



## Bucking a Trend

**M**ore has proven to be better regarding the Williams faculty. The curricular innovations the faculty endorsed as the heart of the College's strategic plan focused on tutorials, interdisciplinary teaching and experiential learning, and on new requirements in quantitative or formal reasoning and in intensive writing, the latter to be taught in small sections. At the same time, we decided to reduce average class size.

Reaching these goals required increasing the number of faculty, and the timing of this decision proved fortunate. While the economy reduced faculty hiring elsewhere, we were able to appoint the most exciting crop of new professors in recent memory, bringing with them to campus new energy and ideas. Today, as the national job market swings back into balance, we've almost completed our addition of 30 new positions, an increase of 15 percent.

As important as who these new professors are, however, is what they've enabled the College to do.

Most notable is our success in reducing class size. Two years ago, less than 60 percent of classes had fewer than 20 students; now it's more than 70 percent. The number of tutorials, the College's celebrated program in which professors meet weekly with pairs of students, has grown in two years from 21 to 46, including 19 tutorials focused on students early in their Williams careers.

It also helps to look at the effects of this expansion through the lenses of some academic departments.

New full-time equivalents (FTEs) in philosophy have brought to campus two new ethicists. The department also has been able to increase the number of tutorials it offers each year from two to four and expand to nine the number of sections in its small, writing-intensive introductory courses. At the same time the department is offering more sophomore-level courses for non-majors, such as "Arguing about God," "What Does a Work of Art Mean?" and "Big Games: The Philosophical Significance of Sports." All this has happened without diminishing the department's core courses, so majors and non-majors both benefit.

Or consider a larger department such as English. In addition to its 18 sections of small, writing-intensive introductory courses, mostly for non-majors, faculty expansion has allowed the department to offer eight such courses aimed at students who are likely to become majors. Its tutorial offerings will more than double. And the increased FTE has enabled department members to offer new interdisciplinary courses (associate professor Peter Murphy teaches with biologist Nancy Roseman and me a course on "Society, Culture and Disease") and courses in programs such as African-American studies, American studies, and women's and gender studies.

Similar stories exist in Division Three. Faculty expansion in computer science has helped that department make a number of enhancements. Tutorials have increased from one to two per year. Added to popular offerings for non-majors in robotics, graphics and network technology is a new course in bioinformatics. The first half of the major has been designed to better prepare students for the variety of disciplines they'll encounter after Williams. And, as much as any department on campus, computer science contributes to interdisciplinary work. One member teaches in the cognitive science program. Five are among the 17 faculty from several departments who contribute to our new program in bioinformatics, genomics and proteomics. As a result, Williams will play a leading role in the teaching of this important new field.

So, more faculty overall has meant smaller classes as well as more teaching that occurs in tutorials, in small, writing-intensive sections and in the intellectual spaces between disciplines, where so much new knowledge is emerging. It's also heightened intellectual excitement all across the curriculum.

This expansion bucks the national trend. Many colleges and universities, including some similar to Williams, have had to decrease their number of faculty for economic reasons. That Williams has been able to seize this opportunity to reposition itself will benefit for many generations the students we serve and the world in which those students, as alumni, will put their educations to use.

—Morty Schapiro