To promote recognition and appreciation for ethnic and cultural diversity, Williams observes Black History Month each February. Academic departments and student groups create displays celebrating African-American leaders, artists, authors, athletes, etc. Activities include public readings of literature by African-American authors; screenings of films written, directed, and/or starred in by African-Americans; student trips to significant historical sites, such as the Civil Rights Museum in Memphis and Central High School, and a Black History emphasis program in chapel. The month is also a time for Williams’ international students to raise awareness of their culture and heritage. These activities are publicized through the Office of Student Affairs online newsletter, Wingtips, and published on the online calendar. Throughout the academic year, the Mabee-Gwinup Cafeteria serves meals that reflect the ethnicity of selected international students. These meals provide a means to acknowledge various ethnic identities among students and acquaint the College community with those diverse backgrounds.

In other more subtle, but no less important ways, students are introduced to the rich and diverse history and heritage of the College’s home community, the state, and region. As an example, The Octave Thanet Society celebrates the life and writing of Alice French (pen name of Octave Thanet) who lived and wrote at Clover Bend, Arkansas. Her life and writings reflect the plantation system at Clover Bend, the role of emancipated African-Americans on the plantation, and French’s interest in the life of African-Americans at Clover Bend. It is also noteworthy that the Academic Dean has served (2010-12) as the Humanities Scholar (Arkansas Endowment for the Humanities) for the Black Baptist Churches of Arkansas history grant project. This comprehensive examination of African-American religious life in Arkansas (ca. 1800-1860) is, in many respects, a pioneering study. Certainly, this project represents a significant academic engagement with Arkansas’s African-American history and culture.

The WTEP offers a minority scholarship for every academic year. Minority Student Scholarships may be awarded to students who are members of traditionally-designated ethnic minority groups (Black, Hispanic, Asian-Pacific Islander, or Native American) and have a cumulative seventh-semester high school GPA of at least 2.25 and an Enhanced ACT composite score of at least 19. The scholarship is valued at $500 and up to 3 teacher candidates a year can receive the scholarship. Applications for the scholarship are disseminated by the education office to all potential recipients.

This scholarship is designed to supplement other financial aid a candidate may have, and it may be used for books, fees, or other needs related to costs associated with a major in Education at Williams. An applicant must: (1) Have at least a 2.5 GPA (4.0 scale); (2) plan to complete a major in education at Williams; (3) be recommended as one having potential for life success as a classroom teacher; (4) be recommended as one with moral integrity suitable for Williams Teacher Education Program’s view of a professional educator; (5) demonstrate maturity and a desire to become an effective classroom teacher who personifies a professional educator; (6) exhibit a willingness to make a time commitment to all aspects of the education requirements of his/her specific degree program, both in and out of the classroom.
To encourage international students to enroll, the Williams Admissions Office began (2008) allowing international students to apply for merit-based scholarships. Moreover, the Admissions website now has a specific page with information for international students; the webpage is now the primary way international students learn about the College. Williams is also committed to providing one full scholarship, in each eight-semester cycle, which covers tuition, room, board, fees, and books for a student from Kenya. Williams has provided this special scholarship since the 1970s.

Additionally, the Admissions Office facilitates international students’ adjustment to life on campus. When needed, Resident Advisors or Admissions representatives, or representatives from the Office of Student Affairs assist international students with shopping and other routine activities. For those international students with limited financial resources, help is provided through donated supplies. Admissions representatives and representatives from the Office of Student Affairs also take international students to the Lawrence County Health Department for necessary immunizations. This is far from an exhaustive list of those services and accommodations provided to international students; but rather the list is indicative of the kind of support available for these students. It must be added that the Freshman Advisor carefully assists international students in class scheduling issues and in finding appropriate tutoring help for Composition I (if a need for such tutoring is noted).