The Davis Center advances broad campus engagement with complex issues of identity, history, and cultures as they affect intellectual, creative, and social life.

The 2020-2021 academic year has begun! Reflecting back on our goals, visions and concerns a mere year ago, it should go without saying that we’re all engaged in a period of great growth and development. Not only has the Davis Center team changed, but everything has, on macro and micro levels, inter-and-intra personal levels - everything has changed.

In a time of change and challenge and it is important that we appreciate these times: remember that we cannot control what happens but we absolutely can control how we react and respond to the situations that we encounter.

We look forward to growing together, as a community. Now more than ever, we have to rally together to remain present, aware and willing to bear witness to what is happening all around us. These are historic times.

This newsletter is the first in this new paradigm and it's a work in progress. We want to introduce ourselves, some of the projects we’re working on and the community of student leaders around us, as well as highlight some events and opportunities that can help us stay engaged, connected and aware.
MEET & GREET

Aseel Abulhab
Assistant Director of the Davis Center

Hi all! My name is Aseel (she/her), and I'm a Williams '15. I was born and raised in metro-Detroit to Iraqi Muslim immigrant parents.

At Williams, I majored in History/International (now called Global) Studies, and I studied abroad in London. After graduation, I did a Watson Fellowship and a Fulbright to Jordan, where I explored Deafness and access (this is still so important to me, and would love to chat with anyone else who shares this interest and/or wants to learn American Sign Language!).

Just before coming back to Williams in this role, I did a Master in Social Work, and am using that knowledge to inform conversations around mental health and systemic issues in our community. I am so grateful to be back at the DC; happy first week of classes!

Bilal Ansari
Assistant Vice President for Campus Engagement

Welcome Class of 2024 and Welcome back Williams students. My name is Bilal Ansari and I am Assistant Vice Presidents for Campus Engagement.

There is no greater joy of mine in this role beyond being an Advisor to the Black Student Union, especially during this double pandemic time of COVID and Anti-Black racism in America.

This summer I have kept myself busy fighting for police reform and racist housing covenants here in Williamstown, Massachusetts.

Please reach out to me at ba3@williams.edu if you are interested in getting involved in Anti-Black racism campaigns or wish to discuss community organizing/social justice activism on and off-campus.

Drea Finley
Dialogue Facilitator

I joined the Williams community in April, as the college's inaugural Dialogue Facilitator. Born and raised in Buffalo NY, I am a first generation scholar who has committed my life's work to providing access to under-represented identities within higher education.

As a spoken word artist and community organizer, I am deeply attracted to building robust communities with an organic sense of realness. My scholarship works to interrogate the intersections of race, class, gender, spirituality and sexuality.

In my spare time, you can catch me playing some smooth chords, as I are also a jazz pianist. I'm also a member of the newly formed DIRE (Diversity, Inclusion, and Racial Equity) Committee within our Williamstown community. I welcome your outreach at df11@williams.edu.

Nat Montoya-Barnes
Hi Friends!
I'm Dr. Eden-Reneé. Although I'm the newest member of the DC team, I have lived in the Berkshires for 11 years. I previously worked in "south county" at Simon's Rock where I was a tenured faculty member before I was tapped to be Dean of Equity and Inclusion. Before that I went to Wesleyan undergrad (please don't hold that against me, sports fans!), Tulane for a Ph.D. in Social Psychology, and I did a National Science Foundation funded post doctoral fellowship at The Pennsylvania State University. I'm looking forward to using my education and passion for social justice as Director of the Davis Center!

I'm very excited to work alongside my comrades in the Office of Institutional Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in continuing to develop and sustain a welcoming environment at Williams. I hope to have an opportunity to say hello to everyone and be another voice to remind you that you belong here. Do note though, if you zoom with me, you will likely meet one or two of my meeting buddies (ages 7.5 and 3).

In my spare time you can find me centering the experience of marginalized communities in the Berkshire Community. I'm also really into self-care. Life can be hard, especially under the multiple pandemics we are in. I hope to encourage everyone to develop their self-care practice. Check out my column below! You can also click on my name to find out how big of a superhero nerd I am, and on the names of each of the DC Staff to find out a little more about us!

Best!
Dr. Eden-Reneé

While fairly new to the Williams community, I'm proud to be able to say I've been part of the northern Berkshire community for almost two decades. Before landing in north county, I've lived in many amazing places including the LBC, the Columbia River Gorge, the Catskills and Boston. That said I grew up in the Peanut Capital of the World: Dothan, Alabama.

I set out on my own at eighteen and because of it I have what is categorized as a "nontraditional" pathway to my Master's degree in education and this job. I've worked in a lot of different vocations and roles. From the dirtiest and most backbreaking work to the most delicate of touch; highly social jobs and deeply isolating work. As crazy at it sounds, I've liked almost all the work I've done. I like working. Work is part of my spiritual practice.

Much like my work experience, I have a varied set of abilities, hobbies and interests. If I had to describe myself in one word, it'd be CREATIVE. If I got to use more than two, I'd like to include, NICE. I'm creative and nice and look forward to serving this community to my fullest.

I hope you are safe and sound, healthy and happy, learning, living and loving. Make sure to get outside, if your environment allows it, every day: winter is coming, as they say. Appreciate what you have when you have it.

Happy fall semester, best wishes to all!
Community Engagement Fellows (CEFs)

The Community Engagement Fellows are a Davis Center-trained, peer-to-peer diversity education group. The DC Community Engagement Fellows work closely with the DC staff and are part of the Davis Center’s effort to provide education for the campus on issues of identity, power, and privilege in order to build a more inclusive community.

Office of Institutional Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (OIDEI)

The Office of Institutional Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at Williams College dedicates itself to a community where all members can thrive. We work to eliminate harmful bias and discrimination, close opportunity gaps, and advance critical conversations and initiatives that promote inclusion, equity, and social justice on campus and beyond.

Click here to meet the 2020/2021 CEF crew!  
Click here to meet the OIDEI team!
Meet the 2020-2021 MinCo Groups

The Davis Center works closely with student groups across campus. Born out of the students' advocacy and protests of students, the Davis Center continues to fulfill its mission by working closely with student organizations. Included in those groups is the Minority Coalition ("MinCo"), student affinity groups united under the umbrella of MinCo. The Davis Center provides advising and logistical support for these groups.

MinCo provides a more unified voice against prejudice and discrimination against minority students by serving as a mechanism for minority groups to come together in organizational, social, academic and political spheres. MinCo facilitates cooperation and communication amongst its member organizations, the campus and the Williamstown community and is an active voice in constructing a stronger community more aware of minority concerns.

Happy Day, Ephs!

For those of you who don’t know me, I’m Dr. Eden-Reneé Hayes, the new Director of the Davis Center. I’ve decided to take over a small section of the DC Times to remind everyone to engage in SELF-CARE!

We at the DC want to encourage everyone to practice happiness. Happiness seems elusive, but it doesn't have to be! One way to grasp happiness is to do something positive on purpose.
So, every month, I’ll post a self-care challenge. Each exercise will be simple and (usually) take 15 minutes or less, but can be done every day of the month. You can do as many or as few of the practices as you like. If you have time, consider journaling your experiences.

**This month’s challenge is SAVORING!**

Next time you notice that you experience anything pleasurable, stop and savor it. Take a deep breath and think about how good it feels. Some examples of things to savor are a good grade on a paper, praise from a colleague, an engaging conversation, a piece of chocolate, the smell of clean laundry, or dessert with a friend (virtually or otherwise!). Does the experience make you feel at peace? Are there other positive feelings evoked? Take more deep breaths and savor those positive feelings.

**Want to go deeper? Use a savoring strategy and write about the experience.**

**Savoring strategies:**
- **Sharing With Others:** You can seek out others to share the experience. If that is not possible, tell others how much you valued the moment.
- **Memory Building:** Take mental photographs or even a physical souvenir of the event and reminisce about it later with others.
- **Self-Congratulation:** Do not be afraid of pride. Tell yourself how impressed others are and remember how long you have waited for this to happen.
- **Sharpening Perceptions:** Focus on certain elements of the experience and block out others.
- **Absorption:** Let yourself get totally immersed in the pleasure and try not to think about other matters.

Want to learn more? [Check out this brief article in Psychology Today.](https://em-ui.constantcontact.com/em-ui/em/page/em-ui/email#edit/activity/a1f6363b-ea6a-44bb-b18a-f87ff0b0a763)

Best,

Dr. Eden-Reneé
TalkSpace - Free Online Therapy for Students

TalkSpace is an innovative online therapy service that is now available, at no cost and effective immediately, to all enrolled students, twelve months a year and even while traveling abroad.

TalkSpace connects users to a dedicated, licensed therapist from a secure, HIPAA-compliant mobile app and web platform. Their roster comprises more than 5,000 licensed clinicians from across the country, who collectively speak over forty languages. You can send your therapist a text, voice or video message anytime, from anywhere, throughout your time at Williams.

Williams College and the IWS is providing this service to students in addition to all of our existing on-campus offerings in psychotherapy, psychiatry and on-call crisis services, as well as the wellbeing promotion events, workshops and groups we organize throughout the year.

To register, visit www.talkspace.com/williamscollge, enter your Williams email address and follow the prompts.

The COVID-19 Health Advocacy Training
DC online workshop now available

This series of six short videos addresses COVID-19 and safer practices, as well as caring for oneself and for each other during this pandemic. The training examines racialized interpretations and impacts of COVID-19, and why social identities matter in dealing with the virus and with each other, as we engage in sometimes challenging discussions.

Created by Davis Center Community Engagement Fellows, this training is a peer to peer education and advocacy initiative, that others may find informative and helpful. The videos are available on-line, and follow-up discussion opportunities are available.

Click here to access the online/virtual Covid-19 Health Advocacy Training

Upcoming Events & Opportunities
Getting 'back-to-school' is worth celebrating! The DC has collaborated with DJ Syxx Figgaz to provide an opportunity to dance, see friendly faces and learn more about the DC team. This virtual event is free! There will be raffles, games and more! Friday the 18th of September starting at 6 p.m.

Click here to register and automatically be entered in an Amazon gift card!

The BSU would like to announce we are partnering with Converging Worlds for our introductory meeting this Sunday! With the stress of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the transition to virtual/remote learning we wanted to focus our attention on mental health and wellness for Black students. THIS upcoming Sunday 9/13 at 2pm will be the first event in the September series focused on the various resources available to students. Event speakers include: BSU, Converging Worlds, SOCA, Sisterhood, the Griffins, WASO, the Chaplains’ Office, The Davis Center, the Deans’ Office, and IWS.

Click here to learn more about this important event

Have you seen VOICES 2020 yet?

In previous years, Voices! was one of the first community events for incoming Williams College first years. The entire cohort would file into a large theater capable of holding the group and would listen to a variety of stories told by Williams sophomores, juniors and seniors. These stories would help give context to the academic environment, as well as help prepare first years for many different challenges that might be encountered. There were laughs, there were tears, and a little bit of everything in between. Obviously, this year is different.
While this project is first and opportunity to provide First Years with the opportunity to learn from the wisdom of others through the Voices program, it's wonderful for all to realize what a great community we host. As you explore, you'll encounter the rich diversity of individuals and experiences: each expressing themselves in a variety of ways—a small sample of the wealth and depth of the Williams College community.

Lavender Voices:
Darnell Moore: Author, Activist, Auteur.

Wednesday, Sept. 23, 2020, 6 p.m. via Zoom.

Moderated by Erica Wall, director of Berkshire Cultural Resource Center.

FREE and open to the public.

Join us for a moderated discussion with author Darnell Moore on his book "No Ashes In The Fire" and LGBTQIA+ issues. This event is made possible through the generosity of alumni and friends who contribute annually to The Lavender Fund.

In conjunction with the lecture, the MCLA Freel Library will host a virtual book discussion of "No Ashes in the Fire" on Facebook from Sept. 17 - 22. Free copies of the book are available to students. To join the virtual discussion, click here.

For further information, contact us at advancement@mcla.edu or 413-662-5224 or CLICK HERE TO REGISTER.

Program in Teaching – An Introduction to Racial Literacy

What does "Racial Literacy," really mean? How is this pedagogical practice employed to create a more 'aware' society and what more needs to be done. The Program in Teaching will host their first in a series of talks about this and much more. This event is on Wednesday, September 16 at noon. Make sure to read more about this event to learn about how the are helping make this event a little more like "the good ol' days" of 2019. The Zoom link can be found there, too! Click here to learn more about Program in Teaching, in general.

https://em-ui.constantcontact.com/em-ui/em/page/em-ui/email#edit/activity/a1f6363b-ea6a-44bb-b18a-f87ff00a763
Submissions requested:
Williams Black Lives Matter Project

Williams Student Union and Williams Libraries are collaboratively putting out a call out for submissions from all Williams students, staff, and faculty for photos, videos, poetry, art, and reflections on the current protests spurred by the recent murder of George Floyd, brought about by ongoing structures of white supremacy, systemic racism against Black people, and policing structures that perpetuate white supremacy.

We are putting this call out to center the Black experience in our collections and to preserve histories that disproportionately and purposefully have been undocumented. This collaborative archival project, The Williams Black Lives Matter Project, will be made accessible and preserved for perpetuity in Special Collections. This project is a co-archiving initiative. Co-archiving is a non-hegemonic process of gathering and organizing records with a group.

Click here to learn more about how to submit to this living history project

Lehman Community Engagement for Volunteer Opportunities in Williamstown and the Berkshires

The Lehman Board connects students with service projects in the wider Berkshire community. At Lehman, we believe that the Williams campus is as big as you want it to be. By getting involved in the greater community, you not only expand your horizons, but your learning, friendships, and memories.

Find more about us and projects go to click here.
You should join EphLink

EphLink is the most convenient and effective way for you to build meaningful connections with alumni. Over 3,000 alumni have volunteered to advise students and fellow alumni on everything from helping shape and form career choices to the general Williams experience! Connect with Ephs with shared identities and interests via one-on-one connections or group involvement, developing your confidence in networking skills. You can also search for an internship, full time, and project-based opportunities posted by Williams alumni. Also, the ’68 Center’s career advisors have established Career Communities on EphLink. Career Communities are organized by industry, not major, and provide an opportunity to connect to specific, tailored industry resources and programs. So, if you are unsure of your career interest, join as many as you like to begin your career exploration.

Come work on campus sustainability with the Zilkha Center this year!

We are hiring for a number of paid internship positions that focus on moving our campus to more sustainable food sources, getting to zero waste, educating the campus community through digital communications and stewarding gardens on campus. Apply by Sunday, September 13th. The complete position information and the application can be found here!

ROOTS: Northern Berkshire Teen Center

Roots Teen Center serves northern Berkshire county: due to it’s downtown North Adams location, especially serves the teens of that community. It provides enriching opportunities in the arts, activism and local community services in particular, but also invites teens into a variety of work environments that might not be accessible to them. Much like in other areas, much of their work has gone online, but if you’re looking to positively impact the local community, consider being part of Roots. This program is actually open for individuals up to 21 to participate, so also if you’re looking for a community to be part of: they’ll welcome you warmly.
Click here to ensure that you are registered to VOTE!

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