Compass 2 Campus helps kids grab opportunities

Success: The Western Stands for Washington Campaign
Our home on the Salish Sea

More than 7 million people live in the Salish Sea basin, which is the area surrounding the Puget Sound, the Strait of Georgia, and the Strait of Juan de Fuca — as well as Bellingham Bay, seen here from Boulevard Park.

Our growing population, industrial activity and climate change place increasing strain on the ecosystem and the health of all who live here. Western's newly formed Salish Sea Studies Institute is an interdisciplinary center for collaboration, education, research and community involvement, bringing together faculty from across Western's campus and scholars from throughout the region.

The institute also hosts the Salish Sea Ecosystem Conference — a multinational gathering of scientists, First Nations and tribal government representatives, resource managers, community and business leaders and others to share scientific research and guide future actions for protecting and restoring the ecosystem that more than two thirds of WWU alumni call home.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**WWU News** ................................................................. 6
Environmental Ed graduate students take the long way to Bellingham; an NSF grant helps STEM professors rework their teaching methods; Western alums shine in earning doctorates and Fulbright awards; Indian Street gets a new name; Western’s Small Business Development Center advisers help boost local entrepreneurs.

**Heart Work** .................................................................. 10
WWU’s Sebastian Mendes’ art honors his grandfather, whose courage helped 30,000 people flee the Nazis.

**The Great Rift Valley Cookout** ........................................... 14
Cooked food may have made us human, but how did proto-humans cook food before they mastered fire?

**What Western Accomplished Together** .............................. 18
Collaboration was a hallmark of Bruce Shepard’s presidency.

**‘Hear My Story’** ............................................................ 22
Thaddeus and Lois Spratlen’s legacy at Western brings more voices and perspectives to campus.

**Thanks to You** ............................................................... Centerfold
We’ll enjoy the benefits of the $62 million Western Stands for Washington campaign for many years to come.

**Charting a Course for College** .......................................... 24
Compass 2 Campus gives thousands of kids an early glimpse of higher ed — and their own college student mentors.

**The Teachers they Need** .................................................. 28
Instructional assistants become teachers for bilingual classrooms through Woodring’s Pathways to Teaching program.

**Award-Winning Alumni** .................................................... 32
The WWU Alumni Association honors those who are making a difference at Western and in their communities.

**Message from the President** ...................................... 4
**Class Notes** ............................................................ 38
**Reader Feedback** ...................................................... 5
**A Look Back** ........................................................... 44

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**On the cover:** Western’s Compass 2 Campus program kicks off with hundreds of fifth-graders visiting Western’s campus. Each year, program director Cyndie Shepard leads a call-and-response cheer: “Opportunity ... Grab it!”

“It helps them understand how important it is to recognize an opportunity when they see it,” Shepard says. “It’s very powerful.”

Photo by Rachel Bayne
Message
from the President

Serving Western has been a life-changing opportunity. Thank you.

Last June I announced my intention to retire from Western’s presidency, and this April, after an intensive, inclusive and transparent national search, the Board of Trustees announced the selection of Oregon State University Provost Sabah Randhawa as Western’s next president. For Cyndie and me, this marks the end of a life-changing opportunity to serve Western for which we are deeply grateful. We offer our heartfelt congratulations to the Trustees and to the greater Western Washington University community for selecting such a fine leader, and of course to Sabah, who is so fortunate to lead Western into the future.

As someone who has studied leadership transitions extensively, I believe their success lies not in first trying to identify the personal qualities of the “right” person, but rather in getting clear on the core values of the institution and the vision for where it needs to go in the future. Western’s search process did just that, starting with the appointment of a broadly representative Presidential Search Advisory Committee, including an extensive listening process both on and off-campus to identify those priorities, and then developing a leadership profile hailed by our consultant as one of the best documents of its kind she had ever seen. Although the work of the Search Committee and the Trustees was monumental — and deeply appreciated — their task was made straightforward by the groundwork already laid. Standing out from an exceptional field of many outstanding candidates, Sabah Randhawa’s record of past accomplishments demonstrated a deep commitment to Western’s core values, and the ability to listen and lead Western to fulfil them ever more in the years ahead.

Like you, I am excited to see how Western will build on its strengths, and have every confidence that Sabah Randhawa will be a great next president to help us do just that. I am equally confident that Western’s future is bright because our extraordinary, dedicated and caring community, on and off campus, has been at the forefront of our past successes.

Cyndie and I know that Sabah and his wife Uzma Ahmad will enjoy, just as we have, the honor of serving Western in the years ahead. Thank you for entrusting us with that responsibility, and for sharing the journey with us these past eight years.

Bruce Shepard

Photo by Dan Levine

4 WINDOW • Spring/Summer 2016
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.

Letter: The legendary John Miles inspired me, too.

I took an interest in the short Q&A with Kathryn Aalto ('98, M.A., English) (Fall/Winter 2015), where she discussed the theme of her book, "The Natural World...of Winnie the Pooh." I was struck by the first question, "What did John Miles teach you about nature writing?" This is a great question, because his legions of fans are everywhere, most of whom had the privilege of being a student in one of his classes. In Miles' classes you not only hear a lecture from a scholar and a historian but a teacher with a deep understanding of the subject. It did not matter if you were a part of the department, he makes his topics interesting to everyone and engages students. I work for an airline, but my lifelong interest in nature writing, from authors like Rick Bass, Roderick Haig Brown, Ivan Doig and many others, started from that class I took at Western in 1992 or '93.

John Pressentin ('93, Journalism)

Letter: 'These things really did happen'

Thank you so much for "The Get Fisher Squad" article in the Fall/Winter 2015 issue of Window. That very kind of "politics" affected my father’s life at the University of Wisconsin. Some of his student friends attended a "meeting." Later these students were labeled by McCarthy’s Committee on Un-American Activities (I think it was called) as Communists and they were never able to be biochemists, their chosen professions. Our Dad was too busy with his experiments to attend the meeting so he was not "listed."

My husband and I summered in British Columbia on Kootenay Lake. Up in the mountains was a colony of Hollywood actors, screenwriters, etc. They had relocated out of Hollywood because of McCarthyism. They cooked French pastries all winter and sold them to the campers for extra money. These things really DID happen! Are they likely to happen again? Recognizing the signs and possibilities and putting a stop to them is everyone’s responsibility. The right to assembly (and to have visionary ideas) is an important part of our government’s protective rights. Rarely are these mentioned. Next we may have to draft legislation to limit the right to bring false witness against good people. It is thought to be "fair game," but it is not right. Thank goodness for fact-checking but is it enough?

Nancy Kroening ('87, Environmental Studies)

Window’s Mars Rover story wins a Best Article award

When John Thompson isn’t working as Western’s assistant director of Communications and Marketing, he’s cranking out award-winning stories for Window magazine. His "The Truth is Out Here," (Spring/Summer 2015) about WWU’s Melissa Rice’s work on the Mars rover, won a Silver award from CASE District VIII for Best Articles of the Year in the Pacific Northwest and western Canada.
Environmental Ed’s ‘Transition Trek’ to the city

Why just drive to Bellingham when you can paddle, pedal and remember the trip forever?

After spending a year ensconced in the North Cascades, students in Western’s master’s program in Environmental Education move to Bellingham to complete their degrees on campus at Huxley College of the Environment.

For most students, this means packing their cars and hitting the highway for a two-hour drive. But right before fall quarter 2015, seven students turned the “Transition Trek” into a 90-mile, three-day bonding adventure by canoe and bike.

The group had spent the year at the North Cascades Institute’s Environmental Learning Center on the shores of Diablo Lake, studying the region’s ecosystem, working at the institute’s Mountain School youth program and studying nonprofit administration.

“It was time to leave our quiet home and enter the hustle and bustle of city life,” wrote Mike Rosekrans (’16, M.Ed, Environmental Education) in the North Cascades Institute’s blog, “Chattermarks.” “What better way to do it than canoeing, biking and camping together?”

The grad students paddled tandem canoes 60 miles down the Skagit River, spying salmon, osprey, heron, elk and at least one coyote. Midway, they camped on a rocky island and watched alpenglow illuminate Sauk Mountain as the fog lifted the next morning.

After pulling ashore at Sedro-Woolley, the group began a 30-mile bike ride up Old Highway 99 and through the Chuckanuts. This time, they spent the night at a KOA campground and fell asleep to the sound of traffic on Interstate 5.

The last day, the group pedaled north along Lake Samish for a backyard dinner party at Rosekrans’ house in Fairhaven to celebrate the final quarter before graduation.

“We don’t know where we will be in 10 months, a year, a decade and so on,” wrote Rosekrans. “Some of us may stay upon the coast, some of us might drift to the desert and some of us, like the water molecules in the ocean, may be taken upon the rays of sunshine and wind back up in the mountains.”

Rosekrans has a summer job lined up as a naturalist at Denali National Park and then hopes to find a job as a curriculum coordinator or naturalist in Washington.
NSF grant helps STEM faculty rethink their courses

Western's Science, Math and Technology Education program is coordinating a $2 million, three-year grant from the National Science Foundation to change the way undergraduate science and math classes are taught in the region.

The goal is to have fewer lectures and memorization, said SMATE Director Ed Geary, and more student problem-solving, collaboration and discussion to explore big concepts.

"What we know now is that almost immediately after the need to memorize this information is removed — such as a test — students in this learning model, at least in regards to the sciences, retain as little of 10 percent of that information down the road," Geary said. "That's not effective learning, so we wanted to try something new that is based on 20 years of research about how people learn."

About 60 faculty members from three campuses — Western, Whatcom Community College and Skagit Valley College — are involved with the grant. The goal: Encourage students to discover the answers to problems or questions, rather than tell them how something works.

Western alumni are near the top for earning doctorates

Western ranks ninth among the nation's 590 public and private master's-granting institutions for the number of graduates who go on to earn doctorates, according to the federal government's Survey of Earned Doctorates. This is Western's highest-ever ranking in the survey.

Western alumni earned 58 research doctorates in 2014:
Western's Small Business Development Center (SBDC), which provides business advice and research services to entrepreneurs, helped save or create 121 Whatcom County jobs in 2015.

The SBDC's three certified business advisers worked with 317 clients in 2015 and helped provide about 3,330 hours of in-depth counseling and research. Working with the SBDC, businesses secured more than $5.1 million in loans and new investments.

Western's SBDC is one of more than 1,000 SBDC programs across the country and is supported by the U.S. Small Business Administration, Whatcom County, the Port of Bellingham and the cities of Bellingham and Blaine.

Heating Green of Bellingham, which designs and distributes infrared heating panels, is one of the businesses helped by the SBDC. See their story at www.wwu.edu/sbdc.

An old street with a new story

The street leading to the north side of Western's campus has a new name with historical significance.

The Bellingham City Council has renamed Indian Street in honor of treaty rights activist Billy Frank Jr. New street signs went up Nov. 24, the same day Frank posthumously received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from the White House.

Frank was a Nisqually leader who fought to have treaty rights enforced in the state of Washington during the Great Northwest Fishing War of the '60s and '70s. In 1974 federal judge George Boldt ruled that tribes that had signed an 1854 treaty with the federal government were entitled to harvest half the state's salmon and to co-manage fisheries with the state. Frank then served for 33 years as chairman of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission and was a leader in salmon habitat restoration.

Bellingham Councilman Terry Bornemann first suggested naming a Bellingham street after Frank, who died in 2014, and WWU Political Science Professor Vernon Damani Johnson suggested renaming Indian Street.

"It leads to the university," Johnson told the Bellingham Herald. "It's a teachable opportunity if people ask, 'Who was Billy Frank Jr.?'"
Fulbright winners spend a year teaching and learning abroad

When Polly Woodbury ('14, Communication, Psychology) applied for a Fulbright Fellowship to teach English abroad, she had hoped to spend a year in her mother’s native country of Cambodia.

Instead, she is spending a year in the northeastern Isan region of Thailand, and she couldn’t be happier. She teaches conversational English to about 500 Thai high school students each week and serves as an unofficial American cultural ambassador. She’s also absorbing as much as she can of local culture and language — which, to her delight, shares a lot with neighboring Cambodia and Laos.

Years ago, Woodbury’s mother fled to Thailand to escape the Khmer Rouge. This year, Woodbury’s Thai nickname is “Pailin,” or “Sapphire.” Her Thai mentor told her “the bluest sapphires are said to be found in Cambodia,” Woodbury wrote in an update to friends and family.

“I believe life sometimes works in roundabout ways but you somehow still end up exactly where you are meant to be,” Woodbury wrote. “I believe that is true with Thailand.”

During her stay in Thailand, Woodbury has been able to visit Cambodia. She listened to Khmer Rouge survivors at the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, visited Phnom Penh on Victory Over Genocide Day and watched the sun rise over a 12th Century Angkor Wat temple.

Woodbury, of Tacoma, is one of five Western students studying or working abroad this year on a Fulbright fellowship or scholarship; Western was tied for second in public, masters-granting institutions for the number of Fulbrights among students and alumni in 2015. Since establishing a Fellowships Office in 2009, Western students are applying for — and receiving — an increasing number of competitive fellowships and scholarships.

The Fulbright Program is a prestigious international exchange program sponsored by the U.S. government. Many recipients are English teaching assistants abroad, spending 15 to 20 hours a week working alongside teachers. Others use the funding to conduct research or study for a graduate degree. The fellowships provide about $20,000 a year, plus housing, health insurance, airfare and other expenses.

Other Western students and alums who are Fulbright recipients this year include English teaching assistants Emily Brodie of Snoqualmie, in Spain; Tobias Osterhaug of Edmonds, in Taiwan; and Sadie Metz of Butte, Montana, in Germany. Samuel Bliss of Mercer Island is a Fulbright recipient studying degrowth economics in Spain.
The art of Western’s Sebastian Mendes honors his grandfather, whose courage saved 30,000 people from the Nazis.
Overlapping tightly, densely packed, superimposed, the names are a palimpsest, a tribute to Aristides de Sousa Mendes, a man who changed history by defying his government and saving thousands from Nazi persecution.

"I had always been impressed by the fact that my grandfather had written visas for 30,000 people," says Mendes, avant-garde artist and associate professor of Art who has taught at Western since 2001.

By the time he was 5 or 6 years old, Mendes became aware of his family legacy. He had heard about it in adult conversation, as relatives would come to his home in the Bay Area and discuss Sousa Mendes, not only unrecognized for his heroism by his home country of Portugal but actively ostracized because of it. Sousa Mendes, disgraced and penniless, had died in Lisbon in 1954 in total obscurity.

But to Mendes, visa recipients like Norbert Gingold, a virtuoso pianist who went on to found the San Francisco Youth Symphony Orchestra, were normal visitors at his family home. Mendes says, "I just remember it was part of the oral history of the family." Mendes, whose interest in art developed in high school and flourished during his time as an undergraduate at the University of California-Santa Cruz, says, "I thought, sometimes, every so often, that I would like to do something to pay homage to my grandfather as an image or as a work of art. I wasn't a traditionalist. The art I had in mind was more experimental, the avant-garde and so forth. So I didn't have any interest in making a drawing of or a painting of the teeming masses or a portrait of my grandfather. That wasn't what I was interested in as an artist. But I hadn't formulated a project that was resonant for me."

Only after he'd completed graduate school at Stanford University did Mendes start developing what would become a signature style. As a faculty member at the University of Oklahoma School of Art, very conservative at the time, Mendes felt he couldn't speak openly about his progressive political beliefs. He began rereading and writing out works verbatim that he felt were important in a complex, superimposed style. His palimpsests, pages with lines of text layered on top of each other, began as a way to publicly present what was private, to hide in the open with text indecipherable to anyone but himself.

An act of conscience

In 2004, he created his first drawing in homage to his grandfather's heroic act, with 2,000 superimposed names, shown at an exhibition at Oregon State University.

Mendes then decided to start a series, 30 drawings with 1,000 names each. A thousand, he says, is a more fundamental, meaningful number. Done privately and in his Bellingham studio, these drawings became a powerful way to contemplate and engage with his grandfather's story, a reflection, he says, and a secular prayer. He calls the collection "There Is a Mirror in My Heart."

"I was fully aware of time, the passage of time, the urgency of time, in terms of what my grandfather did."

Ballpoint pen in hand, he contemplated family anecdotes, like how his grandfather, a member of the Portuguese nobility who served as a diplomat throughout Europe, Africa, and in the Americas, stood up at a banquet in Brazil in the 1930s. The toast was to Antonio de Oliveira Salazar's new regime — Salazar, who'd recently taken power in Portugal, was a man no one would have dared to publicly call out as a dictator — and when everyone sat down, Sousa Mendes remained standing. He toasted the monarchy, an unthinkable act. His small rebellion caused him to be recalled to Lisbon for a reprimand. But this act of conscience would foreshadow his role in the war to come.

As the Nazis advanced across Europe, Salazar, officially neutral but unofficially pro-Hitler, issued Circular 14, a directive to Portugal's diplomats to deny safe haven to refugees, explicitly to Jews, Russians and others who could not return to their countries of origin. Sousa Mendes, the Portuguese diplomat in charge of visas in Bordeaux, couldn't ignore the plight of the 120,000 refugees who'd fled Nazi persecution. Turned away from Portugal's borders, many had seen family die, had lost everything, and were confined to a field of three city blocks without access to food, shelter or sanitary facilities.

Visa assembly line

Sousa Mendes decided to defy Salazar's orders, orders he believed violated the Portuguese constitution and his own deep Catholic faith, and his act inspired other consular officials, Manuel de Vieira Braga in Bayonne and...
worked with Sousa Mendes so that he could issue visas faster, as he attempted to issue as many as he could while he still had the authority.

The recipients, terrified of losing their places in line, waited for days and nights without eating or drinking, washing or changing their clothes, in order to gain access to the consulate. Then, they watched as officials jammed their visa forms into Mendes' orders, playing an important role as well. Rabbi Chaim Kruger, collecting passports and delivering them in batches, worked with Sousa Mendes so that he could issue visas faster, as he attempted to issue as many as he could while he still had the authority.

Then, they used wallpaper. "They're pretty similar," Mendes says. "Numbers, names, and all that. I like that."

Mendes is acquiring vintage wallpaper to incorporate this family legend into his next series of drawings, so that these old patterns mingle with the names of those Sousa Mendes saved. He uses ledgers to keep track of the names he uses in his work. His grandfather, too, had ledgers in which he wrote the names of the recipients. "They're pretty similar," Mendes says. "Numbers, names, and all that. I like that."

Only one Sousa Mendes ledger has been recovered. That means that less than 5,000 names of the 30,000 recipients are known. More names of recipients, and their descendants, are being discovered every day by the Sousa Mendes Foundation.

When the visas were brought out in Bordeaux, Mendes relates, the recipients' names were called; they had no idea of what was happening behind the scenes. Mendes says, "They only knew that someone had given them a visa from Portugal. The younger kids, they never knew."

The visas gave the families passage to Lisbon, where they could book passage to safety. Recipients included artist Salvador Dali and his wife Gala, H.A. and Margaret Rey, who created "Curious George," Otto von Habsburg, and married actors Madeleine Le Beau and Marcel Daul, who later went on to play in "Casablanca." Michel Gill, an actor from "House of Cards," only found out recently, Mendes says, that his father and grandfather were recipients, too.
An aftermath in obscurity

Sousa Mendes never regretted the price he paid for disobeying his government’s orders, but he and his large family paid dearly. Ostracized in Portugal and unable to earn a livelihood, Sousa Mendes became so impoverished by 1942 that he and his family took their meals at a Jewish soup kitchen in Lisbon. His children, too, were denied access to employment and university studies in Portugal, and many emigrated to other countries in order to survive. Sousa Mendes died in 1954 at the Franciscan Hospital for the Poor in Lisbon and his 19th century mansion, the Casa do Passal, was forfeited to a bank.

In 1995, the Portuguese government finally posthumously recognized and celebrated Sousa Mendes’ act of heroism. Sousa Mendes was also the first diplomat to be recognized by Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem, as Righteous Among the Nations, in 1966.

Mendes intends to continue his work on his grandfather’s legacy through an upcoming artistic video project, where he takes “video stills” of Sousa Mendes visa recipients and their descendants. Mendes says, “These video stills are something of a hybrid between traditional portrait photography and the movement of a live video image.” He’ll make these video stills as he retraces the refugees’ route on a journey that begins in Bordeaux, crosses through Spain, and includes such important destinations as the restored Casa do Passal in Portugal.

Even though Sousa Mendes may have died unrecognized and unknown, by celebrating his grandfather’s story through his artwork, Mendes urges us to recognize that his grandfather’s legacy lives on—not only in his many descendants, but also in the visa recipients, and their descendants, those he saved.

Jemma Everyhope-Roser is a writer and editor in Bellingham — and the program assistant in Western’s Office of Communications and Marketing.

Learn more at the Sousa Mendes Foundation, established by the descendants of Sousa Mendes and his visa recipients: www.sousamendesfoundation.org
The Great Rift Valley

Cookout

Did volcanic activity help proto-humans cook food before they had mastered fire?

By John Thompson

About 2.5 million years ago, something important to all of us happened in East Africa’s Great Rift Valley.

That was when humankind’s ape-like ancestors, such as Australopithecus afarensis, began to evolve rapidly, and scientists think this evolutionary surge had everything to do with what they ate.

Their mouths, teeth and digestive tracts began to change in a way that reflected a new diet. And most importantly — crucially, in terms of human evolution — this new diet allowed their brains to grow, exponentially, in size, leading to huge changes in behavior and intelligence.

“The how and why of this happening remained unclear for years,” says Western’s Michael Medler, an associate professor of Environmental Studies. “And while all we can still do is hypothesize, the puzzle pieces are starting to come together.”

One of the prevailing theories about this evolutionary jumpstart is that somehow, some way, a group of hominins (the taxonomic catchall for early human ancestors) discovered cooked food — not only how to cook food, but that cooked food was better for them.

They were right — cooked food unlocks far more calories than raw food. Think about eating raw corn vs. cooked corn, for example. Cooked food is also simply far more efficient: it unlocks more calories, which means less time is needed for foraging, chewing, eating and digesting. And it means there’s more time for hunting and gathering (and thus, potentially, even more calories).

Cambridge-trained British anthropologist and primatologist Richard Wrangham, the Ruth B. Moore Professor of Biological Anthropology at Harvard University and the author of “Catching Fire: How Cooking Made us Human,” is the researcher most connected to the cooked-food hypothesis. In his book, Wrangham points out that not only does cooked food explain the caloric link for the rapid evolution of early humans, he goes as far as saying that that in his view, cooked food led directly to the evolutionary jump from Australopithecus to our own genus, Homo. In addition, Wrangham also posits that the mastery of fire also accelerated species development by providing warmth and helping fend off predators.

In an interview with Scientific American magazine, Wrangham explained how the caloric jump was crucial for mankind’s evolution from primitive primate to humanity as it is now.

“A primate the size of an early human would be expected to spend about half of its day chewing, as chimpanzees do. Modern humans spend less than an hour a day chewing, whether you’re American or living in various subsistence societies around the world. So you’ve got four or five hours a day freed by the fact that you’re eating relatively soft food. In hunter-gatherer life, men tend to spend this time hunting,” he told the magazine.

“Hunting is risky. If you fail, then you need to be able to eat your ordinary food. It seems to me that it was only after cooking enabled individuals to save time on chewing that they could increase the amount of time spent on an activity that, for all its potential benefits, might not yield any food.”

But not everyone in the field is on board with Wrangham.

With such a constant heat source nearby, our ancestors could cook food without knowing how to start a fire — and would have unlocked a huge reservoir of calories.
HIS THING IS FIRE: Huxley College of the Environment’s Michael Medler, an expert on fire and wildfire resistance, theorizes that volcanic activity in East Africa’s Great Rift Valley made cooked food more widely available to proto-humans — and sparked a surge in human evolution.
A QUICK LOOK AT HUMANS’ THORNY SHRUB OF A FAMILY TREE

Human evolution, as a topic, is of course an extraordinarily contentious subject of debate, even among scientists who agree on the basics of the primate-to-human evolutionary ladder.

The family tree for Homo sapiens actually looks far more like a dense, thorny rosebush than a stately oak, and it’s filled with the kind of relatives most of us wouldn’t want to see around the Thanksgiving dinner table (or maybe we would — might make for a lively holiday). And because there is only one member of the genus Homo currently trotting around this planet — that would be us — the family tree is also filled with many long-lost relatives who wandered off into the evolutionary savannah never to be seen again.

For example, there’s the earliest hominins, collectively referred to as the Ardipithecus group, who were around from about 6.5 million years ago until about 4 million years ago. They gave way in large part to the australopithecines like “Lucy,” who hung around from about 4.5 million years ago until 2.2 million years from the present. Lucy and her crew were important because from them sprang two new groups: Paranthropus, a mostly herbivorous group of grub and nut eaters, and Homo. Homo habilis, our earliest direct progenitor, then split into two groups, one evolving into Homo erectus, which went extinct about 1.2 million years ago, and one eventually evolving into Homo sapiens.

Todd Koetje, an associate professor of Anthropology at Western, says that the way scientists view these groups is dynamic and ever changing, in part because the sample size is tiny.

“Homo erectus, for example, was around for about 1.5 million years, but we have only about 125 specimens of them worldwide,” he says. Koetje says that the easiest way to think of all these ancestral groups is to put them into boxes. Get a big box for all the australopithecines, for example. Inside are smaller boxes for individual species such as Australopithecus africanus and Australopithecus afarensis. Samples found in the field get put into these proverbial boxes.

Or do they? What happens when you find something that looks sort of like one thing and sort of like another?

“You make a new box, and give it a new name,” he says. “And hopefully you or other folks will find more like it. Because here’s the reality; Australopithecus didn’t one day decide it was now a Homo habilis. The line isn’t black or white.”

These are the blurry edges of evolutionary science. In some ways, it’s all one flowing timeline; in others, it’s a maze of dead ends with very few clear paths to the exit marked “modern humans” — but that’s part of the fascination for scientists like Koetje.

“We are forced to open and label new boxes all the time, because researchers keep finding new specimens that they don’t yet understand,” he says. “And because of the dynamic nature of the biological and evolutionary processes, it will always be that way.”

— John Thompson
Archeologists excavating Australopithecus sites have found no signs of fire mastery such as fire pits, campfires or the like. So the question remains: How did these early proto-humans with brains half the size of ours figure out how to make fire and cook food with it before they developed bigger brains?

Medler thinks the answer lies in the earth itself. He is an expert on early human evolution, although he has worked hard to learn what he can.

His thing is fire.

A former wildlands firefighter, Medler’s expertise about wildfire resilience has led him to testify at U.S. Senate panels after what turned out to be the worst back-to-back wildfire seasons in Pacific Northwest history during the two most recent summers. And it’s this experience with fire and heat and the thermal processes of the earth that got his gears turning about how Australopithecus mastered fire.

“It actually really started one night when I was staring at a campfire,” Medler says. “I was sort of lost in thought, and the germ of the hypothesis started and just sort of grew as I sat there thinking.”

The cooked-food question intrigued Medler, and it didn’t take long for his inner cartographer to get to work, thinking about the overlap between where there are fossils and where there was fire.

This is where the geology of the Rift Valley enters the story in a big way.

“The Rift Valley in East Africa 2 million years ago was an area of massive lava flow and volcanism. Many places may have looked like the Big Island of Hawaii or Yellowstone today,” he says. “In places, the lava may have been very approachable, and there would have been thermal features such as hot springs or hot sands associated with it that could also have been used by our ancestors.”

With such a constant heat source nearby, our ancestors could cook food without knowing how to start a fire — and would have unlocked a huge reservoir of calories in the diets of the australopithecines. And the Rift Valley had lava and thermal energy in abundance.

Based on the fossil record, it also had plenty of australopithecines. In fact, one of the greatest fossil finds ever, the 3.2-million-year-old Australopithecus skeleton nicknamed "Lucy," was found nearby in Ethiopia in 1974. So, according to Medler, Lucy and her neighbors wouldn’t have needed to know how to “make” fire — they would have simply needed to remember where it always was, and use it.

It also makes sense to Medler that these isolated bands, cooking their food on the leading edges of lava flows and in thermal pools and hot sands, were evolving differently from many of their peers elsewhere. Australopithecus africanus, for example, lived in southern Africa at the same time but went extinct soon after, at about the same time as the rise of our more recent ancestor Homo habilis. Unlike their fellow hominins elsewhere in Africa, the australopithecines of the Rift Valley had access to constant heat energy, and they were making the most of it.

“I call these ‘islands in the pyrosphere,’ because these pockets of early humanity were given different sets of resources and evolved very differently from each other,” Medler says. “We have seen how islands produce unique traits among isolated species, such as Darwin’s finches on the Galapagos. I believe it is the same with these small islands of fire,” he says.

Medler was asked last December to present the early findings of his research at the annual conference of the American Geophysical Union in San Francisco, the nation’s largest annual gathering of earth and space scientists.

“It was flattering to be invited to speak, but more importantly it let me test my hypothesis and defend it to some real pros,” he says. “It was pretty warmly received, which was encouraging.”

In the meantime, Medler will continue to build on his little corner of the cooked-food hypothesis, and is contemplating writing a book about the research. And much like Lucy’s people may have done 2 million years ago, it may take a visit to the Rift Valley to finally put all the pieces in place.

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John Thompson is Western’s assistant director of the Office of Communications and Marketing. He can’t help but wonder how many readers pictured the opening scene of Stanley Kubrick’s “2001” while reading this article.
When Bruce Shepard started as Western’s 13th president in the fall of 2008, he soon made clear his leadership style — listening to others and asking questions before collectively setting the university on a particular course.

In conversations both on campus and off, Shepard learned how prized Western was to so many; from them he also learned they wanted to see an engaged university making a difference in their community, state and world.

Now, full circle, as Shepard and his wife Cyndie retire from Western at the end of June, that shared vision for Western is being realized.

Cyndie Shepard started the highly regarded Compass to Campus mentoring program at Western, pairing university students with children at schools throughout Whatcom and Skagit counties. Thousands have been helped by the program whose ultimate goal is to inspire those children, many from homes where higher education is not an aspiration, to succeed in school and with their lives.

For Bruce Shepard, the timing for the start of his presidency in 2008 was inauspicious, begun as the worst economic recession in decades took hold across the nation. Facing dramatic state budget cuts, Shepard’s leadership fostered a bottom-up, transparent process that brought the entire campus into the fold of tough university budget-cutting decisions. With such broad participation, Western protected its academic core and excellence. Not only did the university weather the Great Recession, but it looked for even more ways to make significant differences, across a whole host of programs, research, partnerships and collaborations.

In that spirit, here are some examples of what Western has accomplished — together — during Shepard’s presidency.
The Western Stands for Washington Campaign: Thanks to 21,700 donors, Western's largest-ever comprehensive fundraising campaign passed its $60 million goal seven months ahead of schedule and is now closing in on $63 million. With more than 100 new endowments and a doubling of the amount of funding for scholarships, the campaign will benefit Western students and faculty for generations. See our special centerfold section to learn more about how the Western Stands for Washington campaign is making changes across campus.

International Partnerships: Since 2008, Western officials have signed 22 new international agreements with universities abroad, including those in Africa, Asia, Europe and Central and South America. Shepard traveled to Korea, Japan, Mongolia and China to sign half of the agreements himself. This spring, a faculty member from the National University of Mongolia has come to Western to teach Mongolian language and culture, thanks in part to Shepard's visit to Mongolia. And the number of students studying abroad is going up — along with the number of international students coming to Western.

Education and Social Justice: Right before the first day of his first fall quarter at Western, Bruce Shepard told staff and faculty in his 2008 convocation remarks that higher education was in a period of major transition and transformation that inevitably threatened the status quo. "We will be changed," he said. "With foresight, we will lead in changing the society we exist to serve. But, not without also changing ourselves." Since then, Western has increasingly become a school of choice for students of color, including 25 percent of today's student body. And in the last five years, the gap between white students and students of color in freshman-to-sophomore retention has virtually disappeared. Shepard's unapologetic support for diversity has made national news — such as when he cancelled classes one day last November after WWU students of color were targeted by threatening language on social media. "On behalf of Western I apologize to our students, faculty, and staff of color," Shepard said to a gathering a few days later. "I should not have taken an incident such as this for all of us to recognize and empathically understand their experiences." Meanwhile on campus, faculty, staff and students work toward breaking down barriers. The work continues.

Marriage equality: Before the state's voters approved it in 2012, Shepard told the state Legislature that, while students, faculty and staff held a variety of opinions on the issue, marriage equality would improve the university's ability to recruit and retain outstanding faculty and staff. Shepard also wrote in a blog post that it can be easy to forget how privileged he is to not worry about who sees him kiss his wife when they arrive on campus first thing in the morning. "A hostile environment is real, ugly, and damaging," he wrote. "It is another and very real limitation on our effectiveness as a place for inquiry and learning."

Community connections: Since 2010, the second weekend in May has been the biggest community party on Western's campus, with Back2Bellingham. Not only that, but Western has extended its reach throughout the Puget Sound with new partnerships with Olympic College in Poulsbo and Port Angeles, while continuing as the leading provider of higher ed services at University Center in Everett. Western also strengthened connections to neighborhood groups, continued its involvement in Bellingham waterfront redevelopment and set up offices in downtown Bellingham and Seattle to make it easier to connect with community members.

More STEM degrees: Since 2008, Western's STEM degree production has increased by 50 percent, including a tripling in the number of Computer Science degrees. Meanwhile, Western's well-regarded Engineering Technology programs have transitioned to Engineering, providing more opportunities for graduates — and the businesses that employ them.

Navigating Western through state budget crises: The Great Recession left its mark on Western, including double-digit tuition increases. But thanks to a team approach among students, faculty, staff, unions and alumni, Western was better able to withstand the cuts and prevent future budget cuts. Western was even able to attract new state funding for Computer Science and Engineering. As Shepard told faculty and staff in 2011, "I saw more clearly than ever what I think most unites us in the face of potentially divisive challenges: We all deeply care about Western students and the quality and completeness of their Western education."

Looking out for faculty and staff: Raising salaries during tough budget times might seem counterintuitive — and even evoked the very public wrath of former Gov. Christine Gregoire in 2012. But as Shepard told faculty and staff the following year, "Western's strength is its people." Competitive compensation, including a living wage for Western's lowest-paid workers, has remained a top legislative priority.

Institute for Energy Studies: The pioneering program launched in 2012, with significant input from industry leaders who say these are the graduates the state needs, offers one of the nation's first comprehensive bachelor's degree programs combining science, technology, economics, business management, politics and public policy to prepare students to become leaders in the state's new energy economy. The first graduates are already at work.
January 2009
Shepard makes the difficult decision to end Western's football program in order to ensure the high quality of Western's Athletics program.

October 2009
Shepard launches the 100 Conversations listening tour, what it means to be a "publicly purposed university."

"I believe that a culture of relentless questioning and innovation will distinguish those publicly purposed universities that emerge as national leaders."

May 2010
Back2Bellingham Alumni and Family Weekend becomes Western's biggest community gathering on campus.

July 2010
A student team from Western's Vehicle Research Institute makes it to the finals of the Progressive Automotive X Prize finals in a competition to build a 100 mpg car.

September 2011
Miller Hall reopens after $51.5 million renovation, which receives LEED Gold Certification.

September 2008
During his first Convocation address Shepard talks about transformative power of education, a key topic of many of his remarks during his presidency:

“Our nation has progressed because each generation — several times only after major political struggle — has made the sacrifices necessary to assure that the next generation is better educated. Yet there are indications that that trend is slowing if not reversing. And, is it mere coincidence that that is occurring precisely at the time when those we must more effectively serve — those whose populations are growing most rapidly — have cultures and skin colors different from the traditional norm in American higher education?"
June 2012
Western's new agreement with the United Faculty of Western wins praise from the National Education Association. Average faculty salaries had long been lower than at peer institutions. But Gov. Gregoire sends Shepard a letter with "grave concerns" about the raises.

"Western's status as a premier undergraduate institution traces directly back to the caliber of faculty we are able to attract and retain."

February 2014
Western hosts the first Washington Higher Education Sustainability Conference, drawing more than 500 people.

September 2014
Western responds to the state's need for more graduates in STEM fields by expanding capacity in the Computer Science program; Engineering Technology programs become Engineering. The College of Sciences and Technology becomes College of Science and Engineering.

July 2015
Washington State Legislature approves Carver Academic Facility remodel; construction begins.

March 2012
Western wins the NCAA Division II National Championship in men's basketball.

6 October 2013
Students and alumni receive nine Fulbright awards to teach or study overseas, a record for Western and the most among public, master's-granting institutions in 2013.

"The basic fact is that we do not teach history or biology or philosophy, we teach people. Higher education is not a mechanical transfer of information; it is a fire inspirationally ignited through human interaction. People teach people."

October 2013
Western begins three years as the medium-sized school with the most alumni in the Peace Corps.

November 2015
Salish Sea Studies Institute is established, an interdisciplinary center focused on the economy, health, culture and habitat of the international area 7 million of us call home.

Western’s 14th President: Sabah U. Randhawa

Sabah U. Randhawa, a chemical and industrial engineer with a long history in academic administration and a passion for student success, was selected in April to be Western’s next president.

Randhawa will begin at Western Aug. 1; Bruce Shepard will retire from the presidency on June 30 after eight years at Western.

Randhawa has spent most of his career at Oregon State University, where he most recently served as provost and executive vice president, OSU's second-in-command.

"The first thing I would like you to know," Randhawa said during a campus forum, "I am passionate about education, about educational institutions, and really about enhancing educational institutions. As a first-generation student, I owe my career to education. One of the commitments I made when I switched careers into education from working in industry was to provide those same opportunities for others across the globe."

The Board of Trustees praised his success in recruiting and retaining diverse populations of students, faculty and staff, and for his commitment to reducing the achievement gap. Randhawa is also devoted to shared governance and transparency and to bringing a global perspective to higher education.

"Dr. Randhawa is the person that we believe will be the next great president of Western Washington University," said Board of Trustees Chair Karen Lee. "He's an exceptional person. He's highly regarded for his commitment to students, to social justice and to the academy of higher education. And he is a person of dignity and humility."

Randhawa earned a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering from the University of Engineering and Technology in Pakistan, a master's degree in industrial engineering from OSU and a doctorate in industrial engineering from Arizona State University. His wife, Uzma Ahmad, is a clinical psychologist who works with children recovering from trauma.

Randhawa was selected from 75 candidates after a nationwide search following extensive feedback from those on and off campus. Western’s Presidential Search Advisory Committee, made up of faculty, staff, students and community members, worked with Greenwood/Asher & Associates to conduct the search.
‘Hear My Story’

The Spratlens’ legacy at Western brings more voices and perspectives to campus

By Matthew Anderson (’06)

When voices are missing from any conversation, a vital method of learning is missing, too.

“I really believe the best environment is heterogeneous,” says Maria McLeod, an assistant professor of Journalism at Western Washington University.

“On any given topic, people bring their own experiences to the conversation. That’s how we learn. Everyone addresses a topic differently. A heterogeneous campus, a heterogeneous classroom is really important to me as a teacher. We need their voices in the classroom; they're part of the curriculum.”

McLeod has been trying this past year to find missing voices and reinsert them into conversations. She created and produced “First Person: Diverse Student Stories,” a series of monologues using the words of real Western students. A companion project featured photos of students and highlights of their stories; those were posted to Western’s Facebook page.

Support for the project came from a Spratlen Diversity and Inclusion Grant, established in 2014 by Thaddeus Spratlen to fund work that promotes a broader range of voices and experiences at the university.

Spratlen was motivated both by a desire to honor his late wife, Lois Price Spratlen, and to give back to a community that welcomed his family with open arms when they arrived at Western in 1961.

Progress toward a more diverse and supportive community is a hot topic around campus. All year, for example, students, faculty and staff in the Teaching-Learning Academy have been addressing the question “How do we move beyond conversation to achieve self-sustaining equity and inclusivity at Western?”

“I hear all the time at Western, ‘What do we need to do?’” McLeod says. “Truly, students say, ‘I want to be heard. Even if people don’t agree with me, I want them to hear my story.’”

When others know they exist, students feel more like people, she says. Like they matter.

“They feel like they belong,” she says. “Like people are listening and paying attention.”

Spratlen says that’s exactly what he hoped would happen in funding the grant.

“It should foster support for appreciating and accepting differences as cultural norms,” he says.

Lois Price Spratlen, who died in 2013, had a long and distinguished career at the University of Washington. A professor of psychosocial nursing, she became university ombudsman for sexual harassment in 1982. In 1988, she became the first woman, African American and nurse to serve as university ombudsman, a role she held until 2009.

Thad Spratlen joined the UW faculty in 1972 as the first Black faculty member of the Foster School of Business. He established the school’s Consulting and Business Development Center in 1995, which among other things studies minority- and woman-owned businesses and increases employment oppor-
opportunities in underserved communities by supporting small businesses. The center's Minority Business Executive Program is one of just three in the country. He retired as a professor emeritus of Marketing in 2002.

But the time the Spratlens spent at Western and in Bellingham—with their five children—always stuck with the family as an important part of their history. The couple’s three daughters (Pamela, Pat and Paula) all attended Campus School. It had closed by the time the sons (Thadd and Townsand) were in elementary school.

“That was a transformative decade for me personally and professionally,” Spratlen says. “I have a great deal of attachment to and appreciation for Western regarding my hiring in 1961 and through the 1960s supporting my development and career as a professor.”

Spratlen taught business and economics at Western for nearly a decade. He was the first male Black professor at the university, he says (Eunice Faber, the first Black female professor, taught Spanish from 1959 to 1984). It was a time in the country when adding a person of color to the faculty was as likely as not to cause protests, he says.

“But we had the opposite of protests,” he says. “We were welcomed. President (James) Jarrett, Dean (Herb) Taylor and others actually showed up to help us move in. We definitely had positive experiences that were not typical of what African Americans experienced back then.”

That’s why he wants to continue to see Western grow, to continue to realize the promise it has shown since those days of the 1960s. Spratlen sees a Western “that reaches out past group differences, whatever they may be, toward greater understanding and appreciation.”

“If you look back over the years at the university, Western has always had a willingness to take on multicultural perspectives,” he adds. “Western also over the years has been very accepting of innovation and change. I hope that over time, this grant can grow into something that will support many different forms of diversity and inclusion.”

Matthew Anderson ('06, Journalism) is Western's New Media Coordinator. His most recent story for Window magazine was a profile of Assistant Psychology Professor Jeff Carroll's Huntington's disease research.

THE SPRATLEN LEGACY CONTINUES
The five Price-Spratlen children all went on to complete graduate degrees and pursue successful careers. Pamela is U.S. Ambassador to Uzbekistan. Pat is a consultant and owner of Civic Communications in Long Beach, California. Paula is a nationally-certified high school English teacher in Phoenix. Khalfani Mwamba (formerly Thadd) has an M.S.W. and is a program manager with Sound Mental Health in Seattle. Townsand is an associate professor of Sociology at The Ohio State University.
The Difference
PHILANTHROPY
Made
We’ll feel the effects of the Western Stands for Washington campaign for years to come
WESTERN stands for WASHINGTON CAMPAIGN
From new scholarships and equipment to more support for faculty and students, here are a few examples of gifts from the WWU community that are making a difference.

**ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARSHIP**
The Talbot family donated $100,000 to endow the James G. Talbot Fund for Sustainability Studies, which supports scholarly activities related to environmental sustainability.

**ALPHA TECHNOLOGIES ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING LAB**
A $1 million gift from Alphas Fred Kaiser and Grace Borsari supports the lab that gives students hands-on learning in advanced power systems to prepare for careers in the energy field.

**STUDENT RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES**
Former WWU President Karen Morse and her husband Joe, former director of Western's Science, Math and Technology Education Program, both got their start as chemistry professors and know the value of research experiences for students. Together, they funded the Karen W. and Joseph G. Morse Endowment for Student Research Experiences in Chemistry to give students more time in the lab alongside faculty members.

**SATURNA SUSTAINABLE INVESTING LAB**
The research lab in Parks Hall, funded with a six-figure gift from Saturna Capital, provides students with real-time access to market data and automated data analytical tools.

**SCHOLARSHIPS FOR NEW TEACHERS**
Many gifts create opportunities for students who want to become teachers. Peter Hovenier ('92, Accounting), for example, created a fund for future teachers in the name of his late father, a long-time Woodring faculty member. Karen Simms Gallagher ('67, Political Science) and Pat Gallagher ('66, Biology - Secondary) created a scholarship for career changers going into teaching.

**FUNDS FOR FIRST-TIME COLLEGE STUDENTS AND CHILDREN OF MIGRANT FAMILIES**
Wells Fargo donated $75,000 for two-year scholarships to be awarded to first-generation college students.
A NEW VIEW OF THE STARS

Every seat in Western’s planetarium in Haggard Hall has a stunning view of the universe, thanks to a new state-of-the-art projector in the newly renamed Leslie E. Spanel Planetarium. Former State Sen. Harriet Spanel, who passed away earlier this year, donated funds for the planetarium upgrades in honor of her late husband, a longtime WWU Physics professor.

BARBARA MATHERS SCHMIDT SCHOLARSHIP

The scholarship named for the emeritus chair of the Communications Sciences and Disorders Department is for graduate students in Speech Language Pathology.

NEW ART GALLERY SPACES

The lobbies of the Performing Arts Center Mainstage and Concert Hall now double as gallery space for about 75 works by Northwest artists. Seattle art patron Virginia Wright donated $250,000 to help renovate the new galleries, named in honor of Sarah Clark-Langager, former director of the Western Gallery.

MANN FAMILY SKYBRIDGE

Part of a $200,000 donation from Ann and Dave Mann (’82, Accounting) helped build the Learning Commons in Wilson Library.

NEW HOME FIELD

The family of the late Robert S. Harrington, including son Scott Harrington (’98, Accounting) and Robert’s wife Dolores Harrington, gave $1 million for the regulation-size soccer field with an all-weather surface.

ADVENTURE LEARNING GRANT

For many years, retired Fairhaven Professor David Mason made annual gifts to fund Western’s Adventure Learning Grant, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for Fairhaven students to live abroad and enrich their education with intellectual risk, challenge and adventure. When Mason passed away last year, he left a multi-million-dollar estate gift to the program, ensuring even more students will be able to immerse themselves in research projects overseas and return to Western to share what they’ve learned.

MARINE BIOLOGY GRADUATE RESEARCH

The Jerry Flora Graduate Student Summer Stipend in Marine Biology is for Marine Biology graduate students conducting summer research and traveling to present their work at academic conferences. In addition to his time as Western’s president, the late Jerry Flora was a marine scientist, scuba diver and host of a local television series, "Tidepool Critters."
How a crowdfunding appeal became bigger than anyone expected

In fall 2014, Joann Otto, chair of the Biology Department, gives the Western Foundation great news: The university can get a $50,000 discount on a state-of-the-art Leica DMi6000 automated inverted microscope, the kind used in biomedical research. But they must raise an additional $20,000 in a hurry.

The Annual Fund launches its first crowdfunding campaign, reaching out through social media to graduates of Biology and other sciences.

Stacy Anderson ('13, Biology), now a graduate student in biology at the University of Wisconsin Madison, forwards the appeal to her parents, Ingrid Sarapuu and Michael Anderson, who contribute $10,000 -- half of what's needed to pay for the microscope.

Meanwhile, Western's Engineering Technology Department is transitioning to Engineering. A gift to Western's engineering equipment endowment seems like a fitting way to remember Stacy and Erich's grandfather, Erich Sarapuu, a scientist who developed ways to apply electrical phenomena to mining problems.

Catherine Clark, dean of the College of Sciences and Engineering, and Amber Asbjornsen ('02, English – Writing), the college's director of development, visit Stacy's parents to thank them in person. They get to talking...

It turns out that Sarapuu and Anderson are already thinking about making a larger gift to Western in recognition of the good education their children Stacy and Erich Anderson ('09, Accounting, Finance) received -- and in recognition of the financial challenges Western faces.

In thanks for the $150,000 gift, Western names its robotics laboratory in honor of Erich Sarapuu (left) in spring 2016.
Young alums fund scholarships they would have loved to receive

When Deborah Dull ('07, Business Administration – Operations Management), a supply chain program officer with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, funded a Western scholarship, she wanted to give students a more challenging experience than a typical essay application.

So the Available to Promise Scholarship, named for a supply chain management term for inventory that is immediately available, asks applicants to solve a real-world problem.

"It might be something like, 'You're working at a distribution center and it's not performing well. Create a recovery plan.' Or 'You have a major time constraint and customer orders are coming in. What's your recommendation to your leadership team?" says Dull, who spent six years with Microsoft. "Those are pretty vague questions, but that's what they're going to be confronted with when they get out in the workplace."

Justin Gruba ('07, Accounting), now a manager at KPMG in Seattle, enjoyed his student days performing during basketball games as Western's mascot, Victor E. Viking. It gave Gruba a great view of the court and a solid appreciation for extracurricular activities.

So he funds the Western Spirit Scholarship to give other students the chance to get involved on campus. "If this scholarship helps others take advantage of courses they otherwise might not be able to take, or gives them extra free time to join a club, that's what I hope to accomplish," Gruba says, "for them to enjoy life at Western, to enjoy being a part of it."

After Gruba told KPMG coworker Grant Shaver ('08, Accounting) about the scholarship, Shaver was inspired to fund his own. His scholarship is for a College of Business and Economics student involved in clubs, community service or other opportunities "that you won't realize how valuable they are until you get out in the real world and it's much harder. If you get comfortable with that when you're in school, you'll be in a position to help facilitate those same interactions once you graduate. And people," he adds, "will look to you as a leader."

Deborah Dull ('07, Operations Management) asks those applying for the scholarship she funds to get creative and apply their knowledge to a real-world business problem.

Grant Shaver ('08, Accounting) hopes funding a scholarship will give a student more time for leadership opportunities.
Charting a Course for College

Thousands of kids get an early glimpse of higher ed — and get their own college student mentors — through Compass 2 Campus

By Hilary Parker ('95)

The voices of hundreds of fifth-graders rise in the crisp autumn morning as youngsters pour out of school buses and set foot on Western's campus, most for the first time.

Their green T-shirts form a river moving from south campus to Carver Gym for an official welcome to Western. Many smile as they see the college students on their way to class; the Western students' faces light up, too.

Each fall since 2009 fifth-graders have been coming to Western for a daylong kickoff of the Compass 2 Campus (C2C) Mentorship Initiative. The kids sit in on classes, eat lunch in a dining hall and watch a quick "commencement" ceremony designed to get them to picture themselves in a cap and gown. They also ask lots — and lots — of questions.

Then the real work begins.

C2C sends Western student mentors — nearly 700 this year — to classrooms throughout Whatcom and Skagit counties to work at least four hours a week with the students for the remainder of the school year.

The mentorship doesn't stop there. C2C mentors will continue to follow the fifth-graders for the rest of their middle school and high school careers. The first kids who came to Western as fifth-graders in 2009 will begin their senior years this fall — and C2C mentors have been in their classrooms ever since.

Charting a Course for College

C2C is now one of the state's largest school mentoring programs. So far, C2C's Western student mentors have spent more than 180,000 hours in the schools. In all, C2C serves between 450-500 classrooms in 31 schools each year, working with about 10,000 students.

This year, mentors are in 31 Title I schools in two counties — schools where a majority of students are considered low-income and whose prospects for graduating from high school and continuing on to post-secondary education are not often as bright as those of students from other schools.

C2C founder and Executive Director Cyndie Shepard explains it is C2C's goal to "encourage and support under-represented first-generation, often-marginalized students from low-income families to stay in school and go on to some form of post-secondary education."

That may not mean coming to Western — the program isn't geared just toward recruiting students to campus.

"It's really a program that says, 'Be a lifelong learner and reach for your dreams,' " Shepard says.

But if they do make it to Western, "We hope they join Compass 2 Campus and turn around and become C2C mentors to complete the cycle."

C2C rises from Phuture Phoenix

C2C originated at the University of Wisconsin Green Bay, where Cyndie's husband Bruce Shepard, was chancellor.

Cyndie, who had a long, successful career as a K-12 educator, had left her post as the administrator for special education in 11 school districts throughout eastern Oregon when they moved to Green Bay, and she wanted to continue her work with K-12 students.

She was touring a Title I school in Green Bay searching for volunteer opportunities in the community when the principal was called to discipline a boy who had been disruptive in class.

The principal cut the tour short and suggested Shepard talk with him while she called his mother.

Shepard got the boy talking and calmed him down. Then she asked, "What do you want to be when you grow up?"

"He got angry again," Shepard remembers. "He folded his arms and stuck his lip out and said, 'I'm gonna end up in prison, just like my dad.'"
The program isn’t geared just toward recruiting students to Western. “It’s really a program that says, ‘Be a lifelong learner and reach for your dreams,’” says Executive Director Cyndie Shepard.

Compass 2 Campus tour day includes a mock commencement ceremony, to encourage kids to visualize their own moment walking across the stage, diploma in hand.
“It was kind of like a knife going through my heart,” she says. So she asked the principal how she and the University of Wisconsin Green Bay could help. Without hesitation, the principal's answer: Send us mentors.

Shepard co-founded, created and helped launch and run the Phuture Phoenix mentoring program for seven years before her husband became Western’s president in 2008. Soon after the Shepards arrived in Bellingham, the state’s Higher Education Coordinating Board contacted Cyndie and asked her to give a presentation on the program.

The board was impressed and thought the mentoring program could help boost high school graduation rates in rural Whatcom and Skagit counties. It later brought House Bill 1986 to the legislature proposing Western as the pilot university for the program.

The bill passed, and former Gov. Christine Gregoire signed it into law in April 2009 with the expectation it would take two years to get the program up and running. By September of that same year, Compass 2 Campus was in 12 elementary schools.

That first year, Shepard expected about 50 Western students to sign up for the C2C mentor training course. She got 465.

About two-thirds were planning to become teachers, Shepard says. Today, less than one-third are education students. The rest are coming from all over campus, including the sciences, Human Services, Psychology, Huxley College of the Environment and the College of Business and Economics.

Building work-life skills

But two years ago Shepard began to realize the curriculum for mentors wasn't enough.

“Our students didn't quite know how to work in those populations because many of the cultures of the students were very different from their own,” she says. “We realized we needed a strong social justice element.”

She worked with other academic departments to develop a new five-credit course, “Youth Mentoring Toward Social Justice.”

The new class also counts toward Western's graduation requirement of at least two courses in comparative, gender and multicultural studies.

“My goal in all of this has been to support Bruce's mission
for the campus to become more diverse,” Shepard says.
But as the program has developed over the years, Shepard has also heard from students that mentoring gives them valuable skills to bring to the workplace, no matter their field.
“We all know when you mentor you learn more than the mentees do,” Shepard says.

Finding a path
Alexa Tucker (’14, History/Social Studies) may know this better than anyone.
Tucker, 24, from Redmond, became involved in C2C as a freshman during the program’s second year, and she learned about C2C as she was trying to decide between education and pre-law.
She decided to give C2C a try, but still wasn’t sure what she’d gotten herself into the first time she stood in back of a sixth-grade classroom.
“I was totally intimidated,” she remembers. “I had never been in a school where I wasn’t a student.”
On that first day she began keeping a journal — which she has kept up ever since — including notes on two boys in particular whom she still mentors today as they prepare to apply to colleges in the fall. These students were among those in the first C2C cohort and will be the first group to graduate high school next spring.
Those first weeks in their classroom, Tucker remembers she worked hard to build the boys’ trust, and the following quarter they began warming up to her and asked that she be their mentor.
After that second quarter together, she made them a promise: “I’ll follow you until you graduate — or I do.”
Tucker ended up graduating first, but she’s still a C2C mentor as she completes her master’s degree in teaching at Western.
Along the way, more students have joined her growing circle of mentees.
As Tucker follows her students, she works hard to get them to see their potential — the potential she has seen in them from early on. She uses her own story as inspiration: Tucker and her siblings were raised by a single mother, and she is the first of her family to go to college. (Her younger sister, Lauren, is now a C2C mentor at Western as well.)
“I didn’t even think of college until the 11th grade,” Tucker admits. “I hadn’t even heard of Western, and I grew up in Washington.”
It wasn’t until she heard her friends talking about their college plans that she got curious about higher education and toured Western.
Tucker hopes her mentees’ first-hand knowledge of a college campus — and knowing college students — will make college feel more attainable.
Her first two mentees even attended Tucker’s undergraduate graduation last year.
“I think it really solidified what I’d been talking about all these years,” she says. “If your path in life doesn’t include college, that’s fine. But I want you to know that college is an option. And I want you to know you can go if you want to.”

A wise investment
C2C has never received operating funding from the state Legislature, but relies on grants and donations.
The costs for tour day and lead mentor transportation are covered by donations raised at an annual brunch in the spring.
“You would think this program would cost more than it does,” Shepard says, explaining it costs only about $35 per fifth-grader for the trip to Western.
As C2C ends its seventh year, Shepard is preparing to say goodbye. She and Bruce will retire at the end of the academic year. A national search is under way to find her successor.
“It’ll be hard for me to leave because it’s my baby,” she says. “But I’ll stay in touch. I certainly hope to come back and hand out the first scholarship.”
Meanwhile, Central Washington University has adopted the program as well. That makes five schools total in Wisconsin and Washington using this mentoring model.
And after Tucker graduates this spring, she plans to teach middle school social studies and language arts in Bellingham.
And it all started with Compass 2 Campus.
“I think about the path it lead me to. As a freshman, I made this choice to sign up for Compass 2 Campus, and I didn’t know where it would take me. It’s changed my entire life.”

Hilary Parker (’95, Journalism) is a freelance writer in Bellingham. Her most recent story for Window magazine was about alumni in the Growing Veterans organic farming project.

C2C IS GETTING RECOGNIZED
Compass 2 Campus has received accolades, including five years running on President Obama’s Community Service Honor Roll. And donors have begun to establish scholarships that will assist C2C mentees who want to attend Western.
One such scholarship is the Diann and Kunie Ojikutu Compass 2 Campus Pathway Scholarship. Kunie Ojikutu is Western’s assistant vice president for Enrollment and Student Services and special assistant to the president for diversity, and Diann is a retired elementary school teacher. The Ojikutus’ gift recognizes the critical next step for its young participants by providing scholarships for C2C alumni who become Western students.
And those students will begin arriving in fall 2017.
First-year teacher Luz Lopez, right, was a classroom assistant who got her teaching credential through Western's Pathways to Teaching program. Lopez, who speaks English and Spanish, now teaches in a bilingual classroom at Allen Elementary in Burlington.
THE TEACHERS THEY NEED

Instructional assistants become teachers for bilingual classrooms through Woodring’s Pathways to Teaching program

Story by William Dietrich ('73)
Photos by Rhys Logan ('11)

Busting Allen Elementary School might be attractively plunked in the scenic heart of Skagit Valley farmland, but it can be a challenging place to start a teaching career.

Eighty percent of the K-8 school’s kids are poor enough to qualify for free or reduced lunch, and at least 40 percent speak a language at home other than English, including the Mexican indigenous languages Mixteco and Triqui. A migrant labor camp across the street contributes up to 60 students.

Teacher turnover is not uncommon, with 10 new hires necessary for the 2015-2016 year. Other districts can offer better pay and classes filled with kids from middle-class families.

But to the graduates of a pioneering Western program called Pathways to Teaching, this is their dream job. Three new graduates began their teaching careers at Allen last fall especially prepared to reach and inspire their pupils.

They represent Western's determination to come to grips with the nation’s fast-changing racial and cultural balance.

"We're at Allen because the Pathways teachers are exactly the teachers these students need," says Maria Timmons Flores ('82, Psychology; '86, M.Ed.), director of the Pathways program at WWU’s Woodring College of Education.

An example is first-grade teacher Luz Lopez ('15, Language, Literature and Cultural Studies), 33. She and fellow Pathways grad Leslie Bunzel ('15, Language, Literature and Cultural Studies) are the school’s sole Latina teachers. In a school where two-thirds of the students are Latino, they’re role models who communicate with their classes in both English and Spanish.

"It's a challenging but rewarding experience for me," says Lopez, a former instructional assistant who needed Pathways’ help to become an accredited teacher. "I wanted to come here. I feel I can make a difference."

Immigration has become a fiery presidential campaign issue this election year. Even some third-graders of another Allen Pathways teacher, Brittny Cantrell ('01, Environmental Education; '15, Language, Literacy and Cultural Studies), have worriedly mentioned Donald Trump.

But beyond the national debate is the practical issue of educating 6-year-olds whose parents and grandparents are vital to Skagit planting and harvesting and have become a vital part of the community fabric. By law, all children in the United States are entitled to K-12 education, regardless of their own or their parents’ national origin or immigration status. As of 2014, the U.S. Department of Education estimated there are 840,000 immigrants in K-12 American classrooms and 4.6 million who are English learners.

Teachers come prepared to connect classroom learning to the knowledge the kids bring to school and to support learning in two languages.

Traditionally, Timmons Flores says, teaching has been a career choice for white, middle class women. The result is that while 43 percent of children in Washington’s classrooms are students of color, 93 percent of their teachers are Anglo.

"Many teachers don't have a window into the lives of their students," Timmons Flores says. Students of color, especially those from farm worker families, might be poor, come to school hungry, and have migratory lives. There are usually youngsters at Allen Elementary with a parent held at Tacoma’s Northwest Detention Center, a private immigration prison run for U.S. Immigration and Custom Enforcement.

Despite his efforts to resolve the legal status of millions of immigrants, Barack Obama has overseen more deportations than any American president, about 2.4 million in his first seven years in office. And Obama’s recent executive order to defer deportation for parents of U.S.-born children faces an uncertain future before the U.S. Supreme Court.

But Allen Elementary School is a refuge, made stronger by these new WWU-trained teachers who understand the kids’ emotional needs. They come prepared to connect classroom learning to the knowledge the kids bring to school, Timmons Flores says, and to support the students’ learning in two languages.
“They are reminded that they are safe here,” says Cantrell, 40, who doesn’t speak Spanish but is qualified to teach English language learners, thanks to the Pathways program. That means she is experienced in reaching kids for whom English is their second language.

“They want to be here,” Cantrell says. “They want to see their friends and play.”

Like Lopez, Cantrell was an instructional aide for eight years but couldn't afford to quit work for a full-time teaching program to earn full teacher certification.

Pathways provided a two-year alternative program of classes, experience, and financial support for an initial cohort of 15 Western students. Ten identify as Latino, 11 have experience teaching in a second language, and half already had a bachelor’s degree. Eight are from either the Burlington-Edison or Mount Vernon school districts and have from three to 14 years of experience working in Skagit Valley schools.

All 15 received $8,000 a year in scholarship money through a grant from Washington’s Professional Educator Standards Board to develop teachers in shortage areas, such as bilingual education, if they committed to teach at least two years. And all 15 graduated in spring 2015 and began work as teachers the following fall.

Addressing the achievement gap

Lopez grew up with a migrant farm family in Eastern Washington’s Mattawa. Now a first-grade teacher at Allen Elementary, she understands where her students come from. They, in turn, have a first-grade teacher who looks like them.

“I always reaffirm the positive,” Lopez says.

Historically, students of color, low-income students and those learning English as a second language have not had the same opportunities to learn and succeed as many of their peers, says Timmons Flores, an associate professor of Elementary Education whose area of expertise includes supporting students from migrant families. Officially this is known as the achievement gap, but, “The achievement gap is an opportunity gap,” she says.

These kids are capable of excelling, she says, but neither teacher education nor schools have prepared teachers with the professional knowledge to close the gap.

This kind of “equity pedagogy,” or a commitment to close the opportunity gap, is an important characteristic of all teacher training at Woodring, Timmons Flores says. And the Pathways program seeks to bring to the teaching profession those who have experience living or working in diverse communities — experience that could also be put to use in closing the gap.

But many Pathways student-teachers have families to support and didn’t have the means to leave work for a full-time teaching program, Timmons Flores said. “None of them would have become teachers in traditional programs,” she says.

Lopez is a good example. She grew up wanting to be a teacher and, having been born in California, she has dual U.S.

and Mexican citizenship.

But when she married in Mattawa, she didn’t have the opportunity to go to school. She had two kids, got divorced, and moved to Mount Vernon to be with her extended family. She eventually went to work as an instructional assistant, but as a single mom there wasn’t a practical means to go to WWU for a teaching degree.

“It took me many, many years just to get my AA degree” at Skagit Valley College, she says. “It was like, one class a quarter.”

Now there is help for Skagit students with Burlington-Edison High School’s Recruiting Washington Teachers program to identify promising students and encourage them to get a degree. And Maestros Para el Pueblo is a partnership among Skagit Valley school districts, Skagit Valley College and Woodring to support young people to become instructional assistants and, ultimately, teachers.

Another new Pathways alumna is Berenice Rodriguez (’09, General Studies; ’15, Language, Literacy and Cultural Studies), who began life in Mexico and began third grade at La Conner Elementary when her family moved to the United States for farm work. She completed a degree at Western and dreamed of becoming a teacher, but was ineligible for a teaching certificate because of her undocumented status.

Like many other “DREAMers,” Rodriguez got a college degree in hopes that immigration reform such as the proposed DREAM Act would one day allow her to put her education to work in the classroom. In 2012, President Obama’s Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program made it possible for her to get a job as a teacher’s aide at Lucille Umbarger Elementary School in Burlington. Then scholarships from Woodring and the Skagit Valley Foundation enabled her to attend the new Pathways program to achieve certification. She now teaches second-grade at Burlington’s Westview Elementary, a dual-language school.

Timmons Flores is recruiting a second cohort of 20 teacher candidates who will begin in August of this year. A $300,000 grant from the Professional Educator Standards Board will provide $8,000 scholarships for the participants.

What binds these educators is a combination of ambition and passion. They aren’t intimidated by the sometimes challenging situations some of their students face at home. And they see and value the strengths that their students and families bring, and are prepared with the knowledge and ability to support their students’ success, Timmons Flores says.

Take, for example, Allen’s family support network. Many
families at Allen, while they care deeply about their kids' education, work long hours without a car and can't come to PTA meetings or parent conferences. Some students start late in the fall and leave early in the spring because of field work. So teachers have adapted their outreach so more families can participate. They offer meal programs that can include family members and hold community celebrations of student work and success. Families who must move for work may keep their kids at Allen as a home school. After-school and summer programs take place at times when parents are working; these programs tend to have more Spanish, Mixtec and Triqui speakers. School staff members are also working to create ways for families to have a more active voice in decisions.

Shifted demographics

Each wave of American newcomers — Germans, Irish, Italians, Chinese, Japanese, and more recently Somalis and Syrians — has faced resentment and discrimination. Despite conservative fantasies about deporting millions of undocumented workers and their kids, these students are almost undoubtedly here to stay, Timmons Flores says. Their success is in our national interest.

The Latino influx is the result of complex market forces. Migrant labor has long been welcomed to sustain farming and services. Latin American rural poverty fueled by new policies such as the North American Free Trade Agreement drove more people north. Many laborers once preferred to return to Mexico each winter, but as the border tightened they simply stayed and eventually smuggled in their families. Trying to keep people out was actually keeping them in.

According to the Migration Policy Institute, by 2013 there were more than 41 million foreign-born immigrants in the U.S. — four times as many as in 1970 — and nearly half were of Latin American origin. The state of Washington had nearly a million foreign-born in 2014, or 13.4 percent of the state's population.

Add the foreign-born to their U.S. born children, and the national total is 80 million, or about a quarter of the American population.

That's the demographic reality, and that's what Pathways to Teaching is trying to address. "I think it's a win-win," says Timmons Flores. Aspiring teachers get a practical way to achieve their dream, students of color get teachers who are role models, and society gets better-educated kids.

But numbers only tell part of the story. Teaching is also a labor of love, and first-year participants like Lopez, Cantrell, and Rodriguez say they put in 70-hour weeks for relatively modest pay. Why?

Lopez shows a basket of apples she is accumulating from grateful students and a bulletin board with letters from students. "Dear Ms. Lopez," first-grader Lauren laboriously penciled. "I like you as a teacher."

"The reward is hugs and smiles," Lopez says. And she smiles herself.

William Dietrich ('73, Journalism, Fairhaven Interdisciplinary Concentration) is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and New York Times bestselling author.
“If you want to improve your community, you better be ready to contribute.”
By Daneet Steffens

Bellingham born-and-bred — apart from four years at Whitman College and two with the U.S. Counter Intelligence Corps in Korea — Brian Griffin established his Western connection at the Campus School. "I started in kindergarten and went through ninth grade," he says. "I was there so long ago that I remember watching with great fascination the blasting of the rock ridge under the space on which the science building was eventually built. It was kind of exciting." He adds, "I've lived in Bellingham my whole life and I feel the roots."

The image of deeply-seated roots is particularly apt as community-minded projects all over town have this local hero at their core: Griffin has been instrumental in developing some of Bellingham's most visible landmarks, including the Parkade downtown parking structure, Fairhaven Village Green, Boulevard Park, and Depot Market Square, which houses the Bellingham Farmers Market.

"If you want to improve your community, you better be ready to contribute," notes the retired insurance broker. These days, he relishes his passion and business as a luthier, a skill that grew out of his love of woodworking. Today he creates custom ukuleles that sell everywhere from Skagit County and Indiana to Australia, England and Germany.

Griffin is also the author of six books, four about local history and two of them on native bees. He is a nationally recognized expert on Osmia lignaria — the orchard mason bee — and the creator of Knox Cellars Native Bee Pollinators, a business that popularized this key pollinator. He has been honored with the Sally Rogers Award for Lifetime Achievement by Whitman College; with the Whatcom County Lifetime Business Achievement Award by Northwest Business Monthly; with the Chamber of Commerce Man of the Year Lifetime Achievement Award; with the Rotary Club of Bellingham Community Service Award; and with the Whatcom Parks Foundation William Dietrich ('73, Journalism, Interdisciplinary Concentration) Award. Last year, he received the Bellingham Mayor's Living Treasure Award from Mayor Kelli Linville ('74, Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology; '81, Speech Pathology/Audiology).

But possibly nothing has been as rewarding for Griffin as investigating and bringing to light fun, little-known regional stories. For this English-major-turned-historian, immersing himself in historical tales and bringing them to the public eye has been a favorite pastime. And he has always relished the joy of connections, finding them and making them.

He calls researching history "as exciting as prospecting for gold — you sift through a lot of material and once in a while you hit the motherlode." Western's Center for Pacific Northwest Studies at the Washington State Archives Building, as well as the Bellingham Public Library, have been treasure troves, for example. And he's generous to colleagues, giving at a recent talk an official shout-out to the librarians, archivists and "fellow history nuts" with whom he works. Historians "get curious," Griffin says. "And then one thing leads to another. There are a thousand stories and that's what historians love to dig up."
Distinguished Alumni Awards

Larry “Go Vikings!” Taylor
Alumni Service Award

Kay Hovde (’84, Business Administration, Office Administration), a senior manager in business operations at Boeing, started her professional career at the Western Foundation.

“We computerized the division,” Hovde says. “That was the first time our donors were in a database; up until that point we were handwriting receipts.”

Through multiple jobs and states, Hovde’s engagement with Western never faltered. She joined the Alumni Association Board in the 1980s and later in Hawaii she was “the regional rep for the Alumni Association there.” When she moved back to Washington — after stints in Colorado and Kansas — she rejoined the Alumni board. She’s a longtime supporter of scholarships, making 83 gifts to WWU since graduation, and has mentored students in leadership classes.

At Boeing for the past 20 years, Hovde also mentors WWU interns and new hires who are Western grads. “At Boeing it’s amazing how many Western alums I run into, and I always encourage them to re-connect with Western — and to bring that connection back to Boeing.”

Ronald J Bundy, (’89, Business Administration – Marketing) CEO of Russell Indexes, and Tracy Mari Bundy, (’88, Business Administration – Finance) a retired Boeing systems analyst, share a commitment to Western born during college when they met at a meeting for one of Western’s business clubs.

Today, when it comes to Western, the Bundys’ contributions complement one another: Ron serves on the College of Business and Economics advisory board, Tracy served on the Alumni Association board and both frequently attend WWU events.

“I just loved being able to reconnect with alumni and work with them,” says Tracy of her time with the Alumni Association. “I also loved the way we had students come to meetings and give us updates on what was happening at Western — that was a great way to learn about new changes and developments.”

For Ron, serving on the CBE board re-establishes WWU ties and allows him to contribute his own perspective. “I can use my professional experience to determine ways to give back and support the university,” he says. “I always appreciated the impact that Western had on me from a career standpoint as well as personally: That’s where I met Tracy.”
Young Alumni of the Year

Harrison Mills
Clayton Knight

Mills (left, '12, Design) and Knight ('12, Physics) make up the electronic dance music duo ODESZA, a wildly successful partnership that started during their senior year at Western. Their 2014 album, "In Return," opened at No. 1 on Billboard's Dance/Electronic album chart and their next album is in the works. Meanwhile, they're performing sold-out shows around the world with a crew that includes several fellow Western alumni.

Deborah M. Atwood
Distinguished Alumna, Huxley College of the Environment

For Deborah M. Atwood ('77, Marine Resources), an impressive career arc as a legislative and policy specialist stems directly from Western.

"I liked to challenge my student colleagues and professors in class: 'We need to collaborate with the industry,' I'd say. 'You can't just attack them — we need to find ways to address their environmental issues through both regulatory and collaborative efforts to clean up discharges to the air, water and land! I knew that that was what I wanted — I was going to go work for the industry and get them to change, get them to adopt more sound practices. And the school encouraged that thinking."

Following jobs in marine resources, working for members of Congress in the House and Senate, serving as the deputy associate administrator for the EPA, and in the Secretary's office at USDA, Atwood is executive director of AGree: Transforming Food and Ag Policy. She also sits on the boards of two international nonprofits that focus on global food security.

"I have had really interesting opportunities," Atwood notes, "usually built around policy matters presented before Congress and the Executive Branch: farm bill, clean water, clean air, endangered species, and international agriculture development. The thread that goes through all of this is, how do we connect people to solve the problems at hand? That has always appealed to me."
Distinguished Alumni Awards

John Abrams
Lifetime Achievement Award

John Abrams ('50, Education), left, has earned master's and doctoral degrees. But, he says, “The education I got at Western has made my life.”

Abrams, a 30-year teacher and elementary school principal, and his spouse, Karl Compton, have supported Western in many ways, most recently with an $800,000 estate gift and a four-year scholarship for a freshman from Abrams' and Compton's hometown of Kingston.

“John's Western education has meant so much to him,” notes Compton. "And Kingston is important because it's our home."

Ruben Van Kempen
Distinguished Alumnus, College of Fine and Performing Arts

Freelance theatre director Ruben Van Kempen ('92, M.A., Theatre) recently retired after 38 years as head of Roosevelt High School’s acclaimed drama program in Seattle, but he still brings groups of high school theatre students to Western every other year with the Washington State Thespian Society. "The WWU teachers would lead workshops," Van Kempen says. "I was immediately impressed by the level of expertise and the level of the care." Van Kempen himself is no stranger to accolades: Among other recognitions, he was inducted into the Educational Theatre Association National Hall of Fame in 2012 and was a 2000 recipient of a Christa McAuliffe teaching award. And several of his students have gone on to successful careers in the theatre — including at least one Tony award nominee.

David A. Frank
Distinguished Alumnus: College of Humanities and Social Sciences

David Frank ('78, History, Speech Communication; '79, Speech Communication) is a University of Oregon professor of rhetoric and expert in presidential rhetoric and international affairs who served as the founding dean of the U of O’s Clark Honors College from 2008 to 2013. He is the author of six books and the recipient of five teaching awards as well as grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Science Foundation.

“I had great teachers at Western, including Larry S. Richardson and Leonard Helfgott, who taught me how to be a good scholar and teacher,” says Frank, a former member of the debate team who contributes to debate scholarships at Western. “I borrowed and stole from them over my 35-year career.”

Casey Diggs
Community Volunteer Recognition Award

Casey Diggs, operations manager at Boundary Bay Brewery, has generously provided in-kind donations for nearly a decade to many Western events, including for Back2Bellingham, Athletics events and the Ethnic Student Center’s 25th Reunion party. Diggs also coordinates Boundary Bay’s support of other community organizations like Boys & Girls Club of Whatcom County and Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association.
Legacy Family of the Year

The Linville, Kuljis and Parberry Families: Eighteen members of this extended family have attended Western, including Steve D. Kuljis ('49), Bellingham Mayor Kelli Linville ('74, Speech-Language Pathology & Audiology; '81, M.A., Speech Pathology/Audiology), and Louis H. Parberry III ('05, Music).

Evelyn Ames
Campus Volunteer Recognition Award

Decades after she coached former Athletic Director Lynda Goodrich ('66 and '73) in basketball and pioneered Western's Bachelor of Science degree in Community Health, Evelyn V. Ames is still making her mark at Western through volunteer work. The 2003 retired professor guest lectures in health education, supports a scholarship in Community Health and writes the "Health Notes" column for the WWU Retirement Association. "I stay involved because it's healthy for one's mind and I enjoy it," she says.

Ruth Mathews
Distinguished Alumna, Fairhaven College of Interdisciplinary Studies

Ruth Mathews ('87, Interdisciplinary Concentration) is executive director of the Water Footprint Network, a Dutch NGO that promotes fair and sustainable water use around the globe. Even today, she calls on crucial lessons she learned at Fairhaven: "You don't say, 'It can't be done.' You see that there's an opportunity, and you take it; you're willing to innovate, you're willing to take risks, you're willing to go where it's not comfortable." Mathews has worked on water issues around the world, has lived in Vietnam and China, and currently resides in the Netherlands.

David Kennerud
Distinguished Alumnus, College of Science and Engineering

David Kennerud ('92, Mathematics) an actuary in the Seattle office of Milliman since 1997, has always appreciated the support he received at Western. And Western's Math Department has benefited from Kennerud's commitment to give back: Kennerud served on the College of Science and Engineering's external advancement board for six years and he and his wife recently set up a $100,000 fund for the Math Department to support visiting scholars. "This was something that would benefit both students and faculty," Kennerud says, "and that made a lot of sense to me."

Tom Keegan
Distinguished Alumnus, Woodring College of Education

Thomas Keegan ('84, M.Ed., Adult Education) has been president of Skagit Valley College since 2012. He still draws upon what he learned at Woodring: "The faculty members engaged me in a learning process which is still with me," he says, "the idea that we should engage with students, treat each student as their own person while we create a community of learners." This is Keegan's second community college presidency: While he was president of Peninsula College, he led a capital campaign resulting in more than $120 million in new and remodeled facilities, including the construction of the nation's first longhouse on a community college campus.
Rachel Alston ('03), all about diapers

Alston (Human Services) is the founder and executive director of PDX Diaper Bank, which partners with community agencies to provide diapers to low-income families in the Portland area.

How did you realize that diapers were your way to make the most difference in your community?

My family experienced diaper need eight years ago when my oldest daughter was 6 months old and we were living on my husband’s student loans. I remember always feeling stressed about the high cost of diapering supplies and disappointed that SNAP benefits didn’t cover this necessary expense. In order to provide our family with some financial relief, we turned to the local cloth diaper service. The money that we saved could then be applied toward other household necessities such as food, rent, electricity, transportation to work, etc.

After relocating to Portland, I began researching community need as a first step in assessing what type of nonprofit I wanted to start. Since there is no government aid to assist families with the high cost of diapers, it didn’t take me long to realize that diapers are not only a huge need for families, but other nonprofits as well. Diaper need is embedded in pretty much all family assistance programs, however, nonprofits typically don’t have the budget to purchase them. This is why PDX Diaper Bank serves nonprofits directly, with our services trickling down to the families they serve.

PDX Diaper Bank currently serves 14 partner organizations such as teen parent programs and family shelters, with a waitlist of at least 20 organizations. Last year we distributed approximately 100,000 diapers to Portland families in need.
became superintendent of the Athena-Weston School District in eastern Oregon.

1981 – Quentin Walter (Art) is an artist in Florida, where her "Fashionista Series" recently appeared at the Art on 18th gallery in Vero Beach.

1982 – Barbara Tappa (Music Education), a choir teacher at Ferris High School in Spokane, was named 2015 high school music educator of the year by the Washington Music Educators Association. James Craig (Business Administration) recently became president, strategic capacity solutions, for USA Truck Inc. Lori Thornton (English), depository coordinator and public services bureau chief for the New Mexico State Library's Department of Cultural Affairs, was recently appointed to the U.S. Government Publishing Office's Depository Library Council.

1983 – Debora Juarez (Fairhaven Interdisciplinary Concentration) was elected to the Seattle City Council. Juarez is a former King County Superior Court Judge, former director of the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs, and a citizen of the Blackfeet Nation. Kris McDuff (Business Education; '88, M.Ed., Reading, Resident Administration Certificate, School Administration) was named superintendent of the Edmonds School District.

1984 – John Saunders (English, Economics, Political Science) recently became vice president for commercial real estate services for Columbia Bank in Tacoma. Most recently, he served in the U.S. Army Judge Advocate General Corps. Jennifer Hahn (Environmental Science; '00, Writing, Literature and Ecology) is a writer, teacher and wilderness guide who spoke at Western's Commencement ceremony in March and is working on her third Western degree, a master's in Environmental Studies.

1985 – Leland "Lee" Adams (Industrial Technology) is retired from aircraft engineering and lives in Bandera, Texas. He and his wife, Judy, have traveled by motorcycle from Texas to Labrador, Canada, the Arctic Circle in Alaska. Nancie Weston (Recreation) is founder and CEO of GRAYL, which designs and manufactures water bottles that also serve as water purifiers.

1986 – Robin Robertson (Huxley College Student/Faculty Designed Major) is the owner and manager of Bellingham Tennis Club. Her recent book, "Healthy Knees Cycling: The Fun No-Impact Way to Reduce Joint Pain, Improve Strength and Help You Live an Active Lifestyle" is available on Amazon.

1987 – Roy Vataja (History) is a historian in Aberdeen and was recently named Harborite of the Year by the Friends of the Aberdeen Museum.

1988 – Pam Bosch (Art; '04, M.Ed., Adult Education) is an artist renovating her Bellingham home using hemp construction materials. She's documenting the progress at highlandhemphouse.com. Carol Menges (Music – History and Literature; '90, Master of Music) first novel, "Justice and Mercy: Once upon a time..." is now available on Amazon. Joe Dockery (Recreation), a digital arts teacher at Mount Si High School recently received the 2016 Eric Jensen Award from the Northwest Council for Computer Education. Lori Bumstead (History) was appointed principal of Serene Lake Elementary School in Edmonds.

1990 – Michelle McNeil (Journalism) recently became a community liaison with the North Central Regional Library, which covers Okanogan, Ferry, Chelan, Douglas and Grant counties.

1991 – Peter Ide (Journalism) owns and operates Captain Pete's Fishing Charters in Chesapeake Beach, Maryland.

1992 – Scott Ryan (Political Science) cofounded Math Adventure, a non-profit that combines math, puzzles, the arts and interactive theatre at elementary school events in the Seattle area.

1993 – Green Writers Press recently published "Hidden View," a novel by Brett Ann Stanciu (M.A., Art) about a multi-generational family farm in Vermont. She also works as a surgarmaker in northern Vermont. Jenne Hohn (Business Administration) recently completed her Doctorate of Chiropractic at Life University in Marietta, Georgia. She graduated summa cum laude and was inducted into the Pi Tau Delta Honor Society for Chiropractic. Jenny Draper (Social Studies – Elementary), a librarian at Emerson Elementary School in Snohomish, was a finalist in the National Life Group Foundation's LifeChanger of the Year program. She received $5,000 to share with her school. Andrew Short (Industrial Technology) teaches Engineering Graphics at the Lake Washington Institute of Technology, where he just received tenure.

1994 – Paul Marcoe (Business Administration – Management Information Systems) became chief technology officer for Orion First, a financial services company. Janelle Phinney (English – Secondary) was appointed principal of Fairmount Elementary School in Everett.

1995 – Hans Dunshee (M.A., Political Science) was recently appointed to a vacant seat on the Snohomish County Council after spending more than 20 years in the Washington State Legislature, most recently as chairman of the House Appropriations Committee.

1996 – Don Sayegh (M.Ed., Secondary Education) teaches physics, general science and algebra at Blaine High School and can often be seen in Whatcom County playing with his Irish music group, Flattery.

Kirsten Sutton (English – Writing, Linguistics) is vice president and managing director of SAP Labs Canada and SAP Global Executive Briefing Centres. She also serves on the board of directors of the BC Technology Industry Association.

1997 – Steve Pickens’ (English – Writing) first novel, "Final Departure," was recently published by Bold Strokes Books.

Robyn Goldblatt ('11)
Trip-of-a-lifetime designer
What was your best worst day?

One of my best-worst days traveling would have to be mid-way through my trip to Tanzania last November. I was staying in the most stunning place I had ever been to — Greystoke Mahale, in the Mahale Mountains National Park. The main draw to this place is trekking out into the mountains to observe wild chimpanzees. The only way to reach this camp is by taking a couple-hour boat (dhow) transfer down/up Lake Tanganyika — the world's longest freshwater lake. It's a beautiful, scenic ride, but on my departure day the water was choppy and I got incredibly seasick. Those two hours felt like an eternity. But I would do it over again in a heartbeat. It was absolutely worth it to visit such a remote, untouched, unspoiled place that few have the opportunity to experience.

Goldblatt (Business – Management), a trip designer for Outside GO, with elephant and wildebeest skulls at the Chem Chem Conservancy in Tanzania.
Western Give Day is one day to unite as Vikings and make history. On June 1st, let's give back to the departments, programs and scholarships that powerfully impacted our lives at Western and beyond.

www.WesternGiveDay.com
Katherine Frankhauser (’03), e-transit entrepreneur

Think there’s a U.S. demand for short-rental e-bikes?

Our commutes of the future will include multiple modes of transit, including electric vehicles of both two-wheeled and four-wheeled varieties! Most importantly, I think we will come to realize that not all transportation relies on a vehicle that’s personally owned. In some places in the U.S., demand is already being proven for shared cars and shared bikes, but in many more I think the majority of people don’t realize what a significant change these platforms can make in the way that they choose to move in their cities. It’s actually very freeing to be able to pick up a vehicle (in this case, an e-bike), use it as you need, and return it to a station, leaving someone else to then worry about security, maintenance, parking spaces, and so forth. I look forward to being part of this groundswell change in how we move in our urban environments and the impacts that we have on them!

Frankhauser (Environmental Science) co-owns Spark Mobility, a Spokane-based company renting electric-and battery-powered bikes and cars in several European cities.
Blake Herrington ('07)
Author and mountain climber

How do you handle fear?

I handle fear by first trying to determine if the fear is reasonable (based on a likely outcome of bad consequences) or just emotional.

If reasonable, I try to take immediate and concrete steps to mitigate likelihood and severity of whatever I'm afraid of.

If that all fails, I just take courage from memories of surviving freshman chemistry at Western.

Herrington (Economics/Environmental Studies), seen here on the first ascent of Gorillas in the Mist on Mount Stuart in 2009, is a mountain climber and author whose recent "Cascades Rock" guidebook covers 160 multipitch and alpine climbs in Washington and Southern British Columbia.

Running Co. and recently achieved his dream of running in the U.S. Olympic Marathon Team Trials. Anders Carlson-Wee (Fairhaven Interdisciplinary Concentration) earned a master's in Creative Writing from Vanderbilt University in 2015 and received a National Endowment for the Arts Literature Fellowship in Creative Writing. Six of his poems appeared in the autumn 2015 issue of The Southern Review. Paulina Antczak (Business - Management) is office manager of Healthy Living Center in Bellingham and works at her family's business, Fairhaven Floors. Hanna Knowles (Business Administration - Marketing) recently completed a master's degree in public relations from University of Southern Mississippi, where she is the marketing communications coordinator with the School of Kinesiology and College of Health.

2012 – Rachel Langaker (Business Administration - Management) is a project manager and designer for Fusion Creative Works in Poulsbo. Ryan Boser (Plastics Engineering Technology) is a technical engineer at Toray Composites. Amanda Lile (Cellular and Molecular Biology) is a chemical consultant with ChemPoint in Bellevue. Sarah Crouch was the second-fastest American woman in the Boston Marathon in April.

2013—Claire (Rachor) Brunhaver recently earned her CPA license and works as an auditor with KPMG, LLP in Seattle. Sean Gorey (Music, Communication) and Alexander Lueth ('11, Kinesiology – Health and Fitness) are Sean & Xander, up-and-coming trance music producers and DJs. Richard Grunert (Visual Journalism) is a self-taught programmer and one of the creators of "Lunar Invasion," a two-player game for Android devices based on old-school cannon games. Sean LaHusen (Geology) is a doctoral student at the University of Washington, studying the area around the Oso landslide.

2014 – Juliette Machado (Dance, Communication) performs with Bellingham Repertory Dance and coordinates an after-school arts enrichment program for Bellingham Arts Academy for Youth. Her latest film, "Ellis Won't Be Dancing Today," a dance theatre piece about Alzheimer's disease, was recently screened at Pickford Film Center. Katie Walvatne (Business Administration – Management) is the general manager of Thinkspace, a coworking space in Redmond that supports entrepreneurs. Chloé Boland (Plastics Engineering Technology) is an engineer who designs composite tooling at Space Exploration Technologies and was recently inducted into the VIP Woman of the Year Circle by the National Association of Professional Women. Nina Olivier (Biology) is with the Peace Corps in the Philippines, serving as a Coastal Resource Management volunteer and helping to establish a marine turtle sanctuary. Angela Gossom (Environmental Science) is in veterinary school at Washington State University and recently received the Fellowship Award from the Institute of Environmental Education.

Obituaries

1928 – Jean Carver Clark, 95, on Sept. 5, 2015, in Seattle. Irene France Kohler, 107, a retired teacher, on March 2, 2016, in Inchelium.

1939 – Lee Trafton Wilson, 95, who worked at Hatloes Decorating Center in Everett for several decades, on March 25, 2016.

1946 – John Daniel Cornwell, 97, a World War II Navy veteran and retired junior high school vice-principal, on Nov. 15, 2015, in Manhattan Beach, California.
In memoriam: Former State Sen. Harriet Spanel

Harriet Spanel, who represented northwest Washington in the state Legislature for more than two decades and was a strong supporter of Western, died Feb. 2, 2016, at age 77.

Spanel served three terms in the state House and four in the state Senate representing the 40th District, which includes WWU as well as portions of Whatcom, Skagit and San Juan counties.

Spanel’s reputation for smart questions, quiet intelligence and collaborative nature made her very popular among voters and fellow legislators. When she retired in 2009, she was chairwoman of the state Senate Democratic Caucus.

She was also the wife of the late Les Spanel, a longtime member of the Physics faculty who was in charge of running Western’s planetarium. Following Les Spanel’s death in 2002, Harriet Spanel donated funds for significant upgrades at the planetarium, including a state-of-the-art digital projection system. Western named the planetarium after Les Spanel in 2014.

Former state Sen. Harriet Spanel at the dedication of the Leslie E. Spanel Planetarium in 2014. Spanel’s donations in memory of her husband Les Spanel, a retired member of the Physics Department faculty in charge of the planetarium resulted in significant upgrades to the projection system. Harriet Spanel died in February 2016.
In 1946, Art classes were held in Old Main, one of the few buildings on campus. The Western Washington College of Education, as it was known then, was a small place on the verge of significant growth. World War II had sent enrollment plummeting to just 254 students in 1943, as would-be students joined the military or worked in war-related industries instead. But with the war's end came more students, thanks in part to returning veterans. New construction was on the way, too, with College Hall in 1947. That same year, Western began offering its first Bachelor of Arts degrees, a sign that the curriculum was growing well beyond teacher training.
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