



CLiA Chronicle 2020 - '21 HIGH SCHOOL OUTREACH

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[2020 - '21 Photos](#)

Summary

During the 2020 - '21 school year, we continued our dramatic shift to fully remote programming as both Williams and Mt. Greylock school communities grappled with the direct impact of providing safe schooling in the midst of the COVID pandemic. Despite these unprecedented challenges, our initiatives through middle and high school local education outreach remained positive, energetic, collaborative and innovative. Our primary focus remained coordinating the activities and programs related to **The Williams Center at Mt. Greylock**; this year we were unable to continue similar programming at other local schools, though Williams students who were recipients of a TIDE grant were able to offer their remote **Raise Your Voice** series (focusing on food security and food justice) at Drury High School. Throughout the year, **31** Williams students participated in some form of activity at Mt. Greylock. These engagements ranged from paid Fellowships in the areas of after-school tutoring (**10**), special co-curricular group enrichment (**5**), writing and college essay (**6**), in-class academic student support (**3**), in-class teaching assistant (**1**), independent study mentor (**1**), special programming (**4**), racial justice curriculum research (**2**). Some students were involved in multiple activities and programs. We remain deeply grateful to our community for their patience, flexibility and mentorship of our Williams students who undertake these endeavors.

The Williams College Fund for Mt. Greylock continues to underwrite key areas of professional development and technology. These initiatives reinforce the school's commitment to teaching, learning and innovation. MG teachers were able to quickly pivot to

an online learning environment thanks, in part, to the extra funding that Williams has prioritized over the past years.

THE WILLIAMS CENTER at MT GREYLOCK

The **Williams Center (WC) at Mt. Greylock**'s original vision in 2008—"to maximize the academic value the College can provide the school"—continues to serve as the broad principal focus as we build and expand upon the rich educational connections that now exist between the two institutions. Over the past few years, we have seen that both Williams and Mt. Greylock students wish to develop and exercise their leadership skills and voices within the school community while also supporting—as part of a larger global dialogue—the tenants of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging. To encourage this, we continued our commitment "to support a more inclusive, equitable, engaging and safe school community for all students." This year given the complexities and stresses associated with the pandemic closures, the lack of in-person connections and the shift to remote learning platforms, we have responded to the community climate (articulated by the MG faculty and administration) by focusing our efforts primarily on academic support and co-curricular engagement. For faculty, we have also been able to support key professional development initiatives as well as racial justice curriculum research.

Despite having never met their MG students in physical space and place, our Williams Fellows forged important mentorship relationships with young students who had a greater degree of need in many new ways. As we began exploring the best ways to support the school community, we quickly discovered that in order to initiate any remote programming between MG students and our Williams Fellows, we needed to create protocols and guidelines for Williams and MG students to safely and effectively interact online. We developed and refined contracts in collaboration with the school administration and our Williams legal team and shared them widely as a template throughout the district.

Once all Fellows were orientated in early October, our Fellows, guided directly this year by Liza Barrett (WC@MG School-Based Coordinator), grappled with navigating online zoom protocols, procedures and new remote tips and tutoring guidelines. Much of the early work required our Fellows to jump into the work to test and try, and then try again, until a rhythm of necessary flexibility and consistency could be established. Facing their own campus struggles, adjustments and challenges, we anticipated that this "extra" community outreach commitment might lead to many mid-semester or mid-year departures. However, we lost only two Fellows throughout the year; when we needed consistency and

perseverance most, Williams students answered our call and found important roles that made them feel both utilized and valued.

Much of this feeling of belonging should be attributed to the Herculean efforts of Liza Barrett, MG Library Media Specialist. Because of the restrictions on Kaatje and Jessica's physical presence, we needed a full-time Williams Center presence in the school building to operate the functionality of the hybrid in-person/digital spaces in order to connect MG students and Williams Fellows seamlessly and safely on a daily basis. Far beyond that technical role, Liza's personal mentorship and relationship-building with each and every Williams student was key to creating the authentic feeling of belonging in the MG school community, despite the fact that the Fellows never physically stepped into the building. One silver lining of this pandemic experience is the affirmation of need that Kaatje and Jessica have felt since the inception of the WC@MG; in order to run a successful "Center" with authentic mentorship and teaching roles for Williams students, MG must fully own and operate that Center with a professional, on-site faculty facilitator and partner. This partnership-toward-ownership model has been building steadily over the course of the most recent ten years of operation. The fact that Liza shifted her own path away from the seventh grade English classroom to her new role as the MG connector within the "hub" of Mt. Greylock's Library space has been a bonus we might not have recognized had the specific challenges of this year not necessitated such direct integration and guidance.

Unable to invite Williams Professors to participate as featured speakers for our **GreylockTalks** programming, we re-envisioned this as a student-run series in collaboration with the **WEO Zoom Around the World** program instead. Our terrific Williams leaders **Mikeala Topper '21** and **Noah Reich '21** recruited, enlisted and featured international Williams students to support our commitment to diversity, inclusion and belonging by offering a breadth of voices to MG student audiences, in partnership with Deb Dane and her team at WilliNet.

In addition, **Abigail Matheny '22** and **Grace Reynolds '23** organized and presented **GreylockTalks/Raise Your Voice**, a remote series featuring activists in the food social justice and environmental sustainability movement.

Williams Fellows Program (WFP):

The WFP maintains 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."

The majority of writing and subject-specific support this year took place under the guidance of Liza Barrett in the MG library/media center, in Candie Smith-Brizen's Academic Support classroom and in Blair Dils' English classroom. Clearly, our Fellows have become an integral part of the MG community and curriculum, allowing teachers to extend their craft

and pedagogy to teachers-in-training while simultaneously supporting and expanding MG student learning. This year's group of Fellows gave feedback and gratitude; they were a consistent, responsible and courageous crew who generously shared their diverse knowledge and background with the MG community. We share the following highlights from our end-of-year, online survey:

"I like working with students and I really have enjoyed getting to connect with them more deeply this year. It has also helped to inspire me to consider teaching more seriously as I move forward professionally."

"While I am not pursuing a future in teaching, I have always really enjoyed teaching and being involved in the community. I also love building community relationships and helping kids/teens as a mentor and friend."

"This program has emphasized the lesson that everyone comes from different backgrounds and has access to different resources. Nevertheless, everyone deserves a chance to have support in school."

"I learned that I love to see students' progress and getting to know them over the course of the semester. I feel much more confident as a teacher and leader as a result."

From a Williams College feature story featuring Allie Campbell '21 and her work this year in Blair Dils' high school English classroom: *"Recalling a recent unit on race, racism and identity, Campbell speaks excitedly about helping students to see things from a different perspective. 'They're teenagers; they've already internalized these messages about race. Our work as educators is more like helping them unlearn—or re-learn,' says Campbell, adding that she admires Dils for having 'found ways of teaching standard high school material through that framework.'"*

Of note: It is not surprising to hear that our Fellows felt that they had the biggest impact in their role with MG students as **mentors and role models** this year. During a time when middle and high school students needed extra human connection more than ever, it is gratifying to know that Williams Fellows felt empowered to serve in that critical way.

[Ongoing WC@MG Initiatives \(details, highlights and evaluation\)](#)

[Academic, Writing and College Essay Support:](#)

The WC offers academic support in the form of one-on-one tutoring and mentoring beyond the classroom, utilizing Williams students as Homework Fellows. The WC also offers many ways for MG students to access additional support with the college application process and academic needs.

- ***Homework Fellows.*** Each Tuesday and Thursday afternoon, an average of **10** Greylock students in grades 7-10 received free homework support and mentoring from **10** Williams tutors in all academic subjects including ESL. We continue to rely on our tutor guidelines and Liza's on-site presence as the primary support system for the Williams tutors.
- ***Writing Fellows Support During Directed Study.*** Much of the Directed Study outreach this year included assistance by our Fellows on assignments across the curriculum that included a large amount of writing feedback, coaching and mentorship. Our Writing Fellows wore many hats, versed and practiced in the various ways to engage developing student writers in one-on-one and small group zoom sessions. Liza Barrett was able to identify and encourage those who would benefit most from this consistent help; our Writing Fellows were flexible and also reliable, and MG students who were able to utilize this time benefitted from building a trusted relationship with their Williams mentor(s). The model of a true "Writing Center" in the school's library "hub" will continue to benefit from the access to Fellows that expanded digitally this year.
- ***College Essay.*** While some community members may have been utilized to serve as college essay coaches in an online capacity, our Williams Writing Fellows now take on the bulk of this mentorship through our Writing Center during designated Directed Study and additional out-of-school time. This emerging and integrative model has proven effective, especially since our Fellows have recent and direct experience navigating the college application process and are most familiar with the changing landscape of college readiness and outreach. **175** one-on-one writing feedback sessions took place with Writing Fellows over the course of this year, a number of which focused on assistance for senior college essays.
- ***Free Sunday Evening Tutoring at Williams for high school students.*** On average **4** Williams tutors provide homework support with the same number of Greylock students each week. Traditionally, two Williams students are paid to coordinate this program; this year we paid three additional Williams Fellows to assist. Tutoring occurs in all subjects, including AP and SAT prep, with an emphasis on math and science (physics). This program, while small, is incredibly supportive for MG students who take advantage of it. This opportunity teaches students important

college readiness skills, specifically the critical nature of self advocacy and working in a study group environment.

- ***Independent study mentors.*** This year one Williams student mentored an MG student in Mandarin Chinese. In the past, there have been more connections in the area of independent studies; however, this year all MG independent studies were advised by MG faculty.
- ***Fee-based private tutoring options at Williams.*** The Center maintains a list of private Williams tutors and makes it available to interested Greylock students. This year, there was less of a demand for private tutoring since we have integrated much of this assistance into our school-based model. Moving away from fee-based tutoring is a progressive goal of the WC@MG, allowing more accessibility to tutoring for all students, regardless of affordability.

Of Further Note

Teaching Mentorship:

Each year, Williams students request opportunities for in-depth teaching experiences alongside master teachers that extend their placements as Fellows. These experiences are initiated by students who seek a more extensive career experience in the field of education. Each year, a small number of Williams students request opportunities for in-depth teaching experiences alongside master teachers that extend their placements as Fellows. These experiences are not tied to a specific class at Williams; rather, they are initiated by students who seek a more extensive career experience in the field of education. Of note, this year **Allie Campbell '21** worked with Blair Dils as a teaching assistant during both the fall and spring semesters. Blair provided Allie with invaluable mentorship while Allie assisted Blair in his English classroom as a writing coach, and at times, teaching and curriculum design. The partnership was beautifully captured in [this article](#) for the Williams website.

Co-Curricular Groups:

We continue to attract Williams students who are eager to run programs with guidance and coaching from the WC@MG staff and MG faculty. This year, these programs included: the **After-school Writing Group, Sunday Evening Tutoring and Model UN**. This spring we have also begun recruiting (in collaboration with the WEO/NAPS TIDE recipients and *The Davis Center*) Williams leaders to mentor a new **MG Book Club** and the **MG GMSU** (*Greylock Multicultural Student Union*) in the fall. During this year's remote learning period, MG students were seeking clubs and activities to connect with their peers in creative and

meaningful ways. It will be interesting to see whether this interest continues once students have more in-person options.

Model UN:

Model UN continued to strengthen its ranks despite the remote engagement. Under the leadership of **Sam Holmes '22** and **Yannick Davidson '23** and MG advisor **Blair Dils**, these leaders successfully engaged 10-15 MG student participants each week in simulation exercises and research. Both Sam and Yannick commented on the MG student engagement as they developed more confidence with the material and the online platform. *"Some of the kids were initially pretty quiet, and not super engaged in the activities, but as they continued to do the activities, it was really fulfilling to see the kids become more confident and more expressive speakers. It has definitely been different this year than previous years but still a fun way to do some MUN!"*

MS and HS Writing Groups:

Spotlight from Liza Barrett, MG Media Center Librarian (2021):

Despite the obstacles presented by the COVID 19 restrictions, the MG after school writing program met this year on nearly every Monday afternoon from 4:30-5:30 on ZOOM. All three Williams leaders returned for their second (or third) year, bringing both caring and calm to a challenging year for our middle and high school students. While writing remains the focus, the club continues to serve a broader purpose for these students who find acceptance, consistency and camaraderie amongst each other with the thoughtful guidance and mentorship of our Williams leaders. The group experience and support seemed especially important this year for our members. The Williams leaders meet weekly as a team on campus to prepare for the upcoming sessions, recognizing and embracing the unique needs of each age group. This year the combined MS/HS group enjoyed writing games and creative exercises as well as a writer's workshop model for individual writing. With everything going on, it is worth noting that we only cancelled WC one time this entire year! The After School Writing Program is an invaluable club offering at MGRS.

Field Studies Highlights:

WC supports many one-day or short-format, in-person "field studies" at Mt. Greylock, the Williams campus and beyond. While we were not able to host most of our offerings this year (*see above*), we ended the year on a positive note with an in-person **outdoor field water testing project** at Mt. Greylock for the entire eighth grade with Jay Racela, *Lab Supervisor and Lecturer from the Center for Environmental Studies* and two Williams student Science Summer Interns. In addition, Kristen McCormack, *Assistant Director for Communications, Arts and Technology in the '68 Center for Career Exploration*, participated in the **Senior Career Day** by offering a resume writing workshop to Mt. Greylock graduating seniors.

Racial Justice Curriculum Research Project:

2 Williams students worked as research assistants with middle school social studies teachers, **Mary MacDonald** and **Andrew Agostini**. The goal of this project is to assist teachers by helping them locate additional resources and activities to expand curriculum offerings in the areas of racial justice. The [research at MG](#) was focused on Indigenous people in the US and also the histories of Kingdoms of West Africa and Kush.

Classes at Williams:

33 local high school students registered for Williams College classes in the fall. Of that number **27** students were from MGRHS.

10 local high school students registered for Williams classes in the spring. Of that number **6** were from MGRHS.

Beyond MG: Middle/High School Education Outreach

Pine Cobble School:

Thanks to the tremendous efforts of the WEO team, all the resources generated for the WES, LES, NAPS and homeschool population were also shared with the Pine Cobble School librarian and a few teachers.