

ALUMNI REVIEW

June 2011

Williams



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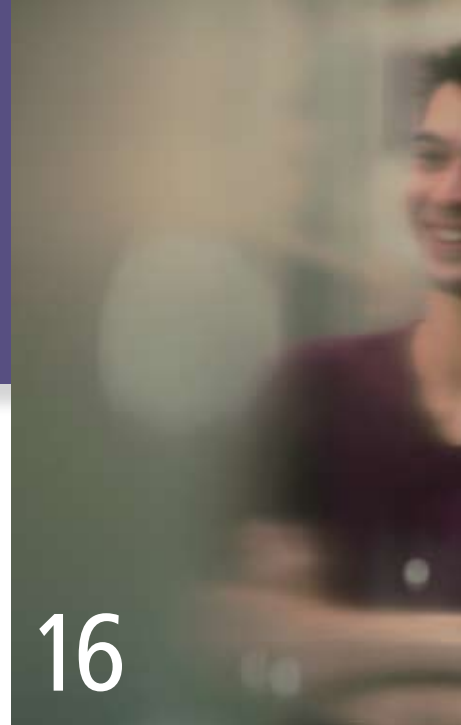
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ALUMNI REVIEW

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The Community We Aspire to Be

by President Adam Falk

People who haven't seen the college for a while are often pleasantly surprised by how different the campus looks. I don't mean the buildings, but the people.

Our growing racial and ethnic diversity is clearly evident to any visitor, while other forms of difference (including class, nationality, religion and sexual identity), though less visible, are also real.

Williams has done a remarkable job of diversifying the campus community and, as a result, our alumni body. Because this results from work carried out over a span of time marked by a number of Williams presidencies, I thought I should share some of my own thoughts on the matter.

- Diversity comes in many forms. We benefit here not only from the differences mentioned above but also from those of people's interests, experiences and opinions.



JUSTIN KNIGHT

Christian, a majority Caucasian and first-generation college student, or a Jewish lesbian athlete. While we need to track numbers in certain large categories—particularly racial and ethnic ones—as one way of measuring progress, we know that everyone's identity is unique and that we do well to treat each other as individuals.

- There are various motivations for cultivating diversity. Certainly, it's the case that some individuals in society continue to suffer from inequalities pressed, in the past or even now, upon one or more of the groups to which they belong. Moreover, Williams

is called upon to serve broad public goals, such as the enabling of social mobility. At the same time, we all benefit from the rich academic, intellectual, extracurricular and social diversity that marks our college community. And our mission to help prepare leaders must surely include engaging students with the diverse society they will graduate to serve. I know that not everyone would give equal weight to these motivations. That's OK. There's something to be learned from those discussions.

- Being diverse by itself isn't enough. None of the above motivations is satisfied merely by having different people live and work on campus. If they don't thrive, there's no social benefit, and if they don't interact, there's no educational value. Assembling a community is only the first step; we need also to structure and support it.
- Nor is it enough to be tolerant. By itself, what a pathetically weak virtue. The social and educational benefits we aim for require much more than begrudging acceptance.

ASSEMBLING A COMMUNITY IS ONLY THE FIRST STEP; WE NEED ALSO TO STRUCTURE AND SUPPORT IT.

- Each of us is much more than a member of a category. Or I should say categories, because you can be at the same time a minority African American and majority

- What's required is true celebration of difference. Only when we embrace the uniqueness of each community member do we all thrive and all maximize the learning available to us through each other.

This work at Williams began at least 50 years ago when, under the leadership of President Jack Sawyer '39, the college decided to phase out fraternities, admit women and recruit African American students. My sense is that Williams has succeeded more than many colleges in embracing difference, and we should take pride in that progress. But there's no doubt that further effort is needed to make this a place where all members can live, learn and thrive. That has been the aspiration of all Williams presidents from Jack Sawyer onward, including this one.

Though not always easy, the work is always important, and pursuing it has for a long time represented Williams at its best. ■

LETTERS

That an 18-year-old from Massachusetts journeyed to Mississippi in 1964 to fight—at great personal risk—in the forefront of the civil rights movement is a remarkable story (“Taking Democracy Door to Door,” March 2011). That this personal journey ultimately brought Chris Williams to Williamstown is our great fortune. Chris was quiet about his incredible experience for too long, but with Bruce Watson’s mesmerizing book *Freedom Summer* (which I highly recommend) about Chris and other heroes of that summer, Chris’ own Winter Study class and this article, the story is out now to both awe and inspire us.

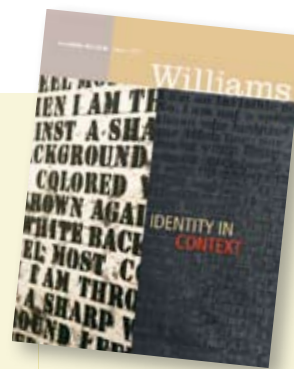
—Tom Gardner ’79, Bedford, N.Y.

Not least because I grew up in Boston, taught for 37 years at Williams and now have a post-retirement job teaching equally delightful honors students at the University of Mississippi, I enjoyed reading about Chris Williams’ Winter Study class on his civil rights work

in my newly adopted state. I fully recognize his courage and idealism yet also hope that his students leave his class recognizing that civil rights was a national, not just regional, problem. The Boston of my particularly privileged “WASP” youth was not just hostile to blacks but also Catholics, Jews and Asians. In this Northern town, a rather less violent but equally nasty school integration crisis took place 10 years after James Meredith was admitted to Ole Miss.

In all these cases, progress was made not only by Freedom Riders as brave as Chris Williams, but also by equally idealistic local activists, a few of whom it has been my privilege to know here in Mississippi. More work, of course, needs to be done, and so I hope his students, and for that matter the *Alumni Review*, will help all of us to work for a less violent and more humane country wherever we are lucky enough to live.

—Peter Frost ’58, Williams College’s Frederick L. Schuman Professor of International Studies, emeritus, Oxford, Miss.



The Williams Alumni Review welcomes letters relating to articles or items that have appeared in recent issues of the magazine. Please e-mail comments to alumni.review@williams.edu or send them to the Alumni Review, P.O. Box 676, Williamstown, MA 01267-0676. Letters may be edited for clarity and space.

I read with great interest Professor Steve Lewis’ ‘60 write-up about the Center for Development Economics (“CDE at 50,” March 2011). As it happens, I “pre-interviewed” the first two Venezuelans to be accepted by the CDE—Enrique Narciso ’62 and Jose Manuel Egui ’64.

I also pre-interviewed three others who were not accepted.

—Robert Bottome ’56, Caracas, Venezuela

Did you know?

Williams offers college counseling to children of alumni.

From May 31 to Sept. 30, children of alumni who have completed their high school junior year or are high school seniors are invited to meet with Williams admission officers to discuss finding “best fit” colleges, fine-tune applications and explore a variety of college options. To schedule, call 413.597.2214. Important note for students: Be sure to identify yourself as an alumni daughter or son. When you visit Williams, bring a copy of your most recent transcript (unofficial is OK) and test scores. If you visit during the academic year, plan to take a campus tour, attend a group information session and/or sit in on some classes.



NICHOLAS WHITMAN

BOOKER, BANCROFT, BURNS HIGHLIGHT COMMENCEMENT

As this issue of the *Alumni Review* was going to press, the campus was bustling in preparation for Commencement Weekend June 4-5.

Highlighting the schedule were a question-and-answer session with filmmaker Ken Burns on Saturday afternoon, a baccalaureate address by Arctic and Antarctic explorer Ann Bancroft on Saturday evening and a commencement address by Newark,

N.J., Mayor Cory A. Booker on Sunday.

The three speakers were to receive honorary degrees during the college's 222nd Commencement Exercise, as were performance artist Marina Abramovic, political scientist Bruce Russett '56 and former Philippine finance secretary Margarito "Gary" B. Teves, CDE '68. Also slated to be recognized was Anne Skinner, Williams senior lecturer in chemistry, who is retiring.

For speeches, video and photographs of the weekend, visit <http://commencement.williams.edu>. And

look for more details about commencement in the *Review's* September issue.



Cory A. Booker

PUDDESTER NAMED VP FOR FINANCE/ADMINISTRATION

As the final step in a realignment of senior administrative responsibilities across the college, President Adam Falk has named Frederick Puddester of Johns Hopkins University to the newly created position of vice president for finance and administration, starting July 1.

After spending two decades in Maryland State government, including four years as secretary of budget and management, Puddester in 2000 was named executive director of budget and financial planning for Johns Hopkins University, responsible for developing the university-wide budget and its five-year fiscal plan. In 2007 he became senior associate dean for finance and administration at the university's Zanvyl Krieger School of Arts

KELLOGG HOUSE TO BE REMODELED AFTER MOVE

To make room for the new Stetson Library, a project scheduled to begin in June, Kellogg House is moving to a new site near Hollander Hall. A planned expansion of Kellogg will create a new home for the Center for Environmental Studies and the Zilkha Center for Environmental Initiatives, physically uniting the two programs for the first time.

The original 2,800-square foot building, the second oldest on campus, is to undergo a green renovation that will add 3,700 square feet of new space. A committee of faculty, staff and students is considering various green building standards to guide the project. Options include designing a building that can qualify for LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification from the U.S. Green Building Council or one that will generate enough of its own energy requirements to achieve net zero energy use and greenhouse gas emissions.

Renovating a colonial house that dates back to 1794 poses other challenges, such as maintaining Kellogg's historical features. Project leaders want to salvage and recycle surplus building materials and trees that will be removed from the site.

"We're looking at this as a process of learning about green building," says Zilkha Center director Stephanie Boyd. "We'd like it to be a learning experience for the entire campus." —Jennifer Weeks '83



ROBERT V. BEHR '55



Frederick Puddester

and Sciences, which Falk led as dean from 2006 to 2010. In that role Puddester redesigned the budget process to make it more open and increase the engagement of department chairs, enhanced faculty input into the design of capital projects and laboratory renovations and established a student-driven sustainability capital program.

At Williams, Puddester will be responsible for all aspects of the college's financial resources, with the exception of investment

management. His appointment—coupled with a change in responsibilities for current Vice President for Operations Stephen Klass, who will become vice president for campus life—will strengthen the system of faculty governance already in place and allow professors from a wider range of disciplines to serve as dean of the college, dean of faculty and, especially, provost.

Calling the realignment a way to “add some net bandwidth to the governance of the college,” Falk told the *Record* in May, “I think everyone’s job is going to be more coherent and more rewarding.”

MELENDY NEW ATHLETIC DIRECTOR

Lisa Melendy, former head coach of women's soccer at Williams, was named chair and director of physical education, athletics and recreation, effective April 4.

In her 25 years at Williams, she spent 17 as head coach, during which time she was named regional coach of the year three times and NESCAC coach of the year twice. She also served the college as associate athletic director from 1998 to 2009, assistant athletic director from 1988 to 1998 and acting director of athletics for 2006-07 and this past year, when she took the reins from Harry Sheehy '75, now director of athletics and recreation at Dartmouth.

Melendy has been a member of numerous campus committees over the years, including the Advisory Group on Admission and Financial Aid, the Committee on Undergraduate Life and the Queer Advisory Group. She also is a member of the NCAA Div. III Strategic Planning and Finance Committee.



Lisa Melendy

The Williams softball team had a lot to celebrate April 30, when they rallied for a 5-4 win on a two-run, two-out double from Kaitlin Dinert '13 in the first game of a key doubleheader with rival Amherst. They then rolled to a 10-0, five-inning victory in the nightcap to clinch the Little 3 title and an 11th straight berth in the NESCAC Tournament. For the latest sports news and standings visit <http://williams.prestosports.com/landing/index>





FURTHER AFIELD

Williams professors in the news

"Politically, it's a major success ... although

Al Qaeda will still exist without Osama bin Laden."

—Political science professor James McAllister, who teaches the class "America and the World After September 11," discussing how bin Laden's death at the hands of U.S. forces signals both a victory for President Barack Obama and a turning point in the legacy of President George W. Bush. WAMC News, May 2

"By laying out a smooth trajectory, the hope is that it would minimize disruptions and prevent an overreaction."

—Economics professor Kenneth Kuttner, a former Federal Reserve economist and co-author of research with Ben Bernanke, on Bernanke's historic decision in April to hold news briefings on the central bank. Reuters, April 21

"We know that if you study something twice,

in spaced sessions, it's harder to process the material the second time, and people think it's counterproductive. But the opposite is true: You learn more, even though it feels harder." —Psychology professor Nate Kornell on his and others' research on how people learn. The New York Times, April 18

"Catastrophic events like the flooding we see

following a hurricane or tsunami—these are often glimpses into our future with our gradual rise in sea level around the globe." —Geosciences and marine sciences professor Lisa Gilbert of the Williams-Mystic Program on the ecological impacts of the March 11 earthquake and tsunami that struck the northern coast of Japan. WAMC News, March 21

WILLIAMS WELCOMES CLASS OF 2015

A total of 550 students are expected to join the college's Class of 2015, selected from the second largest pool of applicants in Williams history.

Though the exact who's who won't be known until students arrive on campus in late August for orientation, the general makeup of the group is:

- 51 percent female, 49 percent male;
- 37 percent American students of color;
- 7 percent international; and
- Exceptionally talented academically, with an average combined SAT score of 1412.

Among the American students of color are 75 Asian American students, 70 who are African American, 50 who are Latino and eight who are Native American.

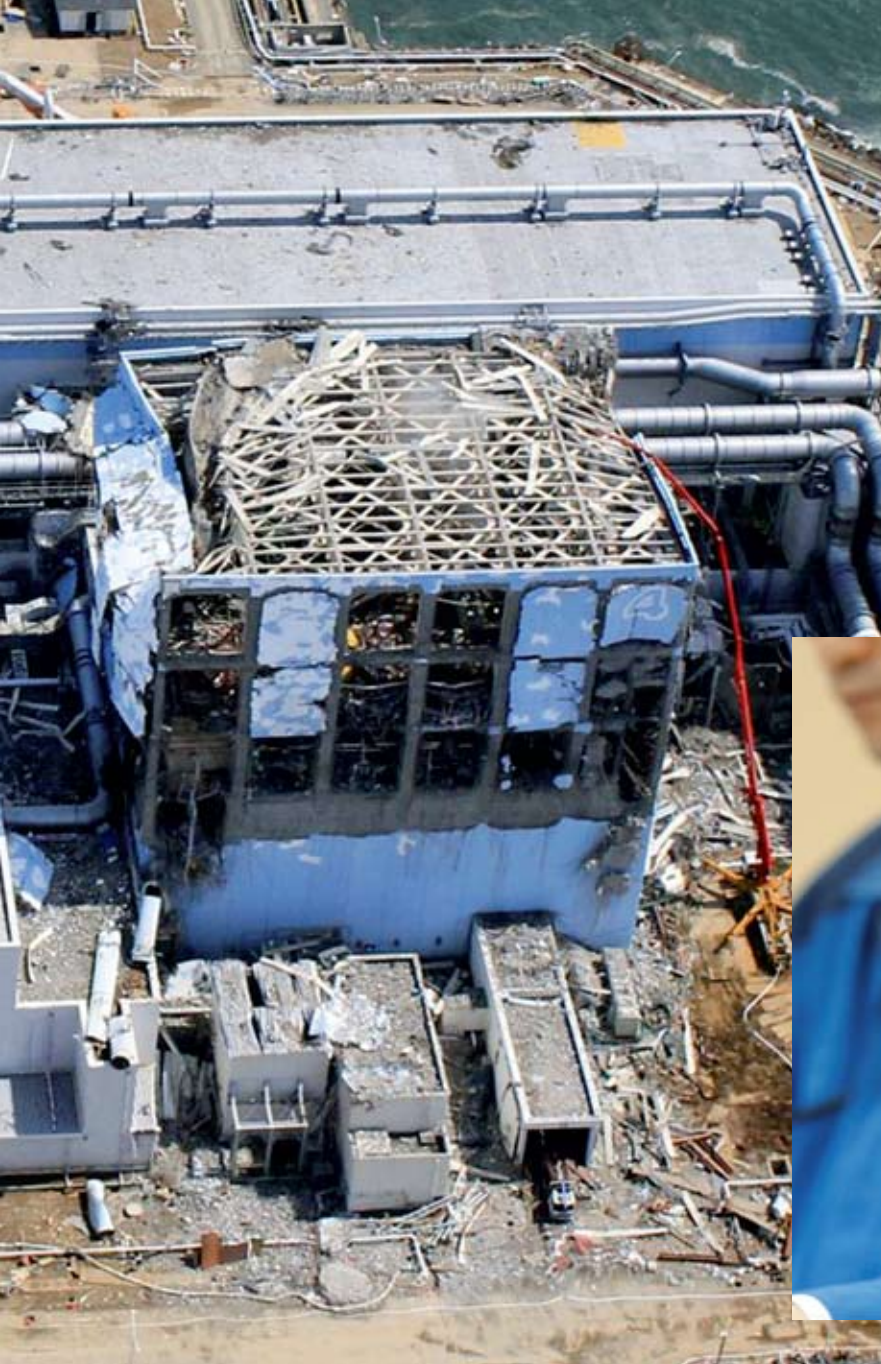
Fifty-two percent of the entire class will receive financial aid from the college, with an average aid package of more than \$40,000, primarily in the form of grants.

This year's enrollment represents 46 percent of the 1,201 applicants granted admission to the college in April, compared to 44 percent in the Class of 2014. Forty-two percent of the class was admitted through the college's early decision process. The entire class was selected from a pool of 7,030, with an overall acceptance rate of 17.1 percent.



EPH LIBRARY ONLINE

Looking for books, CDs and DVDs by Williams alumni and faculty? Visit <http://ephsbookshelf.williams.edu/>. To have your recent work listed, please send information and cover images to alumni.review@williams.edu or mail a copy to the *Alumni Review*, P.O. Box 676, Williamstown, MA 01267-0676.



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GAMMA-RAPHO VIA GETTY IMAGES

AFTER THE Meltowns

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Three alumni experts offer their **perspectives**
on nuclear power in the wake of the disaster
in Japan.

INTERVIEWS BY JENNIFER WEEKS '83

Japanese engineers are still measuring damage at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station, which was devastated by a massive earthquake and tsunami in March. The disaster left the plant without backup power to keep nuclear fuel rods cool, causing partial meltdowns in three reactors. Used fuel rods stored at another unit overheated, releasing more radiation.

In early May Japan announced it would abandon its plan to build 14 nuclear reactors by 2030, raising even more questions about the future of nuclear power worldwide. The *Review* asked three Williams alumni—two who study nuclear power from a scientific or political perspective and a third who is an influential member of the power industry—to share their early reactions and perspectives.



ASSOCIATED PRESS



Sarah Nichols '03 earned a doctorate in physics at Stony Brook University in New York and did postdoctoral research at University of Michigan. As a visiting assistant professor of physics at Whitman College in Walla Walla, Wash., she teaches courses on mechanics, electricity and magnetism as well as introductory classes for non-science majors.

Some Americans wonder why Japan invested so heavily in nuclear power. What are its technical pluses?

Most of the developed world gets electricity from fossil fuels and nuclear power, plus smaller amounts from hydropower, biomass and wind. Japan has a relatively small landmass, a high population and a technologically advanced society that needs a lot of electricity to provide services its citizens want.

Its islands are volcanic, so they don't have a lot of indigenous fossil fuels. Importing oil and gas subjects them to world prices. Nuclear reactors are expensive to build, but operation is reasonably cheap, so nuclear power is an attractive long-term source. Renewables are still relatively expensive, and we haven't figured out yet how to scale them up to supply large-scale, uninterrupted power.

What aspects of this disaster may be relevant to nuclear plants in the U.S.?

Radiation scares people, but far more Americans have died in coal mines or from coal plant emissions than have been killed or even made sick by nuclear power. Having said that, nuclear utilities here should all have multiple power supplies, lots of sensors in locations that can provide information about different parts of the plants and redundant cooling systems. Much of that is in place, but promoting safety is an ongoing process.

Physicists and engineers can tell you how much force a material will stand up to and what stresses it can tolerate. But they can't tell you when disasters will happen or how they will play out. We have to make judgment calls about where to build infrastructure and what scale of disasters to plan for. Those decisions can't be made by scientists.

The U.S. government assured residents in the Pacific Northwest that they were safe from radiation. Yet several West Coast drug stores sold out their supplies of potassium iodide, a supplement that can protect the thyroid gland from radiation. What was the real risk of exposure?

Radiation on our side of the Pacific wasn't near damaging levels. Any suggestion that we should take iodine pills was fearmongering. We need those in case we ever have a serious problem here. [Ed. note: The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission recommends that states consider making potassium iodide available to residents within 10 miles of commercial nuclear plants as part of their emergency planning.]

You teach a course called "Physics for Future Presidents." What insights would it give into a disaster like Fukushima?

It's designed to develop well-informed citizens. We make decisions about scientific issues every

day. Should we get electricity from renewable sources, nuclear power or fossil fuels? Will your cell phone give you cancer? If you know a little science, you can assess whether an argument is credible. Students learn what radiation is and how nuclear reactors work—for example, that we design reactors so they won't blow up like nuclear bombs.



Mayo Shattuck '76 is president and CEO of Baltimore-based Constellation Energy Group, which operates more than 35 power plants in 11 states, including nuclear plants in Maryland and New York. Last year,

Constellation withdrew from negotiations over a federal loan guarantee to help finance a new nuclear plant, saying the fees would make the plant too expensive to build. But in April the company announced plans to merge with Chicago-based Exelon Corp., creating one of the biggest utilities in the U.S., with the nation's largest fleet of nuclear plants.

Has Constellation taken any actions at its own nuclear plants in response to the disaster at Fukushima?

Within days of the events at Fukushima, each of our nuclear plants—along with the rest of the nuclear industry—began a process to confirm that the procedures and equipment previously designed to address this type of “beyond the imagination” event were in place and ready to perform in the unlikely event it should become necessary. As was true following the accident at Three Mile Island and in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on 9/11, the nuclear industry will learn from these events and use the knowledge gained to enhance our safety and security processes and procedures.

What kind of response do you expect from the American public over the next year or two?

With growing concern about climate change and the environment, I am confident the American public will continue to support nuclear energy as a safe, cost-effective and efficient means of producing

emissions-free energy. The nuclear industry produces about 20 percent of our nation's electricity. It is by far our largest source that does not create air pollution or carbon emissions that contribute to climate change. We must accelerate our transition to a clean-energy economy, both for the benefit of our environment and our future competitiveness as a nation.

You're chairman of the board at the Institute of Nuclear Power Operations (INPO), a nonprofit organization that utilities set up after Three Mile Island to make U.S. nuclear plants safer and more reliable. How is INPO reacting to Fukushima?

INPO has been watching these events very closely and has issued “event reports,” which include recommendations for actions that members should take at their U.S. nuclear sites. As a member of the World Association of Nuclear Operators (WANO), INPO is in regular contact with nuclear operators around the globe.

Every major energy source has its own risks. Last year, for example, an explosion killed 29 miners at the Upper Big Branch coal mine in West Virginia, just two weeks before the massive BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. How do energy companies weigh these issues when they decide where to invest?

Carefully assessing and managing risk of all kinds is one of the most important and challenging functions in our business. The power industry is

Opposite: Exelon Corp.'s nuclear plant in Byron, Ill.

Below: Demonstrators outside the White House protest against British Petroleum in April.



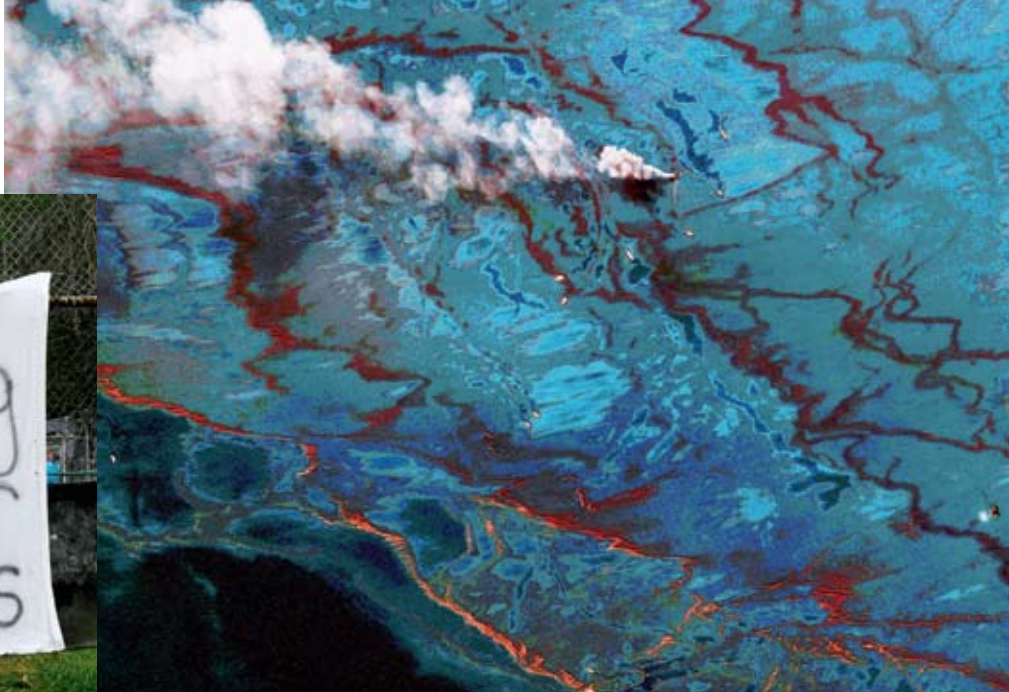
AP/GETTY IMAGES



WASHINGTON POST/GETTY IMAGES

Above left: A memorial to the coal miners who died in the April 2010 explosion at Massey Energy Co.'s Upper Big Branch mine in Montcoal, W. Va.

Above right: A total of 4.9 million barrels of crude oil flowed into the Gulf of Mexico over the course of three months after the April 2010 explosion of British Petroleum's Deepwater Horizon.



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preparing to invest more than a trillion dollars over the next 20 years in new generation, smart grid technology and other infrastructure to meet future energy needs.

In many instances, the choice is clear. For example, our decision to invest approximately \$1 billion on air emissions scrubbers at our Brandon Shores power plant [*ed. note: located 10 miles southeast of Baltimore*] makes that facility one of the cleanest coal-burning power plants of its kind in the nation and brings it into compliance with one of the toughest clean air standards on the Eastern Seaboard. Similarly, Baltimore Gas & Electric, our regulated distribution utility, is moving ahead with one of the most comprehensive smart grid programs in the nation. When completed, we estimate this initiative will reduce the need to build new power plants and save our customers \$2.5 billion over the life of the program.

Meeting our nation's long-term clean energy objectives will almost certainly require new investment in nuclear energy. While the business case for new nuclear plants can't be made in today's economy, over time—and it may be a decade or more—the economics are likely to change. Keeping the ones we've got and building a new generation of advanced nuclear plants will remain critically important to America's energy future.



As a professor of international environmental policy at Tufts University's Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, William Moomaw '59 works to translate science and technology issues into policy, focusing on climate change and other environmental challenges. A former director of the Center for Environmental Studies and holder of an endowed chair in chemistry at Williams, he founded and runs Tufts' Center for International Environment and Resource Policy. He serves as a lead author for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), an international scientific organization created by the United Nations to advise national governments on climate change science and impacts.

The shorthand assessment of damage at Fukushima seems to be: "Worse than Three Mile Island, not as bad as Chernobyl." Do you agree?

Fukushima hasn't released as much total radiation as Chernobyl so far, but in other respects this accident is worse.

What are your biggest concerns?

First, nuclear plants with the same design as the Fukushima reactors are operating in the

U.S., Europe and elsewhere. The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission has given some of the U.S. plants 20-year license extensions on their original 40-year operating lives. One of those decisions came right after Fukushima. That's worrisome.

Second, the accident in Japan shows that on-site storage of spent nuclear fuel is dangerous. Every U.S. nuclear reactor has large quantities of spent fuel stored on site because we don't have a long-term plan for managing nuclear waste. When things go badly, spent fuel storage pools are vulnerable.

Some commentators say the U.S. doesn't have to worry about an accident like Fukushima because we don't build reactors in earthquake zones. That misses the point. Current nuclear plants are technologically complex systems that are very unforgiving. They work really well within a very narrow range of conditions. When those conditions are breached by an earthquake, a tsunami, a hurricane or some other disaster, things can get out of control fast.

Japan announced in May that it's scrapping plans to build 14 new nuclear reactors by 2030. Yet President Obama still supports nuclear power as part of the U.S.'s clean energy portfolio, and developing countries like China and India don't appear to be backing away from nuclear energy. Does that surprise you?

I recently heard someone from the U.S. nuclear industry say that we clearly weren't going to build any new reactors soon after Fukushima, so now his job was to get existing reactors' lives extended out to 80 years. The problem is that at some point machines wear out. We have a dilemma: Do we extend the lifetime of aging plants, or do we shut them down and build next-generation models in their places?

There have been half a dozen meltdowns in the world since the nuclear era began. *[Ed. note: In addition to three units at Fukushima and the 1986 Chernobyl disaster, partial meltdowns occurred at an experimental reactor in Idaho Falls, Idaho, in 1955; the Fermi I breeder reactor outside Detroit in 1966; and Three Mile Island Unit 2 in Harrisburg, Pa., in 1979.]* We've had some close calls, and we need to decide whether we're willing to tolerate this kind of infrequent but catastrophic problem. It's worrisome that the U.S. is trying to sell nuclear power plants to countries that are much less technologically

advanced than Japan, like China. Japan is a very technically sophisticated country and is having a lot of trouble managing the Fukushima accident.

Nuclear power supplies about 20 percent of U.S. electricity and 14 percent of electricity worldwide. How difficult would it be to find another source for that share of electricity generation?

We're not going to build a lot of new nuclear power, and I think the replacement will be some combination of natural gas and renewables. Renewable energy has been doubling its worldwide electricity contributions about every three years, and wind power may overtake nuclear energy as a global electricity source within 10 years or less. These technologies are easy to scale up.

Industry advocates say that nuclear power is an important part of the answer to climate change. Does that argument resonate with scientists and leaders in other countries?

Many countries are thinking about where nuclear power fits. I think it has to play a part, although it may be a niche role. In IPCC reports we describe nuclear power as a carbon-reducing technology option. Many people would like to see nuclear power work to address climate change, but Fukushima has put a real damper on that movement. It may be a decade before we have a clear sense of where we're going with nuclear power.

It's possible to envision a path that works for nuclear power. There are all kinds of promises for the next generation of advanced reactors, and some of them sound pretty good. I'd rather build some and find out whether they'll work than extend the lives of creaky old reactors. ■

Jennifer Weeks '83 is a freelance writer in Watertown, Mass.

Below: As the number of wind farms continues to grow, some predict wind power may overtake nuclear energy as a global electricity source within the next 10 years.



IMAGE SOURCE



Jay Thoman '82 (at right, center) holds thermodynamics class in the Science Quad at the newly installed 715 molecules, by Jenny Holzer. Above: Emma Pelegri-O' Day '12.



Chemistry *as* Art

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ROMAN IWASIWKA

Of all the books lining the shelves of beloved chemistry professor Hodge Markgraf's '52 office in Bronfman, only two dealt with subjects outside of his field of study. Both were monographic volumes on the art of Jenny Holzer.

Holzer is known the world over for using language to engage and provoke. Her texts have been projected on massive gallery walls, broadcast in bands of LEDs, coalesced into giant walls of light in public outdoor spaces and printed on posters.

Markgraf encountered one of her large-scale works late in life, while traveling in Germany. Fascinated, he began corresponding with Holzer—herself no stranger to Williams as a past honorary degree recipient living and working in nearby Hoosick, N.Y., and married to artist and studio art professor Mike Glier '75. The chemist and artist became friends, and Markgraf began working to have a piece by her commissioned for the campus.

When Markgraf died in 2007, students, alumni and friends picked up where the “chemist who talked like a down-to-earth poet,” as he was known, had left off. With the help of chemistry professor Jay Thoman '82 and several students—primarily Charles Seipp '11—who lent their drawing, computer and proofreading skills, Holzer assembled a collection of 715 molecular diagrams representing water, the gypsy moth pheromone, DDT, ethanol, components of chocolate and more.

Individually, the structures are graphic metaphors for much larger concepts about war, love, natural phenomena, emotion, pleasure and pain. Taken together, and sandblasted over nearly every surface of a 16½-by-4-foot stone table and four benches, the overall effect appears much like stellar cartography.

Just days after the piece was installed in the Science Quad in April, Thoman, who is the college's J. Hodge Markgraf Professor of Chemistry, took advantage of the decent weather to hold his thermodynamics class outside, at the table Markgraf helped to inspire.

—Reported by Maggie Adler '99, MA '11

715 molecules, 2011

Sandblasted diorite table and benches

Williams College, Williamstown, Mass.

© 2011 Jenny Holzer, member Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY

Applying for a national fellowship is grueling work, and the chances of winning are slim. Luckily, the payoff is often in

The Journey Itself

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BY ZELDA STERN

Hanna Saltzman '12 sits in her parents' backyard in Salt Lake City, Utah, pen in hand, a thick notebook across her lap and a cast on her ankle. Laid up with tendonitis, she's decided to use the month before starting her junior year at the Williams-Exeter Programme at Oxford to think deeply about her future. It's her first step in applying to become a Truman Scholar.

The number of Williams students who apply for national fellowships such as the Truman is increasing, and, over the years, the college has had more than its fair share of success: 36 Rhodes Scholars, 16 Marshall Scholars, 16 Truman Scholars, 78 Watson Fellows. Williams ranks among the top 10 undergraduate institutions nationally for Fulbrights, with 94 recipients since record keeping started in 1991.

Still, the competition is fierce. In the case of the Rhodes, each year more than 1,000 candidates across the country seek endorsements from their college or university to vie for an honor ultimately awarded to only 32 U.S. students. And the work is hard, likened to adding a fifth class on top of an already full course load.

"Applying for a national fellowship is a long and difficult process," says Katya King, director of Williams' Office of Fellowships, who, along with fellowships coordinator Lynn Chick, helps advise and prepare students and recent graduates from the moment they express interest in a fellowship through the final interview and beyond.



Hanna Saltzman '12,
Truman applicant

At nearly every step along the way, faculty, staff and alumni are there to help—whether they’re steering promising students toward particular fellowships, writing letters of recommendation, offering feedback on essays or drilling them during mock interviews. Alumni who were Rhodes Scholars and Marshall Fellows work one-on-one with current applicants. For fellowships that limit the number of students who may apply from each college, a committee composed of faculty, King and a dean (or other staff member) interviews candidates and selects nominees.

“We get to know the kids,” says King. “We push and we prod. We comfort and encourage. Then we send them off with as much confidence in themselves as possible.”

No matter the outcome, it’s the rare student who doesn’t gain something—clarity, confidence, focus, poise—from the process. In Saltzman’s case, the Truman application was “a launching point to think about my own future critically in a way I hadn’t done before.” For many, even if they don’t win a fellowship, the process is life changing, helping them to think about who they are and what they want to do, encouraging them to dream big and focus on ways to achieve their goals, and providing them with the confidence and critical-thinking skills to get them there.

Your Life Goals in 400 Words or Less

An anthropology major and premed student, Saltzman had been involved in community service since elementary school, when she campaigned to save the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. She spent the summer after her freshman year at Williams as a hospital volunteer and accompanied a medical team on a service trip to Mexico and a research trip to Ghana. She taught an environmental class for sixth-graders at Williamstown Elementary School, wrote articles for the *Williams Record* about the impact of the recession on neighboring towns, helped found Williams Sustainable Growers and petitioned the college for a Center for Community Engagement, all while playing in the orchestra and leading the college cycling team.

So Saltzman seemed a good candidate for a Truman Scholarship, a highly selective national award for college juniors planning careers in public service. With a stipend for graduate school of up to \$30,000, the Truman also provides counseling for graduate school admission, internship placement and career and professional development.

While Saltzman had plenty of accomplishments to tout in her application, the Truman folks also wanted to know her goals, asking questions like: What position do you hope to attain immediately after graduate school? Five to seven years after that? And what problem or social need do you want to address when you enter public service? About to begin her junior year, she had never seriously considered these questions before.

She began the work of answering them at her parents’ house, scribbling in her notebook. (“Writing helps me think,” she says.) And she continued overseas at Oxford—where she spent a full year—checking in with the fellowships office via email and video chat when she had a question or needed feedback.

She considered practicalities and made a list of things she wanted to be able to afford in life—sustainably produced food, a small house, a good education for the children she might have someday. She calculated what those things might cost and what she might earn working in public service versus a more lucrative career in the private sector. She listed her previous jobs and decided what she liked and disliked about each, noticing that she was happiest when her tasks were varied and involved doing research and lab work. She explored advanced-degree programs and realized that fields such as environmental health and global environmental health justice excited her.

She thought the hard work was over once she identified her goals—going to medical school, getting a master’s in public health and working with multidisciplinary teams to design environmental health programs or to translate research into improved health care. But it was just as hard to stick to the application’s word limits.

“I had to cut a lot of descriptions,” Saltzman says.

She also had to write a brief proposal addressing a policy issue of her choice.

“All the ideas I wanted to address were huge,” she says. “And I had only 200 words to propose a solution and 200 words to describe the problem.”

Saltzman thought through countless ideas and read hundreds of journal articles. “I went over the top,” she says, but she also educated herself about some of the most important health issues in her state. Her final proposal was a succinct, well-informed, four-part strategy to prevent childhood Type 2 diabetes in Utah.

Though she was chosen as one of Williams’ three nominees for a Truman, Saltzman didn’t get the fellowship. But she has no regrets and says the process—coupled with the time she spent at Oxford—has made her more inclined to apply for a Rhodes or Marshall Scholarship this coming year, as a senior.

“The application propelled me toward thinking about my future far more specifically—and seriously—than before,” Saltzman says. “I learned a lot about opportunities available, specific societal issues and myself.”

Transforming Passion into Purpose

Clint Robins '11 had been playing football for 12 years when he was faced with a decision. As a sophomore he won a national Mellon Mays Research Fellowship, designed to help remedy a serious shortage of faculty of color in higher education. The fellowship enables a student to delve into a research project for a few years as an undergraduate to determine if graduate school is the path he or she wants to take.

Robins' project—to assist biology professor Heather Williams with research on how Savannah sparrows communicate with each other—added many hours on top of an already heavy course load. During a football practice, his running back coach noticed Robins was struggling with exhaustion.

"He told me flat out, 'I know you love this sport, but you

"The insights you get from being forced to reflect on what you aspire to, what you're passionate about, what you want to do with your life, are invaluable at this stage in life and so helpful for so many things you will do as adults."

—Katya King

can't function,'" Robins, the Class of 1960 Scholar in biology, says. "Research is what's making you happy, getting you places. Quit football. It's not the end of the world."

So he made the unusual and difficult decision to give up football, creating room for someone else on the roster before the first game of the season his junior year. "When I left," Robins says, "I felt like I'd lost a piece of myself." But he relished the opportunity to focus exclusively on research.

His work on sparrows' song structures evolved into a senior honors thesis, confirmed his desire to pursue a graduate degree and led him to another jumping-off point. During the long drive back to campus from a field research trip in New Brunswick, Canada, Williams suggested Robins apply for a Thomas J. Watson Fellowship, which awards a \$25,000 grant for a year of "independent, purposeful exploration and travel" to 40 college graduates of "unusual promise" selected from private liberal arts colleges and universities around the nation.

Robins already had an idea in mind. Ever since he was a child, the biology major—whose mother is Rwandan and whose father, a cultural anthropologist, has studied social issues surrounding the killing of gorillas in the Rwandan National Park—had been fascinated by "the bushmeat crisis." With a Watson, he would have the chance to explore the cultural and social issues surrounding this hunting of and trade in endangered wild animals in tropical countries.

He began the application process by sending out 100 emails to organizations and individuals around the world involved in wildlife conservation. Twenty people responded, offering additional names and specific information about the bushmeat crisis in each of their countries. Over several months Robins

Clint Robins '11,
Watson applicant



MARK MCCARTY

built a contact list for communities at risk in Ghana, Cameroon, Uganda, India and Chile, and he constructed an efficient travel itinerary for how he would spend his fellowship year.

He solicited ideas and feedback from across the Williams community. During his interview with the college's nominating committee, which would select up to four students to apply for Watsons from a pool of 20, King and Chick suggested that he take advantage of his involvement in sports. His experience with soccer, in particular, popular in all the countries he wanted to visit, might be a useful icebreaker in his research—a way to win the trust of people he wanted to interview. A friend who won a Watson the previous year gave Robins ideas for how he could use his time between interviews overseas: "Hire a tutor to learn the language, go to the international student center, take a course..."

"We get as emotionally invested as students do. It's exhilarating when they win. When they lose, it's our loss, too."

—Katya King

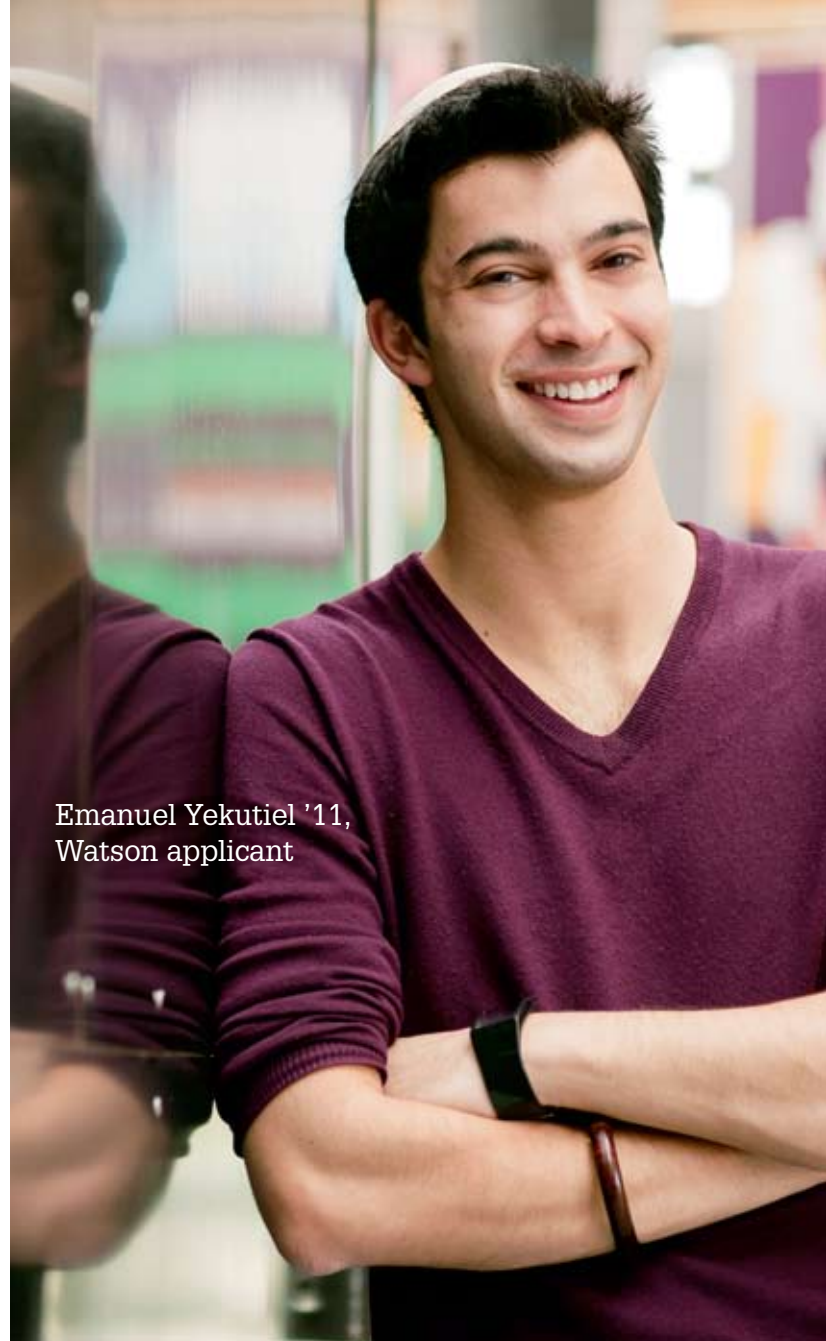
The more he fleshed out his plan, the more excited he became thinking about it. "You create a Watson from a personal passion," says Robins, an adventurer who has helped rehabilitate eagles in Alaska, photographed sharks from inside a cage in the Indian Ocean and conducted field surveys of fauna in the Australian outback.

Though he was nominated as a finalist, and his Watson interview went well, Robins ultimately wasn't selected. But he's not ready to give up yet. Encouraged by his parents and the fellowships office, as of May he was looking for another source of funding to go overseas. He also was considering work as a lab assistant for a year at Duke, where faculty members have affiliations with Kruger National Park in South Africa.

"I am still invested in my project and will take every opportunity to pursue it," he says. As he wrote in his personal statement for the Watson, "Each experience has reinforced my belief that the greatest learning comes from the most unfamiliar circumstances."

Nurturing Personal Growth

"I never thought I would be saying this, but I consider myself a gay rights activist," Emanuel Yekutieli '11 wrote in his application for a Watson Fellowship. "Three years ago I was closeted in L.A., unhappy, and I had no idea what I was going to do with myself. Three years later, I was standing on the streets of San Francisco,



Emanuel Yekutieli '11,
Watson applicant

fundraising for gay rights with a kippah on. We can never predict where we're going to be."

Yekutieli, an Orthodox Jew, came out in front of 250 people at the Paresky Center three weeks into his freshman year. The occasion was Storytime, a Sunday night event in which one member of the Williams community tells his or her life story to a college audience. Yekutieli had planned to talk about what it was like going from a yeshiva where everyone wore a kippah, or skullcap, to being the only Orthodox Jew at L.A.'s Harvard Westlake High School.

"That's been a tough adjustment," he told the crowd at Paresky. "I'm working through that part of my identity."

Then, because the moment felt right, he said, "One other part of me that I'm coming to terms with is the fact that I'm gay."

Looking back, Yekutieli says it was really helpful to come out early on: "Being out at Williams made this place safe for me,



MARK MCCARTY

made it become a home really quickly.” He also found “an army of support,” especially among staff and faculty.

He felt comfortable enough his first year to run for class representative in the spring and would remain on the College Council throughout his time at Williams, serving as co-president his senior year. A political science major with a concentration in leadership studies, Yekutieli says he loved student government.

“College Council gave me a stake in the Williams community,” he says, noting that during his time the council worked with the college to change how the dining system worked, build a resource center in Paresky and create an orientation program to better prepare students for sophomore year. “I didn’t want to just complain, I wanted to be proactive,” he adds.

Yekutieli visited the fellowships office for the first time during his sophomore year to find out if he was eligible for any programs. That summer, he took an internship in San Francisco with the nonprofit Grassroots Campaigns to lobby for gay rights. As a junior, he applied for a Truman but didn’t win.

In the spring of his junior year, at a general information session run by the fellowships office, he learned about the Watson. “It sounded perfect,” he says. “Creative and adventurous, like me.”

He started working on applications over the summer. (Energetic and enthusiastic, he would apply for an astounding seven fellowships during his senior year.) For the Watson, he dashed off three lists: his qualities (“outspoken, an activist...”), his interests (“music, talking to people, coffee, gay rights, religion, the concept of love...”) and places he had always wanted to go (Brazil, India, Australia, Ireland, the U.K.). He posted the lists as sticky notes on his computer screen and stared at them, making connections.

His first idea was to study great change agents in countries around the world: Gandhi in India, Churchill in England. “Katya thought that idea was a little stale and not very ‘Watson,’” says Yekutieli. “Also a little too safe for me.”

Then he thought he might use the Watson to “try to investigate the concept of love,” he says. It was a good idea in theory, King told him, but it would be “difficult to construct a watertight proposal” to support it.

His third concept was to visit countries where gay rights existed but did not extend to same-sex marriage in order to see how activists were fighting for full equality. King approved the idea and gave him a copy of a Watson recipient’s successful application, also on gay rights, to look at.

Writing his personal statement “was kind of like going through the attic, opening up boxes I haven’t opened up in years,” Yekutieli says. “One box was, ‘Why did I leave yeshiva?’ Another was, ‘What did I come to Williams for?’”

He earned a place as one of the college’s four Watson finalists. But during his final interview, “I didn’t think I was able to convey my excitement for the project effectively,” he says. Afterward, he “plopped down in the fellowships office” and told King and Chick, “I just bombed that. I *ruined* it. I’m really sorry, guys.”

As it turned out, he did much better than he thought. (The interviewer would later say Yekutieli had him “in stitches.”) When, four months later, he learned he was selected for a Watson, he was “surprised at every level.”

With the approval of the Watson program, Yekutieli has since broadened his focus from same-sex marriage to studying global gay rights activism, building upon his interest in political organizing to bring about change. “I want to know what these activists are fighting for, how they are fighting and why,” he says, adding, “Part of my interest in gay rights comes from knowing what it feels like to fight for acceptance. Taking lessons from individuals all over the world who can relate is my way of dealing with that.”

Yekutieli credits the fellowships office with helping him build his confidence. “Katya and Lynn would tell me, ‘If you don’t believe that you deserve this fellowship, they won’t either,’” he says. “I can be very critical of myself sometimes. I needed to believe that I deserved a chance to do this. Katya and Lynn allowed me to feel qualified, which gave me confidence.

“It wasn’t ever about getting Emanuel the Watson,” he adds. “It was really about helping me grow.” ■

Zelda Stern is a freelance writer based in Williamstown.

Eph Cappella

BY ROB WHITE

PHOTOS BY ROMAN IWASIWKA

>> [Click here for text only](#)



Williams student groups are like quarks. They come and go so quickly that it's nearly impossible to keep a current list. From the Gospel Choir to the Garfield Republican Club to the South Asian Students Association to the Springstreakers, they express every contemporary student interest, talent and affiliation, but no discernible trend—with one grand exception.

A cappella.

With deep Williams roots, and until recently a somewhat retro reputation, a cappella is *big*—and getting bigger. Of a record eight groups on campus this year, four have been created since the 1990s. The newest group, the Aristocows, debuted just last fall.

Why so many groups? Why now? Are Williams students more susceptible to pop-culture prompts (think *Glee*) than most are willing to admit? Are we seeing a backlash against technologically enabled entertainment—a return to “make your own fun”?

Who knows? And, really, who cares? The point is that at Williams lots of informal, vocals-only music is being made across a range of styles and attitudes. Much of the fare is contemporary. The all-female Accidentals sing hardly anything that pre-dates James Taylor, leaning more toward Taylor Swift. Good Question (whose male and female members performed a concert in respective drag last spring) ranges from the Beatles to Michael Jackson to Katy Perry. The Octet—which continues to perform venerable Williams songs and jazz numbers dating back to its 1940s birth—has added rock, pop and hip-hop to its set list. The Elizabethans, founded in 1993, counters all this “currency” with Renaissance music (sacred and secular), folk songs, spirituals and a classical repertoire that tends to draw an older though no less appreciative crowd.

The students work hard, and it shows. The Ephlats, for example, rehearse six hours per week and even more when they're getting ready to tour over spring break, says outgoing president Elizabeth Bingham '11. Arrangements can be ambitiously complex, like The Octet's version of R.E.M.'s “Losing My Religion,” in which performers mimic every bit of the original, from opening acoustic guitar jangle to ticking cymbals on the bridge and a convincingly heavy bass line.

But many things beyond music matter at least as much—fashion, for instance. The Elizabethans don period garb for performances. Ephlats sport formal wear for formal gigs, jeans and “hot” for



The Springstreakers

Once a Streeter, always a Streeter

“We sing, we dance, we do other stuff, too.”

WILLIAMS' A CAPPELLA ROOTS

In 1940, Glee Club president Warren Hunke '42 was asked by director Bob Barrow to organize an eight-man subset to introduce a lighter touch by performing a few popular tunes during Glee Club intermissions. (Barrow perhaps was inspired by the venerable Yale Whiffenpoofs, founded in 1909.) The Octet was Williams' only a cappella group until fraternities began forming their own octets after World War II, with interfraternity competitions judged by the young art history professor Whit Stoddard '35. This lasted only a few years, “mostly because the fraternity men didn't necessarily make the best singers,” recalls Hank Flynt '44, former financial aid director and an a cappella aficionado. The Octet took a hiatus in the early 1950s when the campus embraced the Dixieland jazz craze (e.g., Phinney's Favorite Five and the Spring Street Stompers). Despite the Octet's reemergence in the 1970s, the Ephlats, formed in 1956, are officially the longest continually running a cappella group on campus—and also the best-looking group, by popular opinion,” says outgoing president Elizabeth Bingham '11.

The Accidentals

“Acci's” for short

“We tend to be more productive in rehearsals when we are goofing around, talking about inappropriate things and having fun.”



The Octet

Were: Founding fathers of Williams a cappella
Are: "Brotastic"



Good Question

The only Williams a cappella group to double as a team at Thursday Night Trivia at the Log.



The Ephlats

The longest continually running a cappella group on campus; started all-male, now co-ed

"We get lost in central Florida every single year."



The Elizabethans

Mostly Renaissance

Not only do they sing Elizabethan, they dress Elizabethan.

informal concerts. Springstreeters wear suits to their end-of-semester concerts and believe that button-down shirts, matching shoes and a belt are "always a good start" for other shows. The Octet's dress code ranges from "Oc-casual" (button-down shirts, jeans, "fresh/nice" shoes) to "Oc-formal" (blazers, ties, khakis). Good Question is contemplating matching tracksuits; Ephoria's members snag each others' apparel at a springtime swap.

Road trips are another binding tie. Most groups get off campus each year, often singing to alumni in return for food and lodging. Ephoria usually does the New England college circuit; the Springstreeters drive to South Carolina, then work their way back north. The Accidentals did an Amherst/Trinity/Dartmouth loop in the spring; the Ephlats ran across to Lake Placid then down to New York City in the winter and all around Florida (Fort Lauderdale, Miami, Naples, Palm Beach) over spring break. Harkening back to the days when women's colleges hosted rambling all-male Williams groups, the all-female Accidentals hosted the all-male Dartmouth Cords in fall 2009. (A Dartmouth singer fell asleep against an Agard fire alarm, recalls an Accidental, "forcing us *all* to leave the party.")

A handful of Williams a cappella singers graduate into singing careers. Sebastian ("Seb") Arcelus '99 made his Broadway debut in *Rent*, and a fellow Springstreeter, Sony recording artist Leehom Wang '98, performed in the closing ceremony of the Beijing

Olympics. For the most part, though, what's accomplished by Williams a cappella groups occurs in the undergraduate moment, when what really matters are the relationships engendered and later cherished. As Rachel

Durrant '13 of the all-Disney-tunes Aristocows puts it, "Fourteen people coming together to sing songs most of us grew up with [is] a beautiful thing! The atmosphere is very relaxed, and we're free to be as silly as we want to be in front of each other. ... It's really amazing to see the growth that has taken place in some people, and it's been awesome to discover hidden talent as well." ■

Rob White is Williams' deputy director of communications.

Watch a host of Williams a cappella performances at www.youtube.com/user/williamsacappella. And check out "A Cappella Rehabilitation," a video made in honor of The Springstreeters' 25th in 2006, at <http://bit.ly/emDmW>.

Ephoria

First all-female group at Williams

"We eat muffins and dance to Willow Smith's 'Whip My Hair.'"



The Aristocows

The newest a cappella group

"We haven't had our first performance yet, but when we do people will realize that we call ourselves a 'Disney a cappella group' for a reason."




NEAR-CAPPELLA

The Waterstreeters.

"Not Your Daddy's A Cappella Group" is the tag line on a seemingly abandoned website (<http://waterstreeters.blogspot.com/>) for this Williams "mockapella" group—more an exercise in guerilla theater than a singing group per se. Waterstreeters co-founders Mike Leon '11 and Isaac Nicholson '11 recount the time they kidnapped an admission tour guide in this video clip: <http://bit.ly/hQcSm2>.

Diminished Faculty

A decade ago four professors—Daniel Aalberts in physics, Dick De Veaux in statistics, Elliot Friedman in psychology and Tom Smith '88 in chemistry—founded Diminished Faculty, which performed barbershop quartet numbers along with standards like "Lulu's Back in Town." Aalberts had sung in an undergraduate MIT a cappella group, and Smith had been in the Springstreeters and Ephlats as a Williams student. De Veaux has a long history with music and dance. When Friedman, a baritone, left for the University of Wisconsin in 2004, his co-singers tried to carry on. "We have a few numbers that we try to do with three-quarters of the parts," says Smith, who was hoping to get the trio together for a surprise appearance in his organic chemistry class in the spring.



IMAGINED MUSEUMS

By Denise DiFulco

What happens when a community becomes disconnected from its museums? In the case of Morocco, says Prof. Katarzyna Pieprzak, artists create their own spaces.

>> [Click here for text only](#)

Katarzyna Pieprzak was a graduate student studying Arabic in Fez in 1998 when she took a road trip across Morocco with friends. Their journey took them to Tangier, the North African city on the lip of the Strait of Gibraltar, where one of her companions, an artist, wanted to drop in on the Museum of Contemporary Art.

They arrived to find the building locked, though the posted hours clearly stated it should be open. When they returned an hour later the gates remained shut, and it was some time longer before a man appeared and let them in. “We were the only ones in the museum the whole time,” recalls Pieprzak, now an associate professor of Francophone literature, French language and comparative literature at Williams. “We switched on the lights in the different rooms, and we went around. It was kind of interesting that it was a place that was entirely unvisited.”

The oddity of it all left Pieprzak wondering how a national museum of contemporary art could be so disconnected from the public it served. She has spent the years since answering that question for herself and others, most recently in her book *Imagined Museums: Art and Modernity in Postcolonial Morocco* (University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

Pieprzak was born in Poland and raised in England and the U.S. She is fluent in three languages (English, Polish and French—her Arabic being a bit rusty), and in any of them her passion for her work is evident. Inspired by her experiences, she frequently incorporates contemporary texts discovered during her travels into her teaching. For next spring she has developed a comparative literature course, taught in English, examining the role of museums—primarily French and European—in imperial history. For the final project, students will design their own gallery or museum based on their reading of the materials.

After Pieprzak’s first trip to the museum in Tangier, she began exploring other Moroccan museums and found they too were ignored by tourists and locals. “It seemed like they were there in a perfunctory way, to sort of say, ‘Oh, Morocco has national museums, too,’” she says. “Somehow they were completely divorced from the community and space around them.”

Pieprzak discovered many of these institutions were founded during the Colonial period in the first half of the 20th century, when Morocco was a protectorate of France—one factor that accounted

for their disconnect with the general population. “The idea is that the French were going to come in and rescue this culture that was, in their words, sleeping, dormant and starting to fall apart,” she explains. And yet “they were excluding the majority of Moroccans. They were uninterested in contemporary practices. They were fixed on what was authentic and what wasn’t.”

Unfortunately, not much changed after Morocco gained its independence in 1956. In the ‘60s and ‘70s, many contemporary artists created their own museum spaces—often on the pages of art journals, Pieprzak says. Private collections emerged, and art galleries housed in banks also filled some of the void. Today, artists find themselves taking their work to the streets, frequently staging public art projects.

During spring break in March, Pieprzak completed a brief residency with an influential art collective called La Source du Lion, which is responsible for community art throughout Casablanca. The highlight of her stay was a lecture she delivered to about 60 people, including artists, anthropologists and a museum director, at the collective’s studio. A philosophically and emotionally charged session on the future of Moroccan museums followed and lasted more than an hour.

It became clear to Pieprzak that many in the Moroccan art community are skeptical of the country’s overtures to create formal spaces for artists, despite the fact that internationally renowned architects Zaha Hadid and Jean Nouvel have been enlisted to design new spaces. In the eyes of the art community, “nothing has changed,” Pieprzak says. The ministry of culture “shut down the contemporary art museum in Tangier, and they’re building a new one in Rabat, the capital. This museum has been in the works for 10 years now. It’s still not completed.”

In the meantime, Moroccan artists continue to improvise in the absence of permanent, physical, well-curated space. Pieprzak’s residency included a visit to a nearby university that opened its own neighborhood museum in a poor and overlooked area in Casablanca. University students are photographing residents and collecting stories about the history of the neighborhood along with objects for display. “Some of these objects are of very poor quality, but it doesn’t matter,” Pieprzak says. “This is a space for this group of people, and people are responding positively in the neighborhood.” ■

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EXILE ON BOURBON STREET

By Miranda Lash, MA '06

Tom Piazza '76 had been addressing the theme of displacement in his fiction for years before Hurricane Katrina uprooted him from his New Orleans home in 2005. Still, when he was forced to move temporarily to Missouri, where his partner Mary's family lived, he found himself casting about for "something to keep myself sane" for the next six months while he waited to return to his beloved city.

He started to write, in part to respond to critics who were calling New Orleans a lost cause, and in part to answer questions he was fielding about the city during speaking engagements. The result was *Why New Orleans Matters*, a 224-page treatise hammered out in five weeks and published almost immediately. Ultimately, it's the story of how and why Piazza himself came to love the city.

Growing up in Seaford, N.Y., in the shadow of New York City, he was 8 years old when the Beatles came to the U.S. He became interested in the music that influenced them, poring over books about blues and jazz, and he was fascinated by the pictures he encountered of New Orleans.

In high school he wrote for the jazz magazine *Downbeat*. As an English major at Williams he hosted a radio show and became the first conductor of the Williams Jazz Ensemble, which grew out of a Winter Study class with musician Carl Atkins. Piazza also started a yearly jazz festival on campus, inviting such luminaries as Charles Mingus and Milt Hinton.

After graduation, he landed back in New York, playing jazz piano and writing about music for *The Village Voice* and *The New York Times*, among other publications. He also started writing fiction. But he remained intrigued by the music and images of New Orleans. "Whatever that frequency was," he said during a talk at the Westport, Conn., Public Library earlier this year, "that was the frequency I was trying to tune in to."

He ultimately moved to New Orleans in 1994, after spending two years studying at the Iowa Writers' Workshop. And that's when the books started coming. First his focus was music. From a guide

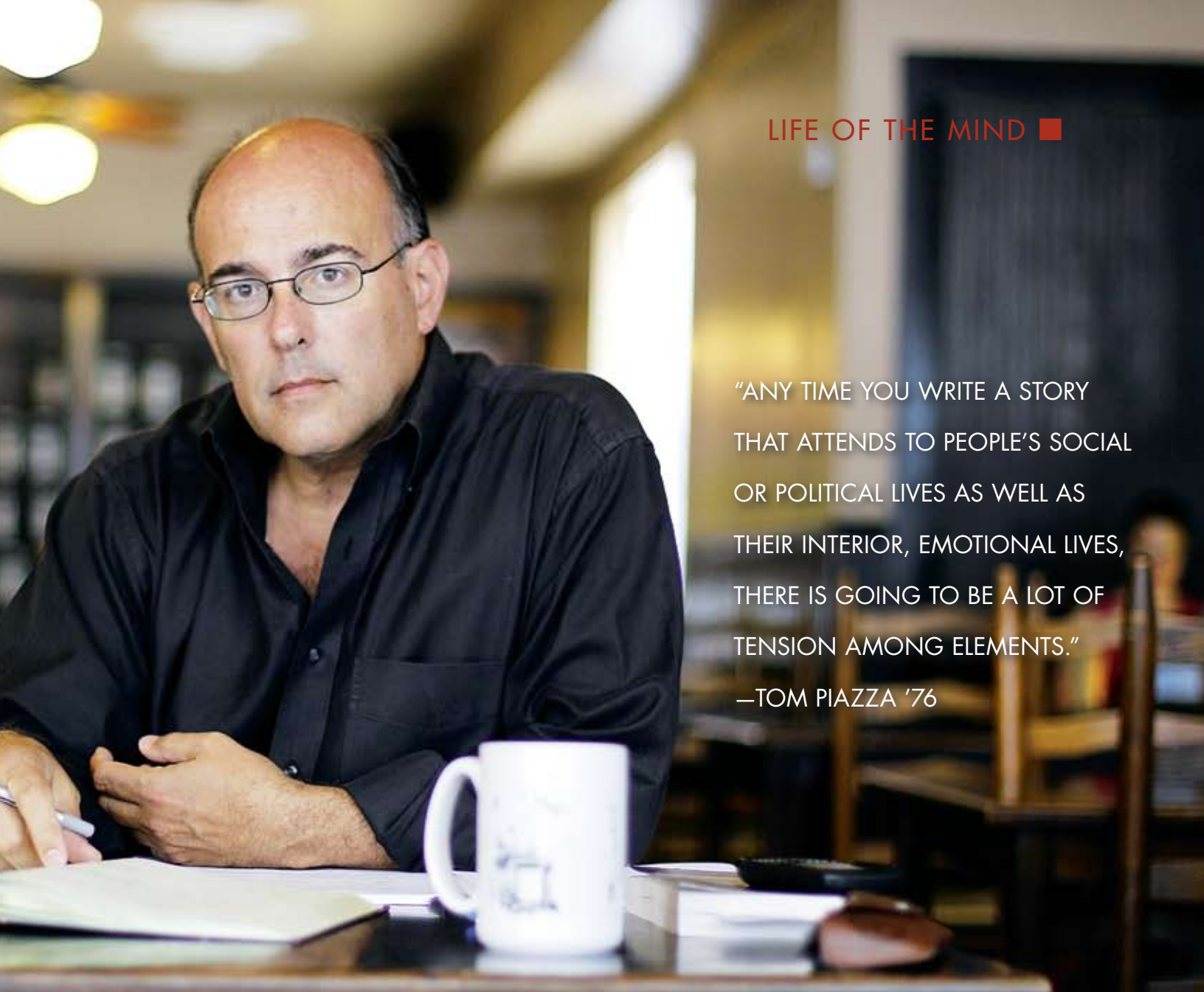


SEAN GARDNER

to classic jazz recordings to a portrait of "king of bluegrass" Jimmy Martin, his nonfiction would garner him three ASCAP-Deems Taylor Awards for Music Writing and, later, a Grammy Award for his album notes to *Martin Scorsese Presents The Blues: A Musical Journey*.

His first work of fiction was *Blues and Trouble: Twelve Stories* (1996). The book won the James Michener Award and featured a cast of outsiders living "between here and there, both geographically and figuratively," as one *Booklist* reviewer noted.

The main character of his first novel, *My Cold War* (2004), was a gimmicky, well-liked professor at "a small New England college" who, in a crisis of confidence, shelved his first major book project to drive across the Midwest in search of his estranged brother. The novel won the Faulkner Society Award and earned praise from Robert Olen Butler, Ann Beattie, Stewart O'Nan and Norman Mailer. Bob Dylan is quoted on the cover, saying: "Tom Piazza's writing



LIFE OF THE MIND ■

"ANY TIME YOU WRITE A STORY THAT ATTENDS TO PEOPLE'S SOCIAL OR POLITICAL LIVES AS WELL AS THEIR INTERIOR, EMOTIONAL LIVES, THERE IS GOING TO BE A LOT OF TENSION AMONG ELEMENTS."

—TOM PIAZZA '76

pulsates with nervous electrical tension—reveals the emotions that we can't define."

Piazza's second novel, *City of Refuge*, which he began formulating as he worked on *Why New Orleans Matters*, focused on the "dislocation" felt by the people of New Orleans—many of whom, especially the poor, had never left the block they lived on before Katrina. "People were taken out of their usual narratives and thrown all around the country into other people's narratives," Piazza told *The Morning News* online magazine in 2009, describing the "several different types of discourse" he employed in the book.

His writing took another turn when David Simon, creator of the hit HBO series *The Wire*, asked Piazza to contribute to *Treme*, a new HBO series based in New Orleans. Piazza admits that at first he questioned what more he could say about the city. As he explained to the library group in Connecticut: "I'm an old-time character. I'm a novelist. I

like to write books. I like to sit at a desk with nobody else around." Nevertheless, he now says, "I recognized how important this was going to be for the city and that it was going to be a good experience for me to learn a new angle on writing. ... I found I enjoyed it."

Treme's second season premiered in April just as Piazza was putting the finishing touches on his new book, *Devil Sent the Rain: Music and Writing in Desperate America*, featuring his essays about Charley Patton, Gustave Flaubert, Norman Mailer and others, due out in August. In the fall he'll begin work on a new novel while serving as the first-ever Peter Trias Writer in Residence at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in central New York.

He concedes the novel will have nothing to do with New Orleans but won't say much more, other than: "For me, truth is the tension between these diverging feelings I have about just about everything. When I'm lucky, I make a kind of music out of that in my work." ■



Unknown (Roman)

Flavian Portrait Bust of a Woman

ca. 88 CE

marble

On extended loan from Hiram Butler, MA '79

EL.2009.3

>> [Click here for text only](#)

MYSTERY WOMAN

Is she a wealthy and beautiful matron? A spirit of the dead? A genomic mess?

Three professors offer their perspectives on a Roman bust on view at the Williams College Museum of Art as part of *Labeltalk 2011: Art of the Ancient World*, which closes July 13.

Oh gods. Something is most strange here. Where are the lamps that let me see you? Surely this place is most unnatural; I smell nothing. And you—your, your hair! Tell me mine is still fresh and coiled. Have you taken a vow or been enslaved to have such locks? And you, sir, where is your beard? Have I awoken in a foreign land? This hushed babble does me no good. Let me sleep again. *Dis manibus.*

Diminutive time traveler, I wonder what colors your cool, cool smoothness sported, where you perched. Your blank eyes neither accuse nor, truly, inquire, though I fret about both possibilities. Did you so animate the dead with tales of speaking statues in your temples? I'll not conjure you again.

Denise Buell

*Professor of Religion and
Department Chair*

That's some hairdo—could you have had uncombable hair syndrome, also known as *pili trianguli et canaliculi* [OMIM #191480; autosomal dominant], or maybe you had Naxos disease, causing curly hair and cardiomyopathy, first described in a family from the Greek island of Naxos [OMIM #601214; autosomal recessive, on chromosome region 17q21]?

Or maybe you just had an overzealous hairdresser...

And where are your eyes?!—aniridia [OMIM #106210] due to a mutation in PAX6 on 11p13; in 1995 it was discovered that if this gene is overexpressed in fruit flies, they make extra eyes—not that that can help you now...

And your head is very small by human standards—microcephaly [OMIM #608716; autosomal recessive, on 1q31]. Your marble image looks a *little* battered, but your genome is a REAL mess!

Or maybe it's just that the sculptor took artistic liberties—if only we could examine your DNA...

Marsha Altschuler

Professor of Biology

This small, marble head depicts a Roman matron of the first century CE. She is portrayed in an idealized fashion with smooth, youthful skin and an aquiline nose. Her most distinctive feature is her elaborate coiffure, a tall pile of undulating curls, which rises from her forehead like a crown. This hairstyle was popularized by the empress Domitia in the 80s CE. By imitating the empress' hairstyle, our matron demonstrates her keen fashion sense while simultaneously advertising her loyalty to the empire. A hairstyle of this complexity would have taken a great deal of labor to maintain, which suggests that our matron was also a woman of some financial means—or at least wished to be perceived that way! The diminutive size of her portrait is most in keeping with a funerary bust displayed in a mausoleum or household shrine. This image is, therefore, a direct reflection of how our anonymous Roman matron hoped to be remembered by posterity—as wealthy and beautiful, refined yet intensely loyal: an ideal Roman woman.

Benjamin Rubin

Assistant Professor of Classics



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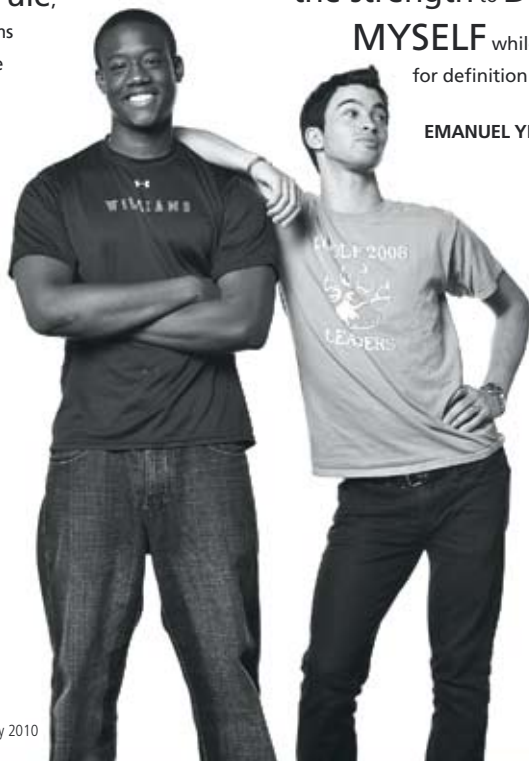
Williams

Documenting the many faces of Williams.

To see more of the "I Am Williams" project, visit <http://web.williams.edu/home/iamwilliams>

I am **THE EXCEPTION**
and **not the rule**,
and only at Williams
does that make me
normal.

IFIOK INYANG '11



I am Williams because I have
the strength to **DEFINE**
MYSELF while searching
for definition all around.

EMANUEL YEKUTIEL '11

The Chinese symbol for **crisis** embodies
both **challenge** and **opportunity**.

FLEXIBILITY is the key.

I always have a Plan B.

P.S. Ask me about
my granddaughter.

HEATHER CLEMOW,
WEB DEVELOPER,
OFFICE FOR
INFORMATION
TECHNOLOGY

