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to WILLIAMS-STUDENTS

Dear Members of the Williams Community,

I hope you and your loved ones are healthy and safe; and that you're enjoying the start of the fall. As we reflect on our individual and collective experiences, particularly over the past year, we're reminded of the importance of community. While we continue to live in multiple pandemics—one manifesting as aggressions based on our identities and the other manifesting as a public health crisis—both cause harm and each impacts us and the communities that we are a part of in different ways. Therefore, we remain committed to doing all we can to ensure that our campus and the wider world become evermore inclusive, accessible, and respectfully engaging of a diverse range of identities and backgrounds. What follows is a series of updates and information about the Office of Institutional Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion's (OIDEI) continued work to foster these values.

### ***Special projects***

#### Davis Center Building Project

The [Davis Center Building Project](#) continues to move forward in support of a new and remodeled space that will support the community's growing needs and aspirations. The [building committee](#) has been working closely with the architects during the design phase. Please [visit the project webpage](#) for the latest information about this and future phases of the project. Many thanks to those who have been moving this effort forward despite the pandemic.

#### Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Planning

Last year all college administrative units were asked to [develop diversity, equity, and inclusion \(DEI\) plans](#). We encouraged units to pay particular attention to people, places, and operations as areas of opportunity. The resulting plans will be posted to unit websites and aggregated on [diversity.williams.edu](#) later this fall.

Last year, the Faculty Steering Committee hosted a series of roundtable conversations on furthering diversity, equity, and inclusion in academic units. We look forward to extending and deepening those conversations with individual units.

#### Committee on Diversity and Community

In 2020-21 we [charged the Committee on Diversity and Community](#) with imagining and crafting practices of communally accountable institutional memory that address the college's relationship to slavery, to the Indigenous populations who lived or live in this region, and to other aspects of our institutional past as it is entangled with colonialism, racism, discrimination, and struggles for justice; and to recommend ways we can document and acknowledge that history and engage in restorative actions. The committee's report, [Reckoning With Our Institutional Histories](#), includes in-depth information about the work of four subcommittees and also sets forth a series of recommendations for the college's consideration. I'm deeply grateful to the CDC and its leadership for their time, energy, inquiry, and recommendations.

Based on these recommendations, the college, with the endorsement of the Board of Trustees, has adopted an institutional land acknowledgement as a reflection of our relationship with the

Stockbridge-Munsee community (see below). You can find the text of the acknowledgement on [the OIDEI website](#) and also [the Stockbridge-Munsee Community's webpage](#).

We will provide updates as we move forward with other CDC recommendations.

#### Williams Reads

Relatedly, the CDC suggested in their report that it was time to rethink [Williams Reads](#). In recent years the Williams Reads program has taken place during First Days and focused on first-year students. The committee suggested a new approach that would involve campus more fully in each year's reading and would connect with our attention to institutional history.

With those goals in mind, this year's Williams Reads program will be open to the whole campus, culminating in discussions at [Claiming Williams](#). The text for this year, selected after community input, is Craig Steven Wilder's *Ebony and Ivy*, lauded as "a groundbreaking exploration of the intertwined histories of slavery, racism, and higher education in America." Wilder, the Barton L. Weller Professor of History at MIT, will deliver a keynote during Claiming Williams this winter.

Every year the college purchases copies of the Williams Reads book and makes them available to those participating in the program. Look for details later this semester on how to obtain your copy of the book.

#### Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Town of Williamstown

Last year, the college charged a [working group](#) with developing a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between Williams and the Williamstown Police Department. Our goal was to define and make visible our shared conception of the police's role and responsibility on campus, and the responsibility of Campus Safety staff when off campus. We later expanded the charge to envision an MOU with the whole town, encompassing local schools as well as law enforcement, and aiming to help make Williamstown more diverse and welcoming of all. Work on the MOU is a means by which to develop a shared set of guiding principles and terms of engagement.

As part of the working group's efforts last year, they held several listening sessions with the Williams community, gathering input about people's hopes for the MOU. They also held preliminary meetings with town officials, who were receptive to the project. The group will reconvene this month to continue progress toward a final document and agreement. Due to recent, significant turnover in town leadership, the MOU might not be signed until next spring semester, instead of this fall as we initially proposed.

#### **Ongoing initiatives**

##### Towards (Greater) Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity (TIDE) Grants

The college offers [TIDE grants](#) to support grassroots efforts that further our goals of diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice on campus and in the community, and to highlight and leverage the creativity and passion in our community. [We have awarded 29 grants](#) since the program's inception—a testament to the breadth of campus commitment. Applications are still being accepted for the 2021-22 award cycle, so please apply if you have a project in mind.

##### Trans Inclusion Committee

[The Trans Inclusion Committee](#) comprises staff, faculty, and students from across the college. The committee's current areas of interest include data collection and sharing regarding the

experiences of trans members of our community, and the assessment of campus facilities to ensure they are inclusive and serving our varied needs.

Over the past several years, the committee has encouraged changes to technology that allow individuals to add their pronouns to PeopleSoft, elevated the need for more all-gender restrooms on campus, and created [a layer of the campus map to identify those locations](#).

#### Accessibility

As part of the college's strategic plan, we want to continue creating, sustaining, and evaluating accessible environments across campus. We are currently reconstituting [the campuswide accessibility committee](#), which will be charged with coordinating our accessibility efforts and elevating pressing concerns so they can be addressed efficiently and proactively by the administration.

Those efforts across campus are indeed diverse:

A new workshop co-created by one of the Davis Center and Office of Accessible Education's Community Engagement Fellows and Accessibility Coordinators, called Disability 101, is now delivered to all MinCo groups. The Fellows also provide extensive peer education. We are also creating a student advisory board for the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Please look for a call for expressions of interest, coming soon.

On the curricular side, we are funding remote access for two Williams students to an American Sign Language course offered by Gallaudet University—an opportunity long sought by students here. The college has also dedicated testing space for students with accommodations, and continues to invest in assistive technology and software that enhance access to course materials.

In recruitment, we are increasingly attentive to accessibility experience in staff hiring, including in the OAE and the Davis Center. This is helping to deepen our work with faculty: The Davis Center and OAE have developed workshops on accessible pedagogy for faculty and the Office of Information Technology, and staff have provided specialized support to faculty who want to make their syllabi accessible.

A revamped [OAE website](#), developed in part by students, now offers access to a rapidly expanding array of resources and opportunities for students, faculty, and staff, including a portal for [reporting accessibility issues](#), [guidance for student groups](#) on how to create accessible options for participants with disabilities, guidance on accommodations and how to apply for them, and [advice for faculty and staff](#), including accessibility tips for document creation and online learning.

#### Racial Justice

Last year, the college announced [a commitment to furthering racial justice](#) by supporting organizations and the members of our community through philanthropic and participatory engagement. Williams contributed \$120,000 to select local, state, and national organizations, and also made funds available to students pursuing racial justice research and advocacy. Approximately two dozen students completed internships or fellowships with racial justice organizations, or developed their own projects to advance racial justice. In the coming weeks, students who are engaged in racial justice work will convene with staff from OIDEI and the

[Center for Learning in Action](#) to recommend distribution of a new round of grants to local, state, and national organizations and initiatives.

Partnership with the Stockbridge-Munsee Community Tribal Government  
Our partnership with [the Stockbridge-Munsee Community](#) deepens. The Community comprises descendants of many of the people who lived in this region before the arrival of European colonists, and who were subsequently displaced by them from the tribe's traditional lands.

The college offers a number of fellowships and programs to support students, faculty, and staff in working with the staff of the Community's Tribal Historic Preservation Office, located on Spring Street. Staff from the office have also partnered on faculty-student research projects and participated in many classes. You can learn about volunteer opportunities, get involved, and read the latest news about the Office and their work via the [Stockbridge-Munsee Community's page](#) of Williams' Diversity website.

### ***Programming***

We kicked off the semester with our annual Davis Center Block Party, a fall reception for new faculty and staff of color and their families, and a series of "welcome back" events hosted by the [Office of Pathways for Inclusive Excellence](#) for our Summer Humanities, Social Science, and Science students. The Pathways office was formerly known as the Office for Special Academic Programs.

It was wonderful to greet hundreds of students, staff, and faculty during these events. Thank you to our colleagues from Dining Services, Facilities, and Information Technology for always supporting our programming.

Following are just a few examples from among the many events planned for this academic year. Visit the [Diversity website](#) and [college Events calendar](#) for many more.

#### Davis Lecture

Each year [the Davis Lecture](#) commemorates [the lives of Black scholars and activists W. Allison Davis '24 and John A. Davis '33](#). This year, the Davis Lecture will focus on mental health and social justice with a lecture by [Dr. Thema Bryant](#), psychologist, minister, sacred artist, and advocate. The lecture, which will be delivered remotely, is scheduled for Tuesday, October 26, at 7:30 PM, and all are invited.

#### Indigenous Peoples' Days and Recognition

While Indigenous Peoples' Day is celebrated on Monday, October 11, we encourage celebration of and learning about native and indigenous communities throughout the year. The Davis Center recently hosted a visit to Stockbridge, MA, [a significant archaeological site](#) for the Stockbridge-Munsee Community. On subsequent visits, those who take part will have the opportunity to visit several exhibitions that the Stockbridge-Munsee Community has worked on in south Berkshire County, including the Mission House and Stockbridge Library. We are also supporting a student-developed panel and other programming related to celebrating and honoring indigenous and native peoples. More information will be provided in Daily Messages.

### ***Creating Inclusive Community and Supporting Diverse Communities***

There is a great deal of further work that goes on every year through college committees, advisory groups, and more.

#### Inclusive Learning Environments

The college prioritized work to make our learning environments more inclusive [in the Strategic Plan](#). Recent efforts have involved engaging both individual faculty who seek to consider the ways in which they are being inclusive and academic units as they reflect on the ways they might collectively model inclusivity for the students, faculty, and staff with whom they work most closely. To further this work, in August we welcomed an Associate Director for Inclusive Learning Environments at the Davis Center, helping position the college to teach and support pedagogical strategies that are inclusive of diverse identities and learning styles.

We will meanwhile also continue to build programming that supports learning about identities, bias, and discrimination, both on campus and in the broader community and region.

#### Continuing Conversations with IDEA2

This semester, we will begin convening the [Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Awareness, and Action Working Group \(IDEA2\)](#), a group of unit leaders from across campus who will discuss and address some of the most pressing DEI needs on campus. Bringing together this diverse group will empower and encourage unit leaders to collectively support a culture, in their own units and beyond, where everyone feels welcome and affirmed. The group's work will be organized around four guiding principles: Community, Innovation, Responsibility, and Restoration.

#### Restorative Practices and Intergroup Dialogue

Over the course of this year OIDEI will continue efforts to introduce restorative practices and intergroup dialogue into our community. These two approaches support effective communication and positive relationships between people and groups by bringing together people from different social groups and helps them talk across differences.

Members of our team are versed in both approaches and are developing a plan to introduce them to the community as a whole. We presented restorative practices to a group of student leaders this summer, and will continue to engage students, staff, and faculty throughout the year ahead.

#### Indigenities, Race, Gender, and Sexuality Initiative (IRGSI)

IRGSI provides a forum in which pre-tenure faculty can share their research and work in progress, discuss readings, and invite guest speakers helpful in support of the members' scholarly and artistic work, as well as for building intersectional, interdisciplinary, relational, and/or comparative approaches. We held an introductory gathering for eligible faculty earlier this fall and will continue to host gatherings throughout the academic year.

#### Affinity Groups

In addition to supporting several MinCo and other student affinity groups, OIDEI coordinates several affinity groups for faculty and staff. These groups provide space for faculty and staff and their families to come together in the community and support each other. We also routinely support and convene [LGBTQIA+ affinity groups, programming, and fellowships](#).

#### Climate Surveys

Finally, this fall Williams will participate in a racial climate survey run by the [Liberal Arts Colleges Racial Equity Leadership Alliance \(LACRELA\)](#). Williams is a member of the Alliance,

and the survey gives us an excellent opportunity to gather data on the experiences of our own community members, in ways that can also be analyzed by comparison with data from other institutions. The survey will be administered this fall at Williams and several peer schools.

In 2022 we are also planning to administer a survey of our own about campus climate more broadly, including ways that the experiences of students, staff, and faculty are influenced by their identities.

This is just a concise introduction to the many aspects of DEIA work at Williams. If you have questions or are interested in participating or sharing ideas, please don't hesitate to contact me or any member of [the team](#).

We undertake this work during a time of continuing aggression toward many communities—Black, Latinx, Native and Indigenous, Asian and Asian-American, LGBTQIA+, immigrant—and individuals, based on their gender, religion, and/or disability, socio-economic, veteran status, or other identities. Our campus is not free from such aggressions, and we are aware that for all our ongoing efforts to foster an inclusive environment on campus and in town, we still have work to do. We therefore encourage transparency and acknowledgement about the lived experiences of individuals based on their identities; and we seek to support our community in confronting biases and stereotypes so that we can come together to create an inclusive and supportive community in which all can thrive. We look forward to supporting and engaging you.

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## Williams Institutional Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

### Land Acknowledgement

*We respectfully acknowledge that Williams College stands on the ancestral homelands of the Stockbridge-Munsee Mohicans, who are the indigenous peoples of the region now called Williamstown. Following tremendous hardship after being forced from their valued homelands, they continued as a sovereign Tribal Nation in Wisconsin, which is where they reside today. We pay honor and respect to their ancestors past and present as we commit to building a more inclusive and equitable space for all.*