

Gaudino Scholar's Report, Spring '99
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This year's Gaudino activities began before the school year did, with a two-day retreat for rising sophomores and juniors, to ponder how their Williams education fit in with their overall purposes in life. With the help of Wanda Lee in the Dean's Office, I put together a program of discussions surrounding 8 hours of silent meditation at a camp site in the southern Berkshires. Ten students came, and seemed very pleased with the results. Several reported afterwards that the experience helped them make specific changes in their curricular planning. The Dean's Office has taken over the event, which will be run next year by (former Gaudino Scholar) Bill Darrow, in the Religion Department. With better advertising than we had this year, and the removal of this year's registration fee, we expect a higher attendance.

The other major new initiative this year was a travel Winter Study, which also met with a small but intense response among students. The novelist Paul Park, who lives in town, helped me organize a program in which five students went off on their own to countries they had never visited before. (Three went to the same country - Nepal - but split up for most of their time there.) All five were supposed to have taken courses on cross-cultural encounter, before they left, and were asked to come up with a project in which they examined how useful, if useful at all, the theories they had read were to them in real experience. One student spent two weeks in a Zulu village in South Africa, another tried to make a video documentary in the streets of Katmandu, while a third tested theories of language-acquisition she had studied in a linguistics class on her own attempts to acquire rudimentary Nepali. Upon returning, the five students gathered with some of the professors who had taught them before they went, to discuss their experiences publicly. In practically all cases, the projects did not quite work out as expected; this failure was itself the most educational aspect of the trip for most of the students. All of the students also said that spending long periods of time on their own, without any member of their home culture to talk to, was very painful as well as very valuable. Paul Park, and Gaudino-Scholar designate Mark Reinhardt, were pleased enough with the results of

the program to want to run it again. The difficulties involved do, however, make it unlikely that it will draw a substantially larger group in the future.

Aside from these two projects, I have continued to run the Gaudino Forum, with the help of Mark Reinhardt, who led it every other week, and my student assistant, Kristina Gehrman, who arranged topics with many of the speakers and handled all the publicity (you will note that I have learned to delegate this year!). The Forum has continued to draw a regular crowd of 30 to 40 people, and on occasion – when discussing homophobia on campus or the bombing of Kosovo – has drawn as many as 150. The Forum is also expected to continue next year, and one student told me recently that she and her friends are planning their schedules so as to keep Monday evenings open for it. It has been a pleasure to share this project with Professor Reinhardt, and our working on it together should provide some continuity between our respective terms in the Scholar's position.

Finally, I have put effort into a few more minor, or more exploratory, projects: 1) (together with the Dean's Office) a small brochure to go out to all professors who want to teach a travel Winter Study course, 2) an attempt – failed, I think – to stir up enough controversy over the closed way in which the College picks its President that the search for Hank Payne's replacement might end with the entire faculty, or even the entire College, meeting and voting on the final candidates, 3) an attempt to start up a student-run investigative newspaper at Williams, which dwindled, by the end of the year, into a one-time workshop on investigative journalism for the editors of the Williams Record, and other interested students, led by a New York Times reporter, 4) a small experiment in service-learning in my own Fall class, "Authority and Freedom," and 5) the hiring of Professor Jean Bacon in the Sociology Department, an expert on service-learning, to draw up a full report on what kinds of service-learning are going on across the College and how they could be better co-ordinated and encouraged.

I leave Williams at the end of this year, and one of the things I will miss is the opportunity for experiment that the Gaudino Fund represents. I am afraid that I have learned, as the Scholar, that the administrative efforts required to run all these programs are not the kind of work I enjoy most, but I have also been immensely pleased at the results of many of the projects, and immensely grateful to have had the chance to carry them out. The existence of the Fund represents all that is best about

Williams, I believe; the openess and helpfulness of its Trustees has been just wonderful; and I salute and thank all of them, and all those contributing to the Fund, for a most unusual, noble, and socially valuable way of commemorating a beloved teacher.