Greylock Initiatives 2014-2015

Program Director: Kaatje White
http://sites.williams.edu/center-at-greylock/
http://sites.williams.edu/community-fund/

Background:
The Williams Center (WC) at Mt. Greylock’s original vision in 2008—“to maximize the academic value the College can provide the school”—has been our principal focus as we build and expand upon the rich educational connections that now exist between the two institutions.

Over the past eight years those involved with WC have worked to engage both communities with each other and to develop collaborative programs that utilize Williams resources. These initiatives have been funded either by the Williams Center, The Williams College Fund for Mt Greylock or have been given in-kind by departments or individuals.

Where Are We Now?
While last year was a year of many administrative transitions and pivotal goal setting at Mt. Greylock, this year’s administrative challenges focused on the superintendent search, a monumental community task of planning for a potential new building, thorough teacher evaluations, and a tight budget that led to teacher lay-offs.

Due to a strong and resilient community, a clear commitment to teaching and to students, and the support of Williams, the school is still moving in an excellent direction with a clear focus on Rigor, Relevance and Relationship—and Innovation. The very real constraints and requirements that presented themselves in 2014-15 have also been the very real opportunities to reflect, evaluate and initiate new programs and projects. For this reason, there is now a sound educational vision in place, and programs and personnel have been evaluated carefully for their effectiveness. In addition, substantial new curriculum initiatives are in progress in the areas of history and technology.

New This Year
The WC was able to expand and further refine the Williams Fellows Program-supporting teachers and students now in science, math and foreign language classes. New opportunities were created for Williams students to engage at Mt. Greylock through work-study or off-campus jobs, community engagement experiences, and extensions of their classes on campus. During the 2014-15 academic year more than 50 Williams student participated in some form of activity with Greylock students. These engagements ranged from paid Fellows in the areas of afterschool tutoring, English, science, math, history, Spanish, and special skills; to Zilkha summer garden interns and Williams students completing their class credit practicum in two Williams classes, (Psych 372 and Math/Stat 317: Introduction to Operations Research. One student worked over the summer with an 8th grade science teacher to develop inquiry-based STEM science units tied to the Next Generation Science Standards, and volunteers participated in The Great Day of Service.
In addition, more than 40 Williams faculty and staff engaged in numerous ways, ranging from class visits and field studies to serving on curricular review committees and as college essay coaches.

**ScienceBlast (SB).** As a result of the multi-year focus on improving the sciences at Mt. Greylock, the WC offered the first SB modeled closely on the successful MathBlast (MB) program. SB was hosted by the Williams science department. MG 11th graders participated in two sessions choosing from seven workshops taught by Williams professors. While SB was very similar to MB, SB included 7 Williams students as TAs and as panelists in a “science in college” session.

**Extracurricular Groups**—Williams students played a key role this year creating special interest extracurriculars. Due to lack of funding for official school-based faculty advisors, WC was able to employ Williams students as group leaders. This year the center supported the startup of a Model UN group and also a Glee club in addition to ongoing support of the successful writing group also led by Williams students. These programs are being evaluated and will most likely continue next year.

**Other Support:**
Ongoing support from the Williams College Fund for Mt. Greylock (WCF) continues to be a key component in the transformation of Mt. Greylock—especially in its focus on professional development, technology and the arts. While WC plays an “on-the-ground” role, developing collaborations between the school and college and seeding new ideas, WCF goes a step further to support that next layer of institutional or departmental professional development. While WC and WCF remain distinct Williams initiatives at the school, the programs inform and support each other.

The Williams Center thanks its many contributors, most especially faculty and administrators from both institutions, who have assisted the program and school on all levels.

**Ongoing WC Initiatives**

1. **Williams Fellows Program (WFP) – Coordinator, Jessica Dils.**
   The WFP continues to reflect upon, strengthen and expand its mission, “Supporting middle and high school students through one-on-one dialogue that promotes improvement through mentoring, revision-based writing and subject-specific assistance.” This year’s WFP included the following efforts and initiatives:
   - Over 500 Mt. Greylock students benefitted from the WFP.
   - 26 Williams Fellows served as writing coaches, mentors and subject-specific assistants in 16 middle and high school classrooms including 6 English classrooms, 2 academic support/study skills classrooms, 2 history classrooms, 2 math classrooms, 3 language classrooms (two being a Mandarin language group), one science classroom, and one high school newspaper classroom.
   - Our after school writing group led by two Fellows continued this year and met weekly with a small group of seventh, eighth and ninth grade girls. In the spring, this group split into two age-specific groups. While writing remains the vehicle, the groups serve a much larger purpose for these students who find acceptance, freedom, consistency and comfort amongst each other with the thoughtful guidance of our Williams leaders.
   - Our new “branding” of the Fellows gives them all the status of a “Williams Fellow,” with specific categories delineated as follows: Writing Fellows, Student Support Fellows, Language Fellows, Math Fellows, Science Fellows, and History Fellows. We have seen the organic expansion of the Fellows program into these subject areas by way of specific requests from MG faculty, seeking out this extra and necessary support. We intend to include Art Fellows and perhaps Technology Fellows as we hire students for the fall of 2015.
   - As a new initiative, we designated two Williams Fellows “Captains” to serve as peer mentors for personal dialog, discussion and feedback purposes amongst the Fellows; this has been very successful. The Captains organized and hosted two “Teacher Features,” (one each semester) with an invited MG faculty member who spoke to Fellows in an informal setting, sharing their unique perspectives as experienced
educators. We hope to continue this and perhaps expand this effort to include presentations to our Fellows by recent Williams alum and professionals who work in the field of education.

II. Academic and College Application Support

WC offers outside of class academic support in the form of 1:1 tutoring/mentoring utilizing Williams students at Homework Fellows. WC also offers many ways for Greylock students to access additional support with the college application process.

- **Homework Fellows.** Free afterschool tutoring at Mt. Greylock for grades 7-9. Each week 15-20 Greylock students continue to receive homework support and mentoring from 11 Williams tutors. These students are paid as part of their work-study job or through WC. One school-based coordinator is paid to oversee this program.

- **Free Tuesday evening tutoring at Williams for high school students.** Roughly 7 Williams volunteer tutors provide homework support with same number of Greylock students each week. Each year, two Williams students are paid to coordinate this program.

- **Fee-based private tutoring options at Williams.** The Center maintains a list of private Williams tutors and makes it available to interested Greylock students.

- **College essay writing program**- 9 volunteer Williams and community members served as college essay coaches in an online capacity; four of these coaches were utilized, providing one-on-one feedback to 17 MG seniors on their college essays.

- **Application camp.** Local college counselor and former Williams admissions officer Beth Nesbitt offers a three-day program in June to juniors wishing to get a head start on the Common Application and their own college essays. This year, 11 Greylock students participated, and a mock interview component was added to the program. Betsy Hobson and her colleagues in Williams Office of Financial Aid offer **free financial aid seminars** at the school.

III. Extracurricular Groups

**Williams students are available to help students form special interest groups at MG or on-campus at Williams**

- **Two Zilkha** interns worked with four paid MG summer apprentices to maintain the school garden. This program will be on hold for the 2015 summer due to loss of advisor position at school.

- **Model UN** - One Williams student mentored a group of close to 30 MG students interested in forming a chapter of Model UN. The group meets weekly on Sundays at Williams.

- **Glee** - one Williams student mentored a group of 15 or so who are trying to forming an afterschool glee club. The group meets weekly.

- **Girls Writing Group** – Two Williams students mentored two small group of middle and high school girls in an afterschool writing/creativity club. The group meets weekly.

IV. Field Studies

**WC supports many one-day or short-format activities at Greylock, Williams and beyond called “field studies.” For a full listing see attached calendar. Highlights include:**

- **Workshops held in collaboration with the ’62 Center, wherein internationally acclaimed guest performers visit the school as part of their residencies at the college, and students attend free of charge CenterSeries events at the college. This year, Camille Brown Dancers, Bill T. Jones and Shantala offered dance workshops at the school. 10th grade English students attended Hamlet and Junior Classical League students attended A Homer’s Coat Project: “An Iliad”.

- Amy Moore-Power’s 7th grade Science classes participated in a live video session with the Williams College Electron Microscopy Lab. Nancy Piatczyc, Electron Microscopy Technician at Bronfman Science Center, led the interactive session.
- Artist-in-residence at MG included local painters John MacDonald, Julia Morgan-Leamon and collage artist Robin Brickman.
- MathBlast (hands on math workshops) at Williams for all 10th grade students and Greylock math faculty. Led by 6 Williams math and statistics faculty.
- MG Girls Writing Group visited the WCMA Publication Studio and took part in a performance poetry workshop with SpeakFree.
- 5 Williams students, 25 Greylock students, 3 MG teachers, and 2 school custodians worked together clearing brush, gardening, and removing trash as part of the Williams Great Day of Service.
- Human Library. Blair Dils MG AP Junior English classes attended the third annual Human Library, a community understanding program at Williams.
- 3D printer project at Williams. Students in MG maker club worked with Williams students on building a dual extruder for the college printer.
- Astronomy. Shawn Burdick’s astronomy class visited the Williams planetarium and telescopes.
- GreylockTalks. A collaboration between the Williams Center and the MG student council. Six Williams faculty and one Williams student presented talks over the course of the year on topics including: mathematics and the 4th dimension; Iraq and the rise of Isis; sociology in the nuclear age; sports philosophy; epigenetics; and growing up in Kenya and beyond
- Four AP Physics Labs at Williams College.
- ScienceBlast-http://sites.williams.edu/center-at-greylock/newsannouncements/11th-graders-attend-sciencblast-on-may-18th-at-williams/
- Williams astronomy professor Karen Kwitter spoke to the entire 7th grade about “The Big Bang.”
- Health/Peer Team hosted Justin Adkins, director gender, sexuality and activism and Williams RASAN.

Other programming:
- Classes at Williams-This past year, 10 MG students took classes at Williams for academic credit.
- Mandarin language independent study-2 MG students participated in this independent study with two Williams TAs under the guidance of Prof. Li Yu.
- 8th grade STEM summer curriculum development- collaboration between Sue Strizzi and Williams student.

New ideas 2015-’16
In addition to continuing the programming from above and the one-day opportunities, highlights of new programming and initiatives currently being explored include:
- MS GreylockTalks - based on high school model, featuring age and interest appropriate talks for middle schoolers.
- 9th Grade ArtsBlast - similar model to MathBlast and ScienceBlast. Hopefully in collaboration with Friends of Arts (FOA) and Art Museum Partnership (AMP).
- Middle School MakerSpace Mentors-with Williams students
- Curriculum development, science, English, art - summer 2015 Williams students working on 8th grade science and 11th grade US history.
- Further Collaborations with Art Museum Partnership (AMPE)-curriculum work with 11th grade US history and potential pilot of Art Fellows program
- Improved Communications - quarterly CenterStories newsletter, collaboration with FOA and PTO to get word out about free happenings at Williams.
- Directed Study Writing Lab - utilizing Williams Writing Fellows.
- Music residencies with Williams students@MG and expanded opportunities for MG students to perform at Williams.