celebration Oct. 23, a homecoming reception Nov. 12 and a gala April 28-30, Shabbat services all year will feature distinguished alumni. For more information and to submit photos and stories about Jewish life at Williams, visit www.jewishephs.org or e-mail 06eah@williams.edu.

EPH'S BOOKSHELF

A sampling of current books and other published materials received by the *Williams Alumni Review*

Down the Rabbit Hole: An Echo Falls

Mystery. By Peter Abrahams '68. Laura Geringer Books of HarperCollins Publishers, 2005. 384 pp. \$15.99. A suspenseful children's novel about a young girl who unexpectedly finds herself involved in a murder investigation in her small town.

Youth Justice in America.

By Andrew G. Ferguson '94 et al. CQ Press, 2005. 271 pp. \$26.95. A student-focused collection of history and analysis of crime and criminal justice issues.

The Ride: Cycling for Life.

By William G. Gisel Jr. '74. Prometheus Books, 2005. 125 pp. \$16. An inspiring narrative about Gisel's preparation for and participation in a 500-mile bike trip across Alaska to raise money for AIDS vaccine research.

Maverick Autobiographies: Women Writers

and the American West, 1900-1936. By Cathryn Halverson '90. University of Wisconsin Press, 2004. 240 pp. \$45. The stories of three women of the American West are retold and examined alongside the question of what it meant to be a "western writer."

Promoting and Sustaining Economic

Reform in Zambia. Edited by Catharine B. Hill '76, Williams provost and economics professor, et al. Harvard University Press, 2004. 576 pp. \$35. A collection of essays about Zambia's economic development during the 1990s and its potential for economic reform.

Neuroendovascular Surgery (Progress in Neurological Surgery).

Edited by Michael B. Horowitz '84 et al. S. Karger Publishers, 2005. 244 pp. \$167.25. An overview of common endovascular procedures.

American Diplomats: The Foreign

Service at Work. Edited by Charles Stuart Kennedy '50 et al. iUniverse, Inc., 2004. 320 pp. \$22.95. A collection of interviews with members of the Foreign Service about diplomacy throughout the 20th century.

Brave New Neighborhoods: The Privatization of Public Space.

By Margaret Kohn '92. Routledge, 2004. 256 pp. \$24.95. How to protect and reinvigorate public spaces that have suffered a loss of identity and voice in today's world.

Radical Space: Building the House of

the People. By Margaret Kohn '92. Cornell University Press, 2003. 203 pp. \$46.50. An investigation into the power that a place or environment has to inspire resistance and political action.

A Concise History of the Jewish People.

By Naomi Pasachoff, research associate, et al. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2004. 368 pp. \$24.95. An overview of the most important people and events in Jewish history, from Abraham to the present day.

Fathoming the Ocean: The Discovery and Exploration of the Deep Sea.

By Helen M. Rozwadowski '87. Harvard University Press, 2005. 304 pp. \$25.95. How cultural, political and economic forces motivated advancements in oceanography in the 19th century.

ON DVD

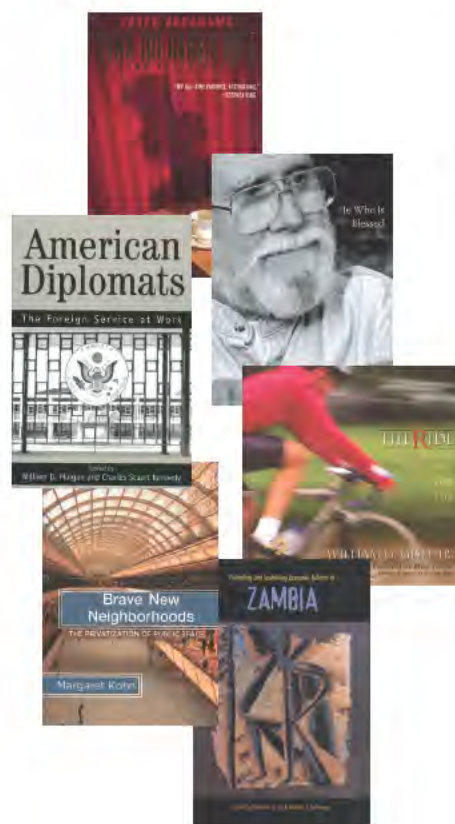
He Who Is Blessed.

Produced by Chris Barrett. Tutto Buono and The Shaking Ray Levi Society, 2005. 57 minutes. \$29.99. The story of Harvey Simmonds '61, now a Trappist monk known as Brother Benedict, reevaluates the role of monks and religious orders in the 21st century.



The Painted Kiss: A Novel.

By Elizabeth Hickey '93. Atria Books, 2005. 288 pp. \$24. In the glittering society of fin de siècle Vienna, painter and libertine Gustav Klimt influences a patron's young daughter, Emilie, as she becomes a fashionable young woman and his mistress.



FACULTY IN FOCUS

Flower Power

What is rooted to the ground but faster than a speeding bullet? The humble bunchberry, aka *Cornus Canadensis* or Canadian dogwood, a low-growing plant common to woodlands all over the northern hemisphere.

During June and July, its tiny white buds burst open and fire their pollen into the air in 0.3 milliseconds—three times faster than the time it takes for a bullet to leave a rifle barrel—earning the bunchberry a place in the *Guinness Book of World Records* as the world's fastest-opening flower. And behind the discovery of the bunchberry's explosive speed are Williams biologist Joan Edwards and physicist Dwight Whitaker, who reported their findings in the May 12 issue of *Nature*.

In July 2002, Edwards and research assistant Sarah Klionsky '03 were doing fieldwork on Michigan's Isle Royale, an island carpeted with bunchberry, when they noticed little puffs emanating from some of the buds as they popped into flower. "It was over before you could blink," Edwards recalls.

Intrigued, she took some of the flowers back to Williams, where she hoped to capture the flower-opening sequence using a high-speed camera. Edwards was working on the project in her lab one day when Whitaker walked by. She called him in and asked him to operate the camera while she triggered the flower's pollen release. One look at the resulting video and Whitaker was hooked. "Something that



Dwight Whitaker



Joan Edwards



To see a video of the bunchberry's fire power, visit www.williams.edu/go/explodingflower.

moves that fast and explodes

is always appealing to a physicist," he says.

Taking a detour from his own research—cooling atoms to create a quantum form of matter—Whitaker set out to learn how the bunchberry achieves such speed. He and Leon Webster '04 created a computer model duplicating the physics of the flower's firing mechanism.

With the assistance of a molecular and cell biologist, Edwards and Whitaker established that the bunchberry's firing power is mechanical. Even when its cells were poisoned, the flower still exploded open when touched.

The scientists went on to discover that over the eons the bunchberry has developed a near-perfect design. Four petals, fused at the tip, restrain four flexible filament "catapults," which, forced to bend as the plant grows, store elastic energy with which to launch pollen from anthers loosely attached to the filament tips.

When a bumblebee or long-horn beetle touches the flower's trigger hair, the petals spring open, releasing the catapults, which, like medieval trebuchets, fling their payloads up and out with maximum force. The pollen accelerates at 2,400 times the acceleration of gravity, or 800 times the acceleration experienced by astronauts at takeoff. Thus propelled, pollen is embedded in the body hair of a bumblebee before the insect has a chance to react, or it's hurled up into the air where the slightest breeze can carry it off—the only known instance of a plant achieving pollination by both insects and wind.

—Zelda Stern

Anime and Academe

As a professor of Japanese, Christopher Bolton addresses themes of confession and deception, love and death, masks and the end of the world in his literature classes. But his research interests extend beyond books, encompassing graphic novels, TV and film and the Japanese phenomena of anime and manga.

Flights of Fantasy

Japan has a long tradition of graphic

storytelling, beginning with elaborately painted scrolls depicting the lives of nobles or telling comic tales. Over time, the media by which these stories were told evolved to include manga (comic books) and anime (animation), which today are two of Japan's major cultural exports. While some might be inclined to dismiss franchises such as Pokémon and even critically acclaimed films like *Spirited Away* as kids' stuff, anime and manga

are attracting growing attention in academic circles. In the past decade, Bolton says, scholars at many North American colleges and universities have begun publishing articles and teaching courses applying the analytical tools of a variety of disciplines to the exploration and examination of Japanese animation.



Christopher Bolton

Reading the Visual Medium

The appeal of "Japanimation" involves what Bolton says is "the chance to investigate the fuzzy boundaries of

what we call literature and the ways technology is forcing us to rethink those boundaries." In his January 2005 Winter Study course "Japanese Animation," students ► p.10

FACULTY IN FOCUS

Blending Science and Fiction

Imagine the splitting of the atom. How would you write about it as a novelist? As a journalist? As a playwright? Those are the types of questions Andrea Barrett posed to Williams students in her “Imagining Scientists” class last year in an effort to show how malleable facts are and how powerful good writing can be.

The award-winning novelist and short story writer is about to start her second year as a lecturer in English, having come to the College at the suggestion of English professor Jim Shepard. Barrett previously taught exclusively at writing conferences (where she met Shepard) and at the MFA Program for Writers at Warren Wilson College.

But at Williams, Barrett says, she quickly learned that teaching in a residential academic setting “uses the same part of the brain and takes the same energy as writing.” She particularly enjoys finding her students the right book at the right time and the chance to witness their thrill of discovery.

As she did last year, Barrett is spending the fall in the classroom, teaching “Advanced Fiction Workshop” (for English majors interested in creative writing) and “Introductory Fiction.” She plans to devote the spring semester to her own writing.

With five novels and two short story collections behind her, Barrett says writing doesn’t get any easier. Each project begins differently—inspired by the sound of a voice, an image, a landscape, or a piece of architecture or music. She often relies on her education in biology and her interest in history and does extensive research. But she never knows where a story is going until she sits down and begins to write.

Growing up on Cape Cod, Barrett was an avid reader. She trained as a biologist and pursued graduate work in zoology before realizing that she couldn’t translate her interest in science into a career.



Andrea Barrett

So she decided to give writing a try.

Two of her best-known works are *Ship Fever & Other Stories*, which won the National Book Award for Fiction in 1996, and *The Voyage of the Narwahl*, published in 1998.

Science plays a central part in both books, so readers tend to think of her exclusively as a science writer. Barrett, however, defines herself by her character-driven approach, even though science is fertile ground for her writing and allows her to join her two interests.

—Jennifer Grow

Other fiction by Andrea Barrett:

Servants of the Map, 2002

The Forms of Water, 1993

The Middle Kingdom, 1991

Secret Harmonies, 1989

Lucid Stars, 1988

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considered “whether traditional ways of reading literature and film can effectively grapple with this material,” according to the syllabus. It’s an issue he hopes to explore further in

Mechademia, an academic journal of anime, manga and the “fan arts,” soon to be published by University of Minnesota Press, on whose editorial board Bolton sits. Similar in scope to *Gastronomica*, the award-winning journal of food and culture produced by Williams Russian professor Darra Goldstein, *Mechademia* seeks to bridge “the gap between academic and fan discourses,” Bolton says. In helping to

develop the journal, he and Goldstein discussed publishing and editing strategies as well as “what it takes to produce a visually beautiful journal.”

Moving Away

Growing up in Williamstown, Bolton nurtured twin interests in science fiction and Japan, which he visited as a high school exchange student. As a Harvard undergraduate, he studied Japanese language while majoring in electrical, computer and systems engineering. A career in software development eventually led him back to Japan, where he was a liaison

between American and Japanese programmers. Realizing that he’d rather improve his language skills than his programming ones, Bolton left the computer world for Stanford to pursue a doctorate in Japanese with a focus on modern fiction. “I found literary studies very similar to programming in some ways,” he says. “Both involve immersing yourself in the world of a text and talking to the text.”

Coming Home

Bolton taught for several years at the University of California, Riverside,

and then joined the Williams faculty the day after his father, economics professor Roger E. Bolton, retired in 2003. (The senior Bolton, who spent 35 years at Williams, still has an office in Kellogg.) Though he is glad to be home, Bolton says it was a bit of a culture shock. During a tour of faculty apartments in the former Southworth Elementary School, he realized he was standing in his old sixth-grade classroom. And he’s still getting used to the idea of dropping off his 2-year-old daughter for playgroup in the same place he attended preschool.

—Amy Lovett



Real Letter Days



En route to Williamstown for her 10th reunion, Amy Butler Greenfield '91 almost asked her husband David to turn the car around and head back to their home in the Boston area. As much as she wanted to reconnect with her classmates, her life had changed in ways she never could have anticipated since graduating from Williams. And not all for the better.

As a student, Greenfield had been a Tyng Scholar, creating a major for herself in environmental studies that included spending a semester at Williams-Mystic for maritime studies. She took contradance lessons, was a house officer and participated in a variety of musical and choral groups. She graduated summa cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa. She wanted to teach history at a college like Williams and received a Marshall Scholarship for graduate study in the U.K.

Then, at the age of 26, having just completed a research master's in modern history at Oxford and partway through a doctoral program at the University of Wisconsin, she was diagnosed with lupus, a debilitating, potentially life-threatening disease that afflicts more than 1.5 million people in the U.S.—90 percent of them women. Lupus strikes more Americans than several other diseases combined, including multiple sclerosis and cystic fibrosis, according to the Lupus Foundation of America.

Newly married and living in England at the time, Greenfield didn't share the details with many of her friends. She was unable to walk for several months, and she couldn't write or type

By Resa Nelson

Photography by Jon Roemer







for several years. Initially, she didn't know if she'd survive. Still, she was determined to re-map her life and figure out what she wanted to do if her health improved.

Laura Aust '91, who met Greenfield during a Winter Study class on contradance, says her friend dealt with her diagnosis "in a very matter-of-fact way: identifying but not dwelling on her limitations, finding alternatives that allowed her to continue living her life as normally as possible."

It was during a period when Greenfield was bedridden that she realized with "perfect clarity" that she wanted to write books that people would read for pleasure. She could work at her own pace and in her own environment. As she regained her strength, she learned how to use voice-recognition computer software that freed her hands from typing. She published two articles in *Cricket* magazine and wrote a manuscript for a children's novel titled *Virginia Bound*, about a 17th century London orphan who's kidnapped, sold as an indentured servant and shipped to colonial Virginia.

On a bleak winter's day, just months away from her 10-year reunion at Williams, Greenfield again took stock of her options. Unsure if she wanted to write another novel, she stared at a pot of geraniums on her windowsill. She wondered what the world would be like if those flowers were the only

source of red in existence, and she began thinking about the importance of color.

Greenfield remembered something unusual she stumbled upon while at Oxford. She spent several weeks in Seville, Spain, conducting research for her thesis about the introduction of chocolate to Europe. Poring over centuries-old ship registers in the Archive of the Indies in search of records of imported chocolate, she discovered something else: entry after entry of cochineal, the natural dyestuff that produces the most potent shade of red.

A love of color and fabric runs in Greenfield's blood. In the late 19th century, her great-grandfather emigrated from Scotland to the U.S., where he studied dyes and chemicals, worked in textiles and ultimately became a professor of textile chemistry at Drexel University in Philadelphia. Her grandfather worked for dye companies and married a woman who owned a yarn shop. And her mother studied textiles and married a man who worked in physics and chemistry.

Thus Greenfield thought cochineal's history would make an interesting read. No one had ever written about it before, so she landed a top-notch agent who struck an international book deal for *A Perfect Red: Empire, Espionage and the Quest for the Color of Desire*, published in May by HarperCollins.

The book begins with an introduction to the art of dyeing in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, a time when the textile industry played a major role in the economy. The greatest demand was for the most rare of colors—red, associated with royalty and power. Finding a dyestuff that would produce a vivid red that could withstand sunlight, wash and wear could make or break guilds and even entire villages dedicated to textiles and dyeing.

In 1519, conquistador Hernán Cortés came across cochineal in the great Aztec marketplaces and sent a sample back to the king of Spain. The king immediately recognized the dyestuff's value and went to great lengths to control importing cochineal from the Americas to Spain and exporting it to the rest of Europe, making it one of the most valuable commodities in the world.

Driven by the desire for scientific fame and commercial profit, the English, French, Dutch and other Europeans struggled to answer questions about cochineal. Was it derived from plant, animal or mineral? Could it be transplanted from Mexico

to their own colonies? It would be 300 years before 18th-century microscopes would reveal cochineal's source: a scale insect native to Mexico and its host plant, nopal.

A Perfect Red traces the wild, clandestine attempts by adventurer naturalists to cultivate cochineal, as well as the changing meanings of the color red over time—from the luxurious robes of kings and cardinals to its later incarnation as the garb of the “scarlet woman.”

“It is a fascinating and largely unknown story of greed and subterfuge, mixing fashion, folly and ingenuity in equal measure,” Sir John Elliot (head of history at Oxford when Greenfield was there) writes of his former student's book. “Amy ... unravels its mysteries with all the skills of a detective.”

Greenfield, in turn, says her Williams coursework in history, environmental studies, art history and Spanish was excellent preparation for her to research and write the book. “I was constantly challenged both to look for the big picture and to dive deep whenever necessary,” she says. “That training really helped me as I wrote *A Perfect Red*, which delves into an enormous range of topics—including entomology, art, biography, maritime law, imperial history, early physics, anthropology, engineering and the history of science.”

Researching and writing the book took Greenfield more than three-and-a-half years. And she had just begun her work when she embarked—with some misgivings—on her trip to Williamstown for reunion. Here it was, 2001, and she had dropped out of her doctoral program. *Virginia Unbound* wouldn't be published for another two years. She had written a couple of articles for a children's magazine. And she was dealing with a debilitating illness.

“Because I'd been so isolated with lupus,” she says, “the list of accomplishments in the *Alumni Review* had made me feel distant and separated from my old friends.”

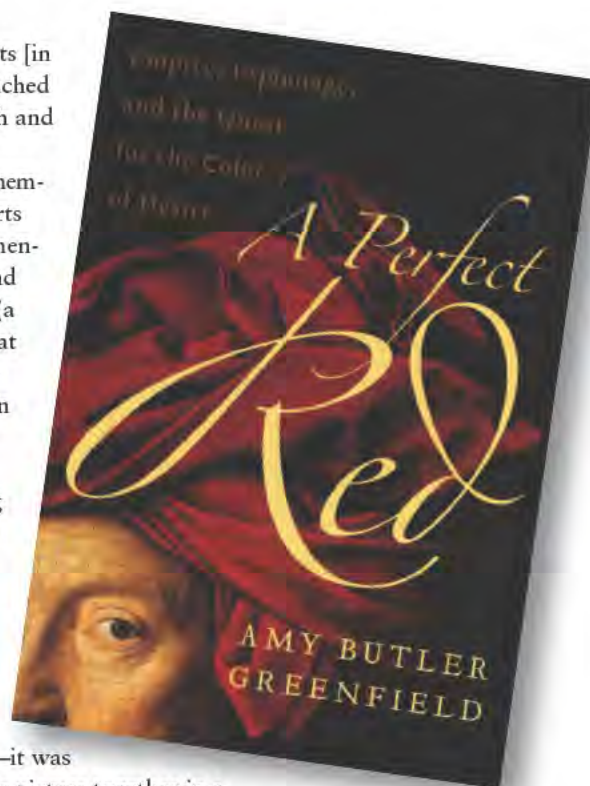
But when Greenfield arrived in Williamstown, she was met with reassuring praise from friends who, only a few years before, she thought she might never see again. She left re-energized about and refocused on her work. “At reunion, I saw the people

behind those announcements [in Class Notes], and I was touched by their candor and warmth and honesty,” she says.

Mark Henderson '91 remembers Greenfield from concerts they attended, the environmental studies student group and her Santa Lucia Day party (a Swedish holiday tradition) at Garfield House—when she wore a wreath of candles on her head. Reunion helped him view his friend in a different light. “For so long I think we all had pictured her going on to a career as a history professor, and suddenly that picture was broken,” Henderson says. “So when she turned to writing—using her background as a historian—it was wonderful to see her put the picture together in a new way.”

Kathi Fisler '91 first met Greenfield when they were visiting campus as high school seniors who already had already been admitted to Williams. “I don't think I would have guessed that Amy had been ill if I hadn't known,” says Fisler, who was a driving force in encouraging Greenfield to come to the 10th. “She had her usual sparkle and lively conversations—she was every bit as much in the heart of conversations as she'd been in college. I loved [reunion], because it felt like going home, and a big part of that would have been missing if she hadn't been there.” ■

Resa Nelson is a freelance writer based in the Boston area. Amy Butler Greenfield '91 has been a guest speaker for the Lupus Foundation of New England.



Opposite: Amy Butler Greenfield '91 in her Waltham, Mass., home.

This page: The first picture of a magnified cochineal insect, published in 1694 by Nicolaas Hartsoeker. (By permission of the British Library.)





5,822 extremely qualified applicants. 540 places in the Class of 2009. 11 admission officers balancing scores of priorities from the campus community. The Alumni Review dishes up the College's ...

Recipe for Success

“Man, these kids are really smart, aren't they?” Richard Nesbitt '74 asks quietly, with a gentle shake of the head. Sitting at a conference table in Bascom House, the Williams admission director is surrounded by his staff, but he's more or less talking to himself, because the answer is abundantly clear. He utters the question with as much dismay as delight, since he knows that being smart—incredibly smart—is not enough to get some very talented young people into Williams these days.

It's the middle of March, and Nesbitt and 10 other admission officers are deciding who should be among the 540 or so members of the Class of 2009. The applicant they're discussing at the moment, Arun Ajarati,* has stunning academic credentials: a combined 1570 on his SATs (out of a maximum 1600), all A's on his high school transcript and 710 or higher on five SAT2 exams.

But even Arun's eye-popping achievements won't ensure him a spot: The admission staff wait-listed or rejected nearly 300 of the 675 applicants to whom they had given their top “Academic 1” rating—a pool of students that,

on average, ranked in the top 3 percent of their high school classes and had SAT scores of 1545.

Arun, however, appears to be the complete package. He participates in a slew of activities: National Honor Society, tae kwon do (he has a black belt), Model United Nations and the honors orchestra. And his intellectual curiosity and thirst—described by his teachers and counselors and exemplified by having taken distance-education courses from Stanford in his spare time, among other things—impresses the committee.

“Everything really shouts out his *amazingness*,” one admission officer has written in his file. “God just gave him more than most,” writes another. When the committee votes, he is admitted easily.

Meanwhile, on paper, Jennifer Johnson's* credentials meet or exceed Arun's. She scored a perfect 1600 on the SAT and had another perfect score on one of her four achievement tests. But while she won regional honors for her school's swim team, her extracurricular record is otherwise a little thin, and her essay leaves many of the reviewers cold. Most important, as the admission team weighs her

**Names of applicants
have been changed.*

By Doug Lederman • Illustrations by Rowan Barnes-Murphy



application, one member offers this assessment: Despite her high grades and test scores, “I can’t discern any real intellectual spark.” The verdict: wait-list.

The competition for admission to Williams and other elite colleges has escalated to a point that astounds anyone who applied to college two decades ago or more. Students feel enormous pressure not just to perform academically in high school (if not earlier), but also to involve themselves in the

widest possible range of extracurricular and community service activities. And still that may not be enough, especially for students (or, more likely, their parents) who define the range of acceptable college destinations narrowly, aimed at the perceived top of the higher education food chain.

“There are too many people who think, ‘If I don’t get into Williams or Yale or Stanford, life is over,’” says Williams President Morty Schapiro. “But the admission game shouldn’t be about getting into the school that’s highest ranked in *U.S. News*. It’s about finding the



Recipe for Success

best fit for your kid, not about the sticker you can put on the back of your car. I worry that some parents care more about that than about their kids.”

Williams is not immune from this phenomenon, as anyone whose son or daughter has applied to the College in the past decade surely knows. The crush of applications and the heightened competitiveness has come at the same time that Williams, like many institutions of its kind, has made a higher priority of admitting a student body more representative of today’s high school-age population. In essence, the thinking goes, the more Williams looks like the world, the better prepared *all* of its students will be to become leaders in that world.

What the admission office must do, then, is select from among every five applicants, almost all of them stellar, the one student who will make the most of his or her time at Williams and contribute to other students’ education. That means students of great academic promise, but also those who bring to campus a variety of talents, backgrounds and experiences.

Such decisions are not made in isolation; rather the admission office is plugged into the wider campus community, including the coaches of Williams’ 32 intercollegiate teams seeking guards, goalies or golfers; student and professional groups in search of flutists, dancers and painters; and alumni hoping that their sons or daughters will have a chance to experience the place they love. Oh, yes, and the faculty, who want as many engaged, committed, vibrant students in their classrooms, art studios, labs and performance spaces as possible.

An outsider sitting in on the admission process observes many things: the seriousness of purpose, leavened with equal parts missionary zeal and self-effacing respect for the applicants, with which the staff undertakes its work; the delicate dance the committee engages in to balance its many priorities; and perhaps most powerful of all, the jaw-dropping credentials and achievements of the terrifically talented young people whom Williams is attracting these days.



It’s not as though it was easy to get into Williams 20 or even 40 years ago. In 1962, the first year for which the admission office has electronic records, 1,501 young men applied to the College. Of those, 35 percent were accepted. The entering class of 288 had an average combined SAT score of 1280 (SAT scores being the most readily available comparison across several decades).

From there, the number of applicants began to grow. Beginning in the 1980s and through the early 1990s, the average pool was about 4,500 per year, with only a quarter admitted, despite the fact that class sizes grew to as many as 519. Average SAT scores during that time rose steadily to the 1330s.

Since then, the number of young people applying to Williams and other highly selective colleges has shot up even more, driven both by growth in the number of college-age people (the Baby Boom echo) and by the prevailing view that a degree from an elite college will have huge economic, intellectual and social payoffs. By the 2004-05 academic year, 5,822 high schoolers had applied to Williams, which, in looking to fill about 540 slots, admitted just 18.8 percent of them.

As the numbers have risen, so too has the intensity of the College’s efforts to ensure, as Schapiro says, that Williams has the “best students in the world, regardless of their family circumstances.”

Despite this long-standing commitment, research (much of it conducted by the Williams Project on the Economics of Higher Education) has shown that highly qualified students from low-income backgrounds are underrepresented among the most selective colleges and universities. As a result, according to a 2004 study, 74 percent of students attending the nation’s top colleges and universities come from families in the top income quintile (earning more than about \$92,000 annually), while 9 percent come from the bottom two quintiles (typically earning less than \$40,000 per year).

So Williams has taken several steps this decade to make its student body more socioeconomically diverse. In addition to





extending its need-blind admission policy to international students and expanding financial aid to meet 100 percent of all families' demonstrated need, the College is recruiting in more cities and schools that serve low-income students. This past year, Williams also joined Questbridge, a nonprofit initiative that matches colleges with highly talented underprivileged students.

Though this thrust produces many benefits for the College—providing exceptional students the opportunity to learn from each others' experiences and backgrounds—it has another undeniable effect: intensifying the already stiff competition for admission slots.

Students apply to Williams in one of two ways: for early decision or regular admission. The College admits between a third and two-fifths of its total freshman class through early decision in December; those students apply only to Williams and commit to enrolling if accepted. Most of those who are turned down join the regular pool of applicants, which the admission team begins reviewing in January. (For the Class of 2009, nearly 500 students applied early decision; of those, nearly 300 were turned down.)

From January until late March, when acceptance letters are mailed, the admission team works on whittling the regular pool of applicants (5,822 for the Class of 2009) to between 1,000 and 1,100 admitted students, of whom it expects nearly half to enroll in the fall.

The office creates a folder for each candidate, stuffed with high school transcripts, the students' essays and recommendations from teachers, counselors and (sometimes) peers. Many applicants—particularly performers or artists—also submit tapes, portfolios or DVDs of their work to be evaluated by the music, dance, theater or art departments.

The full-time admission staffers, plus a handful of helpers like Phil Smith '55 (Nesbitt's predecessor as director), pore over the folders. Two readers examine each folder independently, without seeing each other's comments, and assess them in three major ways. Each applicant gets an academic rating

from 1 to 9 that focuses heavily on his or her high school grades, standardized test scores, the rigor of his or her academic program within the context of the school setting and the strength of teacher recommendations. Then there is a non-academic rating from 1 to 6, assessing a student's level and length of involvement in school and outside activities.

The readers also assign any of more than 30 "attributes" that admission uses to identify exceptional traits. Some of these are easily quantified, such as being the child or grandchild of an alumnus, a member of a minority group, an "impact" athlete or a local resident. Other more subjective "tags" draw attention (usually but not always favorably) to something special about a candidate, like a powerful passion or aptitude for scientific research or an interest in getting a non-science Ph.D. Among the most significant of these is the "intellectual vitality" or "IVIT" code, which marks a candidate as having "extraordinary academic depth/talent" or being a "classroom catalyst who would have a significant impact in labs or class discussions," according to the office's written guidelines. With so many applicants with comparably impressive academic records, the attributes are often the tipping point.

The admission office has paid extra attention in the last few years to its "socio-ec" tags, which identify students who hail from an "obvious modest/low-income background" or whose parents did not attend college. This is the only way that a student's financial situation is discussed by the admission office, as Williams is one of only a few dozen colleges in the country that ensures applicants will be admitted





Recipe for Success

without regard to whether they can afford to pay for college. Williams, in turn, commits to meeting all students' full demonstrated financial need.

If the first and second readers' academic ratings differ by more than a point, they put their heads together to try to reach a consensus rating. In general, all applicants with a combined academic rating of 3 or higher are rejected at this point, unless the first and second readers have identified one or more "attributes" that warrant additional consideration.

By late February, the readers identify 200 or more students who stand out so clearly that they receive letters offering admission a few weeks ahead of the rest of the regular admittees. These "early writes," as Williams calls them, are typically highly coveted by other colleges. By admitting them a bit earlier, arranging for department chairs or coaches to phone or write urging them to accept, and, in a small number of cases, offering to fly them in for campus visits, Williams hopes to get a leg up in the wooing process. (The College tends not to "early write" students from high schools where many candidates have applied to Williams, however, so as not to send parents and school counselors into a tizzy by accepting one student weeks ahead of others.)

In the case of the Class of 2009, Williams admitted 209 students "early decision" in December and then 200 as "early writes" in February. Another 11 students selected for the Class of 2008 but who postponed their enrollment were also on the roster.

The admission committee now gives a third read to the 2,000 remaining applications and then convenes in early March to begin formal deliberations to select the final 600 or so admittees. Meeting six hours a day in the conference room in Bascom, the 10 officers plow through lists of students as Nesbitt reads from the one-page cards readers have filled out about each applicant. In some cases, debate is extensive and the assembled vote thumbs up or thumbs down. In a relative handful of others, the committee more or less listens to decisions determined in advance by Nesbitt.

As they gather on a Monday morning two weeks into deliberations, Nesbitt fills in the staffers on where they stand—part statistical review, part pep-talk.

"So far we've admitted 803 students," he says, providing breakdowns by sex and race, those with alumni connections, international students and the number admitted through athletic "tips"—requests from coaches for some extra nod in an athlete's direction because of his or her ability to help a team or teams.

"We're down a little bit on IVITs from last year, so we may want to do a little more there," Nesbitt says. "We're ahead on socio-ecs, so that's good."

Then, because just two weeks remain before the acceptance letters go out, and more than 300 Academic 1's and scores more Academic 2's still need to be considered, it's time to get to work.

The admission officers gathered around the conference room table in Bascom are an eclectic group. Several, like Connie Sheehy '75, Fran Lapidus and Karen Parkinson, have a decade or more of experience at Williams; others, like Geraldine Shen '01, Mark Robertson '02 and Rob Rivas '01, are recent grads. Each has his or her own interests and biases—some are particularly behind the push for diversity, others are skeptical about sports; some focus intently on applicants' academic profiles, while others seem especially partial to students who they think will be leaders on campus or contribute powerfully in some social or extracurricular way.

But following the lead of the low-key Nesbitt, they work seamlessly together. Serious disagreement about whom to admit is far less common than bantering about how wide to open the windows to keep the room comfortable or the healthfulness of the snacks they take turns bringing in to keep them sharp (or awake) through the hours of deliberations. (Sheehy, who suffered a heart attack running to catch a plane while returning from an eight-day recruiting trip two years ago, pushes fruit and vegetables, while Lauren Lynch, who as of March is eight months pregnant, craves cookies and chips.)





"We're each looking for different things, given our differing backgrounds and differing interests, but we all have a sense of who's going to really come alive here and be a good Williams student," says Robertson. "Dick sets the tone, with his steady hand and the signal he sends that he really does want and value input from everybody on the committee."

As an outsider, it is hard not to be overwhelmed by what the applicants have accomplished, and not just in the classroom. One student has turned the death of his brother into a personal crusade to stop drunk driving. Another played piano at Carnegie Hall. Seemingly dozens are supplementing their high school courses with online classes from places like Stanford or weekend programs at Columbia.

Even the admission officers seem to recognize—in self-deprecating ways—how special the applicants are. During discussion of one particularly amazing high schooler, associate director Gina Coleman '90 jokes that she's lucky to have applied to Williams when she did. "We couldn't get in here again," she says. "I was primed in the late '80s for this place, but not now."

Tuesday morning, President Schapiro sits in on the committee's deliberations, as he does a few times each year. He wants to have a first-hand sense of what the applicants look like and what the committee is focusing on, so that he can answer the many questions he gets from alumni and others when he's traveling. "Plus, those of us on the faculty have a lot at stake about the students we admit," says Schapiro, a professor of economics who teaches each semester.

Schapiro doesn't vote on applicants, and he mainly listens quietly, occasionally throwing out a wry aside to lighten the mood. Comments from the readers about peer and competitor colleges, especially Amherst, are common, but not all are digs. When the panel admits a student whom everyone agrees would be a huge asset to Williams—"an intensely competitive kid with the soul of a novelist," as one of his teachers described him—its members

seem to know he's aiming even higher. "He's not going to come here," one officer says.

If any one deliberation sums up the challenges and choices facing admission as it works to craft the Class of 2009, it's the case of Jacob Cohen.* Ranked fourth in a class of nearly 300 in his suburban New York high school, with a perfect 1600 on the SATs and perfect 5's on five Advanced Placement tests, Jacob clearly impresses the readers with his intelligence. But one offers the sentiment, oft-heard around this table, that in this sterling academic record, "There's nothing to find fault with, but nothing to put him over the top, either."

After a few moments, the committee seems to be heading toward a vote to reject him when one member notes Jacob's strong interest in biology, that he has participated in national science competitions and the fact that the pool of admitted students so far contains fewer than the ideal number of potential research scientists. (Jacob also manages to find time to compete on two varsity sports teams.) After a few more minutes of discussion, Lynch says with some exasperation: "It's cruel—he couldn't *possibly* be doing any more than he's doing, could he?"

With that comment, which could apply to so many of the applicants Williams both admits and rejects, the tide for this high schooler, at least, has turned. Here's your invitation, Jacob, to the Class of 2009. ■

Doug Lederman is editor of Inside Higher Ed (insidehighered.com), an online publication covering higher education. He is based in the Washington, D.C., area.





*From editing class books to planning dinners
far-flung alumni*

REUNION

*are a dedicated bunch. Here's a look at
what they do and*

CLASS: 2000

REUNION: 8th

KEY ORGANIZERS: Albert "Albie"

Naclerio (pictured, left) and Erin Morrisette (right) as well as Virginia Pyle, Gabriela Pereira and Zelle Bonney (who missed the festivities altogether because of a conflicting business trip to the VIBE Music Fest in Atlanta).

CHALLENGE: Convincing classmates scattered all over the globe and busy with grad school, fledgling careers and weddings, weddings, weddings to find their way back to Williamstown for their (and the organizers') first major reunion.

M.O.: Says Pereira: "Get people excited and spread the word ... since most of us don't live anywhere near Williams anymore." Adds Naclerio: "Don't overplan. Allow people the chance to catch up with friends and explore the campus and town on their own."

AGENDA: What Pereira calls "pretty standard 'good ole days' kinds of stuff: a semi-formal dance on Saturday night, a late-night party in Currier, drink specials at the Red Herring."

RESULTS: Two hundred eight alumni showed up, including one classmate from Tokyo.

WHY ALBIE WAS INVOLVED: As one of only a few classmates living in Williamstown, he says, "It would have been weird for me to have a party in my own backyard and not be involved in planning it."



Interviews by Maryann Teale Snell
Photos by Scott Barrow

to convincing
to flock back to Williams,

VOLUNTEERS

why they do it.

CLASS: 1946

REUNION: 60th

KEY ORGANIZERS: John "Jake" Winant (pictured) and Fred Scarborough

CHANGING ROLES: Winant's been a class president, VP and secretary—and he's only missed one reunion. So by the time his 60th rolled around, it seemed "natural," he says, to take a turn chairing the weekend with Scarborough.

CHALLENGE: Planning a low-key, memorable experience for a group of what Winant considers to be "a lot of aging men. ... When people get into their 80s, a lot of things happen to you, most of which are very nice, but some of which slow you down."

RESULTS: Thirty-six classmates, 28 wives and guests plus five widows—more than ever—came back from as far away as Washington State.

CHANGING

ATTITUDES: "It took a while to get our act together," Winant says of his class. "When we were recent graduates, we were sort of dispersed to the four winds, but then we came together resoundingly, and things got better and better. Our 50th was a smashing success, and we've become a very solid group."

CLASS: 1955

REUNION: 50th

CLASS BOOK

EDITORS: Steve Gordon (pictured) and Don Seymour

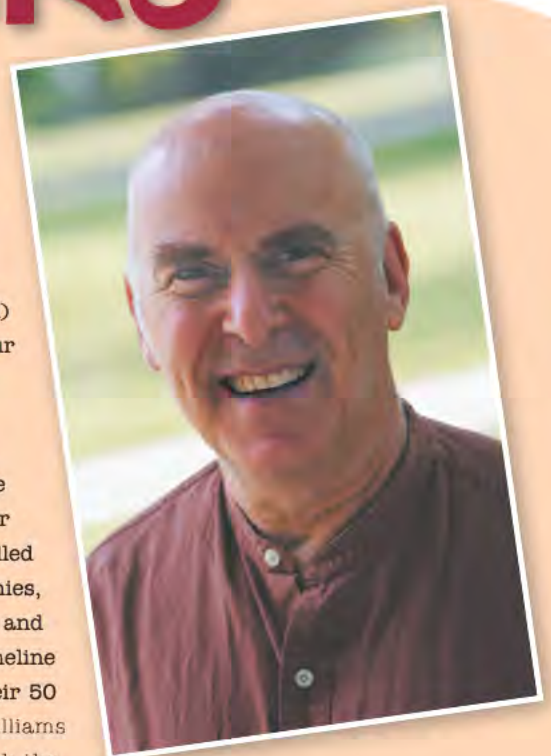
CHALLENGE: Publishing a gorgeous, full-color, 190-page tribute to their classmates, filled with biographies, perspectives and a unique timeline weaving their 50 years of Williams history with the

historical, political, scientific, cultural and environmental milestones of the time.

ANOTHER CHALLENGE: Figuring out how to get the book done on time, despite the printing company's equipment breaking down at the 11th hour.

AND PERHAPS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE: As was the case 25 years before, Gordon initially wasn't enthusiastic about serving as class book editor. "I was not inspired," he says. "I went in determined not to do it again. I didn't feel I had time to do it, [and] it would be taking away from my art."

RESULTS: Ultimately, Gordon "couldn't say no," the printing company made its deadline, and the book was a hit. "I think it came out very well, and everyone else seems to be happy," he says. "I've had a lot of good feedback, extraordinary letters of gratitude. It's all very nice."



REUNION VOLUNTEERS



CLASS: 1985

REUNION: 20th

KEY ORGANIZERS:

Meg (Holliday) Kelly (pictured, left) and Sara Harkness Curry (right)

WHY THEY DID

IT: Curry's mom Antoinette and

dad Kenneth Harkness '56, a former class president and associate agent who will celebrate his own 50th reunion in 2006, inspired Curry to co-chair her 20th. She was moved by the "many stories of the good times and friendships they've enjoyed because of their involvement." For Kelly, whose dad Richard Holliday '60 was celebrating his 45th the same weekend as her 20th, it was a "debt of gratitude for the institution." Plus, says Kelly, a former class VP and associate agent, planning reunion has been "the most fulfilling, because there's a tangible product."

STRATEGY: Says Kelly, "To build a simple but fun and cost-effective weekend with lots of opportunities to reconnect. ... You'd be hard-pressed to not find your cup of tea on Reunion Weekend."

TEAM EFFORT: Kelly and Curry were rugby co-captains at Williams. So teaming up to be reunion chairs wasn't such a stress—and it was "a very fun time," to boot, says Kelly. "I can't speak for Hark, but I would co-chair our 25th in a minute." Replies "Hark": "I'd do it again with Meg in a heartbeat." In the meantime, they're serving as co-presidents of their class for the next five years.

CLASS: 1965

REUNION: 40th

KEY ORGANIZER: Dusty Griffin

THE RIGHT TIME: Griffin's been a class president, VP and agent, is a College trustee emeritus and has belonged to or led a half-dozen committees. When he moved back to Williamstown a few years ago, he decided to take on one of the few roles he hasn't held—reunion chair.

MISSION: "Maximize attendance and make sure everybody has a good time," Griffin says.

M.O.: Individual outreach to all 261 classmates and ongoing conversations, primarily via e-mail, throughout the planning process.

ON THE AGENDA: A popular talk at the Clark Art Institute by National Gallery of Art curator and class-

mate Arthur Wheelock, local hikes, a lunch for spouses and partners and a round-table discussion focused on "how we see the next 10 years in our own lives as we approach retirement," Griffin says. "By the time we come back for our 50th, almost everyone will be retired. Some of us already are."



RESULTS: A 40th reunion record-shattering 99 classmates, 79 wives and guests and seven children, despite the heat, and, Griffin says, with "no arm-twisting needed."

If you're interested in volunteering for reunion, please contact your class president.

CLASS: 1980

REUNION: 25th

CLASS BOOK EDITOR:

Sarah Mollman
Underhill

THE CHALLENGE: A professional writer and editor who's helped out with reunions before, Underhill nevertheless "had no idea what I was getting into" when she took on the reunion book.

Nor did she anticipate what it would take to get classmates to respond to her call for personal essays. By her first deadline in November 2004, she'd received only six submissions.

PAGE BY PAGE: A follow-up mailing with sample essays and a request for photos got candid shots from their college years "pouring in." Another e-mail elicited 100 essays by January 2005—still only half the number Underhill wanted. "So I started the one-on-one approach," she says. "I scanned photos and sent them out. I implored, teased and pushed. I asked people to contact their friends. I knew the class list by heart and every single person who had or hadn't responded."

THE PAYOFF: Ultimately, Underhill says, the class was "blown away" by the final product, a beautiful, glossy, 216-page book designed by classmate Sue Huggins, featuring hundreds of photographs.

POPULAR READING: At reunion, many tracked down Underhill to say that "they wouldn't have been there without the book, without the personal encouragement to contribute," she says. There was also the classmate en route to Williamstown from Seattle who, when changing planes in Chicago, was perusing his copy "with its distinctive lime-green cover," Underhill adds. "He looked up, and there was a woman he didn't know reading her book as she waited to board. And as they got on the plane, they ran into another classmate and her family with the book!"



CLASS: 1950

REUNION: 55th

KEY ORGANIZERS: Kevin Delany (pictured)
and Chuck Alberti

CHALLENGE: With a successful 50th under their belts, Delany says his class was "no longer the big dog on the block, but we still had to put on an attractive show."

TAKE TWO: Delany, who was class president for the past five years, is a seasoned Williams organizer for events including minireunions each fall and some class trips overseas. Having also chaired his 50th, Delany says number 55 would be easier, not only because he was "on top of class interests and attitudes," but also because he persuaded Alberti to "go for a last hurrah and reprise the fun we had" five years before. Another repeat hit this year: "An evening on the beautiful lawns of Mount Hope Farm, with dinner and dancing to the Williams Reunion Jazz Band."

FIT AND FEISTY: "When we were graduating in Chapin Hall," Delany recalls, "the 50th reunion Class of 1900 marched down the center aisle to applause. They looked like Coxey's Army,

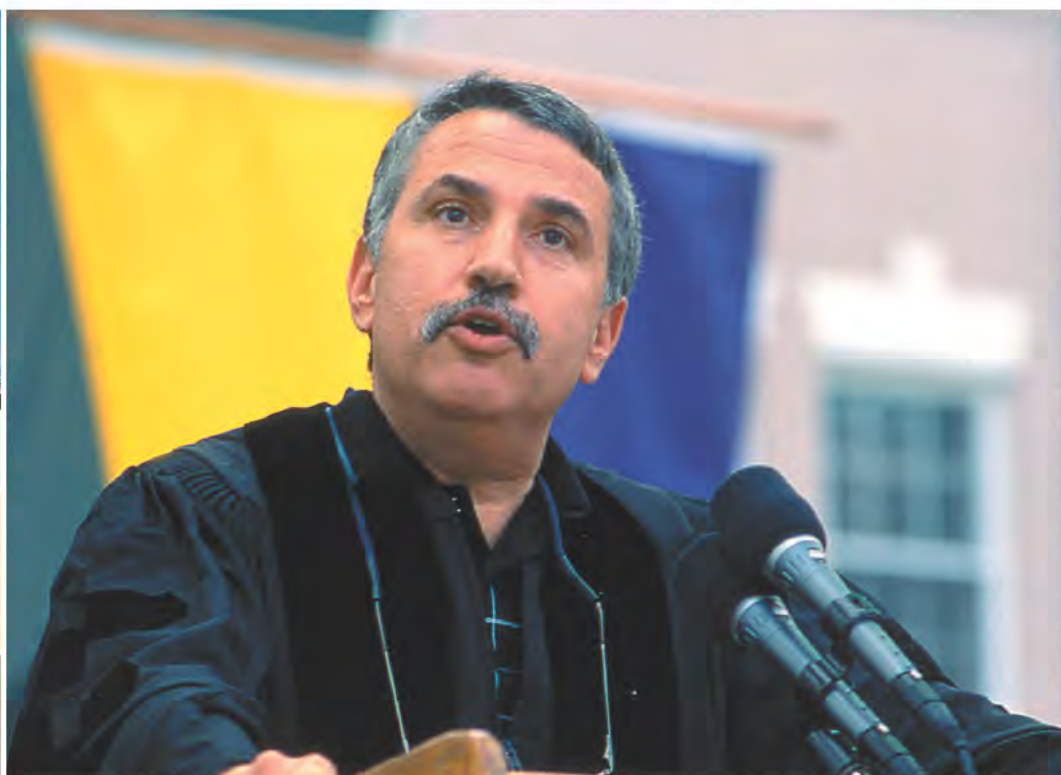
limping along and looking quite battle scarred. I suspect we thought we'd never be that old or look like that. Now we are easily that old, but we are fitter and feistier. And I think we are humble enough to know our good fortune."

TAKE THREE:

Would Delany chair another reunion? "Sure, if Chuck will join me," he says. "We'd probably be presiding over a handful of classmates ... but somebody has to empty the last bottle of wine."



Class of 2005 Commencement



HONORARY DEGREE RECIPIENTS

Pictured with President Morty Schapiro (center), left to right: (front) Evelyn Glennie, master of more than 1,000 percussion instruments; Julian Bond, NAACP board chairman; Thomas L. Friedman, journalist, author, three-time Pulitzer Prize winner; Sally Shaywitz, professor of pediatrics and child study, Yale University School of Medicine; (back) Joseph L. Rice III '54, chairman, Clayton, Dubilier & Rice private investment firm; Jhumpa Lahiri, author, Pulitzer Prize winner; Ellsworth Kelly, abstract painter, sculptor, printmaker.

1. Do what you really love to do, and if you don't know quite what that is yet, keep searching, because if you find it, you'll bring that something extra to your work that will help ensure you will not be automated or outsourced.
2. Being a good listener is one of the keys to life. If you really want to get through to people as a journalist, you first have to open their ears, and the best way to open their ears is to first open your own.
3. The most enduring skill you can bring to the workplace ... is the ability to learn how to learn. ... I think probably the best way to learn how to learn is to love learning.
4. In this age of laptops and PDAs, the Internet and Google, mp3s and iPods, remember one thing: All these tools might make you smarter, but they sure won't make you smart. ... You cannot download passion, imagination, zest and creativity. ... You have to upload it the old-fashioned way, under the olive tree, with reading, writing and arithmetic, travel, study, reflection, museum visits and human interaction.
5. There is a difference between skepticism and cynicism. Skepticism is about asking questions, being dubious, being wary, not being gullible, but always being open to being persuaded of a new fact or angle. Cynicism is about already having the answers—or thinking you do.
6. Your parents love you more than you will ever know. So ... call your Mama, regularly. And your Papa. You will always be glad you did.

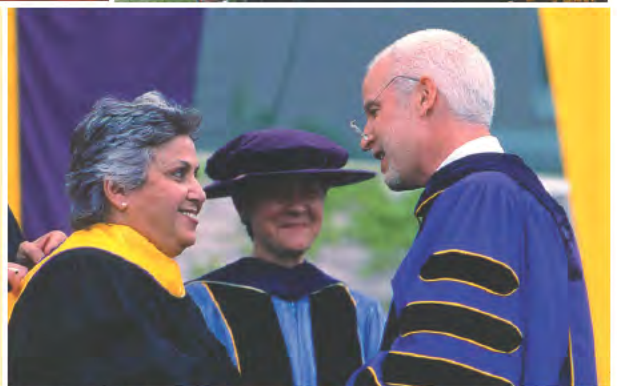
— Thomas L. Friedman, on "Journalism as Life"

PHOTOS BY ROMAN IWASIWKA (UNLESS NOTED)



© Nicholas Whitman

504 undergraduates
10 Summa cum laude graduates
66 Magna cum laude graduates
102 Cum laude graduates
113 Graduates with departmental honors
67 Phi Beta Kappa members
42 Sigma Xi members
43 Master's degree recipients
6,000 Attendees basking in the sunshine



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Most Popular Majors*

Economics (87)
English (69)
Psychology (67)
Art (63)
History (59)

*includes double & triple majors



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Chasing Flies

A year ago, my teammates from the 1986 Williams baseball team romped around Shea Stadium, courtesy of Jim Duquette '88, then general manager of the New York Mets. I am told the afternoon session included batting practice and an infield-outfield drill. More likely the "boys" did a phantom infield, a pantomime without the ball that we used to practice in hopes we might distract our archrival Amherst before the game. In the end, we were good actors, but Amherst had the better team.

In 1986 we called ourselves "super street fighters." It was part of the easy-going humor that had developed among the six seniors on the team through ups and downs. The good times included annual trips to Florida for spring training. There was sunbathing, swimming, nights on the town and ribbing each other endlessly. On one trip, a wickedly clever teammate told our gullible right fielder that a Detroit Tigers scout had seen his powerful stroke and wanted to give him a tryout. The poor guy sat on the curb of our Lakeland motel for half an hour, his face sagging with each passing minute's realization that some dreams don't come true.

But humorous anecdotes couldn't hide our frustrations about losing. Many of us had also played football, and by the spring of 1986, we hadn't had a winning record in either sport. Baseball was our last chance.

Trusted coach Jim Briggs '60 returned after a two-year hiatus to manage us, and things came together on the field. Kevin Morris '86, our ace pitcher, finally got some luck on the mound—he had once pitched eight no-hit innings against Amherst and still ended up losing! The rest of us mixed in well with a younger group of talented players. We ended up with a record of 19-10 and were told that we had won more games than any Eph baseball team in decades.

Memories of that final season were batted about in the e-mails leading up to the Shea Stadium reunion. My work in Central Asia ruled out a return to the U.S., but the whole affair got me reflecting on how much I connected baseball with being American.

The son of a diplomat, I spent the first seven years of my life in Southeast Asia. When we returned to the U.S., I fell in love with the game. I soaked my first glove in oil, wrapped it with rubber bands, and slept on it for months to get it ready for my first Little League season. In the evenings, I would count my baseball cards or memorize my favorite player's batting average.

But my version of paradise came to an end in 1973 when Dad told us we were moving to the People's Republic of China—the land of cadres, communes and the Cultural Revolution. I would have to leave behind the green fields of Chevy Chase, Md. There was no room for bourgeois baseball in Mao's China.

Dad tried to substitute weekend trips to the Ming Tombs for those fields, but it just wasn't the same. On home leaves at my grandparents' house in Myrtle Beach, S.C., poor Dad, who had bad knees from playing college soccer, would try to make up for lost time by setting up drills for me on the beach—pitching to me, hitting grounders and smacking long fly balls.

I was as happy as can be tracking down those flies as the tide rolled in. It was freedom and success in quick, measurable ways. The kinds of ways that living in China didn't offer.

So I have always identified baseball as being American in tangible ways. Call it the willfulness to be more productive. When I returned from China, rusty from two years of not playing, I had to sit on the bench. To get better, I would practice on my own, hitting a fly in the air, then grabbing my mitt to chase after the ball. It sounds ridiculous now, but I was a fanatic about improving.

Three decades later, I find myself again halfway across the world. And the story that comes back most vividly, not surprisingly, is chasing after a fly ball when I played center field that final year at Williams. We were playing Tufts and had a comfortable lead with star pitcher Kevin on the mound. A Tufts batter ripped a ball to the gap in left-center field. I streaked after the line drive, dove for the ball and ended up driving my head into the plywood outfield fence. I lay on the outfield grass, tingling sensations shooting down my arm. When I came to the bench, Kevin was shaking his head. "Lills," he said, "you *don't* have to do that. We are up 6-1." Good-hearted Kevin was worried about my wrenched neck. But for me, it was a fly ball that had to be tracked down and caught, just like all the others.

There's more to the story. Our left fielder, a small-town boy from western Massachusetts named Jim Duquette, actually pulled the ball from my glove and threw it back into the infield. Jim was at the start of a career that would culminate with him being named All-New England and a Div. III All-American. The story goes that Jim needed just one vote to put him over the top—and it came from the Tufts coach. "Well, he's got my vote," the coach said, "because he made the greatest catch I have ever seen."

So if I can take credit for launching Jim's successful career in baseball, I certainly will. For his part, I suspect Jim will let me take a rain check on the Shea Stadium event. Perhaps in a few years when we return to the U.S., he will let me bring my two young boys to Shea. They will be more than happy to run on the green fields of America.

Jeffrey Lilley '86 works for the International Republican Institute, helping political parties develop in the Kyrgyz Republic. He is co-author with his father of China Hands: Nine Decades of Adventure, Espionage and Diplomacy in Asia.