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A Western professor explores
The Secrets of Mars
Sehome Hill Arboretum

For decades, students have gotten their nature fix while meandering the trails of the wooded hillside next to Western's campus. The 180-acre, second-growth forest, managed jointly by Western and the city of Bellingham, includes more than 5 miles of trails, an 80-foot tower with spectacular views of Bellingham Bay and a tunnel originally cut by hand to accommodate Model T Fords.

Students in Western's "Outdoor Science Learning Resources" class, a Geology course devoted to maintaining and improving the arboretum, help build and maintain trails, pull invasive plant species and keep an eye on drainage issues. Learn more about the arboretum at the students' website: www.wwu.edu/share
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*On the cover: Assistant Professor of Geology and Physics Melissa Rice is pictured in Western's Spanel Planetarium. Rice is a member of the Science Team behind NASA's Mars Rover Curiosity. Read more about Rice's work on Page 20.*
Veterans at Western deserve gratitude, compassion and access to higher education

It was a rainy afternoon in November seven years ago when I realized that Western’s attitude toward student veterans had to change. Shortly after I arrived at Western I was standing at the flagpoles on South Campus with a handful of people at what then amounted to our Veterans Day ceremony. A student I spoke with afterward expressed what the ceremony itself implied; he wasn’t comfortable telling other people on campus that he was a veteran. Considering all that veterans have brought to Western over the years — training in leadership, life experience, maturity and above all, an inspiring commitment to serve — it was clear that we needed to do more to support, engage and celebrate student veterans on our campus.

One of the great things about being President is handing off an idea to talented, energetic people who not only know how to make it happen, but go on to exceed all expectations.

For five years in a row, Western has been named a “military friendly school” by GI Jobs magazine, putting it in the top 20 percent of all higher education institutions nationwide. Our Admissions, Career Services, Library Services, Associated Students and disAbility Resources for Students offices and websites have been overhauled to ease veterans’ transition to school, and we have added events, advising and priority registration just for veterans. Western takes part in the Yellow Ribbon Program, providing in-state tuition to many students using veteran benefits who transfer from out of state. And graduating student veterans are invited to bring their families to a special breakfast for honored guests before commencement.

Student veterans undoubtedly face unique challenges in transitioning from the military to the comparatively unstructured ways of student life, not to mention processing their experiences from military service. While we strive to help them meet those challenges, what is often overlooked is how much veterans enrich campus life for everyone. Our student veterans bring a perspective and a set of experience-tested skills that everyone on campus — fellow students, faculty and staff — can appreciate and learn from.

I’m gratified to say that our Veterans Day ceremony has come a long way since that rainy November afternoon seven years ago, too. These days, nearly 100 people gather every year to listen to the experiences of those who have gone in harm’s way for us. And, I’m delighted to hear that they are not only comfortable, but proud to say they are veterans at Western.
What do you think about WINDOW?

If something you read in Window sparks a memory, question, inspiration or critique, let us know! We’ll run a sampling of your feedback in each edition. Send your thoughts to window@wwu.edu. Or, find us online at www.wwu.edu/window. You may also send a note to Window Magazine, Office of University Communications and Marketing, 516 High St., Bellingham, WA, 98225-9011.

Two ways to love Window magazine

On Paper

It’s accessible: New editions come right to your mailbox. Read it whenever you like, no battery-charging required.

It’s just what you need: Tired of reading screens at work all day? Give your eyes a break and read for fun.

It’s a great example of Viking frugality: Window’s cost-per-copy makes it one of the least-expensive university magazines around. Enjoy!

It’s a great way to support Western: Love your alma mater? Share the magazine with a potential student, a friend or your dentist’s office.

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It’s a great example of Viking frugality: Let your paper copy go to a new graduate – Window’s printing budget doesn’t grow with the number of alumni.

It’s a great way to support Western: Share your favorite stories and photos through social media. How easy is that?

It’s easy: Email window@wwu.edu and let us know you’d like your Window magazine online only.

More ways to stay in touch with Western

Western Today: Get a daily email with news, feature stories, photographs, videos and event information from Western at www.wwu.edu/westerntoday. Click on “subscribe.”

Social Media: Find all of Western's social media activity on Western Today by clicking on “WWU Social Media Index.” Western's main Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram accounts are particularly lively.

“Western Window” TV Show: “Western Window” is a student-produced television program featuring stories about Western students, faculty and Western’s collaboration with the community. Catch it on KVOS-TV12 on Sundays at 6 a.m. or at www.wwu.edu/westernwindowtv.
An ancient Skagit Valley tree becomes a work of art

When Wes Smith ('95, Economics) and Andrew Vallee ('96, Art) first saw the 17-foot section of the massive Douglas fir in their Edison woodworking shop, they thought the tree might have been dead 100 years beneath a nearby Skagit Valley pasture.

But they cut a slab off the 14,000-pound log and sent a piece to Western's Huxley College of the Environment to find out for sure.

The tree had been found in the mud in Joe Leary Slough in the Skagit Valley, but not from any groves that property owners Joan and Loren Dahl could remember. Turns out the tree had fallen during the age of the Roman Empire.

Huxley faculty Andy Bunn and Dave Wallin sent a sample to a company in Florida that used carbon-dating to estimate that the tree sprouted around 300 B.C. and lived about 300 to 350 years. Bunn and Wallin think it may have been buried in a landslide, which is why it was in such good shape.

A slab of the tree that has spanned three millennia is on display outside the Huxley dean's office. Smith and Vallee are making other special pieces with the still-soft wood, including a table now in the dean's reception area.

Seeing Double

Three sets of twins are also teammates in Western Athletics in 2014-15. Freshmen Lexi and Abby Klinkenberg from Renton play forward and defender in soccer – Lexi's goal won the game over Seattle Pacific in October 2014. Rachel and Veronica Ivancic from Seattle are junior sprinters for track and field and hold the year's best times for the 100- and 200-meters. And Kennewick freshmen Carlie and Cyline Richards play outfield and middle infield on the softball team.
Students’ solar window wows the EPA

Western students who are developing a transparent window that doubles as a solar panel recently won a $75,000 grant from the EPA to keep the project going.

The team of eight Chemistry, Engineering, Design and Business students — and one Chemistry student from the University of Washington — won first place in their category with their Smart Solar Window at the EPA’s P3: People, Prosperity and the Planet competition in Washington, D.C., April 13.

The window uses luminescent solar concentrator technology by means of a thin polymer layer containing luminescent quantum dots that harness energy from the sun and redirect it to photovoltaic cells at the edge of the window.

With the help of environmental sensors and wireless controls, the power is then used to automatically open and close the window synergistically with a building’s central HVAC system, reducing heating, ventilation and air conditioning costs by 10 to 30 percent.

Students will continue to work with their advisers, Chemistry Professor David Patrick and Marketing Associate Professor Ed Love, to develop the prototype and explore next steps to take the window to market.

Meet a new molecule

A research team that includes a theoretical physicist from Western has created a new molecule that eventually could be used to develop the next generation of computing technology.

Assistant Professor of Physics and Astronomy Seth Rittenhouse (’02, Mathematics, Physics; ’03, Mathematics) was on a team led by University of Oklahoma’s James Shaffer.

The molecule, first theorized in 2000, is often known as a trilobite Rydberg dimer. They might have the largest-ever-recorded electric dipole moment, a property that determines how the molecule reacts to electric fields. One possible application for the new molecule could, eventually, be in the development of quantum computers, devices that can perform computations far faster than our current transistor-based technologies.

Rittenhouse received his doctorate from the University of Colorado at Boulder and completed a post-doc at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics and the Harvard University Department of Physics. He has taught at Western since 2012.

Bellingham’s Frasers gave millions for scholarships, academic programs

At the height of the Great Depression, Alice Cowgill (’31, Teaching Certificate) graduated from Washington State Normal School and went to work at a school in Ferndale, teaching grades one through 12 in a single classroom, until she married the love of her life, Gordon “Bus” Fraser.

Fast-forward to 2015, and the Frasers’ legacy at Western is set to reach thousands of students. The Frasers left gifts to Western totaling more than $8 million, the largest gift in Western’s history, which will support scholarships for public high school students from Whatcom, Skagit, Island and Snohomish counties. Several academic areas, such as music, biology and the College of Business and Economics will also benefit. And a new Fraser Lectureship will bring internationally known scholars to the university.

The Frasers first decided to support Western in 1986 – Fraser Hall was named in their honor in 1995. Bus Fraser owned a successful Chevrolet dealership in Bellingham and passed away in 2004. Alice died in 2014 at age 102 – soon after her 100th birthday, she had cut the ribbon at a rebuilt Whatcom Middle School as the school’s “oldest living graduate.”

They were both always interested in participating in and giving back to the community,” says Al Froderberg, a longtime Western administrator. “Both Bus and Alice wanted to give money to Western because this is where they made their money, in this community. You leave it where you made it.”

He met WWU students in Rwanda and now studies English at Western

When 28-year-old Hassan Byumvuhore bowled for the first time this April, he threw a perfect strike – and he didn’t even have his fingers in the holes of the ball.

Byumvuhore, from Rwanda, is now a student in Western’s Intensive English Program, where he is learning a new language – and making some new friends.

Byumvuhore first learned about Western two years ago when he was a custodian in a health center in Gashora, Rwanda, and a group of students from Western’s Center for Service-Learning came to teach English to the staff. Though visas to study in the U.S. are difficult to obtain in Rwanda, CSL Director Tim Costello (’81, Fairhaven Interdisciplinary Concentration) helped Byumvuhore enroll at Western and hopes Byumvuhore will develop skills which will position him for better employment opportunities in Rwanda.

For now, though, he’s enjoying the daily life of a Western student and soaking up as much culture as he can, one strike at a time.

— Jake Parrish (’15)
A Viking in the Japanese House of Representatives

Hokkaido lawmaker soaked up art, music, scenery in Bellingham while earning an MBA at Western

By John Stark

In 1986, Hirohisa Takagi (MBA) was a student in a hurry. Western Washington University’s MBA program turned out to be just what he needed.

Takagi, 55, now serves in the House of Representatives in the National Diet, Japan’s bicameral parliament. Since his election in December 2012, he has represented the northernmost island of Hokkaido as a member of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party.

After his graduation from Keio University in Tokyo, Takagi spent a couple of years of further study in the United States. He spent a year studying real estate and finance at the University of Nebraska then realized he wanted an MBA, but didn’t want to spend another two years. WWU’s 14-month program was a perfect fit, enabling him to graduate in 1987.

“First of all, I loved the campus, full of environmental consciousness,” Takagi said in an email. “Faculty members were friendly and very helpful in pursuing my academic interest. In addition, I found that WWU offered excellent intellectual opportunities for MBA program participants through case study discussions, programming financial models, etc.”

At the College of Business and Economics, Takagi especially remembers Finance Professor Earl Benson and Accounting Professor Ron Singleton, who provided him with both professional training and the occasional round of golf.

And as an amateur jazz pianist, Takagi said he was thrilled to make the acquaintance of distinguished jazz bassist Chuck Israels, then a WWU faculty member.

Takagi also remembers playing both music and tennis with classmate Douglas Drake (’84, Fairhaven Interdisciplinary Concentration; ’87, MBA), enjoying the outdoors at Lake Padden and Lake Whatcom, and dining at Dos Padres, the Oyster Bar and Dirty Dan Harris.

Drake introduced Takagi to local artist Tom Wood (’80, Art, Fairhaven Interdisciplinary Concentration), and he wound up purchasing a large painting from him. But the painting was so large that Takagi could not get it back to Japan. He left it with a friend, and he’s not sure whatever happened to it.

But Takagi still has a powerful recollection of a conversation with bassist Israels, who had invited Takagi to his home overlooking Bellingham Bay.

“I said someday I want to live in a place like this, then he said that if you pay your dues, dreams always come true,” Takagi said. “That is a fabulous memory.”

John Stark is a freelance writer in Bellingham whose massive jazz collection also includes some work by Chuck Israels.
Friendship, the kind forged among scholars working in the same obscure academic field, helped build Western's Mongolia Collection of books and artifacts into one of the largest in North America, second only to the Library of Congress.

The vast collection of books, maps, music— even a Mongolian typewriter— covers history, economics, language, literature, religion, archaeology, biology, geology, medicine and more.

"Other schools did not collect in the same way," says curator Wayne Richter ('68, Geography). "There are a few things at Harvard, some at Berkeley and a few other places. Indiana has a decent collection and Princeton has purchased the library of Walther Heissig, a major collection by an eminent Mongolist. The Library of Congress has the largest, and we're the next-largest."

The core of the collection is from WWU Professor Emeritus of History and East Asian Studies Henry G. Schwarz, who established the collection in the early '70s with items he accumulated in his travels through Mongolia, China and the surrounding region.

But Schwarz collected more than books. He also built resilient relationships with fellow Mongolia scholars. Last year, noted Mongolian linguist and University of Wisconsin Professor Emeritus John C. Street joined forces with Schwarz to give WWU significant and complementary gifts to develop Western's Mongolia-focused program and to preserve and digitize Mongolian and Inner Asian materials in Western's libraries.

Both Schwarz and Street worked with—and drew career inspiration from—Nicholas N. Poppe, a world-renowned Mongolian language specialist who passed away in 1991. Partly due to his friendship with Schwarz, Poppe left his private library to Western rather than to the University of Washington, where he had taught for nearly 20 years. A student of Poppe and a retired professor from Indiana University, John Krueger, also donated many valuable books to the collection.

"I first corresponded with Henry some 32 years ago, after seeing his book on Mongolian bibliography," says Street, "whose particular area of interest is the "Secret History of the Mongols," a 13th-century text detailing the ancestry, life and career of Genghis Khan. "It was primarily Henry's example that led me to Western: We agree on the importance of collecting scholarly publications dealing with this geographical region that has traditionally been of such little interest to the United States, and we both hope that we might have some small part in bringing Mongolia— its people, history, languages and culture— to the attention of students at Western and elsewhere in this country."

Well-used by visiting scholars and by the 3,000-strong Seattle-area Mongolian community, the collection offers a deep perspective on an ascending region: As scholars like Schwarz, Poppe and Street developed expertise on this corner of the globe, Mongolia has evolved into one of the world's fastest-growing economies thanks in part to its mineral wealth. It's also of growing interest as China's northern neighbor.

"Everything you and I learn, we learn better by perspective," explains Schwarz. "China is such a massive country, it's such a great civilization, but you would understand it better if you have some counterpoint. That counterpoint is Mongolia: It's a different religion, a different economical system — it's a herding culture and economy. Such a different practical and lifestyle structure gives you a whole different mindset."

Richter was part of the first Western group to visit Inner Mongolia and study Mongolian with Schwarz back in 1981 and has worked with the collection for more than 30 years. He counts among his favorite items an 18th century Buddhist xylograph whose title, in various parts of Asia, has been both "The Sutra of the Wise and the Foolish" and "The Ocean of Stories."

"The collection is so varied and interesting," says the 75-year-old. "It keeps my mind very active." He pauses to laugh. "I'll probably never retire."

Daneet Steffens is Western's associate director of campaign communications.
This illustration shows the detail of a Mongolian Khalkha costume with pearl ornaments and a beaver cap. The artwork is on leaf no. 28 in a 1967 collection of portraits, “BNMA Ulsyn ardyn khuvtsas,” by Urjingin Yadamsuren and located in Western’s Rare Book Collection.

A page from “Sutra in 42 sections,” a quadra-lingual sutra with parallel text in Manchu, Tibetan, Mongolian and Chinese. Printed sometime after 1780, possibly in China, the work is a gift of Henry Schwarz and housed in Western’s Rare Book Collection.

Photos by Rhys Logan ('11, Visual Journalism)
From Here to
ODESZA
Two grads are huge in electronic music

By Daneet Steffens

To say that their time at Western proved creatively fruitful for Harrison Mills ('12, Design) and Clayton Knight ('12, Physics) is, well, a bit of an understatement.

Mills and Knight are the electronic dance music duo ODESZA, a partnership forged during their senior year. The year they graduated, the Washington state natives – Mills hails from the Bellevue/Redmond area and Knight is from Bainbridge Island – watched two songs from their debut album, “Summer’s Gone” – “How Did I Get Here” and “iPlayYouListen” – go viral via SoundCloud.

Their 2014 follow-up, “In Return,” opened at No. 1 on Billboard’s Dance/Electronic album chart. Their current tour sold out in advance and they are now a firm music festival fixture, popping up everywhere from Coachella to Lollapalooza.
“It’s all still awfully surreal,” says Knight. But while they may be frenetically and perpetually on the road — their spring and summer tour dates include gigs in Europe as well as the States — their experience remains comfortably infused with familiar elements of their alma mater.

ODESZAs posse includes guitarist and filmmaker Sean Kusanagi, ('12, English/Creative Writing) who has known Knight since their days at Bainbridge High School; Luke Tanaka, ('11, Design) who, as visual projectionist, creates displays for live performances and produces videos; Chris Lien, ('13, Environmental Science), who assists the tour manager; and designer Michelle Gadeken ('11, Design).

ODEZAs music, coaxed from an electronic combo of computers, synthesizers and samplings, is an atmospheric, lush and mesmerizing mix that manages to be ambient, dance-worthy and headphone-friendly all at once. And their compositions — recalling a rich range of artists such as Chicane, The Avalanches, Single Gun Theory and Deep Forest as well as the chillaxed noodlings of Ibiza-based Café del Mar — are nothing if not collaborative.

It’s not just the Mills and Knight teamwork ethic: They keep their musical minds wide open, discovering singers and other artists on social media platforms and inviting them to contribute to ODESZAs works-in-progress.

That open, generous approach was something they both enjoyed at WWU. “I met so many people at Western who opened my view of the music world, basically,” says Knight. “One of my friend’s boyfriends showed me a lot of out-there electronic music and that’s where I got my start into it. I felt a creative enlightenment there; so many things definitely played — and continue to play — a part in how I make art.”

And while Mills relished working in his Design major — “It was a competitive department; it made me a better designer because of that” — Western provided him with an even bigger gift: “I made lifelong friends and those relationships still contribute to what I do now. Western is where I launched my career.”

That would be the career that continues to skyrocket. But Mills and Knight still keep some things simple — their contract rider for backstage sustenance is back-to-basics: whiskey, beer, fruit and veg — and they have plenty of friends to kick back with.

Even more refreshingly, they actually sound a tad dazed — in the nicest possible way — by the fact that they are clearly riding the crest of a still-gathering, ginormous wave: “We’re constantly in motion,” says Harrison. “I think it’s felt like a never-ending road-trip with my friends.”

Daneet Steffens, Western’s associate director of campaign communications, loves her day job but would not say no to going on the road with ODESZA.

If you miss ODESZA on tour this summer, hear their music at soundcloud.com/odesza

Or, check out their new online curation project, Foreign Family Collective, featuring emerging artists handpicked by Mills and Knight — the name and logo stem from a WWU Design class project by Mills and Gilbert Van Citters ('11, Design).
RESILIENCE GROWS HERE

One alum brings fellow combat vets to the farm to grow vegetables and help each other heal.
U.S. Marine veteran Chris Brown ('12, Human Services) says his burden from three deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan is like a bag of rocks. The rocks represent the injuries, physical and mental, he and his fellow Marines suffered, and the guilt that he made it back home when 41 of his friends never did.

He carries this symbolic burden over his shoulder wherever he goes and, sometimes, he just wants to set it down.

"The tough part," he writes, "I'm afraid to lose those rocks. I'm afraid to lose them because of what they have done to shape my character and who I am as a man."

But by sharing his experiences, Brown feels as though he can pass on some of those rocks for safekeeping, easing his burden.

He's also taken a few of those rocks and planted them in the earth. What's growing there now will help many other veterans ease their own burdens.

Brown is founder and director of Growing Veterans, an organization combining sustainable farming with veteran reintegration.

The concept grew out of his experiences studying Human Services at Western while working in Western's Veteran's Services office through the VetCorps program. He and some of the "regulars" from the veterans office, many of them students at Huxley College of the Environment, often discussed agriculture and food systems.

Brown saw that sustainable agriculture practices could use support, as could veterans transitioning back into civilian life. Together, the two created some very powerful outcomes, he thought.

Growing Veterans was also a way to support himself as he works through his own struggles as a combat veteran.

"I wanted to focus my learning on veterans' issues in an attempt to both understand myself better but also to enter a career centered around helping veterans," Brown says.

More personally, Brown says, his work is "an attempt to justify the guilt that I carried about the guys who never made it home."

On a sunny, crisp March morning, Brown gives a tour of the Growing Veterans farm in rural Whatcom County. Beds of kale and leeks have wintered over, and a new field on the southern end of the property is freshly tilled. One greenhouse is already filled with starts for the planting season, and the other greenhouse is nearly ready for tomatoes, basil and peppers to be sold at farmer’s markets outside Veterans Affairs hospitals.

On this day, a handful of people are working on the farm. Outreach Coordinator and Market Manager Matt Aamot, an

Story by Hilary Parker ('95)
Photos by Rhys Logan ('11)

Just two years old, Growing Veterans is already getting noticed: Earlier this year founder and director Chris Brown was named to the HillVets 100 list as one of the country's most "influential and impactful" veterans, service members and supporters.
Army veteran of Kuwait and Bosnia, is showing around new employee Dan Robinson. It is Robinson’s first day as the field manager, recruited from a veteran-farming program in Colorado.

Meanwhile, Billy Pacaccio is working on the junction box in the barn. Pacaccio was a Navy veteran and a Whatcom Community College student when he joined Growing Veterans in its second year. He says his job is not just helping to manage the farm, but building a community in which his fellow veterans, with all kinds of backgrounds and experiences, come together around a goal.

“They found the earth in common,” Pacaccio says, “and from there they prospered from it.”

Growing Veterans has five full-time paid staff members and four part-time employees, all but one a veteran. Three more veterans also work for Growing Veterans through AmeriCorps.

In addition to paid staff, volunteers – 370 last year alone – help in the field or greenhouse, or sell produce at farmers markets. Others help with peer support or community outreach or with tasks such as grant writing and advising.

Brown, 28, grew up King County and didn’t have a background in farming, so when he decided to start a veterans’ farming group he first needed some basic training. He turned to Growing Washington, an Everson-based nonprofit supporting the growth of sustainable agriculture. Brown was hired on as a farmhand, working 20 hours a week to learn all the facets of farming, from planting to delivery.

He spent another 20 volunteer hours a week developing the Growing Veterans concept. By the time the 2013 growing season rolled around, Growing Washington had helped Brown and Growing Veterans secure a three-acre farm in Whatcom County that once belonged to the Bellingham Food Bank.

Then Brown started getting the word out, and an initial crew of four veterans got involved. Word started to spread, and the first season saw more than 100 volunteers, veteran and civilian, come lend a hand on the farm.

“I’ve gone with the motto, ‘If you build it they will come,’” says Brown, who has submitted the IRS paperwork for Growing Veterans to become an independent nonprofit organization. “We weren’t expecting it to happen so fast.”

Growing Veterans sells its produce at weekly farmers markets at the VA hospitals in Seattle and Lakewood. Some local grocers have expressed interest in selling as well, which may be possible as the operation grows, Brown says. He would also like to open a commercial kitchen to create “value-added” products from the produce, and create more jobs for veterans.

But Brown’s plans include much more than employment: One of his long-term goals, to develop peer-to-peer support for veterans, took a giant step forward this winter when Growing Veterans signed a lease on a 40-acre property on the Skagit-Snohomish County line. The land, owned by a Vietnam veteran, will allow Growing Veterans to plant some perennial crops such as blueberries to supplement their farmers markets as well as provide a space for retreats and reflection at the home located there.

“It’s in a more rural setting that will lend itself to therapeutic activities for our peer support programming,” Brown says.

Nationally, an average of 18 to 22 veterans a day commit suicide, and Brown is hopeful Growing Veterans’ peer support training, with a focus on suicide prevention, will be in place by the end of the year.
Brown and two other peer mentors were recently certified through ASIST, a suicide-intervention training program. Brown's goal is to get all peer mentors certified, and have some mentors certified as trainers so they can bring suicide intervention training to others in the community.

So far, the peer support element of Growing Veterans has been relatively informal, but intentionally so, Brown says. Often, veterans struggle to reach out for help because military culture traditionally viewed seeking help for mental health issues as a sign of weakness. By avoiding language around "getting help" and focusing on building camaraderie and community, Brown feels veterans have been more comfortable and willing to participate in what he calls an innovative peer-support program.

"The reason I can confidently say it is innovative is because it's not being designed by doctors; it's being designed by the veterans who are involved," Brown says, adding that the vets are also consulting with mental health counselors along the way.

Brown estimates Growing Veterans' peer-to-peer support will reach at least 50 veterans this year; in the long term he hopes to help thousands.

Coming to the farm benefits veterans in numerous ways, Brown says. "They're talking about similar experiences, realizing they're not alone in this struggle to reintegrate, and they're sharing real, tangible supports with each other."

Another important goal of Growing Veterans, Brown says, is to broaden interaction between veterans and civilians. This facet of Growing Veterans is unique, he says, something he has not seen in other veteran farming projects across the country.

And when the greater community gets involved, the veterans get a different kind of support: understanding.

Bridging the gap between veterans and civilians is vitally important as servicemen and -women re-integrate into daily life outside the military. Brown suggests that simply inviting a veteran to tell his or her story, listening with openness and respect, offers some of the greatest help a veteran can receive.

"Not only are you helping yourself have a better understanding of the veteran experience," Brown says, "but also opening the door for a veteran to heal."

Hilary Parker ('95, Journalism) is a freelance writer whose favorite summer job was working the produce stand for Joe's Garden in Bellingham.
SERVICE LEGACY

Two alumni and Sociology faculty study the long-term effects of military service

By Jemma Everyhope-Roser

More than 40 years ago, Lucky Tedrow ('73, Sociology; '76, M.A., Sociology) and Jay Teachman ('74, Sociology, Anthropology) met as undergraduates in Western's Sociology Department.

Little did they know that they'd end up working together on research that would be featured in national news publications like The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal and USA Today.

Teachman, now a professor of Sociology at Western, says that his academic interest in veterans began after he returned from military service: "I began to question why there was no research on veterans or on military service members or at least very little of it, because I was a veteran and it affected my life course. I wanted to know how it affected the life course of other people."

Their current research, funded by the National Institutes of Health, involves testing the assumption that military services provides a sense of direction and structure to young men, deterring them from troubled behaviors (e.g. drugs, alcohol, tobacco, criminal activity).

So, the results?

It depends on your generation. WWII veterans came out of the service best off, gaining access to the college education they wouldn't have otherwise had through the GI Bill; because there weren't civilian assistance programs such as the Pell Grant at the time, these vets had an economic advantage.

The worst off: Vietnam vets. Education and housing loan assistance programs for civilians had developed by then, so many Vietnam veterans found themselves left out and left behind economically while civilians of similar ages had gone on to get educated and gain employment. Gulf vets seem to land somewhere in the middle – so far.

"We have 15 years of data compiled since 1997 for respondents now in their early 30s," says Tedrow, director of Western's Center for Social Science Instruction and the Demographic Research Laboratory. "So we don't know what it means for when they are 50 or 60 years of age. That's the problem with all kinds of life research: You don't know what's going to happen until it happens."

Overall, Teachman says, "What we find is that veterans are less likely to engage in bad behaviors than their non-veteran counterparts, with one exception. And that's violent crime. They are equally as likely to engage in violent crime. But car
Tedrow and Teachman often include students in their grant-funded research work. Research assistant Paul Hemez ('14, Sociology) also worked with Teachman and Tedrow as an undergraduate and will begin graduate school this summer at Bowling Green State University in Ohio.

LAUNCHING THE NEXT GENERATION OF SOCIOLOGIST-DEMOGRAPHERS

Thanks to Lucky Tedrow and Jay Teachman’s NIH and NSF grants, every year a few lucky undergraduates have the opportunity to do sociological research and get paid for it. Previous grants that have provided funding for undergraduate researchers have had a big payoff for the students. Tedrow and Teachman’s students have gone on to receive full funding for graduate school at the University of Texas at Austin, Pennsylvania State University, University of Colorado and the University of Washington.

“So they not only get this experience here,” Tedrow explains, “but it positions them for getting graduate school funding as well. And those students who have done it are doing quite well.”

Theft, drugs, burglaries, robberies, they’re less likely.” Teachman explains that this could be ascribed to at least two factors: military training and who chooses to go into the service. Or, as he would say it: “Military service is not randomly selected.”

Moreover, military service has been shown to have a disproportionately positive effect on the life course outcomes of individuals coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. Hispanics and African Americans, in particular, gain access to new opportunities.

“Veterans’ data matters,” Teachman says. “Even today, when military service affects a fraction of Americans, it is still the single largest employer of young men in the nation. Ten to 12 percent of young men serve in the military, and that’s a huge number. So the more we know about it, the better.”

Jemma Everyhope-Roser is a writer and editor in Bellingham — and the program assistant in Western’s Office of Communications and Marketing. She is also assistant editor of Glimpse, Clemson University’s research magazine.
The Truth is Out Here

Western’s Melissa Rice is part of a NASA team uncovering the secrets of Mars

Mars Fragments: The high-resolution camera on the Curiosity Mars rover captured this image on Jan. 13, 2015, after a drill test on a rock NASA scientists call “Mojave.” The gray rocks and dust are freshly exposed fragments. Curiosity’s shadow is in the lower-right corner.
If we can find evidence of microbial life on Mars, we would be that much closer to answering the question we all have: ‘Are we alone in the universe?’

Gale Crater sits on a dry, barren, windy plain where temperatures edge into the 60s only during the summer and plummet below freezing most nights. Its mixtures of sunbaked rocks, jagged scarps and deep sands make geological research a struggle.

The fact that Gale Crater is 140 million miles away and on the surface of Mars makes things even more difficult. But what’s locked in the rocks of the windswept crater may help us understand how – and where – life could thrive in the universe.

Each morning, Western’s Melissa Rice wakes up to data fresh from the Curiosity rover on the surface of Mars, and gets to work. Rice, an assistant professor with dual appointments to both the Geology and Physics departments, is part of the Science Team with the six-wheeled Curiosity, sending it new instructions and plotting its course through the harsh Martian terrain. The team tells Curiosity when to gather samples and drill cores, when to take photos and conduct experiments in its on-board lab.

"Every day brings something new. Some new discovery, or question or quandary," says Rice, a native of Sammamish. "Solving these problems and working our way around the challenges that inevitably arise as we set about to explore another planet is why I got into science in the first place. It’s just fascinating."

Rice came to Western this year from the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) at the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena, California. She completed her bachelor’s degree in Astrophysics at Wellesley College and earned her doctorate at Cornell, which is where she first started working on the rover teams.

WHY MARS?

Designing and building a rover and then launching it into space and landing it on another planet is obviously an immense effort. So why do it, and why Mars?

First, Mercury and Venus, our two other closest planetary neighbors, are simply too hot: Mercury has an average daytime temperature of about 400 degrees Celsius, while the thermal blanket of thick clouds keeps the daytime temps on Venus around a staggering 800 degrees Celsius. Mars’ temperatures seem comparatively benign.

But why go to another planet at all?

"The things we discover on Mars help us understand that puzzle we are all trying to put together: Where else in our universe could life exist?" she says. "All our work and experimentation and data gathering in some way ties in to that most basic question."

Water, or evidence of it, has brought Curiosity to Mars. Scientists think Gale Crater’s surface has been altered by water erosion – river beds, lakes, alluvial fans – and that this water existed for enough time to allow life to potentially form.

Mars still has quite a bit of water locked into ice caps at its
Selfie from Mars: This self-portrait of NASA's Curiosity Mars rover was taken near the drill site shown on page 20. The photo, assembled from dozens of images from the high-resolution camera on Curiosity's robotic arm, shows a sweeping view of the "Pahrump Hills" outcrop on Mars' Mount Sharp.

poles, but at one time, Mars had enough standing water — for a long-enough time — to support microbial life. Long, long ago, the planet's water and atmosphere were not too acidic, salty nor laden with chemicals to have prevented life.

Each day for the past 33 months, Curiosity has picked its way through ancient riverbeds, sand dunes and dry deltas with names like "Rocknest," "Yellowknife Bay" and "Pahrump Hills," guided by instructions from Rice and the rest of the science team, always on the lookout for that next crucial piece of the puzzle.

Curiosity has examined all sorts of terrain in its trek, from sharp chunks of basalt and other igneous rocks formed by the planet's now-dormant volcanoes to flat areas of mudstone in ancient lake basins compacted by water that existed hundreds of millions of years ago.

Over everything, pushed about by the omnipresent scouring winds, is a thin layer of reddish iron oxide dust that gives the planet its nickname. These features are not exactly the "primordial stew" from which life will spring anytime soon, but the clues to NASA's questions lie not in the planet's present, but in its past.

"If we can find evidence of microbial life on Mars, that would open whole new windows into what we could expect to be happening elsewhere," she says. "We would be that much closer to answering the question we all have: 'Are we alone in the universe?'

So what happened to Mars to turn it from a planet very much like Earth — cloud cover and a mild climate — into what it is today?
“That’s a really good question,” Rice says. “We’re not sure. One theory is that the solar winds slowly stripped the atmosphere away. Another is focused on the potential of asteroid strikes doing it.” A new NASA orbiter, called MAVEN, just arrived in Mars’ orbit with the main goal of sampling the atmosphere to try to answer that very question.

**TAKING A TURN AT THE WHEEL**

Rice and her team are on the “rover shift” about five days a month. Each morning she downloads images taken by Curiosity the day before as the rover slowly pushes through Gale Crater, ever closer to its eventual goal – climbing 18,000-foot Mount Sharp, which looms over the crater like a Martian version of Mount Rainier.

“Seeing pictures taken the day before on another planet never gets old,” she says. “When I start taking that for granted, it will be time to stop doing this work.”

The science team evaluates these images and, via a conference call, decides the next few tasks for Curiosity. Objectives can range from “drive to that rock and take a photograph of it” to “drill a core sample at location X” to “move from point A to point B.”

The wishes of the science team are then sent to the engineering team, who turn those concepts into computer code and send them off to Curiosity. Everyone then watches to see how the instructions are carried out and then begins the process again the next day.

Unlike previous rovers such as Opportunity, which landed on
Inside the Mars Rover

Curiosity is the size of a dune buggy and rides through Gale Crater on six aluminum wheels, each of which can be independently steered, allowing it to turn in place and easily back in and out of tight situations and potential trouble spots. After more than two years on Mars, the rover's tough metal wheels have suffered punctures and tears during the 5 miles it has driven to date, so the team chooses soft ground whenever possible, or even directs the rover to drive in reverse.

Ultra-high-frequency relay link to talk to one of the three orbiters around Mars – the Odyssey, the Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter and the Mars Express – and have the orbiter relay those signals back to Earth.

The rover is powered by a chunk of plutonium-238, as this radioactive isotope decays, it releases heat that is converted into electric voltage. This heat also warms Curiosity's systems during nights when temperatures can drop to as low as minus-127 degrees Celsius.

Two onboard computers are especially hardened to tolerate the extreme levels of radiation in space. Connected to the brains of the rover are its communications arrays and instruments. Curiosity can communicate directly with Earth using an X-band transmitter.

A clever engineer built Curiosity's tread pattern out of the Morse Code dot-and-dash symbols that spell out "J-P-L" in the Martian sands – a shout-out to its designers at CalTech's Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

Curiosity's advanced instrument package is the main reason the rover exists. It uses its high-resolution color cameras to examine its surroundings and its robotic arm to analyze rock samples or drill cores.

Infrared laser to vaporize small particles of rocks to sample their makeup.

Weather station; records wind speeds/direction, air pressure, humidity, temperature and UV radiation.

It has a microscope and x-ray spectrometer for closer looks at specimens.

Radiation detectors.
Mars in 2004 and was only supposed to stay active for 90 days but is somewhat miraculously still chugging along doing valuable research work, Curiosity has its own onboard science laboratories. This means it can not only photograph Martian rocks and analyze them with its rover arm, it can extract rock cores and do experiments on them using sophisticated equipment within the rover’s body, including X-ray diffraction and evolved gas analysis.

Being a member of not one but three (counting the upcoming Mars 2020 mission) rover science teams is something of a coup, as many hundreds of scientists from around the world apply for the few spots available for each mission. Rice credits her work as a graduate student in getting her foot in the door, with her experience since then making her more valuable to the teams.

“Two of the previous rovers, Spirit and Opportunity, were being operated at Cornell while I was there getting my doctorate, so I was able to be hands-on from the beginning,” she says. “And my following postdoc work at the JPL continued to be rover-focused, so that helped as well.”

**BRINGING MARS INTO THE CLASSROOM**

While Rice loves her work on the rovers, she is equally excited to make them part of her classroom experience at Western. She is teaching classes on planetology, geology and astronomy, and she will have her students use data from NASA to help study potential landing sites for the Mars 2020 mission, using an updated version of the Curiosity rover.

As is the case with Curiosity, the 2020 mission will continue to push toward finding that Holy Grail: evidence of life elsewhere.

“It’s a fascinating endeavor, this idea of exploring other planets to find what they can tell us about the rest of the universe,” Rice says. “And being able to share it in the classroom – to perhaps promote that spark of interest in one of my students the way it was for me – makes it even more rewarding.”

*John Thompson is Western’s assistant director of the Office of Communications and Marketing. He has been obsessed with space since he first saw James Tiberius Kirk step into a transporter in 1969.*
No such thing as ‘no’

Some told Snow Jones ('14) that her college goals weren’t meant for someone with so much to overcome.

Even more are glad she didn’t listen.

By Mary Lane Gallagher

Tran Thi Minh Tuyet (Snow) was in the second semester of an English linguistics degree in Vietnam when her professor sat her down with a suggestion: Transfer to another major.

Snow was a good student in the top half of her class and a scholarship recipient to boot. But her professor’s request wasn’t a complete surprise: Snow was one of only two blind students in the English program. If she switched to history, she could take oral exams. Wouldn’t that be easier?

By then, Snow had already met plenty of people who couldn’t see the path before her.

“I don’t know how I will deal with all the problems, because I’m not able to imagine any of them right now,” she had told university administrators who’d doubted her even after she had passed the university entrance exam.

She told her professor she would finish her English degree, no matter how long it took.

Snow had dreamed of going to college since she was a little girl living with her parents and little brothers on her family’s farm near the picturesque city of Dalat in the Central Highlands of Vietnam.

When Snow was in the third grade her father, Tran Van Nhy, found his daughter a desk. It had collected dust for years in a surplus warehouse with other leftovers from the U.S. military, but it was just the right size for a 7-year-old girl whose school smarts would take her far.

Sitting at her desk for the first time, Snow got to work cleaning it up. She felt underneath, getting into the little crevices with her tiny fingers.

She found a skinny metal object; it was shaped like a short pencil, but made of metal like brass. She got to work on wiping away the grime so she could read the words on it.

The explosion destroyed her left hand and permanently injured her right hand. It also destroyed both of her eyes.

She called to her parents, who were tending the family’s coffee fields. Later in the hospital, Snow was unconscious when a doctor suggested to her parents that it might be better to give the little girl a shot that would cause her to slip away and die.

Her mother, Nguyen Duc Thi Hoa, gave the doctor such an earful, the family still talks about it.

Nhy and Hoa took their daughter home, where Hoa made poultices out of chopped-up turmeric to soothe her daughter’s scars and they both taught her how to navigate their house and nearby farm without her sense of sight. But when she was 9, it was time for her to continue her education; they sent her to live at the nearest school for the blind – in Ho Chi Minh City, an eight-hour bus ride away.

Back in the classroom, Snow was the same kid who loved school and loved where education could take her. A teacher there told her learning English was the key to communicating with people around the world – and would allow her to illustrate the capabilities of people who are blind.

But education for the blind in Vietnam usually ends at middle school. So Snow had to persuade skeptical high school administrators to let her in, even though the school had no Braille textbooks or other accommodations for students who are blind.

“I love learning – anything about learning,” Snow says. “If I don’t understand something, I have to do everything I can to understand.”

But she couldn’t do it alone and asked classmates for help. Soon, a regular network of friends would gather in a quiet park or church yard to study together. Friends read to Snow, and the discussions that followed helped deepen everyone’s understanding, she says.

“Everyone has difficulties in life, so there’s no reason for me to pause. I have to overcome them anyway.”
Snow Jones ('14, MBA) was named Outstanding Graduate of her MBA program group. She had wanted to study abroad ever since she was a little girl growing up on a farm in Vietnam.

Photo by Rhys Logan ('11, Visual Journalism)
Lee Jones accompanied his wife, Snow, to classes during her MBA program, took notes on what was on the board and made sure she got to group project meetings. But she spoke for herself in class.

Soon after she graduated from college – on time – in 2003, a French insurance firm in Ho Chi Minh City gave Snow a shot at the telephone switchboard. Six years later, she was supervising six people in her own division selling auto, home and health insurance.

By then, Snow was also funding scholarships and mentoring college students who, like her, had to overcome some difficulties to earn their degrees. A family of teachers had funded her scholarship, and after Snow graduated, she persuaded others whose educations had been funded by the same family to mentor and support their own students.

Soon, more and more new graduates were paying it forward – some of Snow’s co-workers at the insurance company even joined in – until there were more than 2,000 students and graduates in the mentorship club meeting in huge social gatherings in Ho Chi Minh City.

She had the opportunity to sponsor blind students, but chose to sponsor sighted students instead. “I don’t want to be in a silo,” she says. “If I can sponsor a sighted person that will let other sighted people sponsor blind students. I thought that would be more impactful.”

Meanwhile, Snow continued to study English and posted a profile on a dating website to find native English speakers. She soon heard from Lee Jones, a Bellingham resident and retired building contractor who had learned to speak Vietnamese as an American G.I. during the Vietnam War.

Lee, a Jehovah’s Witness preparing to move to Vietnam for missionary work, wanted to talk to Snow about the Bible. Snow was much more interested in studying Lee’s accent than studying scripture, but they chatted online for several months before Lee came to Vietnam.

Lee said he was moved to tears seeing Snow smile the first time, knowing his friend had become such a warm, smart, funny, kind-hearted person in spite of so many challenges.

Soon, Lee and Snow spent hours together in the evenings after work, walking and talking for hours. Snow navigated the busy sidewalks with high heels and confidence, Lee at her side, and he accompanied her to and from work on the bus.

Snow introduced Lee to friends in the mentorship club she had helped start – immersing him in strong coffee, karaoke and fast, lively conversation.

Snow and Lee were falling in love and wanted to get married, so they traveled to see Snow’s parents back on their farm. Nhy and Hoa weren’t delighted, at first, about their daughter’s much-older American sweetheart.

“My mom and dad are really, really good parents,” Snow says. “In Vietnam, the Americans and French were really famous for getting divorced. They were worried about my happiness.”

Lee wooed Snow’s parents by continuing to study the Vietnamese language and helping out on the farm. Months later, when Nhy and Hoa finally agreed to sit down and talk with Lee about marrying Snow, it took several hours of Lee pleading, sweating – even shedding a few tears – before Snow’s parents gave their blessing.

Snow and Lee got married in March 2008 in her family’s house with dozens of family and friends in attendance. “She is so beautiful,” Lee said in Vietnamese when he first saw Snow as she wore an embroidered ao dai wedding dress and stood between her mother and father.

Photos of their wedding made national headlines in Vietnam. “If you happen to spot an American man and a blind, disabled Vietnamese woman walking happily together down Ho Chi Minh City’s streets, it may just be Donald Lee Jones and Tran Thi Minh Tuyet, a couple whose love has triumphed over geographical distances, language barriers and heart-breaking misfortune,” one story described them.

Snow and Lee lived in Ho Chi Minh City until 2010, when they moved to Bellingham so Snow could complete an MBA at Western.

“It’s been one of my dreams since I was 5, 6, 7 years old, that I would (attend) higher education in a foreign country, just to see how people have different ways of teaching and learning,” Snow says.
At Western, Lee walked the hallways of Parks Hall with Snow as he had the streets of Ho Chi Minh City. He let her know when friends were nearby so she could say hello, and made sure she got to her group project meetings.

She used screen-reading software to read articles and some textbooks. “But textbooks aren’t written for blind people,” says Dan Purdy (‘06, Business Administration – Marketing; ‘07, MBA), former associate director of Western’s MBA program. “For instance, supply and demand curves. So much information is packed into that image.”

Sometimes, Snow says, she let her screen reader recite columns of figures, letting the numbers wash over her as she searched for patterns in the data. And while other students took visual cues from the text and skimmed for the basic information, Snow’s screen reader treats every word the same. So she read every single word.

“I’m not sure that’s an advantage or disadvantage,” she says. “I can do everything other people can do, just sometimes on three hours’ sleep.”

Each night, Snow and Lee reviewed the day’s classes with Lee filling in visual details from lectures.

“He tried to act as her eyes as much as he could,” remembers classmate Jasmin Baker-Kinney (‘10, Psychology; ’14, MBA). “His life is Snow and I think that’s amazing. I don’t know anyone else who would do that. I honestly don’t know what they would do without each other.”

But when it came to class discussions, Snow spoke for herself, Baker-Kinney says. While classmates used notecards during presentations, Snow memorized elaborate PowerPoint slides to present to the class. Snow pulled her own weight in group projects, too, Baker-Kinney says.

“I couldn’t bring myself to slack off, even a little bit, in group work because I knew how hard she was working,” says Baker-Kinney, now a human resources executive with Volant Aerospace in Burlington. “I remember we were worried about her. We knew she didn’t get a lot of sleep because she had to work so hard.”

But Snow rarely cracked — her positive outlook rarely wavered, Baker-Kinney remembers.

“She’s a very happy person,” she says. “When I think of her, I think of the smile she always had on her face.”

Snow ended up getting nearly straight As in the MBA program and was named the group’s Outstanding Graduate in 2014.

Snow and Lee Jones were married in 2008 in her hometown of Dalat in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. After Snow completed her MBA at Western in 2014, she and Lee moved to Ho Chi Minh City where she works as a project manager for AIG Vietnam.

T

oday, Snow and Lee are back in Ho Chi Minh City, where Snow is the Customer Experience project manager for AIG Vietnam — the human resources executive who interviewed her remembered reading about Lee and Snow in the newspaper — and leads the company’s customer service improvement efforts.

While Snow is at work during the day, Lee continues to study Vietnamese and the Bible, and runs errands for Snow’s family in Dalat. At night, Snow and Lee sometimes meander through the city’s food stalls and sit by the river to eat dinner. They’re also thinking about buying an apartment.

Snow loves her job at AIG, but is still hatching other plans. She would love to teach an online course through Western Extended Education about doing business in Southeast Asia. And she has long dreamed of launching a small business employing blind people — something that is both an economic opportunity and an example of what’s possible.

But Purdy hopes she’ll consider a career showing colleges and universities what’s possible when they make their courses more accessible to blind students. He wonders if it really should take Snow’s kind of steely persistence for a blind student to earn a graduate degree.

“My sense is, she’s taught us as much as we’ve taught her,” Purdy says. “She can help the system learn how to do it better.”
Western Stands For: Access

The Barbara Ellen Maguire Scholarship - which will support students who have financial need and are pursuing research, internships, or summer projects in the behavioral neurosciences, health sciences including pre-medicine, or computer sciences - reflects not just the family's career interests, but their lifelong pursuit of achievement as well.

If you would like to give a boost to students in the name of someone whose tenacity and resilience gave you your own shot at a college degree, call (360) 650-3027 or go to www4wa.org.
Alumni Association Legacy Family Award: The Veith family

Meet the family whose traditions encompass career commitment, humanitarian work, community support and Western

By Daneet Steffens

When Barbara Veith became a single mother in the '60s, responsible for eight children between the ages of 17 and 1, she drew on the kind of resilience and determination that had driven her physician father to snowshoe his way into rural Washington to make house calls with the Yakama Nation.

The 91-year-old matriarch, who today is just as likely to be reading techno-thriller “I Am Pilgrim” as she is American history, didn’t merely inspire her offspring, but ensured that they all had access to higher education.

“There are several things operating that have inspired us to create an endowment in our mother’s name,” says Richard Veith ('69, Psychology), a psychiatrist, the Richard D. and Bernice E. Tutt Professor in the Neurosciences at the University of Washington and a member of Western’s College of Humanities and Social Sciences’ Advancement Council. “Part of the reason we’ve chosen the routes that we’ve chosen – in medicine, in IT – has been from growing up with this aspirational identity of ‘Gee, if you’re a really good person you do these kinds of things and you take care of people.’ There certainly was a family value of not just being nice, but of being educated and striving toward excellence.”

And that, he adds, aligns well with Western’s culture, an experience that no fewer than 11 members of his extended family have enjoyed: “It’s a place where people can discover themselves, where they begin to understand the importance of giving back to the community.”

Brother Rob Veith ('70, Chemistry), an orthopedic surgeon in Seattle, agrees. “Western created an extraordinary atmosphere for me to grow and thrive, both personally and academically,” he says.

The two brothers spend a chunk of each year doing humanitarian medical work abroad, Richard in Vietnam and Cambodia, devoted to improving mental health and psychiatric care, and Rob in Haiti, Vietnam, Sierra Leone, Papua New Guinea and Bangladesh, treating clubfoot and teaching local residents how to build durable, affordable prosthetics.

“It’s all about teaching, so that those skills remain in-country when you leave,” Rob says.

“We’re all kind of perfectionists in our family; that is the side product of the way Mom raised us,” adds David Veith ('83, Business Administration - Computer Science), one of two IT brothers in a family packed with doctors and nurses. David, a Solutions Architect at Amazon Web Services, likes to wow customers by using his honeybee-raising hobby to illustrate Amazon’s cloud-focused ventures (“It’s pretty fun to use beekeeping as a vehicle to educate them about our advanced cloud computing services.”).

For David, his mother Barbara’s encouragement towards higher education paid off on a particularly personal note: He and wife Francine, ('83, Physical Education - K-12) met at Western, he says “and we’re still very happily married. It was a pretty magical time.”

“We tend to visit Western’s campus on our anniversaries,” says Francine, a physical education teacher who loves helping kids develop their sportsmanship skills. “Western remains a place where you can get a great education as part of a close-knit community.”

Amazon’s David Veith ('83, Business Administration - Computer Science) is also an amateur beekeeper. “We’re all kind of perfectionists in our family,” he says.

Daneet Steffens is Western’s associate director of campaign communications. She continues to be inspired by the way her father, the late WWU Journalism Professor Pete Steffens, was energized by his work with students.
Larry "Go Vikings!" Taylor Alumni Service Award

Tony Pechthalt
('87, Physical Education – Exercise and Sport Science; '93, M.Ed, Physical Education)

Diana Pechthalt
('87, Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology; '91, M.A, Speech Pathology/Audiology)

The Pechthalts, who met and fell in love at Western, say faculty and staff who believed in them were a central part of their success. The couple still live in Bellingham, where Tony is a financial adviser for Edward Jones and Diana, a speech-language pathology clinical educator in Western’s Speech-Language–Hearing Clinic, mentors students preparing to launch their own careers.

“I work closely with graduate students who are working with low-income children in Head Start programs around the area,” Diana says. “I’ve seen these students struggle financially while doing this amazing work and I wanted to help them.”

Today the Diana Pechthalt Endowed Graduate Scholarship, established by the couple in 2005, is for graduate students in the Communications and Sciences Disorders Department. The Pechthalts also recently endowed a scholarship for Women’s Soccer and established a graduate assistantship for Men’s Basketball.

“We want to give back in meaningful ways to make the world better,” says Tony, a former member of the WWU Foundation Board. “Education is what changes the quality of our society.”
Lifetime Achievement Award

Duane Anderson
('52, Elementary Education)

Thousands owe their hearing to Duane Anderson, who has spent his professional life as an audiologist fitting people with hearing aids and helping people recover from hearing loss. And in a way, Anderson owes his career to Paul Woodring, whose Psychology course "really inspired me to get serious about being a student," Anderson remembers.

Anderson has spent decades in the Portland area serving clients at the Portland Center for Hearing and Speech, lobbying for the Oregon Speech and Hearing Association and working for both the Oregon and Washington state health departments. Twenty-five years ago, he formed Hearing Conservation Services, a mobile testing service for industrial clients.

Today, Anderson continues to work part time while volunteering for WWU in Portland — he's a former member of the WWU Alumni Association Board of Directors — and for AARP of Oregon. He also hits the ski slopes whenever he can.

Young Alumnus of the Year

Seth "Hoby" Darling
('97, History)

Hoby Darling is the president and CEO of Skullcandy, a leading music, gaming and youth culture audio company. Their ear buds, head phones and other audio equipment are popular with snowboarders and skaters — as well as college students crisscrossing Red Square.

Darling became head of Skullcandy, based in Park City, Utah, in 2013 after working for several years as an executive in lifestyle brands. He was senior vice president of Strategic Development at Volcom, head of Strategy and Planning for Nike Affiliate Brand, then general manager of Nike+ Digital Sport.

Darling grew up in Cashmere and after Western went on to earn a law degree from Northwestern University as well as an MBA from the University of California, Berkeley and Columbia University.

"No matter where you were yesterday, you have the power over your future," he told students during a recent visit to Western. "It's not about where you were born, it's about where you are going."
Huxley College of the Environment

Kurt Creager
('79, Planning and Environmental Policy, Student-Faculty Designed Major)

Kurt Creager has worked in the field of affordable housing and community development for 35 years. Now the executive director of the Department of Housing and Community Development in Fairfax County, Virginia, he has also led the housing authority of Vancouver, Washington, and was responsible for housing and economic development programs, policy and finance for Metropolitan King County. His own consulting firm, Urbanist Housing Solutions, was devoted to sustainable, transit-oriented, mixed-use development.

College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Mitchell L. Eggers
('85, Sociology)

The chief scientist for the international market research firm Lightspeed GMI, Eggers is known for creating a unique online lie-detector tests to ensure data quality in marketing research. He also holds patents for a method to create highly representative samples from online populations. Before his career as a technology executive and entrepreneur, he was a research demographer at the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe in Geneva, Switzerland. He also serves on the CHSS Advancement Council.

Woodring College of Education

Sheila L. Fox
('67, Speech - Elementary)

Sheila Fox has spent 35 years at Woodring, beginning as a lecturer in Special Education and most recently as associate dean and liaison to the state. Along the way, she became a statewide leader in education issues, serving twice on the State Board of Education. Before joining Western's faculty, Fox was a Peace Corps volunteer in Tonga and worked as a special education teacher in Australia.

College of Science and Engineering

James Reavis
('87, Business Administration/Computer Science)

As president of Reavis Consulting Group and co-founder and CEO of Cloud Security Alliance, Jim Reavis is an entrepreneur, writer, speaker, strategist and international leader in the field of information security. He leads an alliance of 63,000 members around the world helping to shape the future of cloud computing security and related technology industries. Reavis is also a member of Western's Computer Science Advisory Board and a former member of the WWU Alumni Association Board of Directors.
College of Business and Economics

Karen Richards ('82, Business Administration; '89, MBA)
Karen Richards, first vice president – investment officer at Wells Fargo Advisors LLC in Bellingham, believes in the power of investing in education. She supports scholarships for women business students at Western with an emphasis in finance, is a member of the Western Foundation board of directors and is a founding board member of the Student Investment Management and Scholarship Fund Advisory Board, where she mentors students getting hands-on experience in investment portfolio management.

College of Fine and Performing Arts

Mark Shetabi ('93, Art)
Mark Shetabi is chair of the Painting Department at the Tyler School of Art at Philadelphia's Temple University, one of the top painting programs in the nation. A 2002 Pew Fellow in the Arts, Shetabi's paintings and sculptures have been exhibited around the country at such venues as Western Bridge in Seattle and the Jeff Bailey Gallery in New York, Ratio3 in San Francisco and Project Room in Philadelphia. In 2008 the PULSE Art Fair on Pier 40 in New York City exhibited a body of his work, including "Models," a 34-foot-long sculpture based on video game architecture. And in 2010, his work was included in an exhibit at the Smithsonian National Building Museum called "House of Cars: Innovation in the Parking Garage."

Campus Volunteer Recognition Award

David A. Hamiter ('92, Manufacturing Engineering Technology) and Robert E. Olson
David Hamiter, a Microsoft alum and computer information technology specialist with Western's Academic Technology User Services, established an endowed scholarship for student staff of the Technology Center. Partner Rob Olson, an assistant attorney general for the state and a WWU adjunct faculty member teaching business law, is a longstanding contributor to Fairhaven's Law, Diversity and Justice Program and to the student-led MoneySense program, providing semiannual seminars on tenant rights.

Fairhaven College of Interdisciplinary Studies

Diane Sigel ('77, Interdisciplinary Concentration, Business Administration)
Now retired as CEO of her family business, Duffle Bag, Inc., Diane Sigel serves on the Fairhaven College Advisory Council and supports the college's Opportunity Fund for first-generation students. She has also served on the College of Business and Economics Dean's Board of Advisers. Sigel is immensely active in community causes in Seattle, where she is a board member at the Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle.

Community Volunteer Recognition Award

Warren W. Michelsen
Warren Michelsen has been impressed by Western, and its students, ever since his company, Trane, a division of Ingersoll Rand, sent him to campus to recruit engineers. A member of the Founding Advisory Board for the Institute for Energy Studies, Michelsen has helped the institute raise more than $1.4 million in private funds and secure nearly $1 million a year in new state funding.
At Western, we pride ourselves on our place in the wider community, including our students’ service-learning outreach, our faculty’s professional relationships with other institutions and the University’s ongoing mission to engage with our many constituencies in an inclusive and interactive manner.

As the Western community continues to grow and expand beyond campus and graduation, the Alumni Association thrives on maintaining long-term ties and developing new ones. With the number of WWU alumni growing every year, we are more determined than ever to expand our reach and invite alums, parents and friends to participate in our networking activities, events and programs.

Part of that includes establishing a physical presence in the community beyond campus. We’ve already seen the significant impact that our two-year-old Seattle office has on our Vikings in King County; now we are further extending our reach off campus into the local Whatcom community, where more than 15,000 Western alums live and work.

The 2,500-square-foot ground floor area will also include a conference and events room, facilities and opportunities for the public to find out more about campus life and events—highlighting the work of our talented students, staff and Western community members—and office space for nine WWU staff members.

We look forward to welcoming you to our newest location in the heart of our city, and extend the first of many invitations: please join us on June 19th as we celebrate the ribbon-cutting of our central Bellingham office. This occasion will mark our introduction to our downtown business neighbors as well as to everyone in the Western community—and beyond.

And once we’ve cleared the balloons and the confetti, whether you’re spending the day downtown or visiting from out of town, please stop by to find out about the latest Western-related events, or simply join us for a coffee and a chat.

We are excited about our upcoming move, and hope to share that excitement with you. Whether you live in Whatcom County or are coming back to Bellingham for a visit, please consider this your alumni center to come home to.

Deborah DeWees
Hoby Darling
WWU Alumnus ’97
President & CEO, Skullcandy
Tyler Malek makes ice cream like you can't imagine. No, really. You can't imagine.
Seasonally, there's a Thanksgiving meal of flavors, including turkey, stuffing and pumpkin pie, one of Malek's favorite creations.
“I don't consider (it) weird at all,” he says. “It makes perfect sense to me.”
That figures. Malek, 27, and a 2010 Western graduate in East Asian Studies, is the creative mind behind the flavors of Portland's Salt & Straw ice cream company.
Anyone can make attention-getting flavors. But getting people to not only try them (S&S encourages sampling) but love them is another story.
Malek joined his cousin, Kim Malek, a former Fortune 500 marketing executive, in 2011 when she launched the business from an ice cream cart.
Since then, the company has grown to four shops (three in Portland, one in L.A.) and 150 employees, occupying a place in Portland's hip food culture scene. Tyler was named to the 2015 Forbes magazine “30 under 30” list in the Food and Wine category. The business recently appeared on the Travel Network's Bizarre Foods show.
When a recent photo went viral of vice president Joe Biden, wearing aviator sunglasses and licking an ice-cream cone, Biden was savoring a Salt & Straw cone of Freckled Woodblock Chocolate during a Portland campaign stop.
In the cutthroat food industry where recipes can be closely guarded secrets, Malek networks and collaborates with area chefs, chocolatiers, brewers, roasters, food growers, distillers and others for flavors in keeping with the company's “farm-to-cone” philosophy.
While studying Chinese and business at Western, Malek traveled to China and, after graduation, returned to Asia to travel and work. Then he realized he wanted to be home.
“All my friends were teaching English and starting careers in China,” says Malek, from Lake Stevens. “I wanted to be able to integrate myself into the community here.”
He decided on culinary school. About the same time, his cousin was ditching her high-profile career in corporate marketing to start an ice-cream company.
With a name like Salt & Straw – derived from the pre-refrigeration method of keeping ice cream frozen – it has to be good. The company features eight to 10 “classics” (Sea Salt and Caramel is most popular). Malek oversees a crew that creates six or seven new flavors a month. Popular ones return in a year. Seasonal flavors are developed six months in advance. For every flavor that works, they throw out four, Malek says.
“I'm kind of a romantic when it comes to food,” Malek says. “The cool thing about ice cream is you don't have to have it. It's so celebratory in nature. So when someone finally comes and they take the time to spend the money and the time and the calories to eat ice cream, you know it's special.”

Meri-Jo Borzilleri is a freelance journalist whose work has appeared in the Boston Globe, USA Today, The Miami Herald and Seattle Metropolitan magazine. She'll take chocolate chip ice cream any day.
Class Notes

1960 – Bill Wright (Elementary Education) was recently inducted into the Pacific Northwest Golf Association Hall of Fame. A former professional golfer and the first African-American golfer to win a USGA national championship, Wright continues to teach golf in Los Angeles.

1961 – John Riselnd (History – Secondary Education) was recently honored at a WWU basketball game for his 35 years of service as the scoreboard operator. His wife, Brenda Riselnd (Educational Leadership, 77, M.Ed., School Counselor) worked alongside him as a production assistant. Marilyn (Markow) Redmond (Music – Elementary) recently published her second book as a paperback, "The Real Meaning of 2012," at Amazon.com, where several of her e-books are also available. After retiring from teaching, Redmond became an international speaker and writer. More of her work can be seen at angelsgifts.com. Mel Bowden (Social Studies – Elementary) is a retired teacher and basketball coach in Prosser.

1967 – Jack O’Donnell (Special Education, History/Social Studies) recently retired from writing his history column at the Herald in Everett, "Seems Like Yesterday," which included news published in the paper 25 and 50 years ago. O’Donnell is also retired from a long career teaching in Edmonds and Everett.


1969 – Jack Requa (Economics) became interim director of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority in Washington, D.C. Most recently, he was the authority’s assistant general manager for bus services, overseeing daily operations of the sixth-largest bus system in the U.S. Dennis Murphy (Economics; ’70, M.A., Economics), dean of Western’s College of Business and Economics from 1982 to 2007 who twice served as Western’s provost, continues to teach at CBE but has retired from administrative work. He served as Commencement speaker at the winter ceremony in March.

1973 – Patricia (Wood) Weber (Elementary Education; French - Secondary Education) recently published a children’s book, “Solaster’s Dance: A Legend of How Sea Stars Came to Be;” copies of which are located in Special Collections at Western’s library and in the Daniel J. Evans Library at The Evergreen State College.

1974 – Douglas S. Massey (Spanish, Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology) is the Henry G. Bryant Professor of Sociology at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University, where he directs the Office of Population Research and oversees the Mexican Migration Project and the Latin American Migration Project. Two long-term studies exploring the causes and consequences of immigration, Massey was a Commencement speaker at the spring 2014 ceremony in June. Keith Abbott (M.A., English) retired in 2012 as a professor at Naropa University in Boulder, Colorado. Abbott’s “Downstream from Trout Fishing in America,” a memoir of the American author Richard Brautigan, was recently published in French by Editions Cambourakis as "Brautigan Un Reveur A Babylone." Jan Hanson (Fairhaven Interdisciplinary Concentration) recently retired as Youth Services librarian at the Longview Public Library. She received the Children and Young Adult Services Visionary Award for Youth Services from the Washington Library Association in 2010.

1975 – Tamara Bliss (Interdisciplinary Dance Studies, Speech Communication) is artistic director of Orchesis Dance Group at the University of Alberta, where she is also a faculty lecturer in the physical education and recreation department. Jerry Thon (Physical Education) is semi-retired after selling his business, New West Fisheries, in Bellingham in 2000. A longtime member of the Western Foundation board, Thon was a speaker at the spring 2014 Commencement ceremony in June.

1976 – Woody Wheeler (Environmental Education, Geography) was recently a featured speaker at the Othello Sandhill Crane Festival with "When the Ordinary Narrates: Why Common Birds Matter." Wheeler is an experienced naturalist, birding guide and the author of "Look Up! Birds and Other Natural Wonders Just Outside Your Window."

1977 – Wayne Hale (Chemistry) became president and CEO of Gopher Resource, one of the largest lead producers in North America, based in Eagan, Minnesota.

1978 – Larry Weis (Industrial Technology), general manager of Austin Energy, was the keynote speaker at the 2015 Energy Thought Summit in Austin, Texas. Michael Pucci (Human Services) recently retired after 19 years as executive director of the Housing Authority of the city of Alameda, California. Marilyn Dunne (Sociology) is an active volunteer with Pet Partners and visits schools, nursing homes, shelters and hospitals with her therapy dog partner, Tornado. Dunne also helps other animals and their owners to work as therapy dog pairs. Blaine Dunaway (Music – Jazz Studies) lives in Courtenay, British Columbia, and is a performer, teacher, composer and conductor who plays violin for the duo String Theory.

Jess del Bosque finished 78th in the 65-69 age group of the New York City Marathon.

1980 – Al Barrett (Sociology) recently retired after more than 20 years as a United States Probation Officer. He also served as a training specialist and facilitator for the Federal Judicial Center. In 2005, he traveled to Romania to make presentations about U.S. federal probation practices to judges, prosecutors and probation officials. Steve Hall (Public Policy and Administration) is city manager of Olympia and recently received a Boss of the Year award at an event sponsored by the Thurston County Chamber of Commerce, business students at St. Martin’s University and Express Employment Professionals.

1981 – Michael Ward Stewart (Sociology) recently retired from his position as a human services professional for the state of Hawaii Department of Education Special Education Division, Honolulu Autism Team. He is an emeritus member of the American Sociological Association. Duncan Stevenson (Business Administration) has been director of athletics for Pierce College for 27 years and recently received the Dutch Triebwasser Award from the Northwest Athletic Association of Community Colleges for his outstanding service. This is his second time receiving the award.

1982 – Michael Chrzastowski (M.S., Geology) works at the Illinois State Geological Survey and recently completed his master’s degree at the University of Illinois in religion, with a focus on Islam. After a career in geology – and four college degrees in the sciences – he now hopes to become a recent winner. Thomas Loranger (Ecology; ’86, M.S. Ecology, Environmental Science) is manager of the Water Resources Program at the Washington State Department of Ecology.

1983 – Tami L. Hendrickson (Accounting) became senior vice president-treasurer at Federal Home Loan Bank of Cincinnati, Denise Attwood (Environmental Science) and Ric Conner (’85, Environmental Studies) own Ganesh Himal Trading, which supports hundreds of craft producers in Nepal and sells to more than 250 stores in the U.S. and Canada. Ganesh Himal Trading is one of the oldest, continuously operated fair trade companies in North America and recently celebrated its 30th anniversary.

1984 – Brad Coulter (Geology) is a teacher at Lakeview Elementary School in Kirkland and was recently interviewed for a story in the Wall Street Journal about how he uses manual typewriters in his classroom. Franklin Campbell (Business Administration/Computer Science) recently received the certification of Master Electronic Document Professional – Master of Printing Technology from the Xplor International EDP Commission. Campbell is a subject matter expert in electronic document systems at Canon. Sharen Borgias (Interior Design) joined three of her brothers, including Darren (’82, Biology; ’84, M.S., Biology) and Callen (’78, Environmental Geology), to row at the Greenlake Frostbite Races in December 2014 and placed first in Mens Quad without cox. Darren and Sharen also placed first in Mixed Doubles. And the four competed in November 2014 at the Head

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Get a promotion? Got married? Published your novel? Made a difference in your community? Share your news with other alumni in Class Notes. We collect information from published accounts, press releases and alumni themselves. Notes are edited for style, clarity and length and are published as space allows. For more information, or to submit your own information for Class Notes, email Mary.Gallagher@wwu.edu.
of the Lake Races and placed third in Men's Masters Quad without cox.

1985 - Ricard E. Thompson (Superintendent's Certificate) was selected to become superintendent of the Chichimac School District. Thompson has led the San Juan Island School District since 2010. Duane Schireman (Business Administration) is director of Strategic Workforce Planning at The Boeing Co. and serves on the board of Providence Regional Medical Center in Everett. He recently received a Distinguished Alumni Award from Immaculate Conception and Center in Everett. He recently received a Distinguished Alumni Award from Immaculate Conception and Center in Everett.

1986 - Anne Cooper (‘86, Industrial/Organizational Psychology) is vice president of Human Resources for Sammons Financial Group in West Des Moines, Iowa. She is also a member of the Western Foundation board of directors and an occasional guest speaker in the Psychology Department. Cooper was the commencement speaker at the Fall 2014 ceremony in December.

Michael Vendiola supervises the Office of Native Education at OSPI.

1987 - U.S. Army Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Callaghan-McCann (History) serves in the Army's 1st Battalion, 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment, also known as the Old Guard, which conducts memorials at Arlington National Cemetery. Callaghan-McCann has also served deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan. Stacy Gilliard (Accounting) became a senior audit manager at Doty, Beardsley, Rosengren & Co. in Tacoma.

1988 - Emily (Nelson) Stordahl (Fairhaven Interdisciplinary Concentration) is a registered art therapist, retired from school counseling in June 2014 and received the Impact Award from the Lebanon, Oregon, Education Association.

1990 - Jennifer Hallett (Office of Native Education at OSPI) is director of Native Education - K-12 Elementary Ed; '05, Secondary Ed) is a social studies and leadership teacher at Sehome Elementary School in Bellingham. Billie Wildrick (Fairhaven Interdisciplinary Concentration) recently played Carrie Pipperidge in the musical "Carousel" at The 5th Avenue Theatre. Lindsey Myhre (Business Administration - Secondary Ed) is a social studies and leadership teacher at Sehome High School in Bellingham. Billie Wildrick (Fairhaven Interdisciplinary Concentration) recently played Carrie Pipperidge in the musical "Carousel" at The 5th Avenue Theatre.

1992 - Scott Ayers (Journalism) is a senior communications specialist at the Lower Colorado River Authority in Austin, Texas. Previously, he was a marketing project manager at SPIE in Bellingham and opinion page editor at The Bellingham Herald. Paul Weaver (Economics) became a regional property manager for Compass Commercial Real Estate Services in Bend, Oregon. James Everett History - Secondary Ed) was selected to be principal of Squalicum High School in Bellingham. Most recently, he was principal of Meridian High School in Whatcom County.

1993 - Calvin Watts (Certificate) was selected to be superintendent of the Kent School District, the fourth-largest in the state of Washington. Previously, he was assistant superintendent for Gwinnett County Public Schools in Georgia.

1994 - Stephen Michael Randolf (Theatre) is the founder and producing artistic director of The New Acting Co. in Long Island, N.Y., and recently directed the company’s production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream." Fred Poyner (Art History) is a curator for the Washington State Historical Society museum in Tacoma. He received a Heritage Projects program literary award from 4Culture of Seattle to publish his first book, "The First Sculptor of Seattle: The Life and Art of James A. Wehn." Michael Vendiola (American Cultural Studies; '97, M.Ed., Adult Education), who served as coordinator for Western's Ethnic Student Center from 1998 to 2011, recently became program supervisor for the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction's Office of Native Education. Vini Samuel (‘94, English, History) is an attorney in Montesano and active in local politics. She was the commencement speaker at the Summer 2014 ceremony in August.

1995 - Shanie Matthews (German) recently created My Happy Path, an online yoga studio.

1996 - Darcy Wagner (Child Development) became an employee benefits consultant with the Echelon Group in Boise, Idaho.

1997 - Steve Kirkjie (Journalism - Public Relations, Political Science) became chief of administrative and legal affairs for the Port of Everett. M J Daspit (M.Ed., Adult Education) is a freelance writer of environmental fiction in Ashland, Oregon. Her historical novel, "Lucy Lied," set in the late 1870s in Monterey, California, was recently published by Firebird Press. Greg Wong (Human Services) became a partner in the Pacifica Law Group in Seattle.

1998 - Kelly Liske (Accounting), executive vice president and chief banking officer for First Federal Bank in Port Townsend, recently became a board member for the Jefferson Healthcare Foundation. Mike Gent (Psychology) became public works director for the city of Surprise, Arizona. Death Cab for Cutie, which includes singer and songwriter Ben Gibbard (Environmental Science) and bassist Nick Harmer (English), recently released "Kintsugi," their eighth album and first since 2011.

1999 - Sonja Hoeff (Special Education - K-12 Elementary Ed; '05, Secondary Ed) is a social studies and leadership teacher at Sehome High School in Bellingham. Billie Wildrick (Fairhaven Interdisciplinary Concentration) recently played Carrie Pipperidge in the musical "Carousel" at The 5th Avenue Theatre. Lindsey Myhre (Business Administration - Secondary Ed) became vice president of finance at STCU, a credit union based in Spokane that serves Washington and northern Idaho.

2000 - Kevin Johnson (Geography - Secondary Ed) is a social studies and leadership teacher at Sehome High School in Bellingham. Billie Wildrick (Fairhaven Interdisciplinary Concentration) recently played Carrie Pipperidge in the musical "Carousel" at The 5th Avenue Theatre. Lindsey Myhre (Business Administration - Secondary Ed) became vice president of finance at STCU, a credit union based in Spokane that serves Washington and northern Idaho.

2001 - Ryan Dorcht (Business Administration - Management) coaches the Eastside FC Girls 95 premier soccer team and was recently named U.S. Youth Soccer Competitive Coach of the Year. Maggie Heat (Elementary Teaching Certificate) was named principal of Penny Creek Elementary School in Everett. Bryan Dickson (Psychology) became a regional sales representative for Calvin Klein golf clothing. Rusty Dodge (Business Administration - Marketing) became advertising and marketing director of the Bellingham Herald, while Melody Hitchner (English) became the paper's advertising operations and special projects manager.

2002 - David Freeman (Political Science) is a review judge with the Employment Security Department in Bellingham and a pro tem judge for Ewton Jayden and Ferndale. Audrey Wooding (M.S., Mathematics) became program manager for Blackstone LaunchPad, an interdisciplinary entrepreneurship program at Montana State University. Abe Schaffer (M.Ed., Student Personnel Administration) is the director of international student and scholar services in the University of Oregon's Office of International Affairs.

2003 - Orion Polinsky-Lekos (Renewable Energy; '08, M.S., Environmental Science) is director of research for Whole Energy, an alternative fuels company he co-founded. He is also a biofuels specialist for Washington State University Extension. Jodie Berry (General Studies) is an assistant coach for the University of Oregon's women's basketball team. Previously, she was an assistant coach at Gonzaga University.

2004 - Christine Cameron (Journalism - Public Relations) is a personal stylist and founder of the popular fashion blog, My Style Pill. Ryan Dudenbostel (Music - Performance) recently became director of Orchestral Studies in Western's Music Department. Eryn Goodman (Theatre) is the casting director for Cast Iron Productions.

Christina Starzl Mendoza was named a Woman of the Year by the Tulsa YWCA.

2005 - Meline Price (Art - Graphic Design) is a brand manager for Global Credit Union in Spokane and recently received the Advertising Professional of the Year award from the American Advertising Federation Spokane. Price is the youngest person ever to be honored. Nicole Buesing (Biology - Secondary Teaching) is co-owner of Keep It Cut men's salon in Phoenix.

2006 - Kasia Russell (Art History) recently received her MAI designation and is a managing director, senior partner and head of the Portland,
An Amazon Kindle Single. Travis College. His novella, "Fourth and Long," was recently published as an Amazon Kindle Single. Travis Kane (Business Administration - Marketing) became advertising sales manager for the Bellingham Herald. Ryan Pemberton (Psychology) spent two years studying the work of C.S. Lewis at Oxford University, serving as president of Oxford's C.S. Lewis Society and living and working at The Kilns, Lewis' former house and now a center for Lewis scholars. He later earned a master's degree from Duke Divinity School and is now a center for Lewis scholarship. Pemberton's memoir, "Caled: My Journey to C.S. Lewis' House and Back Again."

2008 - Jessica Harbert (Journalism) became executive director of MakeShift, an art and music venue in Bellingham. Riley Sweeney (Communication) won the 2014 Paul deArmond Citizen Journalism Award for his Whatcom County-based blog, "The Political Junkie."

2009 - Rebekah Hook (Political Science; '11, M.A., Political Science) is director of public affairs for the San Diego LGBT Community Center and was recently honored as the Woman of the Year ceremony in California's 78th Assembly District.

2010 - Christina Starzl Mendoza (German/Spanish) is community planner and connections coordinator at the Community Service Council in Tulsa, Oklahoma, where she works with local schools to promote inclusivity and access for Latino immigrants. Mendoza was recently honored as a Woman of the Year by the Tulsa YMCA. Austin Steigemeier (Art) is an artist in Spokane, where his work, "Violet is an Anagram of Love It," was recently on display at the small gallery Window Dressing. Samantha Cooper (Theatre, English - Literature) is a playwright, actor and theatre trainer in New York City, where she's working on an MFA in playwriting at Columbia University. Her work, "and, and, and, and, Isabella Bootlegs" was recently produced by Macha Monkey Productions at the Cornish Playhouse at Seattle Center Studio Theatre. Erin Graham (General Studies) is the founder and teacher of Daisy Chain School in Friday Harbor and a volunteer firefighter with San Juan Island Fire & Rescue.

2011 - Laura Bohorquez (Spanish, American Cultural Studies) is coordinator of the DREAM Educational Empowerment Program with United We Dream, a national immigrant youth-led advocacy group focused on encouraging immigrant students to pursue higher education. Jeff Emmett (Fairhaven Interdisciplinary Concentration) produces "Here Be Monsters," a podcast described as "ingeniously dark, audaciously constructed" by The Stranger. The 34th episode, "The Grandmother and the Vine of the Dead," was included in "The 25 Best Podcast Episodes Ever" at Slate.com. Marcy Kolberg (Geology) became a geologist with PND Engineers Inc. in Anchorage.

Ryan Dortch
was named U.S.
Youth Soccer
Competitive Coach of the Year.

2007 - Shane Keck (General Studies) became head football coach at Cascade High School in Everett. Most recently, he was an assistant coach at Mercer Island High School. Kerri Holferty (Fairhaven Upside-Down Program; '10, M.Ed., Student Affairs Administration) is associate director of the Office of Access and Disability Services at Whatcom Community College, where she works with about 300 students. Jenn Johansen Gelhar (Psychology) is a cardiac nurse at The Everett Clinic.

2012 - Eight graduates, including Gina Cole (Communication, Journalism), Paige Collins (Journalism) and Colin Diltz (Visual Journalism), contributed to the Seattle Times team that won the 2015 Pulitzer Prize for Breaking News for their coverage of the Oso landslide. Other alumni on the team were Katie Greene Cotterill ('10, Visual Journalism), Coral Garnick ('09, Journalism), Laura Gordon ('89, Journalism), Mark Higgins ('82, Journalism) and Jack Broom ('74, Journalism). T.J. Cotterill (General Studies) recently became prep sports editor for The News Tribune in Tacoma. Gibson Bardeley (Business Administration - Marketing) became a midfielder/forward for the Tulsa Roughnecks FC, part of the United Soccer League, joining Oscar Jimenez ('13). Stephanie Fox (Sociology) recently became head girls softball coach at Eastlake High School in Sammamish. Yadira Rosales (Psychology; '14, M.Ed., Continuing and College Education), an educational planner in Multicultural Student Services at Skagit Valley College, received the 2015 Transforming Lives award from the Trustees of Community and Technical Colleges.

2013 - Zach Wymore (Theatre) recently performed in the 10X10 New Play Festival at the Barrington Stage Co. in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Nick Quinlan (Business Administration - Management) is commissioner of Major League Hacking, which helps organize "hacking" programming competitions at universities in the U.S., Canada, Mexico and Europe. Kelsey Scharnhorst (Chemistry) is working on her Ph.D. in chemistry at University of California, Los Angeles. Dylan Kane (Music, Theatre) recently played Romeo in "Romeo and Juliet: The Musical" at the Lincoln Theatre in Mount Vernon. Oscar Jimenez (Communication, Spanish) is a midfielder for the Tulsa Roughnecks FC. Amy Hill (Art) teaches art at Uptown Art in Bellingham. Emily Petterson (Communication) became the front desk manager for the Everett AquaSox.

2014 - Shawn Bjorback (Math) conducts monthly demonstrations of scientific concepts using everyday items at Ace Hardware in Bellingham. Recent demonstrations include a "Frankenpickle" that illustrates electrical circuits. Patrick Montine (Anthropology) became a missionary for the Franciscan Mission Service, serving in western Jamaica. Elena Bary (Environmental Science - Toxicology) joined AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps and works with Blue Water Baltimore, a nonprofit organization. Gurbir Sandhu (M.B.A.) is general manager of Edge Hospitality Corp., which owns Red Lion Hotels in Kennecwick and Wenatchee. Austin Masters (Economics/Political Science) owns Master of Vapours, an e-cigarette store in Bellingham.

Tell us a good Viking love story
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If you recently got married or entered into a domestic partnership, share your news with your fellow alumni in "Marriages and Unions."

Email your news, including your names, class years, and the date and place of your marriage or union to mary.gallagher@wwu.edu.
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By Meri-Jo Borzilleri

Ever since he was 16, Alex Harrison wanted to compete in the Olympics.

He never thought his best chance would be hurtling 80 mph down an icy mountain chute in a bobsled.

"It's more violent than you imagine," he says, "like a roller-coaster riding over center bumps on the freeway... You feel every one of those bumps because (the sled has) no suspension."

Trimmed of most creature comforts for weight and aerodynamics, bobsleds are bare-bones, carbon-fiber shells with runners attached. Sleds have no seat belts, shocks or padding. Bobsledders wear burn vests to keep from losing skin to the ice during a crash.

Harrison ('10, Kinesiology; '11, M.S., Human Movement and Performance), who took his first trip in a bobsled last fall, was part of a USA II sled team that finished 12th (two-man) and 14th (four-man) at February's world championships in Winterberg, Germany.

Most athletes take two years of development to compete at the top level. Harrison, a former two-time NCAA Div. II All-American in track and field at Western, took just months.

That puts him on the fast track toward a possible berth in the next Winter Olympics, set for 2018 in Pyeongchang, South Korea.

"I never would have expected that in my wildest dreams," says Harrison, from Edmonds.

The 6-foot-1, 220-pound Harrison, 27, was a push athlete in two-time Olympian Nick Cunningham's sled for many races on the World Cup tour, bobsled's major leagues.

He spent more than two months competing in Europe on the world's most famous tracks in places like Austria, Switzerland and Germany. He briefly was part of the USA I sled, piloted by 2010 Olympic champion and five-time world champion Steve Holcomb. Harrison also pushed for Codie Bascue's USA III sled as coaches juggled lineups to produce the best push-start times. Sleds can weigh close to 500 pounds.

"He has an attitude of 'Put me in. Coach, anytime, anywhere,' says Mike Dionne, U.S. Bobsled development coach. "There's no resistance being put with other drivers. He's ready to race with anybody at any time. I constantly see Alex hitting the weights and sprint workouts."

It has all been a rush for Harrison. He played baseball before college, then competed in decathlon and javelin in hopes of someday making an Olympic team.

Harrison's athletic career was winding down when, while pursuing a Ph.D. in sports science at Eastern Tennessee State University, his now-fiancée, former Western hurdler Michelle Howe ('12, Kinesiology), suggested bobsled might be a good fit.

Harrison went to tryouts partly to humor her, not wanting to be disappointed by failing at a new sport.

Both he and Howe made World Cup teams (women's bobsled has been an Olympic sport since 2002). But Howe was cut from the squad partway through the season and has moved on to explore the sport of skeleton.

It has been a steep - and icy - learning curve for Harrison in a sport where races can be decided by hundredths of a second over four heats.

A brush against the wall or a slight slip at the start could cost valuable time. So can rookie mistakes like Harrison has made: sitting too high, bumping into teammates on entry, leaving the push bars up instead of pulled inside.

In bobsled, small things have big consequences. For Harrison, trying out for bobsled was a small thing.

Look at him now.

Meri-Jo Borzilleri grew up in Lake Placid, N.Y., and has covered four Olympics as a sports journalist.
Students Ann Pearson and Keith Booman work in a Chemistry lab in Old Main in this 1947 photo. The north wing of Old Main housed science classes and laboratories before Haggard Hall was built in 1960.

For more about what WWU students and faculty are doing in the lab today, check out page 7 for theoretical physicist Seth Rittenhouse's work on a new molecule or page 20 to see how Geology and Physics' Melissa Rice is including students in her work with NASA's Mars Curiosity rover team.

Photo courtesy of Western Washington University Libraries Special Collections
The studying, testing, and homework is done. Now your life-changing education and memories can help current students. Join the Alumni Association to connect with students through scholarships, programs, networking, and mentoring opportunities.

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An alum brings fellow combat vets together to help the Earth and each other