Our 25th Reunion is a defining moment for our Class, giving us the opportunity to create a lasting legacy through our united financial contributions as we reflect on what Williams has meant to us. Our donations will be focused in two important ways:

1. ALUMNI FUND: $1 MILLION GOAL
The Alumni Fund supports the annual operations of the college. Generations of alumni who preceded us made our time at Williams possible; now it is our turn to support the students of today and tomorrow, ensuring that the best and brightest students have access to this world-class education regardless of their ability to pay.

Donors may make unrestricted gifts, which will be used to support the college’s highest priorities, or they may designate gifts toward specific initiatives such as: financial aid, faculty excellence, equity and inclusion, sustainability, the arts, student life, or athletics.

2. CLASS OF 1996 FUND FOR EQUITY AND ACCESS: $1 MILLION GOAL
Since our founding, the Williams community has constantly changed and grown. Each generation advances the work of those who came before them—work by students, faculty, staff, administrators and alumni—to create, sustain, and support the diverse community that makes up Williams today. Today, the student body is multi-racial and multi-ethnic with international and domestic students from all religions, socioeconomic backgrounds, gender identities and sexual orientations. Their commonality transcends their diversity of experience and identity: they are all highly motivated, extremely talented, and deeply curious scholars and community members. We aspire to be a community where all can thrive—where all Ephs, whatever their background and lived experiences, feel an equal sense of belonging, ownership, and being valued; where they have equal access to the full college experience; where they are equally heard and respected; and where they are all empowered to engage in meaningful dialogue.

The Class of ’96 Fund for Equity and Access supports the Williams Firsts program and the Summer Humanities and Summer Sciences programs, programs essential to the success of students coming from underrepresented racial and ethnic backgrounds or who are first generation college students. These programs give students, from their first day on campus, the tools and skills necessary to not only survive but thrive at Williams with ongoing support from a close-knit community throughout their time at Williams and beyond.
Williams Firsts are students who are the first in their family to go to college, first in their community to travel away to college, students first in their high schools to attend a college like Williams, and more. To be the first in any of these ways takes hard work and courage and we support the success of approximately 100 first-year students and 300 upperclassmen each year. The program includes pre-orientation for students and their families to acclimate them to campus, and familiarize them with available resources and opportunities; social events that build community across class cohorts; and workshops to inform and empower them as they navigate their paths through the college. The Williams Firsts program is the manifestation of our commitment to ensuring all students feel able and empowered to take advantage of the full Williams experience.

Students coming from underrepresented racial and ethnic backgrounds or who are first generation college students can apply to come to campus for either the Summer Humanities or the Summer Sciences programs, five-week programs held the summer prior to their freshman year. In both summer programs, students take classes, attend sessions on study skills and time management, writers workshops and cultural activities, work with librarians, and hear from guest lecturers. The 50 students in each program are not only exposed to the myriad options available at Williams, but they are paired with a faculty advisor who helps them choose classes and consider future academic and career opportunities in the future.

Together these programs are ensuring the academic, social and personal success of students at Williams, helping them learn critical skills and build important relationships, impacting not only their time on campus, but their trajectories after they leave Williams. We are thankful to those alumni who supported us during our time on campus and are excited to be supporting the next generation of students and the diverse community that makes up Williams today.

HOW YOU CAN HELP
Please help by supporting this class initiative in honor of our 25th Reunion and by making an Alumni Fund gift when you hear from a classmate in the coming months. This is a chance to reconnect with what we value most about Williams. It also gives us an opportunity to leave a legacy that ensures the success of future Ephs and helps Williams graduate the next generation of leaders who will have a positive impact on the world.

We can achieve this worthy goal only with your help. Please respond generously when called upon by your classmates.

For me, the Firsts community is what completes this experience and really makes this place feel like home. I’ve had the luxury of meeting people here from all over and with all different experiences, but being able to always go to the Firsts community specifically for the things others may not understand (communicating my college experiences to those back home, figuring out how to utilize resources, feeling worthy at this institution, etc.) has truly rounded out my time here thus far. Coming to Williams, I was petrified that I wouldn’t be able to navigate the space or succeed in the way that I expected my peers to. I was fully prepared to complete my first semester and transfer to an institution closer to home; however, after being welcomed with open arms by the Firsts community during pre-orientation, my thought process completely changed, and I felt ready and excited to do well here. 

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DANIEL RIALS ’22