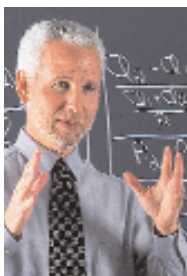


PRESIDENT'S VIEW



Deep Roots

As with most adages, there's truth in the encouragement to "bloom where you're planted." This phrase is usually meant to discourage the seeking of greener pastures, but it also applies to an institution like Williams, which isn't moving anywhere. My predecessor Zephaniah Swift Moore tried that experiment 180 years ago, and it obviously hasn't worked. (Just joking, of course.)

For Williams the saying reminds us that the College's growth depends significantly on the health of the local community in which it's so deeply rooted.

Alumni instinctively know this. Few things warm the heart more than seeing—at the end of a long journey (and, yes, it's usually quite a long journey)—the sign announcing arrival in Williamstown. An increasing number of alumni are even finding ways to make the Berkshires their permanent home. Williams would be a very different college in any other location; our identity is forever bound with this wonderful place.

Many colleges are set atop a hill or walled off from their neighbors, but not ours. We've always resided at the geographic center of the community, even when agriculture dominated the economy. And now the College finds itself the largest employer throughout the whole north Berkshire region.

Perhaps because of this geography, Williams long has engaged with the community. College officials have played prominent roles in local affairs as far back as the 19th century. That involvement has mushroomed in recent years, however, as Williams has more clearly realized the responsibilities and opportunities of community engagement.

The amount and types of College involvement have grown far too long for me to list here. Students, faculty and staff contribute to the community in so many ways. College events and, often, College facilities are open to local residents. Most interactions focus on education, as they should, and the benefits flow both ways. Our neighbors learn from attending lectures and using the library, while our students grow by practice teaching at the elementary school and performing environmental planning analysis for local governments.

For two entities whose futures are so closely entwined, the College and the community traditionally have used remarkably separate processes for long-range planning. No more. Thanks to the efforts of Vice President for Administration and Treasurer Helen Ouellette, joint planning now gives both entities a clearer view of the future.

In addition to all this personal interaction with the College's neighbors, Williams has an important financial stake in the community. As a nonprofit institution, we are stewards of the resources entrusted to us by fee-payers and donors and are bound by honor to devote those resources to the education of current and future Williams students. Room still exists, though, for College financial investment in the local community.

The logic is as follows. Williams exists to educate students. The greatest determinant of the quality of their education is the quality of faculty and staff. We can only recruit and retain the best if the local community is healthy. So when the College, after careful consideration, invests in the local infrastructure, especially in public education and healthcare, every dollar benefits our current and future students. This includes the pledges we're paying over several years toward the construction of a new Williamstown Elementary School building and to the capital campaign of North Adams Regional Hospital as well as a cash infusion to forestall a potentially disastrous budget crisis at Mt. Greylock Regional High School. That the whole community also benefits from these investments is a very happy and healthy convergence.

This new, more active relationship with the community is still developing. In time it should include less reaction to dire situations and more active involvement in advancing the region's well-being.

The College is so fortunate in its location. I'm proud that, going forward, Williams' engagement with Williamstown and the Berkshires—with the soil that enriches both town and gown—will be more vigorous and intentional.

—Morty Schapiro