

A Time of Prudence

Williams is so strong today because its leaders in the past were adept at dealing with the present while planning for the future. That balance is especially important now, as the drop in financial markets and the prospect of a long recession necessarily capture our attention. The letter I sent after the most recent board meeting spoke of the ways we intend to cut spending in order to protect our commitments to financial aid and to current faculty, staff and students while ensuring our endowment will retain its value for their future counterparts. You can read the letter at williamsawc.org/OXHMM/.



Kevin Kennerfick

The time calls not for panic but prudence. Williams heads into this global economic downturn with around the 10th-highest endowment per student in the country and should emerge from it roughly the same. In addition, history shows that financial crises can present great opportunities to those alert enough to see them and strong enough to act. In the case of Williams, that might be the chance to have an even greater pick than usual of top faculty prospects.

The steps we take now will help determine how we emerge from the economic turmoil, and since emerge from it we will, it's important that we continue to plan for the future.

In recent columns, I've written about the College's 2020 Project—the effort to identify the trends likely to affect Williams over the next dozen years and how best to respond to them. In addition to changes in U.S. demographics, in globalization and in the recruitment and retention of faculty, which I wrote about earlier, the remaining two themes involve technology and environmental sustainability.

While heartened by the College's progress toward its goal for reducing greenhouse gas emissions (williamsawc.org/QQVVC/), we

know that more needs to be done to seize opportunities for Williams to grow as a leader in this vital field.

We're combining the academic resources of the Center for Environmental Studies and the practical focus of the new Zilkha Center for Environmental Initiatives to advance on several fronts. We perform an environmental assessment for every significant capital project, and our newest buildings are designed to earn LEED certification. We've begun to tighten up our traditional buildings in ways that reduce their energy needs yet retain their New England charm.

To harness student energy, we now have the Thoreau Fellows—students trained to work with faculty, staff, architects and engineers to apply green design practices to College projects. The Zilkha Center hires student eco-reps to work on projects such as improving recycling and investigating a possible bike-sharing program. We also continue to explore possibilities for more renewable energy and for more involvement with sustainable food practices. Most of these efforts have the added advantage of saving money, now or in the future.

Prospects for greater use of information technology are also exciting. Innovations in that field promote creativity in teaching and learning. Faculty can incorporate new technologies to explain concepts and challenge students to think and express themselves in a variety of media—increasingly important skills in the 21st century. The key is to support faculty in acquiring new skills and to back them up in a timely way when they hit a glitch. The Center for Media Initiatives in the new Sawyer Library will be an important locus for much of this work.

More broadly, we need to take greater advantage of how technology can link Williams with the world. Students and faculty can now engage with resources and people far from Williamstown. Perhaps nothing enlivens a discussion more than drawing into it different global perspectives. At the same time, we can use technology to share our own academic resources more effectively and widely.

The possible silver lining in financial crises is that they force all of us to think harder about what's most important. Everything we do at Williams advances our mission, but some things do so more centrally. By prioritizing those more clearly, while still planning for the future, we can best position the College to continue providing the finest possible liberal arts education. It's certainly the case that the world has never needed more than it does now the public service that Williams provides. ■

—Morty Schapiro

LETTERS

A gem of a footnote on p. 60 of the 1935 autobiography *And Gladly Teach: Reminiscences*, by Bliss Perry, answers several questions encircling the famous remark by James A. Garfield about Mark Hopkins

and the log, noted in "Quotable Williams"

(September 2008). Perry, Class of 1881, a young student of the 78-year-old Hopkins, Class of 1824, writes: "This famous phrase, as originally uttered by General Garfield at a Williams dinner at Delmonico's in 1872 did not contain the word 'log.' Washington Gladden, who heard the speech, reported that Garfield's actual words were: 'A pine bench with Mark Hopkins at one end of it and me at the other is a good enough college for me.'" Perry's source is Theodore Clarke Smith's *Life and Letters of James Abram Garfield* (1925).

Garfield was talking about Hopkins and himself. During his two years at Williams, Garfield was "a favorite of President Hopkins," according to *The Life, Speeches and Public Services of Gen. James A. Garfield of Ohio* (1880). Washington Gladden, Class of 1859, known for "The Mountains" also attended the Delmonico's dinner, according to the Frederick Rudolph '42 book *Mark Hopkins and The Log* (1956).

Perry valued precision in writing. Besides being a renowned teacher, he was respected as a serious man of letters. He wrote many books and for 10 years edited *The Atlantic Monthly*. O. Henry was among many Perry admirers.

—Ernie Imhoff '59, Baltimore, Md.

Regarding George Steinbrenner's quote, "Winning is the most important thing in my life, after breathing. Breathing first, winning second" ("Quotable Williams"): How juvenile. How empty.

—Thomson von Stein '57, Rockville, Md.

Phil Smith '55 did a wonderful job capturing the man who was for so many of us the "first face" of Williams ("Admitting Success," June 2008). Fred Copeland's '35 warmth, his questions testing me in a friendly way and his enthusiasm were a bit overwhelming. But my appreciation for the quality of the man and his school

grew immeasurably when at our next

stop, Amherst, his opposite number had the keenness about his school and zest for his job of a giant sloth. Even the usual suspects farther East could not hold a candle to Fred.

I have one small correction. Though I only stayed two years I remember it well:

Shortly after we arrived on campus Dean Copeland told the whole freshman class that *we* were the first to have a majority of public high school students, by the smallest of margins (less than 1 percent). He seemed very pleased. Being a member of that first majority, I have never forgotten it.

—John H. Logie '61, Grand Rapids, Mich.

John Burghardt's '61 acrostic (June 2008) based on Chuck Webb's '61 *The Graduate* is fun to work and not a little nostalgic, especially for both the husband of a



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woman formerly married to a Mr. Robinson and a member of the '60s Dixieland band of Williams, the Route Two Tooters, clue P.

That name was the brainchild of Toby Smith

puzzle fun '60, an amateur song writer in those days, to wit, inter alia, the classic: "One Glass of Wine and I'm Fine."

—Al Oehrle '62, Bryn Mawr, Pa.

Sheff Otis' '98 "Seven under Seven" (March 2008) is the best article I've read in the *Alumni Review* in years. What

an antidote to the usual "here's what I've accomplished since graduation" thinking that so many of us are too often guilty of.

—Paula Butturini '73, Paris, France

Quite the Crowd

by Caroline Cretti '06

I was overwhelmed. To my left, a dozen women, decked out in glorified bathing suits; to my right, hundreds of people on Boston's Mass Avenue Bridge blowing by in a blur of camera flashes and white noise. Straight ahead—probably the most intimidating part. I was 20 minutes into the 26.2-mile Women's Olympic Trials Marathon. There was a long way to go.

I turned my eyes from the chaos to the ground and tried to calm the rising panic. For the next mile, I ignored what (I am told) was an amazing view of downtown Boston and the Charles for the black asphalt of Memorial Drive. Suddenly I heard my name.

I looked up, and there was a person in purple cow-patterned spandex screaming my name—no, not just one person, two! Three!

It took me a minute to figure it out. A group of alumni from the Williams Nordic ski team was cheering madly on the side of the road, clad in their famous cow-print uniforms. I smiled to acknowledge their bravery in wearing them in public (though they probably had been waiting for an excuse to break them out since their last ski race)—and spent the next mile and a half unable to wipe the grin from my face.

The streets were packed with Ephs, and a few very special spectators had chalked the road with encouraging words. I was literally surrounded by Williams pride and support. With each purple chalking, familiar shout or sign from even the most unexpected alum, I felt myself relax—light and ready to race.

I was reminded of an experience six years earlier. Right after my high school graduation cap toss, I felt a tap on my shoulder and turned to see a curious man who introduced himself as Gus Ball, Williams Class of 1942. (I soon realized that was a common habit of Ephs: state your name, shake a hand, give your class year.)

He had come to graduation just to invite my family and me to his home for dessert later that summer to "tell you about Williams." Then he gripped my arm and said, "We are just so proud of you."

At that moment he introduced an immediate, unmitigated new community—maybe "we" was "Williams," and Gus had simply and naturally taken it upon himself to stand as representative.

Dessert, of course, was more than cake or ice cream, and after an hour of regaling us with Williams history, Gus Ball cleared his throat.

"I thought I would sing for you before we ate," he said.

My parents and I exchanged quick looks, but without hesitation, the tiny 82-year-old man launched into "The Mountains."

A capella has always made me a little uncomfortable, so when Gus started belting, "The mountains! We greet them with a song" alone in his living room, I could barely keep it together. But just as I gulped down a snort, his voice cracked. I looked up and saw a few tears stream down his face.

"Let me just finish the last chorus," he said. That's when I knew Williams was going to be different.



The memory came back to me in a rush around mile seven of the marathon. I now know what makes Williams unique: its alumni, who will have the picture of themselves at Hopkins Gate placed right next to the one in the Alps with the 10th Mountain Division. Who will actually wear full-bodied, spotted purple spandex in the middle of Boston to make sure you see them cheering. Who will sneak onto one of the busiest roads in Massachusetts to write your name in purple chalk, prompting others to ask, "Wow, are you the one from Williams? You've got quite the crowd."

"Yep," I reply. "That's me. I'm from Williams." And tears come to my eyes. Gus would be so proud. ■

Caroline Cretti '06 hopes to give the Williams fans another shot at cheering her on for the 2012 Olympics.