I heard a bird sing in the dark of December. A magical thing. And sweet to remember. We are nearer to Spring than we were in September. I heard a bird sing in the dark of December. -- Oliver Herford

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

December Greetings!
DIRECTORS NOTE:
This holiday season marks the end of a difficult year. For me, and for many others on campus, it also marks the end of our first semester at Williams. I hope that all of us first years have found those that we connect with, settled into a new culture, and had joyful moments. If you haven't or are looking for more, know that The Davis Center is here for you to help you to find your space.

This month we also celebrate the adaption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (December 10, 1948) and International Day of Persons with Disabilities (December 3).

In this month's newsletter, we remind you to nurture empathy, introduce you to Black American Sign Language, ask you to get out (even in the cold!!), invite applications for various opportunities, and keep you abreast of chances to virtually engage.

We look forward to seeing you in the new year!

Enjoy!
Eden-Reneé
One of the keys to happiness is social connection, yet the ability to do so has been impacted by social distancing. But COVID has not stopped us from distant socializing! In our distant socializing, we have seen our friends and colleagues’ furpals, listened to toddlers trying to take over meetings (I know mine isn’t the only one!), and have been given a window into someone else’s struggles. COVID has sparked greater empathy that we can continue to bolster. If we could reinforce this empathy in ourselves and in others, we could do more to move forward as a campus (and as a nation). One practice I found is called active-constructive responding. This method requires one to listen to someone talking about their own successes (a good grade, leading a meeting that went well) and respond enthusiastically, positively, and ask questions. One key is to not talk about yourself, just share in their happy moment. So, this holiday season, let’s consider giving our time rather than gifts. Try to seek out someone you haven’t spoken to in a while and engage in active-constructive responding. Turns out, this method increases your own well being!!

Want to go deeper? Engage in active-constructive responding at least once a week this holiday season, especially when you feel like you need some connection yourself. Reflect on your interactions in your journal.

Want to learn more? Read this article which gives a deeper explanation, examples, and more benefits of active-constructive responding.

Want to talk about it? I have office hours on Wednesdays from 1-3pm . . . except during the Winter Shutdown period (December 19 - January 4). The link to join my zoom changes from week to week but can be found on my appointment page!

Take Care!
Eden-Reneé
Dear Davis Center Times Readership,

My name is Aseel Abulhab, and I’m the Assistant Director of the DC. Welcome to Williams Signs! Each newsletter, I will share a new phrase or sign in ASL and a related fun fact.

If you have any additional questions or want to engage on the subject, please reach out to me at aa9. Happy signing!

New Sign Phrase: This week, instead of a phrase, we’re highlighting Black American Sign Language, or BASL. It is a dialect of American Sign Language, developed by Black D/deaf folks in the 1800s and 1900s during segregation.

Watch Charmay as she shared more about it in this video!
Yes, it's cold but...
GET OUT: It's Good For You!

Much like exercise and eating plenty of vegetables, getting outside in the cold is GOOD FOR YOU. Exposure to cold air not only activates the immune system, but it also helps your skin create the Vitamin D required to support mind/body well being. Cool-weather helps you exercise harder and longer because ‘overheating,’ isn’t an issue. An hour of merely shivering has been observed by endocrinologists to increase one’s metabolic rate as much as fivefold. Scientists from Maastricht University in the Netherlands have shown that when exercise isn’t an option that “regular exposure to mild cold” improves metabolic syndrome symptoms and leads to more efficient weight loss.

There are other physical health benefits to exposure to cold air including supporting a good night’s sleep. But perhaps the most important aspect is this: MORE THAN EVER, getting outside is imperative to your health because of the pandemic we are currently enduring: uncirculated, warm air improves the ability of a virus to be transmitted from person to person but getting outside (using masks and diligently following the six-foot buffer) with others is the safest way to be together, even in the cold.

Perhaps your health isn’t your biggest concern right now, do understand there are many other reasons to get outside in the winter, namely: IT IS BEAUTIFUL. The world we share is a wonderful place, one just needs to get outside to witness the beauty. Believe it or not, there are mushrooms even in winter---plenty of them; there are a wide variety of animals to appreciate, the bird song can be downright divine. Every season has its own special colors: even in winter you’ll find green, yellow, and red--again, one just needs to be out to see them.
Thus far, the Berkshire winter has been gentle--very little snow or frigid temperatures: this will certainly change. Eventually, it'll be warm again and we'll all get to be together, but until then, get outside--bundle up, explore, have fun, enjoy each other...I'm around: write to me if you need anything. Including a walking partner for an hour or so. -[Mime]

UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES & DEADLINES

The '68 Center and the Davis Center present:

**Racial Justice Idea Sprint Winter 2021**

($800 stipend included)

**January 4th through January 27, 2021**

We are looking for 12 students passionate about having an impact on Racial Justice to apply the Entrepreneurial Method to this vexing problem. Students will form teams, participate in brainstorming sessions and a few workshops and then research and develop an idea.

Win a $800 stipend to apply the Entrepreneurial Method to the issues around Racial Justice over the winter break. Students can come with an idea or participate in structured brainstorming to zero in on a viable idea. Work on an important issue, learn how the Entrepreneurial Method can help solve problems, and earn some spending money along the way!

- Jan 5-8: Readings/videos - Brainstorming session to identify a worthy project, build teams
- Jan 11-15th: Training on Design Thinking, Business Model Canvas, Asana Project Management, and Networking, research and outreach
- Jan 18-22nd: Outreach, idea development, and validation
- Jan 27th: Demo Day with Alumni Panel
- TBD Social Entrepreneur Guest

Details:
Information sessions: Register on Handshake!
12/15 Info Session 5:00 pm to 5:30 pm
12/16 Info Session 5:00 pm to 5:30 pm

Application Process:
To apply, please upload a statement of interest (1 page max) and resume to Handshake.

Deadline: December 21st.

You don’t have to have an idea already to participate!

Students must attend and actively participate in all scheduled and unscheduled sessions, including meeting with their team to receive the full stipend.
The student must submit a reflective diary report detailing their work, obstacles, and impressions, including if they wish to continue their project over the summer.
Selected students will complete a Racial Justice Application to receive their stipend.
$800 stipend will be awarded on February 5th, 2021.
Participation in the Idea Sprint cannot be combined with a wINTERNship.

Projects for Peace

$10,000 Grant Available for 2021 Davis Projects for Peace

Williams College has been invited to nominate one or two student proposals for a $10,000 grant for summer projects that "...promote peace and address the root causes of conflict among parties." One hundred such grants will be awarded nationwide.

The Davis Projects for Peace program supports student-developed projects that would foster peace in the world. The program is designed to "...encourage student initiative, innovation, and entrepreneurship focusing on conflict prevention, resolution, or reconciliation." In the past, successful approaches have included "...fostering diplomacy or otherwise contrib[ing] to advancing peace processes underway; promoting economic opportunity and entrepreneurship among those in post-conflict areas; finding creative ways to bring people on opposite sides of issues together...through arts, sports, music...to promote a common humanity;... [and] starting or leveraging initiatives, organizations ...or infrastructure projects to build/rebuild community."

What does “Projects for Peace” hope to accomplish?

The program hopes to encourage student initiative, innovation and entrepreneurship focusing on conflict prevention, resolution or reconciliation. Some of the most compelling projects to date have reflected one or more of the following characteristics:
Contributing to conflict prevention;
Ameliorating conditions leading to violence/conflict;
Looking for and building on shared attributes among differing peoples, races, ethnicities, tribes, clans, etc.;
Fostering diplomacy or otherwise contribute to advancing peace processes underway;
Promoting economic opportunity and entrepreneurship among those in post-conflict areas;
Finding creative ways to bring people on opposite sides of issues together, such as through art, sports, music or other techniques to promote a common humanity;
Developing leadership and mediation skills training for those in conflict or post-conflict societies;
Starting or leveraging initiatives, organizations (e.g. education, health) or infrastructure projects to build/rebuild community

You can find more information about Projects for Peace [HERE](http://www.davisprojectsforpeace.org/).

**ELIGIBILITY**
Any student or student group is eligible to submit a proposal for consideration. Graduating Seniors are welcome to apply. Projects can be either domestic or international in focus.

**HOW to APPLY**
To be considered, a student (or group of students) must:
- Prepare a written project proposal which describes the project (who, what, where, how), including expected outcomes and prospects for future impact (not to exceed two pages). Proposals should include pre-approval of all involved parties and organizations involved in the project. Proposals will be reviewed by a faculty/staff committee, which may request revisions and/or clarifications. The proposal(s) that Williams selects will be submitted to the Davis family in February; awards will be announced in March. You can view previous project proposals and reports [HERE](http://www.davisprojectsforpeace.org/).
- Develop a one-page budget that includes all significant costs, such as airfare, lodging, food, and materials. Please consult the budget template form [HERE](http://www.davisprojectsforpeace.org/).
- The name of a Williams College faculty member (“references”) whom we will contact to assess your suitability for a Davis Projects for Peace Award. If you are making a joint proposal, we require one reference for each applicant.

More information about the Davis Projects for Peace program, including FAQs, proposal guidelines, and the proposals and reports from previously funded projects, can be found at: [http://www.davisprojectsforpeace.org/](http://www.davisprojectsforpeace.org/).

**DUE DATE**
Proposals must be submitted to: Clinton Williams (dcw2@williams.edu) by 5 p.m. on Monday, January 11, 2021.

More information about the Davis Projects for Peace program, including FAQs, proposal guidelines, and the proposals and reports from previously funded projects, can be found at: [http://www.davisprojectsforpeace.org/](http://www.davisprojectsforpeace.org/).

Questions?
Please direct all inquiries to Clinton Williams in Special Academic Programs and you can find more information about Projects for Peace [HERE](http://www.davisprojectsforpeace.org/). Interested students should NOT contact the Davis
ONLINE/VIRTUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Davis Center Created Virtual Workshops

- Covid-19 Health Advocacy Virtual Workshop
- Allyship Virtual Workshop
- Facilitating Difficult Conversations: A Virtual Discussion

Runnin' to Grace with Rashida Braggs

Thursday, December 17 at 5:30 PM EST

Rashida K. Braggs shares part two of her "Grace" series in a virtual presentation hosted with the Williams College Museum of Art. In this performance-in-progress event, "Runnin' to Grace," is a short video performance that reflects her observations as Black faculty navigating the pandemic daily and teaching in hybrid mode throughout the fall semester at Williams College. This performance-in-progress event is prefaced by introductory and contextual remarks and followed by a Q&A session.

CLICK HERE TO REGISTER FOR THIS EVENT

IN, AROUND, AND ABOUT THE BERKSHIRES
"CLC welcomes Heather Bruegl, Director of Cultural Affairs for the Stockbridge Munsee Community, to Nature Night!

At this month’s Nature Night, we’ll learn from Heather as she shares the history of the Stockbridge Munsee band of Mohicans.

The Mohicans lived in what we now refer to as Columbia County before they were driven west to Wisconsin. Heather will discuss the tribe’s history here and the traditional ways Native Americans take care of the land, stewarding it for the next seven generations."

Columbia County, New York abuts Berkshire County and it is acknowledged that Williams College sits on the historic land of the Stockbridge-Munsee Band.

The African American Heritage Trail encompasses 29 Massachusetts and Connecticut towns in the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area, and celebrates African Americans in the region who played pivotal roles in key national and international events, as well as ordinary people of achievement.

Among the key 48 sites along the trail:

- W.E.B. Du Bois boyhood Homesite, a national landmark property in Great Barrington, and the Burghardt homestead where young Du Bois lived for a time.
- Col. Ashley House in Sheffield where Elizabeth ‘Mum Bett’ Freeman was enslaved and whose successful suit for liberty set the stage for the abolition of slavery in Massachusetts.
- Samuel Harrison House in Pittsfield, home of the 54th Massachusetts Regiment chaplain who protested discriminatory pay practices.

The Berkshires are home to over 80 species of edible wild plants, some of which are more nutritious and/or flavorful than their cultivated counterparts. Among these toothsome plants are at least two dozen non-native species, most of which are maligned as weeds or invasives. While it is true that many of these species are indeed ecologically deleterious, the good news is that edible weeds and invasives can provide abundant, tasty and guilt-free foraging opportunities. Join wild edibles enthusiast Russ Cohen, author of the book Wild Plants I Have Known…and Eaten, to learn about comestible virtues of more than a dozen non-native species available for harvesting the Berkshire in the spring. Russ Cohen, naturalist and wild foods enthusiast, grew up and now lives outside of Boston. That said: he has spent considerable time in the Berkshires, most notably when he worked for the state Riverways Program in the Department of Fish and Game from the 1990s until 2015, as part of his territory included the Hoosic and Housatonic.
A presentation on the Racial History of Williamstown will be on the 14th of December at 5:00 p.m. est. Senior Environmental Studies Concentrators Katie Orringer and Morgan Dauk will present their semester-long work on racism in the built environment. This project was completed during Professor Gardner’s Environmental Planning Workshop (ENVI 302).

The students focused their efforts on gaining an understanding of the racial and socioeconomic history of Williamstown through interviews, newspaper articles, and document analysis, and have created a report that outlines the history of four neighborhoods and highlights how that history has influenced and shaped the area. They collaborated with DIRE Committee members Andrew Art and Bilal Ansari for this project. Bilal is also the Assistant Vice President for Campus Engagement in the Office of Institutional Diversity and Equity at Williams College. Based on this research, they have developed recommendations for town bylaws and plans that promote diversity and equity.

Click here to join the webinar

PLEASE TAKE CARE, FRIENDS:
WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU AGAIN

COVID-19 AND YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

While we are familiar with viruses like the common cold and the flu, the coronavirus (COVID-19) is new and presents a situation that none of us could have imagined a few short months ago. The fact that it is extremely contagious has resulted in business closures, social distancing, and quarantine measures which have disrupted our daily lives. It is more important now than ever to pay attention to mental health during this time of isolation and uncertainty.

YOUR CONCERNS ARE VALID
There are many reasons that you might be concerned or worried about COVID-19. Some of the most common are:

- Getting sick
- Passing the virus onto others, especially those that are high-risk
- Adjusting to a new reality for an uncertain amount of time
- Taking care of and supporting your family
- Concern about the health of your friends and family
- Financial stress
- Not being able connect with friends and family the way you’re used to
- Shortages of certain common supplies

**REALIZE WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL**

One of the most frustrating things about COVID-19 is that so much about the virus and the limitations on where you can go are out of your control. However, there are things that you can control, and focusing on those things can provide you with some comfort. Some of the things you can control include:

**YOUR MIND AND BODY**
- Keep a healthy diet
- Exercise at home
- Get enough sleep
- Do not smoke or drink alcohol excessively
- Take care of your mental health
- Maintain self-care and personal hygiene

**YOUR IMMEDIATE ENVIRONMENT**
- Your house, your bedroom, your closet, your kitchen – now is the time to clean and get organized
- Make responsible choices about when to leave the house and only go out if necessary
- Limit the number of people you come into contact with
- Work from home if you are able to

**WHAT YOU CONSUME**
- Don’t overdo your news and information intake
- Get your information from reliable sources like the CDC or WHO
- Watch TV, movies, and videos that make you feel good

**HOW YOU PREPARE**
- Keep 2-4 weeks of food on hand
- Avoid overstocking on supplies that are in high demand so other people can have enough of the essentials too
- If you take medication, get refills and keep a month’s supply at home if possible

**HOW YOU PROTECT YOURSELF**
- Regularly wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and water or use a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Avoid greeting people by shaking hands, kissing or hugging
- Keep 6 feet of distance between you and anyone who is coughing or sneezing

**HOW YOU PROTECT OTHERS**
- Stay home if you are sick aside from getting medical care
- Cover your coughs and sneezes
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces

**SIGNS OF ANXIETY**

It is normal to be worried and stressed during times of crisis. While worry is a part of anxiety, people with anxiety tend to experience more exaggerated feelings of worry and tension. Some common symptoms include:

- Uncontrollable worry or dread
- Stomach and digestion troubles
- Trouble with concentration
- Increased heart rate
- Changes in energy and sleep patterns
- Irritability and/or restlessness
MANAGING ANXIETY

There are small things that everyone can do while practicing social distancing or self-quarantine to help reduce the amount of anxiety they are experiencing.

- Ask someone to be your support buddy. Call, text, or video chat as needed.
- Exercise at home.
- Use resources like online support groups or the Crisis Text Line (Text MHA to 741741).
- Set boundaries with your phone.
- Use a mindfulness or meditation app.
- Set a timer for every hour to get up and stretch or take a walk.
- Create a new routine.
- Take 10 deep breaths when you feel stressed.

WHEN ANXIETY WON’T LET UP

If you’re taking steps to manage worry and anxiety during the COVID-19 crisis but they don’t seem to be helping, there are additional resources you can take advantage of.

**Mental Health Screening**

If you feel like you are struggling with your mental health, visit mhascreening.org to check your symptoms.

It’s free, private, and anonymous. Once you have your results, MHA will give you information and resources to help you start to feel better.

**Crisis Hotlines and Textlines**

If you’re experiencing emotional distress related to COVID-19, crisis counselors are available 24/7, 365 days a year.

Call 1-800-985-5990 or text “TalkWithUs” to 66746.

If you are in crisis or thinking about suicide, get connected to a local crisis center and get in touch with someone immediately.

Call 1-800-273-8255 (TALK) or text “MHA” to 741741.

Find more information and resources about COVID-19 and mental health at mhanational.org/covid19.
In addition to its existing on-campus health and wellbeing services for students, Williams College is partnering with Talkspace to provide convenient, personal, and professional therapy via online messaging and live video, year-round. With Talkspace, all Williams students can regularly send unlimited text, audio, and video messages to a dedicated licensed therapist anytime, anywhere. As of August 1, 2020, students also have access to up to four (4) 30-minute live video sessions per month. Talkspace is confidential and secure. 

There are no fees for Williams students using Talkspace.