



## *The Class of 1959 50<sup>th</sup> Reunion Gift Focusing on Education*

### **The Class of 1959 Great Teachers Initiative**

Most members of the Class of '59 can remember the Williams mission of good teaching as embodied in the reference to “Mark Hopkins on one end of a log and the student on the other.” Many of us continue to see that as the strength of a Williams education and several of our classmates pursued careers in education because they had first hand experience of the power of good teaching in their own college years.

As a strong liberal arts institution, Williams has an obligation to encourage its graduates to become teachers and advocates for education. In fact, several members of the 1959 Gift Purpose Committee were inspired by “Behind Every Grad” a *NY Times* piece by Thomas Friedman on the Williams Olmsted Awards. Friedman was the featured commencement speaker in 2005 and was impressed with what Williams does every June. He stated the following:

“Every year, in addition to granting honorary degrees, Williams also honors four high school teachers. But not just any high school teachers. Williams asks the 500 or so members of its senior class to nominate the high school teachers who had a profound impact on their lives...The winners and their families are then flown to Williams, located in the lush Berkshires, and honored as part of the graduation weekend... “Every time we do this, one of the [high school] teachers says to me, 'This is one of the great weekends of my life,' said Williams’s president, Morton Owen Schapiro. “But it is great for us, too... as faculty members, we should always be reminded that we stand on the shoulders of great high school teachers, we get great material to work with: well educated, well trained, with a thirst for learning.”

That education can solve many, if not most, of the world’s problems is so obvious that it is easy to forget. However, as a new knowledge economy rapidly supplants the old industrial one — and as an ever shrinking world brings people with vastly different perspectives closer together — the role of education is more central and essential than at any time in human history.

The 1959 Gift Committee wants to support and encourage students to choose a career in education at all levels. A quality education depends on quality teachers more than any other factor and we believe Williams can fill this need with our help. The Class of 1959 Great Teachers Initiative will support:

- **A Director of Education Programs**
  - We seek to endow a position to oversee and coordinate programs that encourage and inspire students to become teachers and knowledgeable advocates for teachers and strong schools. The person in this position would bring outstanding lecturers on education to the College; serve as a counselor and resource for those who might consider teaching and develop winter-term seminars on Critical Issues in Education.
- **A Primary and Secondary Schools Liaison**
  - We seek to endow a position to place Williams students in local classrooms. Williams students love working in local schools helping teachers and students. A Hughes grant temporarily covers a part time person who works to place Williams students in the classroom and a gift from the Class of 1959 would permanently endow this position. This program would both strengthen the local schools and provide students with a real life sense of teaching as a possible career.
- **The Summer Education Program**
  - Williams currently brings eight to twelve high school science teachers to campus each summer to learn lab teaching techniques they can utilize in their own classrooms. The teachers gain hands on experience to make science exciting and approachable and bring these new skills back to schools all over the country. The Class of '59 Great Teachers Initiative will endow and expand this program ensuring more teachers and students understand the power of hands on lab based learning.

### **The Class of 1959 Scholarship**

As we have noted, Williams is a model for liberal arts education and attracts and produces the most highly qualified graduates in the country. If access to Williams depended on financial resources, however, scores of outstanding students – and many of our future Great Teachers – would never even get this opportunity. Access to higher education is a key component of The American Dream and Williams is fortunate to still practice “need blind – need based” aid, where the College agrees to meet the full recognized need of every admitted student. Additionally, Williams has recently reduced loan burdens on scholarship students which is critical to recent graduates considering less financially rewarding fields like education. This type of aid is expensive however, explaining why it is one of the highest priorities of the College’s comprehensive campaign and why the Gift Committee has eagerly included scholarship support to complete our 50<sup>th</sup> gift.

The Class of 1959 Great Teachers Initiative and Scholarship will strengthen Williams’ mission as embodied in the Mark Hopkins metaphor while ensuring the seat on the log is open to all. Furthermore, it enables our Class to make a unique contribution by our investment in America; an investment that may very well be transferable to other strong liberal arts colleges.