Inside

All-Grant: making Williams affordable

Lessons in teaching

Caring for the collection
From the President

When my fellow college presidents and I get together, we sometimes reminisce about what we miss from our previous lives. Personally, I miss the joy of being in the classroom full time. There's nothing to match the thrill of holding a vibrant discussion in a roomful of earnest, thoughtful students.

Of course, there will be days when an idea doesn't gel or the conversation peters out. Sometimes the heaviness of outside events can sap students' enthusiasm for classroom debate. There's a strong temptation for us as educators to fill those silences. But at Williams we know the power of pausing to give students the space to develop and test their own ideas.

I was thinking about this dynamic recently, given the somber mood on campus after the horrifying violence in Israel and Gaza. Students, like so many around the world, continue to struggle deeply with the loss and turmoil.

Many higher education leaders issued institutional statements in response to the events of Oct. 7 and their aftermath. I sent a different kind of message to the Williams community. I explained why I find college statements about world affairs to be highly problematic and how, even before the invasion of Ukraine, I had decided not to make them anymore. Among my reasons is the belief that our job is to teach students how to think—not what to think.

I don't get to spend as much time in the classroom as I used to. But I try to think of my presidency as a new form of teaching. Instead of coaxing discussion from a dozen students around a seminar table, I seek to help make all of Williams a space where people can reflect, reminisce about what we miss from our previous lives. Personally, I miss the joy of being in the classroom full time. There's nothing to match the thrill of holding a vibrant discussion in a roomful of earnest, thoughtful students.

It is incumbent on us, as educators, to encourage learning in such moments. That work is happening through classroom discussions, campus vigils, guest lectures and teach-ins. It is featured in informal conversations in dining halls and dorm lounges as well. Our goal is to create circumstances in which students can absorb the enormity of events and then try to make sense of them and work toward a better world.

The Williams campus is a classroom. And, as in any classroom, the easy days can be a joy. But often it's the hard days that remind us how important our work is. Even in difficult times, I am grateful to be doing this urgent work with all of you.
Contributors

“I was able to come to Williams and not worry about how I would support myself.”

Read more from Chris Flores ’26 and about Williams’ new All-Grant Financial Aid program on page 14.

Hanna Barczyk is a German-Canadian illustrator and visual artist who creates conceptual illustrations for major news publications, book covers, film posters and murals.

Kim Catley is a freelance writer based in Richmond, Va. She previously worked for the University of Richmond and Virginia Commonwealth University and is now a contributor to a number of university magazines.

Nate Pedavick is a graphic designer and illustrator specializing in illustrated maps as well as a content creator working in online community building. Nate lives in Miami Beach and New York City.

Megan Piontkowski is an illustrator living and working in Brooklyn, N.Y. She loves making illustrations of food and recipes, politics, portraits and how-tos.

Mason Named a Rhodes Scholar

Williams senior Cole Mason is one of 32 people to receive a prestigious Rhodes Scholarship for 2024. An environmental studies and political science major from Berthoud, Colo., he plans to pursue a Master of Science in nature, society and environmental governance followed by a Master of Public Policy at the University of Oxford. With an interest in creating meaningful policy around fossil fuel extraction, he says he hopes to “work on bridging the divides between academics and policymakers” on this and other environmental issues, so that “new research can drive important change.”

Global Support

With a full slate of symposia, workshops, forums and a new course—Global Questions, Global Frameworks—Williams’ inaugural cohort of 12 Global Scholars hit the ground running in the fall. Over the next three years, the sophomores (who were selected last spring) will take a Winter Study travel course, fulfill foreign language requirements and participate in summer internships and independent study projects. As they move through the rigorous program, each student will have the support of a faculty member, two alumni mentors and a Williams senior to provide guidance on coursework, travel opportunities, managing life-work balance and future career goals.

Global Scholars Director Magnús T. Bernhardsson worked with staff in the Office of Alumni Engagement and the ’68 Center for Career Exploration to pair each student with alumni mentors based on shared interests and experiences.

“I had extensive conversations with each of the scholars to get to know their academic interests, particular areas of the world that they would like to explore, and how and what their dreams and hopes for the future look like,” says Bernhardsson, the Brown Professor of History and chair of global studies.

Students’ interests cross the academic disciplines, and their goals include attending medical school, solving aquatic pollution and studying developmental economics.

Sarah Wang ’26, a prospective history major with an interest in reparations and refugee belonging, says her alumni mentors have been “extremely helpful in offering advice both in regards to my academic experience at Williams as well as future career goals.” She was paired with Narah Moon ’14, an attorney adviser with the U.S. Department of Justice in the Chicago area, and Sarah Whitten Corstange ’05, an immigration lawyer in New York.

“I was relieved by how willing they were to share their personal and professional uncertainties throughout the years after Williams,” Wang says. “As someone who hopes to pursue law school, I found it reassuring that I was able to be matched with such understanding, and knowledgeable mentors.”

On Campus

Williams Magazine Fall 2023

Megan Piontkowski is an illustrator living and working in Brooklyn, N.Y. She loves making illustrations of food and recipes, politics, portraits and how-tos.

Kris Qua is a photographer based in Albany, N.Y., who has more than 20 years’ experience working with clients in education, health care, sports and beyond.

Sarah Sanders ’14 is a queer Jewish performer, writer, musician and curious collaborator raised in Montana and based in Brooklyn.

Bradley Wulof is a photographer based in Williamstown, Mass. His work has been published by national and international media outlets and nonprofits including USA Today, Oxfam America and The Wilderness Society.

Tomas Weber is a London-based writer whose work has been published in The Economist’s “1843” magazine, WIRED, Smithsonian Magazine, The Guardian, Artforum, ArtReview and Frieze.

Mark Harris is a nuanced collage artist living in Philadelphia with his wife and daughter. Simulating tactics akin to the foundation of print, Harris brings a tactile feel to every project he approaches.

On Campus

The inaugural cohort of Global Scholars

Rhodes Scholar Cole Mason ’25

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Healthy Progress

Williams said goodbye to four members of the community in recent months: Alex Wesley Williams on Aug. 29, William R. Darrow on Oct. 1, Louise Glück on Oct. 17 and Peter S. Willmott ’59 on Nov. 11. Among the remembrances shared:

Alex Wesley Williams
professor of political science

“Alex maintained an abiding sense of justice. He instinctively identified with underdogs and brought his commitments to his public life, scholarship, teaching and community involvement.”

—Michael MacDonald, the Frederick L. Schuman Professor of International Relations

William R. “Bill” Darrow
Cluer Professor of Religion, Emeritus

“Bill enjoyed weaving connections between ideas and people. His eyes practically twinkled with excitement when he realized that your work might be enhanced by an introduction he could facilitate to another member of the Williams community or alumni network.”

—Lois Hanta, the Haverford Professor for Distinguished Teaching and Research in Biology

Louise Glück
former senior lecturer in the English department

“There was something very unremitting about the way in which she thought about language… She was incredibly vital, imaginative and fun to be with.”

—Anita Brookly, professor of English

Peter S. Willmott ’59
Williams trustee, 1983-1998, chair of the board’s Executive Committee

“I was blessed to have had Pete serve as an occasional sounding board during my time as chair. Candid, clear-eyed and unequivocal in his passion for the college, his counsel was exceptionally valuable.”

—Gregory M. Avis ’80, Williams trustee, 2002-2014, chair. Candid, clear-eyed and unequaled in his passion for the college, his counsel was exceptionally valuable.”

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With the ultimate goal of becoming a net-zero emissions campus, where human–generated greenhouse gases are negated by reducing emissions, Williams is focusing on sustainable buildings. This is no small feat: Buildings occupy more than 3 million square feet of campus, and heating those tops the list of energy use. Yet measures have been in place since 2003, when Williams adopted a LEED Certification policy to ensure that new campus buildings match stringent environmental and sustainability requirements. Practices have continued to evolve since then, from the green building guidelines adopted in 2011 to the sustainability goals built into the college’s 2021 Strategic Plan. One result: In 2020-21, greenhouse gas emissions were 36% lower than they were in 1990-91.

In June, Williams’ Board of Trustees approved an updated Sustainable Building Policy, ensuring that environmental goals will inform the design of and materials used for buildings, including the in-progress Davis Center, a new Williams College Museum of Art and a Multipurpose Recreation Center. Here are the campus buildings that have already received distinctive certifications for their sustainability:

**Sustainable Future**

Since its construction in 1970, Truice Field House has been a vital space for a variety of varsity and intramural sports teams and home to a host of other recreational activities. Photograph Courtesy of Williams College Archives

**In Memoriam**

Illustrations by Nate Padavick
On the Bookshelf

From a story told in museum wall labels to a surgeon sidelined by Covid-19 to a comprehensive look at the use of the ugly aesthetic in fine art, Williams authors cover a wide variety of subjects. Among the recent publications:

**One Woman Show**, by Christine Coulson MA ‘93 (Simon & Schuster). The former Met writer imagines a privileged 20th century woman as an artifact.

**Nobility in Small Things: A Surgeon’s Path**, by Craig Smith ’70 (St. Martin’s Press). The doctor’s routine was the same every day for 38 years until March 2020 and Covid-19 changed everything.

**Beautiful Ugliness: Christianity, Modernity and the Arts**, by Mark William Bech 78 (University of Notre Dame). The professor of philosophy and German language and literature seeks to make sense of today’s complex art world.

Find the latest titles at today.williams.edu/books/

Quoted

“I’ve worked briefly on a couple of farms and have tended to my own gardens, but in just six weeks this garden has more than doubled my knowledge about plants. I’m taking everything I’m learning and storing it away for future use.”

—Rosemary Kehoe ’24, one of three students who spent the summer tending to and blogging about artist and art professor Pallavi Sen’s garden/art installation Experimental Greens: Trellis Composition at the Clark Art Institute. See more at today.williams.edu/stories/sen-garden/.

Photographs by Bradley Wakoff
On Campus

Clockwise from top left:
Longtime Outing Club Director Scott Lewis addresses students on Mountain Day, his last before he retires in May.
Students take part in a pop-up yoga class in Goodrich Hall during First Days orientation.
A carnival celebrates summer on campus.
A student leans into their work in physics professor Kate Jensen’s lab.
Students learn how to make fresh apple cider outside of the Class of 1966 Environmental Center.
Democracy and Diversity

Adapted from this year’s Convocation Address, given by Bicentennial Medalist Anita Earls ’81.

By virtue of being human, you belong.

So what can you do about that? I want to return to Bernice Reagon. She goes on in the interview to say, “I learned that I did have a life to give for what I believed.”

When you understand that you do have a life—you do have a body—and you can put that on the line, it gives you a sense of power. Whatever you do for your day job, you can trade stocks, write code and compose symphonies and still fully participate in democracy. We need watchdogs and whistleblowers. We need influencers and thought leaders. There are advocates and allies. And organizers and catalysts for change.

These are elements of civic engagement. Voting is only one way to participate in democracy, and being fully engaged is how you bring your full self to your community.

If I’m right that democracy and justice require each of us to bring our full selves to participate in society, then there’s no room for anyone to believe that they don’t belong. By virtue of being human, you belong. And if you’re feeling that society’s representation is not really who you are, take heart. Firing your full self is about figuring out which battles to fight for your space and when it won’t diminish you to just let go. It’s about understanding that you have all that you need right inside you and in community with others. * 

After honoring the senior class during Convocation, Williams awarded six Bicentennial Medals for distinguished alumni achievement. The recipients also participated in a panel discussion with President Maud S. Mandel about addressing educational inequities, stimulating learning across differences and the implications of the landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision to end race-conscious admissions. For full coverage, visit williams.edu/convocation.

In addition to Anita Earls ’81, who delivered the Convocation Address, this year’s Bicentennial Medalists are: 

Phil Geier ’70, a leader in international education and founder of both the Davis United World College Scholars program—the world’s largest privately funded scholarship program for undergraduates—and the Projects for Peace initiative.

Rebecca Halls ’86, co-founder and executive director of the nonprofit Ethiopia Education Initiatives and its flagship project, Halle–Manas Academy, a secondary boarding school for 400 students of promise recruited from across Ethiopia.

Robert Kim ’92, an expert in legal and policy issues in public education, currently serving as executive director of the Education Law Center, advocating for greater resources, equity and diversity in public schools.

Robbi Behr ’97 and Matthew Swanson ’97, accomplished children’s book illustrator and writer, respectively; speakers and activists in children’s literacy who spent the 2022–23 school year living and traveling in a school bus, visiting Title I schools in all 50 states and giving away 25,000 free books to students and teachers from low-income communities.

Never underestimate your power when you bring your full self to the table. That is the heart of what democracy means and why diversity matters.

Coming to Williams as the daughter of a Black man and a white woman who married when it was illegal in many places for them to marry, this was the first time I had to think about what my full self might mean in an environment where I didn’t have the comfort of my family around me.

In the fall of 1980, I could not have predicted that our Homecoming Weekend would see a cross burning on campus and greater attention to what it meant to be a Black student at Williams in that era. Some of the biggest influences that have stayed with me from my time at Williams are the people who came to campus, including Bernice Johnson Reagon of Sweet Honey in the Rock.

Bernice Reagon was a founding member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee’s Freedom Rides. She led the 1982 Student Fair Admissions vs. Harvard and UNC case, challenging the practice of race-based admissions that the U.S. Supreme Court decided earlier this year. In Allen v. Milligan, the court struck down Alabama’s congressional districts because they violate Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act. The court said Alabama must draw two congressional districts that give African Americans in that state an equal opportunity to elect candidates of their choice. In the weeks following that decision, the Alabama legislature openly defied the U.S. Supreme Court.

Contrast that with the reaction to Students for Fair Admissions vs. Harvard and UNC. The court held that the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment does not permit Harvard, UNC, and any other institution to consider race as a factor in deciding who to admit, widely understood as an end to affirmative action programs in higher education. In the weeks since that decision, immediate compliance has been the record, and some say there is overcompliance.

What explains the difference in reaction to these rulings? I would start by looking at whose rights are being vindicated in the different decisions. And just to say a word about the Students for Fair Admissions opinion: The court ultimately concluded that diversity is something we can’t measure, so we can’t evaluate it as a court—and so we can’t say it passes constitutional muster. That’s the same critique that underlies the court’s decision to conclude that partisan gerrymandering, the drawing of districts in a way that unfairly advantages one political party over another, can’t be evaluated under the Constitution, because we can’t measure it.

This notion of institutional incapacity of the court system is counterfactual. Courts all the time make judgments about these kinds of things. They are things that can be measured. And at its core, I believe the opinion rests on a false premise. One of the quotes in the opinion: “Distinctions between citizens solely because of their ancestry are by their very nature odious to a free people whose institutions are founded upon the doctrine of equality.” Which of our institutions was founded on or even now can be said to be based on equality?

That brings me to another fundamental flaw in the legal doctrine, the notion that affirmative action cannot be justified as a measure to remedy past discrimination. That was the holding in Bubba’s back in 1978. The civil rights community considered that decision a defeat—a loss—and we are now seeing the full ramifications of that loss in the current jurisprudence.

In my junior year, I wrote out her words on yellow, lined notepaper and put it up on the wall in my room. She says, “What I’ve had since the Civil Rights Movement is a better knowledge of who I am in this society, an understanding of my power as a person to stand and speak and act on any issue that I feel applies to me in some way and therefore to other people.” We should have a say in the decisions that affect our lives. There are so many issues, interests, social justice movements I could draw on, but I want to say a word about two civil rights cases that the U.S. Supreme Court decided earlier this year. In Allen v. Milligan, the court struck down Alabama’s congressional districts because they violate Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act. The court said Alabama must draw two congressional districts that give African Americans in that state an equal opportunity to elect candidates of their choice. In the weeks following that decision, the Alabama legislature openly defied the U.S. Supreme Court.

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WCMA is conducting its first-ever collection assessment in preparation for a move to a new building on the site of the former Williams Inn. Currently in the design phase, led by the architecture firm SO-IL, the $175 million building is due to open in 2027 to mark the start of WCMA’s second century. It will be the first space purposefully built to house the museum, as its current home in Lawrence Hall was originally a library.

The move offers WCMA’s curatorial team an opportunity to bring fresh eyes to the collection and to consider how a new environment might encourage new ways of displaying the objects. It’s also a chance to check up on the many thousands of works in WCMA’s five on-site and off-site storage facilities.

With the help of several student interns, the staff began a deep dive last spring. The interns comb through the museum’s database, flagging notes about each work’s condition, attribution and how often it has been used in teaching—the core of WCMA’s mission. During the 2022-23 academic year, faculty from 27 departments taught with WCMA’s collection in 130 different courses. Between the Object Lab, which is a hybrid gallery-classroom space where professors investigate key concepts through art objects, and Williams’ robust art history program, more than half of students engage meaningfully with the museum by the time they graduate.

Kevin Murphy, WCMA’s Eugénie Prendergast senior curator of American and European art, and his colleagues have begun making daily trips to the storage areas to examine everything from Ancient Egyptian artifacts dating from the 4th millennium B.C.E. to trailblazing contemporary works by artists like Julie Mehretu and Kehinde Wiley. As of October, the group had assessed 2,000 objects.

“They’ve learned stories about objects I never knew existed,” Murphy says. “As a curator, you rarely get to play with the entire collection of your museum. It’s incredibly exciting.” For WCMA’s interns, the assessment project offers a uniquely broad and immersive learning experience.

“Every day we see something new,” says curatorial intern Julia Clark ’25. “You’re hit with a sense of awe when you realize just how much is below the museum,” says curatorial intern Julia Clark ’25. “Every day we see something new.”

Some objects, like a selection from WCMA’s South Asian collection, are sent to the Williamstown Art Conservation Center for treatment. In November, scholar Dan Elhboorn met with WCMA and conservation center staff and art professor Murad Mumtaz to examine the delicate paint layers and help improve cataloging information.

Restoration processes can reveal thrilling surprises, as was the case with a portrait by the colonial American painter John Singleton Copley of a Revolutionary War-era Boston pastor. “We’d always heard rumors that the painting had been slashed with a British bayonet during the Revolution,” Murphy says. Yet no scar was visible on the painting, and the tale remained a bit of WCMA lore. When Murphy visited the newly cleaned painting at the conservation center in October, evidence of a cut was visible over the pastor’s heart.

WCMA staff and interns are also examining the historical and cultural contexts of each work, with the goal of highlighting connections across cultures in the new building. In October, scholar Christa Clarke spent a week analyzing around 250 works in WCMA’s African art collection. She provided background on each, including whether the works were produced for the Western market or made for the artists’ own communities. She also discussed ethical stewardship.

“The works prompted interesting questions,” says Clarke, including “a lot of possible ways to present the collection across cultures, geographies and chronologies.” As WCMA staff deepen their knowledge about each object, they are also making decisions about what to display in the new building, what to store and what they might consider deaccessioning to make space for new works.

Among the museum’s priorities for new acquisitions is deepening its African American and Asian American art collections, says Lisa Dorin, deputy director for curatorial engagement. The acquisition of the painting Women Off Color, by the Botswana-born, U.S.-based painter Meleko Mokgosi ’07...

In “identifying what we have that fits our acquisition plan and what we don’t have that we could acquire,” Dorin says, the collection assessment and future planning “are working hand in glove.”
In April 2022, Williams College took a major leap in improving college affordability when it announced its All-Grant Financial Aid program, replacing traditional loans and work-study requirements with grants that don’t have to be repaid.

The program is the first of its kind in the nation and furthers the college’s commitment to eliminating economic barriers to a Williams education. Fifty-three percent of students receive financial aid, which extends beyond tuition, room and board to cover expenses such as health insurance, unexpected medical bills, textbooks and art supplies, study abroad, and travel to and from campus. At a cost of roughly $6.75 million per year, All-Grant increases Williams’ total annual financial aid budget to $77.5 million. The aim is to sustain the initiative with new endowment gifts to Williams, including through an innovative 1:1 matching program.

For many students, the program relieves some of the unseen financial pressures of college life and provides flexibility. The time once devoted to a campus job can now be spent taking a more demanding course load, diving deeper into the material by attending professors’ office hours or exploring a new passion. A summer job to earn money toward a student’s tuition contribution can be replaced by an unpaid internship to support their career exploration.

“All-Grant is our next major step toward true affordability,” says Liz Creighton ’01, dean of admission and student financial services. “We listened to students talk about what they wished they had more time to pour themselves into at Williams. We’re passionate about giving them the flexibility to pursue what they love.”

Here, seven students share how All-Grant is shaping their Williams experience.

Vanya Funez ’26 was organizing her high school’s Relay for Life event with one eye on her phone, waiting to see if she had been accepted to Williams. When the notification arrived, she recalls, she couldn’t believe it. Then she read the good news about her financial aid package: Everything was covered except for a $2,700 contribution from work-study.

Funez learned that Williams had just announced its new All-Grant Financial Aid program. Her $2,700 contribution was eliminated.

Aside from a state school that she says was “too close to home,” Williams was now the only college that covered 100% of her cost to attend.

“It was definitely a deciding factor,” Funez says. “I always wanted to go to college for free. I didn’t want my parents to spend a dime, and I didn’t want to have loans.”

She graduated from a vocational-technical high school focused on business and information technology. Her plan was to major in political economy, economics or political science. But Funez says she struggled with the idea of taking classes in subjects she felt less connected to—particularly math and science.


The course is taught by geosciences professor Mea Cook, whose research uses sediment samples from the Bering Sea to study the ocean’s role in climate change. Funez joined Cook’s lab as a research assistant the following semester.

She’s now considering a geosciences major while continuing to study economics, making connections between the two disciplines inside and outside the classroom. She’s spent the fall semester working as a teaching assistant for an economics course on price and allocation theory. She’s interested in the economic impact of climate change. And she is working as a science fellow with Williams’ Brayton and Greylock Elementary School Partnership, visiting a first-grade classroom to teach science lessons once a week.

“Being at Williams has taught me to appreciate the academic side of econ,” Funez says. “I know I don’t have to go into consulting or finance; I can be a professor or study policy. The love that I have for econ is very different than the love that I had before, but it’s way better.”
Opportunity Granted

58% of students have significantly or moderately more time to spend on things that support mental and emotional wellness.

56% of students spent significantly or moderately more time studying, in office hours and in other academic pursuits.

“Opportunity Granted”

Last year, history major Jacob Rivet ’25 had an unexpected opportunity when his roommates proposed a 10-day trip to Italy during spring break. Apart from a family road trip to Canada, he’d never been outside of the U.S. Before, he had never been outside of the U.S. because his financial aid package included a combination of grants to cover personal expenses, books, clothing and health care—and as a self-described frugal person who relies heavily on his meal plan—he says he felt comfortable with the expense of the trip.

“I decided I’m only in college once,” Rivet says.

He attended a soccer game in Milan, visited the Leaning Tower of Pisa and the Duomo in Florence, and took in art museums and historic churches.检察院 by the experience, Rivet came back to campus and started applying to study-abroad programs. He looked for opportunities that supported his plans to attend medical school. This spring, he’ll take part in a School for International Training program focused on public health that will bring him to Washington, D.C., Argentina, India and South Africa.

On campus, meanwhile, his days are filled with research and laboratory classes in biology, chemistry and physics in preparation for medical school. He is also using his time to explore subspecialties. During the spring 2022 semester, he worked in psychology professor Noah Sandstrom’s neuroscience lab, studying the brain and behavioral changes resulting from mild traumatic brain injury in mice.

“For the first time, I was doing lab work where there wasn’t pressure to get exact results,” he says. “We had the freedom to make mistakes and gain from it because that’s just science.”

This past summer, Rivet had an internship with the Pediatric Anxiety Research Center at Bradley Children’s Hospital in Providence, R.I. There he assisted with exposure therapy and worked alongside a mobile therapist.

Without a required work-study contribution, Rivet says he’s had time and flexibility to explore his passions.

“I never thought I would go abroad,” Rivet says, adding that he is enjoying being what he calls a “true liberal arts geek.”

“I wasn’t in a place to spread myself even thinner.”

During high school, Kaia Glickman ’25 started emailing softball coaches at Division III colleges, hoping to secure a spot on one of the teams. She was high on her list. Williams had recently made it to the Women’s College World Series, and she wanted to study at a top liberal arts school.

With a twin sister heading to Tufts University, Glickman says she found Williams’ financial aid package to be a critical factor in her decision.

She was nervous about balancing a campus job with her plans to take multivariable calculus and astrophysics classes that fall, training with a new softball team, and moving from California to an unfamiliar place. So she spent the summer after high school babysitting to cover her required financial contribution. (Williams had not yet unveiled its All-Grant program.)

“It wasn’t ideal to have to hand that money over to the college,” she says, “but I’m glad I decided not to get a job on campus. I wasn’t in a place to spread myself even thinner.”

During her first two years at Williams, Glickman took a variety of classes as she explored potential majors. She loved her Introduction to Astrophysics class but hesitated to continue such a time-intensive course of study. But with the promise of support from her softball coaches—and the elimination of the work requirement in her financial aid package her sophomore year—she felt confident to move forward.

Glickman says balancing her astrophysics major and a varsity sport can feel like having two full-time jobs, especially when softball is in season. But she’s learned to study effectively and ask for help where she needs it. She regularly attends office hours with her teaching assistants for guidance on homework.

The elimination of her on-campus and summer work requirements also created space for Glickman to get a job as a teaching assistant in the astronomy department, where she helps students operate the three telescopes in the observatory.

She has also been able to spend summers as a member of the Israeli national softball team. During the last three summers, she has traveled to Israel and to Japan, Italy and Mexico, where, she says, “I got to be on the field with some of the greatest athletes to ever play.”

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“I’m only in college once.”

58% of students have significantly or moderately more time to spend on things that support mental and emotional wellness.
In high school, Al Mercedes Casado ’26 decided on a career path after watching the TV series *The Big Bang Theory.* “Everything on the show sent me into a deeper research rabbit hole,” they say. “I decided I wanted to be a physicist.” Mercedes Casado’s Bronx, N.Y., high school didn’t offer physics, so a chemistry teacher recommended the City College of New York’s STEM Institute. The program, which they attended the summer before their senior year, encourages underrepresented students to pursue STEM fields.

Mercedes Casado discovered Williams when researching colleges with computer science and physics programs that also met students’ full financial need. “I always knew that if I was going to afford college, I would have to make it up on my own,” they say.

Attending Williams’ Previews program—where admitted students spend two days experiencing life on campus—helped them make their decision. Mercedes Casado says their hosts showed them around campus and Williamsburg and introduced them to life beyond the campus tour. They experienced a strong sense of community they didn’t find at other colleges.

The financial aid package also set Williams apart. Other colleges still expected their family to contribute more than Mercedes Casado felt was possible. “I didn’t want to burden my parents or ask them to break the bank to pay for my college,” they say.

Though they held paid jobs during high school, Mercedes Casado says they were glad not to be required to work on campus right away, given “the culture shock of moving to a different place and not having my immediate support system. I wanted to be more adjusted before getting a job. When I got the financial aid packet, it was one less thing I had to worry about.”

The transition was still challenging. Many of their classmates came to Williams with high school and Advanced Placement science and physics and a solid set of problem-solving skills. Mercedes Casado says they are comfortable with advanced math but regularly attend office hours for extra help. They also formed a study group with their classmates.

Now they are exploring different subfields, in part by spending 10 weeks over the summer in a biochemistry lab at Virginia Tech that their Williams professor introduced them to. “The feeling of satisfaction I get after struggling for hours over a problem set,” they say, “when I finally understand it, it’s totally worth it.”

By the time he got to Williams, Elias Sienkiewicz ’24 had worked in a variety of jobs, including in food service, installing fire sprinkler systems and manufacturing hotel wall panels. The income went toward his family’s contribution to his secondary school tuition in Great Barrington, Mass.—a debt he paid off during a gap year before college. “I was always looking for the highest paying job I could get with a high school diploma,” he says. “I had to budget out the coming year and make a plan to earn that much money during the summer.”

At first his experience at Williams was no different. He worked summers and kept the academic year free to explore his interests. He led first-year students on outdoor orientation trips. He took courses in philosophy and physics but chose to major in economics and computer science, saying that practicality and earning potential were priorities. “Especially as a kid coming from a low-income background, it feels like a safety net to be broadly employable,” he says.

Williams announced its All-Grant program in the spring of Sienkiewicz’s sophomore year. He also learned that his job the next year as a junior advisor, living with first-year students and helping them acclimate to college life, would now be a paid position. With dramatically reduced expenses, Sienkiewicz explored more opportunities. He joined the crew team and is now the captain. And, for the first time ever, he opted to take a lower-paying job. He guided high school students through the mountains of Yellowstone and the Grand Tetons with Overland Summers. “I got to shop around and spend my summer in a much more rewarding and fulfilling way,” he says. “It was a huge quality-of-life upgrade for me and an opportunity to do something that I probably will never have the chance to do again.”

This past summer—his last before graduation—he took a management consulting internship with Ernst & Young after meeting with representatives at a campus information session. He also knew a handful of recent graduates working there and tapped into the Williams alumni network in preparation for entering the job market. “I may want to do management consulting as a career, I may not,” says Sienkiewicz, who, in October, accepted a position as an analyst at Broadhaven Capital Partners in New York starting in July. “But it’s broadly applicable to a bunch of different career paths. Even if I don’t know what I want to do, I want to at least come out of Williams with a lot of options.”

77% of first-years reported that All-Grant was one of the main reasons they chose to attend Williams.

94% of students reported that All-Grant had a positive effect on their experience.

“It was one less thing I had to worry about.”

“It was a huge quality-of-life upgrade.”

1,356 students worked on campus by choice last year after All-Grant was established and the work-study requirement was eliminated.
“I have the freedom and power to be intentional with my time.”

Chris Flores ’26 grew up in the border town of Nogales, Ariz., with a single working mother and a younger sibling. When it came time to explore colleges, he says, “I knew my family wouldn’t be able to help me out.”

The change to All-Grant made a big difference. “I was in your shoes not too long ago, and you can do it—that I understand. Pursuing unpaid work, with no other source of income, is difficult for first-gen, low-income students,” he says. “But all of these experiences are exposing me to the interdisciplinary nature of geosciences and allowing me to explore careers in the field.”

Flores says it was “rejuvenating” to connect with a cohort of students from similar cultural backgrounds and to represent the issues they face across the U.S. His goal is to ground his career in improving people’s lives—especially those of low-income people and people of color like him. It’s a step he’s already taken in his work as a teaching assistant for Deborah Carlisle’s Biology 101 class, where he regularly assures students of color that they will be successful at Williams.

“I realized there was no better financial aid that I could get from another college,” Emmert says. She struggled her first year as she adapted to challenging coursework and her influence on the proliferation of cyanobacteria algae blooms. She says the interdisciplinary nature of the Williams-Mystic program, where students spend a semester engaged in a multidisciplinary investigation of the sea.

Emmert says she is interested in preserving marine biodiversity and in the intersections of water quality, coastal resilience and climate change. In the spring, she plans to delve further into these issues through the Williams-Mystic program, where students spend a semester engaged in a multidisciplinary investigation of the sea.

“[All-Grant] has allowed me to pursue extracurricular involvement, community engagement and anything that’s conducive to my academic interests,” she says. “It allows me to pursue opportunities like Williams-Mystic that I wouldn’t be able to pay for by myself at another college or university. “I’m being given this fantastic opportunity to pursue my true academic interests and figure out who I want to be and what I want to do with my life.”

65% of students say they have significantly or moderately more ability to make decisions based on interests and goals rather than financial needs

While attending the Princeton University Summer Journalism Program, a free, year-long college preparation program for high school juniors from limited-income backgrounds, Ry Emmert ’26 connected with professional journalists who offered advice on colleges and the admissions process. They also introduced her to Williams College.

She took part in a shadow day on Williams, a three-day, all-expenses-paid visit to campus for high-achieving high school seniors. She sat in on classes, listening to the intellectual conversations and noticing how intertwined and interconnected everyone seemed. At a presentation on financial aid, she learned about the All-Grant program as well as how grants covered books, supplies and study away opportunities, among many other things.

“I realized there was no better financial aid that I could get from another college,” Emmert says.

She struggled her first year as she adapted to challenging coursework and an unfamiliar seminar format for many classes, but she started to find her niche after an introductory geosciences course with José Constantine, director of the environmental studies program.

Emmert worked as a paid research assistant in Constantine’s geomorphology lab, which led to an internship with an environmental studies lab at Bates College, near Emmert’s home in Maine. She spent the summer working alongside other undergraduates, investigating environmental changes in Maine lakes and their influence on the proliferation of cyanobacteria algae blooms. She says the internship, supported by a grant from Williams’ Center for Environmental Studies, built on her classroom skills in geographic information systems, and she gained meaningful experience conducting field observations and collecting data samples.

“Pursuing unpaid work, with no other source of income, is difficult for first-gen, low-income students,” she says. “But all...
Teaching FUNDAMENTALS

Professors and coaches discuss what they’re learning in the classroom, on the field and from each other about helping students grow.

The website for Williams’ new Joseph Lee Rice III 1954 Center for Teaching is full of practical information about topics such as syllabus design, promoting active learning, reducing student anxiety and helping students develop healthy work habits. The collection of teaching strategies, curated from decades of faculty experience across every academic discipline, could just as easily apply to a history class as a hockey team. And that’s by design.

The coaches of the college’s 32 varsity athletic teams are also assistant professors of physical education, a long-standing Williams tradition. Many participate in the academic life of the college, advising students, attending thesis presentations and helping students develop time management skills. Academic faculty likewise participate in the athletic life of the college, attending games and serving as “faculty affiliates” for specific teams.

So in developing the first year of programming for the Rice Center, coaches’ involvement was a given, says director and biology professor Matt Carter. Since July, the center has hosted several panel discussions featuring academic and athletics faculty sharing their wisdom about the art of teaching. Professors and coaches are equally likely to attend the center’s events and programs—which have drawn more than 200 people so far—and to participate in The Open Classroom initiative, in which faculty can observe each other’s teaching and coaching.

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Encouraging Risk-Taking

Matt Carter (Rice Center Director and Associate Professor of Biology): We want our students to be intrinsically motivated to grow and try their best. But fear—of getting a low grade, of not making the roster, of embarrassing themselves in front of the class or team—can often get in the way. How do you address motivation and the willingness to take risks?

Ethan Barron (Head Track and Field Coach): Many students have never failed before, so we spend a lot of time removing the main barrier to risk-taking, which is a fear of failure or of what’s going to happen on the other side of this risk if it doesn’t go right. We create a lot of situations in practice where students are almost guaranteed to fail, so they see it’s no big deal and everybody still likes them—they’re still valued. Or I will actively have people visualize their worst-case scenario on the track so vividly that it makes them queasy. And if they’re able to do that and still put on their uniform and lace up their spikes, they’ve essentially vaccinated themselves against it. It’s a fear of the unknown, and knowing makes it a little less scary.

Marion Min-Barron (Lecturer in Public Health): I took this idea from my husband [Ethan], who collects pre-meet objectives from his students. I started to list my objectives as the instructor and then have every student in my Racism in Public Health tutorial identify their objectives in the course. I meet with them for half an hour to talk about the action points to help them meet that objective and what the outcome will look like. Sometimes, it’s about the grade, but it’s also very much about other things, like, “I want to become a better writer.” I’ll say, “Tell me more. In your mind, what is a better writer? What steps can we take to meet that, and what will that look like within a semester?”

Kris Herman (Head Softball Coach): I call that a pre-eval. People get so concerned about evaluations and the post-mortem look back at how things went. So, instead, before a drill or a game week, or even before a season, I ask: “What will this look like done well?” And, more importantly, “What will it not look like?” I had a complete career reinvention when I realized we’re not defining the negative. When we’re able to define the negative—when we turn on the lights—the boogeyman goes away.

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Growing from Mistakes

Carter: There’s a pervasive perception among many students that everyone has to do everything perfectly all the time. Even beyond peer pressure, there are some tangible factors (“I need to get into medical school,” or “We need to win this game to make it to finals”) that encourage and knowing who you are as a person is greater than the player. Then the results take care of themselves.

Barrow: If I wanted to be the best coach I could be, I would never go home to my wife and kids. I would be sleeping in the office. I’d be calling more recruits. And we in society are embracing the idea that the best person I want to be—be the best coach and the best dad and the best Ethan and the best husband—I’ve got to basically be at 85% to 90% in everything and not maximize one. “Try your best” becomes a toxic mindset when you try to be the best student you can be, the best athlete and the best friend. It’s not possible to be at max in everything. So embracing “good enough” is a big part of our team right now.

Min-Barrow: It really makes students think twice about what they’re doing that doesn’t help them. “I really want to get into medical school, “ or “We need to win this game” can turn the players into just the best Ethan and the best friend—what the class is about. This is a really important part of my program.

Individualizing Learning

Barrow: I’ve joked that coaching track is really like teaching in a one-room schoolhouse. Everybody’s story is different, but I’m teaching arithmetic to one person and multivariable calculus to another person at the same time. How do you adjust for the needs of people coming to your classroom or team at vastly different ability levels and figure out what the next breadcrumb on their path is?

LaLumia: If it’s a lecture, I give one lecture, and everybody in the classroom is going to hear that lecture. But I love that students are eager to come to office hours, and then you get to have one little group of people working on one problem and another group working on something else, and you bring them back together and form the groups differently for the next problem. I come to (teaching assistant) sessions where I can rotate around and talk to different groups. And I admire that coaches do this not just over the course of a season but for years, in many cases. I love it if I teach a student all the way through four years in a row.

Gillis: In hockey, you can turn the puck over and almost get scored on, and then go the other way and score a goal. It’s a game of constant mistakes. Even when you’re in the NESAC championship game, 90% of the teams lose and 10% win, and even for the team that won, there are mistakes all over the place during those 60 minutes.

Carter: It’s possible to lose games and still win the season, right? Likewise, it seems like a growing number of academic faculty are allowing students to say, drop a particular assignment or retake an exam—to basically allow for a “winning season” while still being able to make mistakes and grow.

Building Community

Carter: We want students to feel like they are in a safe, supportive environment and feel more comfortable taking risks. How do you build community in your classroom or on your team?

LaLumia: I try to identify to students in front of other students that they’re all good at certain things. And if someone has mastered a particular kind of problem, I’ll say during office hours, “You are the expert for solving for this kind of problem. Can you show your technique to this person sitting next to you?” Everybody is coming in with some strengths, and everyone can be a bit of a teacher to someone else.

Herman: We need everybody’s levels of expertise in order to put together a great contest, drill or even practice situation. We spend a lot of time articulating all the other things you can do to contribute to team success: cheering, having a conversation with somebody next to you. I imagine in the classroom, giving a wrong answer, kids can be so devastated by that. But there is something you can do. Maybe all you can do is make eye contact with the next person next to you. It’s possible to lose games and still win the season, right? Likewise, it seems like a growing number of academic faculty are allowing students to say, drop a particular assignment or retake an exam—to basically allow for a “winning season” while still being able to make mistakes and grow.

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Sara LaLumia (David A. Wells Professor of Economics)

I’ve learned into the possibility of creating community in a classroom by acknowledging all the different dimensions of the students within it. So I prioritize what effectively is a warmup. When people are chatty, I let them chat for five minutes. I’ve definitely learned from the coaching world the value of creating moments for connection and how that can trickle into positive outcomes and performances that we’ve all interested in helping students find.

Carter: I like that example of a warm-up or transition period. In smaller courses, it’s definitely possible to start classes with a brief transition period or opportunity for students to share something with each other. In fact, I know that even in larger classes, some faculty ask students to write something down on a note card to let them share their thoughts on a topic and then transition into what they’re about to do. This transition is a really powerful time. o
One hundred years is a long time for any institution—but it’s the blink of an eye relative to the age of many of the books and manuscripts held by the Chapin Library. While the scale and scope of the collections have broadened to support Williams’ evolving curriculum, the library’s mission has been the same since its founding in 1923, with a gift from Alfred Clark Chapin, Class of 1829: to connect rare books and manuscripts held by the Chapin Library with undergraduate teaching, research and creative expression. An exhibition in the Special Collections galleries and a forthcoming book celebrate the Chapin’s centennial by gathering the reflections of students, faculty, staff and friends of the college, past and present.

This is a library to be used in undergraduate teaching. One of the teacher’s tasks is to make the events and issues of the past a vital reality to his students. The problem of sustaining this vitality, as the events and the issues pass from their sources through the great body of scholarly literature, is one of the never-ending challenges of education. It is here that the Chapin Library can offer assistance. Imagine a history class as it came to the Reformation. There is a 1517 printing of Luther’s theses themselves. Here the students can hold parts in their hands, peruse the ads, with their glimpses into Victorian commercial culture, and check out the publisher’s teasers for upcoming works by various authors. To see the individual parts side by side with the bound volumes helps us appreciate how artfully Dickens balanced the demands of seriality with those of creating a finished work of art.

—Alison Case, the Dennis Meenan ’54 Third Century Professor of English

Charles Dickens, Bleak House
London: Bradbury and Evans, 1852-1853; gift of Alfred Clark Chapin, Class of 1829, in 1916

For over 50 years now, I have been bringing my 19th-century British Novel class to Chapin to give them a chance to see and handle the rare first editions of all these famous books and to provide a vivid immersion in the world of Victorian novel publication. Perhaps the most illuminating object we see is the half-title page of the first edition of Charles Dickens’ Bleak House. One consists of 39 paper-covered booklets that were issued monthly, to be purchased for a shilling by his eager fans, the inside covers and back pages full of ads (which made more money than the sale of parts themselves). The other is the leather-bound volumes that those parts could be converted into by having a bookbinder rip off the paper covers and the ads; shift to the front the title page, table of contents, list of illustrations and author’s preface that were always included in the last double part; and bind the whole thing according to the buyer’s taste. Students can hold parts in their hands, peruse the ads, with their glimpses into Victorian commercial culture, and check out the publisher’s teasers for upcoming works by various authors. To see the individual parts side by side with the bound volumes helps us appreciate how artfully Dickens balanced the demands of seriality with those of creating a finished work of art.

—Jiwoo Han ’25

I was the only Korean speaker working at Chapin; this was one of the 12 unlabeled and yet-to-be-identified Korean woodblocks. I deciphered fragments of the text, and, slowly, they revealed their true identity: classical poetry, essays and even a treatise on why a certain version of a certain anthology is worse than another! For an independent research project, I traveled to places in my own country I have never set my foot on, I visited museums and historical sites in small towns where I shared food with elders and curators and traveled with a stranger.

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Martin Luther, Disputatio B. Martini Luther theologi pro declaratio virtutis indulgentiarum
Basel: A. Perit, 1517; gift of Alfred Clark Chapin, Class of 1829, in 1923

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—Thomas Adams, Chapin librarian
from 1951-1957, writing in 1956

I discovered [this book] while volunteering to help catalog the Chapin’s holdings. Of all the great illustrated works in natural history, Bowdich’s punches way above its weight. Each of its nearly 50 plates in the 50 published copies (nearly 3,000 plates in all!) was hand drawn and painted by Bowdich herself from freshly caught fishes, sometimes adding ground fish scales in the pigments for metallic effect. My discovery of Bowdich’s extraordinary work perhaps made a defining impression on me in other ways unknown then to even myself. From Williams, I went on to graduate school for a Ph.D. in zoology, studying freshwater fishes.

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Sarah Bowdich, The Fresh-water Fishes of Great Britain
London: J. Moya for the authoress and R. Ackermann, 1826-1836; gift of Alfred Clark Chapin, Class of 1829

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Printing block from Nogyejib 노계집 1831
Korea, probably 1831; purchased with the W.E. Archer Fund in 2014

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Aurea, or “Golden Legend,” a compilation of saints’ lives and miracles. With its composite structure and abundant evidence of careful reading and use—including the names of the readers—Codex Ms 099 is a precious object and a wonderful teaching tool to convey the vibrant intellectual traditions of late medieval European society. I have used this item to teach seminars about the reading practices and book culture of the late medieval world; it really helps convey how these and similar objects formed part of a community of use over time and were not simply texts to be read and discarded. Every Williams student can relate to the need to take care of marginal notes in a textbook for future reference!

—Joel Pattison, assistant professor of history

“Hartmann Schedel, Liber chronicarum Nuremberg: Anton Koberger, for Sebastian Kammermeister, 32 July 1493; gift of Donald Kloper, Class of 1922, in 1981

In an Art History 101 lecture in 1995, E.J. Johnson ’59 put up a slide showing the Nuremberg Chronicle (Liber chronicarum). This book is justly famous as the most lavishly illustrated printed book of the 15th century, with over 1,800 woodcuts in its 326 printed leaves. He told us it lived in Chapin Library, just a few hundred yards away. I was just as surprised as if he had said that there was a complete Renaissance rempietto in the basement of Hopkins Hall, open by appointment. I had always liked the physicality of books and also the intellectual pleasures of art. This moment of the lecture united them for me. Five years later I was fortunate to land a job in the rare books department of Christie’s auction house, and sometimes, though, you watch a page of a 1932 newspaper fall in scattered fragments out of an unlabeled envelope at the bottom of a folder and spend half an hour puzzling the pieces back together to find out it was exactly what you were looking for: Gregory Mason (1889-1968), who graduated from Williams in 1911, was an archaeologist, journalist and adventurer who worked in the Yucatán Peninsula in the 1920s and ’30s and who played a pivotal role in the discovery and reconstruction of the ancient Maya. He, and by extension his vast collection of papers in the Chapin Library, were also my research subject for the better part of a semester. This newspaper article is a reminder that the everyday things we use and consume and love speak to who we are and what we care about; it informs my view of public and community histories.

—Ruth Kramer ’22, John A. Lowe III ’73 Special Collections Fellow

“The happenstance discovery and reconstruction of the source itself reaffirmed my appreciation for the power of collections.”

Gregory Mason Papers
Acquired prior to 1978

Collections research is not often entirely what Indiana Jones promised. Sometimes, though, you watch a page of a 1932 newspaper fall in scattered fragments out of an unlabeled envelope at the bottom of a folder and spend half an hour puzzling the pieces back together to find out it was exactly what you were looking for: Gregory Mason (1889-1968), who graduated from Williams in 1911, was an archaeologist, journalist and adventurer who worked in the Yucatán Peninsula in the 1920s and ’30s and who played a pivotal role in the formation of the U.S. public’s understanding of the ancient Maya. He, and by extension his vast collection of papers in the Chapin Library, were also my research subject for the better part of a semester. This newspaper article is a reminder that the everyday things we use and consume and love speak to who we are and what we care about; it informs my view of public and community histories.

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The very first items I ever touched in the Chapin were the Playboy magazines brought up for my 100-level English course in the fall of my first year at Williams. Though excited, I couldn’t understand why such a magazine could be considered rare or historically significant. It ended up being a magazine I returned to for internships, classes and professional projects. Playboy is a reminder that the everyday things we use and consume and love speak to who we are and what we care about; it informs my view of public and community histories.

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The happenstance discovery and reconstruction of the source itself reaffirmed my appreciation for the power of collections.”

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The very first items I ever touched in the Chapin were the Playboy magazines brought up for my 100-level English course in the fall of my first year at Williams. Though excited, I couldn’t understand why such a magazine could be considered rare or historically significant. It ended up being a magazine I returned to for internships, classes and professional projects. Playboy is a reminder that the everyday things we use and consume and love speak to who we are and what we care about; it informs my view of public and community histories.

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Architecture and environmental studies professor Giuseppina Forte helps students consider and design spaces that embody ecological and social justice.

Architecture, in Giuseppina Forte’s view, is about much more than buildings. And it’s too important to leave exclusively to architects. The built environment plays a critical role in shaping our identities and how we coexist, says Forte, who came to Williams in 2022 as an assistant professor of architecture and environmental studies—the first such position at the college. “The design disciplines can help transition us into a better world,” she says—one that is more equitable, sustainable and just—by involving local communities at every step of the process.

That is the vision behind Forte’s two fall courses, now in their second year: Governing Cities by Design and Design for the Pluriverse. In the seminar Governing Cities by Design: The Built Environment as a Technology of Space, Forte’s students learn how 19th-century government officials engineered cities to influence citizens’ practices in using space. In Paris, for example, large boulevards were constructed in the city center to make it easier for the army to quell popular uprisings and promote the efficient flow of people, capital and goods. Poor people were displaced to the outskirts of the city. Other top-down, capital-driven conceptions of urban design shaped American cities like New York and Chicago, and the practice took off around the world.

As part of the course, Forte and her students visit sites around Williamstown. With her guidance, they start to see how even well-intentioned urban design can exclude people. They notice the difficulty that people with disabilities might face accessing forest trails, say, or the lack of street art in the town—a hint that creativity is restricted to galleries, studios and museums. “I teach students to become more aware of the space they inhabit,” she says.

In the tutorial Design for the Pluriverse: Architecture, Urban Design and Difference, Forte’s students explore how design can be reimagined as an inclusive, grassroots practice. The “pluriverse,” Forte says, describes how the world is composed of diverse ways of being. It’s a way of rethinking design that informs Embodying Peripheries, a volume of essays co-edited by Forte and published by Firenze University Press last year.

One course assignment involves designing and building an architectural installation on campus. Students create a space at the intersection of art and architecture that remains open to interpretation—a space that is attentive to and that helps nurture a plurality of ways of being. The design process is meant to be democratic and participatory, and the construction materials are expected to be sustainable. “By bringing together architecture, architecture and environmental studies, the project will offer a unique aesthetic experience that can reorient public imagination around sustainability and social justice issues,” Forte says.

While completing her doctorate at the University of California, Berkeley, Forte spent time in Brazil as a Fulbright-Hays fellow and visiting researcher at the University of São Paulo. There she saw firsthand how urban designers attempted to consider the views of marginalized people in a city where one-third of the population lives in inadequate housing conditions, often lacking access to basic infrastructure. In the absence of democratically designed methods, Forte found that public participation often became a procedural obligation. Ultimately, low-income people in São Paulo had minimal influence on the current design of their city, she says.

Still, designing for everybody presents certain inherent difficulties, Forte says. A visually stimulating exhibit may work for deaf people, for example, but if it also has lots of auditory elements, it might be inaccessible to those who are highly sensitive to auditory stimuli. “Keeping a space open to everyone is very hard,” she says. “Space is always contested.” Instead of a proverbial “public participation” box to be checked, designing for the pluriverse, for Forte, means thinking very deeply about how a space will be experienced by the people who will occupy it. And architects must recognize that a space will always be experienced in different ways by different people. Democratic design “is a horizon,” she says. “It forces us to think about different end users, and not only think, but to involve them.”

Architecture for All

By

Tomas Weber
“Astonishingly well written.” A “masterful new synthesis.” “Lively.” And “deeply informed.” Those are just a few of the descriptors authors and scholars are using in their reviews of *Remaking the World: Decolonization and the Cold War*, history professor Jessica Chapman’s new book published by the University Press of Kentucky.

The book arose out of Chapman’s course Decolonization and the Cold War, which she began teaching in 2006. Until recently, historians have studied the two topics as parallel phenomena. The Cold War was primarily a European event, a tug-of-war between the Soviet-led Eastern bloc and the U.S.-led Western bloc. Decolonization, meanwhile, unfolded in more than 50 countries, primarily on the African, Asian and American continents, that declared their independence between 1945 and 1965.

Chapman’s course explores the interplay between the two—how the Cold War shaped the emerging nation-states and the process of decolonization affected the global superpowers. “There was a total reconfiguration of the international system that all parties involved conceived of and entered in different ways,” Chapman says. “Anti-colonial activists thought of it as a democratic struggle but also deeply confused and kind of frustrated by what they had to wade through,” Chapman adds. 

Chapman’s astute analysis is certain to benefit students and more established scholars alike. “Chapman’s astute analysis is certain to benefit students and more established scholars alike.”

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**Performance Studies**

**Africana studies professor Rashida Braggs embarks on multidisciplinary explorations of Black women jazz musicians in Paris.**

In *Amber in the City of Light*, Braggs embodies multiple iterations of a fictional character named Amber. Each one, performed solo by Braggs, is based on the lives of several Black women jazz musicians that she interviewed for the project. Over the past 50 years, the women journeyed to Paris from the United States, West Africa, the Caribbean and Europe to evolve their musical careers. But there was little archival or historical information available about them, Braggs found in her research. She uses the character of Amber to shine light on them, “always asking questions about how I embody other people’s experience of race and gender.”

Braggs says that as a Black woman and performer who has migrated and who has lived in France, she is “also a part of this shared experience. And how do I perform that? I’m showing my relationship as a researcher to these women and showing me as part of the story, as opposed to this kind of ‘objective’ onlooker who is ‘authentically’ capturing this moment.”

This winter, Braggs will give the first performances of *Amber in the City of Light* to audiences in Montréal. Additional performances are planned for next spring in Cassis/Marseille, France. The performances will be followed by question-and-answer sessions; Braggs says she is curious to learn from the perspectives of non-American audiences in the wider Francophone world as she continues working on the piece.

In addition to raising awareness of Black women jazz artists, Braggs wants audiences to learn more about the musicians themselves—to listen to their music and even attend a concert. “There’s a way that I am able to feel and absorb information in a much moister way when I’m taking in some type of performance,” she says. “I just kind of feel it in my bones.”

Most of all, she’s excited to share with audiences her connection to the subject matter and the fruits of her research and creativity. “It’s such a complex interdisciplinary intermedia project,” she says. “But it’s one that is really exciting because of the multiple ways of reaching people and the multiple ways of expressing myself.”

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**Remaking the World**

**By Greg Shook**

After searching unsuccessfully for an accessible book to support her course Decolonization and the Cold War, history professor Jessica Chapman wrote one herself.

There were “giant tomes that would tackle the big picture of the Cold War and decolonization in lengthy, excruciating detail that were really hard for students to engage with,” she says. And there were “highly specific research articles that would take up one small element of things that students would struggle to contextualize.”

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Chapman’s course explores the interplay between the two—how the Cold War shaped the emerging nation-states and the process of decolonization affected the global superpowers. “There was a total reconfiguration of the international system that all parties involved conceived of and entered in different ways,” Chapman says. “Anti-colonial activists thought of it as a democratic struggle but also deeply confused and kind of frustrated by what they had to wade through,” Chapman adds.

So she set out to write something digestible. Remaking the World focuses on six countries—Angola, the Congo, Egypt, India, Iran and Vietnam—that cast a wide geographic net and represent all of the major colonial powers.

Chapman says she also chose those cases where there were “significant turning points in the Cold War. There was something profoundly unique about each of the cases that I write about, distinctions and particularities inherent in them that we can understand better if we look at how the Cold War acted upon them and how they influenced the Cold War process. Fundamentally, they were parts of longer-term processes in very particular national stories that need to be understood in their own right.”

Chapman, whose book *Citizenry of Resistance: Ngo Dinh Diem, The United States and 1950s Southern Vietnam* was published by Cornell University Press in 2013, is now delving into a book project about the political, economic and cultural significance of Kenya’s running industry. With a New Directions Fellowship from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, she has pursued training in the field of anthropology to support the research.

In the meantime, Remaking the World continues to receive praise. Kaja University of Minnesota Dohlt history professor Scott Laderman, “Remaking the World is a perfect classroom book... Chapman’s astute analysis is certain to benefit students and more established scholars alike.”

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**Review of Jessica Chapman’s book Remaking the World**

**By Sarah Sanders ’14**

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Life of the Mind

Language Learning

By Greg Shook

Computer science professor Dan Barowy uses art to teach students programming.

Sipping a beverage inside Tunnel City Coffee one morning, computer science professor Dan Barowy takes note of the baristas serving the steady line of customers. “It’s not an accident that you have a couple of people taking orders and another pair filling them,” he says. “It’s a very efficient system that you can analyze mathematically.”

Barowy enjoys making connections between his field of study and the world around him. He sees the application of computer science not only in queues for cappuccinos but also in music, sports, art and literature. “Computer science isn’t necessarily about computers,” he says. “It’s about processes.”

That’s why, for his course Principles of Programming Languages, Barowy gathers with his students in the Object Lab, a hybrid gallery-classroom inside the Williams College Museum of Art. Faculty from across academic disciplines collaborate with museum staff to choose artworks investigating key course concepts that hang on the gallery walls. The fall semester Object Lab, on view through Dec. 17, includes 40 objects supporting eight courses in American studies, art history, art studio, computer science, history and dance.

The 30 juniors and seniors in Barowy’s class, most of whom are computer science majors, gain an extensive overview of the fundamentals of programming language design. They also get a hands-on opportunity to design and implement a programming language to produce art in the style of a particular artist from works selected for the course.

Since many of his students are new to the art world, Barowy starts by teaching them the basic language of art that’s used to describe key elements such as lines, shapes, brushwork and colors.

“Students don’t need to talk about the work in a sophisticated way like art critics would,” Barowy says. “They just need to say what it is they’re seeing and then enter the information into a computer for it to reproduce those things from their description.”

Knowing the language of art, he says, enables students to understand the artist’s process and also to think computationally about how to fit the various elements together.

“One of the examples Barowy uses in the course is Josef Albers’ 1959 painting Homage to the Square: Warming. The painting features multiple inset squares of varying shades of orange that are set against a gray background. Barowy points out that the work’s simplicity is deceptive. “When you say to a computer, ‘Squares stacked on top of one another,’ how do you make it understand that accurately?” he asks. “Computers require precise instructions, but even with imprecise language, we still want the computer to be able to do something useful with it.”

Barowy, who has been teaching at Williams since 2017, has discovered that not all of his students were excited about learning programming languages. “Some students really loved the course, and others were there because it’s required for the major,” he says. “It’s harder to teach those students, so I really wanted to find a way of connecting with them. I’ve noticed over the years that many students here love the arts, and exposing them to a whole variety of different programming languages is what the course is about.”

Tricky spots are an inevitable part of the learning process. So Barowy meets with students to help them identify and work through problems. Programming, he says, is “actually incredibly difficult for us to do. Anyone who’s ever worked with any computer program knows that there’s often a disconnect between a computer doing what you tell it and what you want. So the question we consider in the course is, what can computers really do and how can we design new languages to do those things while avoiding misinterpretation?”

“‘When you say to a computer, ‘Squares stacked on top of one another,’ how do you make it understand that accurately?’”

—DAN BAROWY

Photographs by Bradley Wakoff
Artificial Intelligence (AI) seems to be developing at warp speed. And Sneha Revanur ’26—whom Político calls “the Greta Thunberg of AI” and who was named the youngest member of the Time 100 Most Influential People in AI—is working to ensure that we all stay one step ahead.

In high school, Revanur founded Encode Justice with the aim of “fighting for human rights, accountability and democracy in the age of AI” according to the organization’s website. Its membership has since grown to 900 high school and college students around the globe. Revanur grew up in California but is becoming increasingly familiar with Washington, D.C. This past summer she had an internship there at the Center for AI and Digital Policy, a nonprofit research group, with the support of Williams’ Alumni Sponsored Internship Program. And in October, she was on hand when U.S. President Joe Biden signed an executive order regulating AI.

Back on campus, Revanur has been busy running her nonprofit and being a sophomore. “It’s a lot of juggling calls in Sawyer and working to get papers done,” she says, adding that she’s grateful for her professors’ and peers’ support. “I really want to be involved in this conversation long-term,” she adds. “My highest-order desire is that I keep doing this work until I don’t need to do it anymore because it’s not necessary.”

Here’s where she’s focusing her efforts.

RESEARCH: One of Encode Justice’s first campaigns was “studying the impacts of a recidivism prediction tool that had been used by jurisdictions across the country to determine whether or not a defendant is likely to re-offend,” Revanur says. “We found staggering racial bias in that tool as well as other sorts of tools that are used in hiring and education and every other zone in public life. It’s really important that we break free from this perception that algorithms are automatically objective and neutral and think more critically about where we are deploying them in society.”

AWARENESS: Revanur and her colleagues are offering workshops to students around the world on topics including the ethics of AI, the intersection of social justice and computing, and algorithmic bias. More than 15,000 students have participated to date.

Encode Justice is also focused on the 2024 elections, raising awareness about unrestrained and biased AI. “Because there is a veneer of objectivity, she says, news consumers have a hard time distinguishing fact from fiction. “I’m really concerned about whether we’re potentially heading into something that has been described as reality collapse—a point at which we don’t know what to believe and we don’t have a sense of reality anymore because AI has transformed that notion of reality to an unrecognizable degree.”

ADVOCACY: Revanur and Encode Justice helped draft the blueprint for an AI Bill of Rights—five principles guiding the design, use and implementation of automated technology—released by the White House in 2022. Last May, the group sent an open letter to the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy seeking the inclusion of young people in congressional leaders’ AI oversight and advisory boards. Revanur says Encode Justice is planning to endorse whichever candidate in the 2024 presidential election has the strongest platform in terms of AI regulation.

During her internship, Revanur took part in a roundtable discussion about AI convened over the summer by Vice President Kamala Harris. She talked briefly with Lina Khan ’10, head of the Federal Trade Commission, and met with staffers for U.S. Reps. Don Beyer ’72, a member of the House Committee on Science, Space and Technology, and32. Each is a “huge player” in AI, Revanur says, adding, “I’m so filled with pride every single time I see Williams alumni out there influencing the conversation.”

INTERCONNECTION: Revanur says that it’s possible to rein in AI, but “it’s going to require a lot of intergovernmental coordination, because AI development is becoming increasingly borderless.”

Encode Justice’s international chapters are busy pressing political leadership in their countries to take action. “We’re going to need buy-in from rivalrous states and people who might have competing interests,” she says. “Unless we have a harmonized global AI governance approach and some clear-cut, standardized codes and regulations for AI development, it’s going to be difficult to enforce. As important as our work is here on the U.S. congressional front, it’s only going to make a difference if we’re tying that up with action on the international front to ensure intergovernmental coordination.”

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