Summer 2018

Window: the Magazine of Western Washington University, 2018, Volume 10, Issue 02

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Veni Vidi Ascendi

The competitive rock-climbing season for Pacific Northwest colleges and universities doesn't really start until February, when the WWU Student Recreation Center Climbing Wall hosts Veni Vidi Ascendi, an all-day competition that drew more than 140 competitors from 10 schools this year.

Veni Vidi Ascendi is the first of several annual competitions in the Northwest Collegiate Climbing Circuit (NC3). Western's competition is the only one in the circuit that includes a dynamic movement event, in which climbers spring out 6 to 8 feet to grasp a fingertip hand-hold 15 feet above the mat.

Only a few make it, and the ones that do get a cheer from the crowd, no matter what school they're from.
WWU News
Western maps out its next decade in sustainability goals • The surprising power of food banks • After the Olympics, back to the books • New degrees in marine sciences and education • Exciting advances in the fight against Huntington’s disease.

An island retreat for the arts
Noted artist Ann Morris and her children give Morris’ breathtaking Lummi Island studio grounds to Western.

More than passion
Western’s eight IDEA Changemaker Fellows work to bring about the change they want to see in the world.

Nuance and messiness
TJ Martin, ’05, knows we can handle tough, emotionally complex stories.

Megafire
Strategies for fighting a growing threat to the West from fire expert Michael Medler, with photos from the fire-lines from Caitlin Chinn, ’13, who spends her summers rappelling out of helicopters to put out wildland fires.

His own man
Ian Vincent, ’14, once thought strong men didn’t talk about their pain. Now as Western’s specialist in men’s mental health resilience, he helps other men find their own authentic definition of healthy manhood.

Love it while it lasts
Student Brandon Doak creates ephemeral art with the tips of dry-erase markers.

Alumni Honors
Meet the Entrepreneurs of the Year changing the culture at an accounting giant and several other alums who are making a difference.

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On the cover: Design student Brandon Doak remade Old Main—and Window magazine’s cover—with his pointillist technique done with dry-erase markers. See more of Doak’s art on Page 30. Photo of the artwork by Rhys Logan (’11, visual journalism)
Changemakers are part of Western’s history – and a requirement for our future

Since the day Western first opened its doors, our students, faculty, staff and alumni have strived to think ahead and take action. When it was established in 1889, Western was among the first teaching colleges in the West, with an all-female first graduating class. In 1969, Huxley College of the Environment became the nation’s first dedicated college of environmental science and education. And in 2012 Western created the interdisciplinary Institute for Energy Studies to prepare students to tackle the world’s sustainable energy challenges.

At Western, “Active Minds Changing Lives” is embedded in our uniquely collaborative and experiential learning approach, and the reason we’re poised to serve a world that needs original perspectives now more than ever. That innovative, action-oriented spirit is reflected in this issue of Window by the eight Changemaker Fellows of Western’s IDEA Institute, who are challenging status quo thinking about social re-entry after incarceration, exploring cultural identity through images, language and music, and how to develop smarter incentives for responsible energy use.

In the process, they and other students are challenging this 125-year-old institution to do better. Links between the broader social context off campus and students’ on-campus activism have long been a means for students to contextualize what it means to pursue social change on our own campus and in their communities. Research has shown that students engaged in activism tend to continue their political participation well into mid-life and acquire a greater sense of social responsibility. Pursuing the difficult work of building understanding and creating lasting social change also adds complexity and nuance to our students’ emerging views, and honors the longstanding tradition of U.S. colleges and universities as laboratories of social change.

As we look to the future, Western is committed to advancing inclusive success for all students, increasing our impact in Washington, and fostering a caring and supportive environment in which all members of our community are treated with respect and fairness. While this will require difficult conversations and new strategies, our success will be built on the active, forward-thinking culture of students, faculty, staff, and alumni that Western has fostered from its earliest days. I invite every member of the Western community, past, present, and future, to embrace that challenge, and I look forward to taking the journey with you.

Sincerely,

Sabah Randhawa
President
Praise for ‘The Big Story’ and alumni journalists

A few readers shared their appreciation for “The Big Story,” Zach Kyle’s, ’07, account of how WWU alumni journalists are surviving in the tumultuous media landscape. Craig Weckesser, a journalism and public relations veteran who’s married to alumna Susan Weckesser, ’85, called Kyle’s work “spot-on” and said he was particularly moved by the experiences of journalists Amy Harder, ’07, a writer for the online Axios, and Duff Wilson, ’75, a longtime investigative reporter who works for Reuters. Meanwhile, Patrick Brennen, ’72, notes with pride that among his group of about 40 journalism majors from 1972 to ’74, he knows of two who have won Pulitzer Prizes: Bill Dietrich, ’73, and Jack Broom, ’74.

Inspired by Western’s art collection

Jeff Fisher, ’89, wrote that he enjoyed the story “Modern art icons get a permanent home at the Western Gallery,” Fall/Winter 2017, about how artwork by Jackson Pollock, Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, Helen Frankenthaler and many others are now in Western’s own collection. “For WWU to have this collection of works on paper, and that it includes an Agnes Martin (’37) work, is extraordinary,” Fisher wrote. “I do hope the university continues to show and present these works to the student body and public. This type of a collection can really inspire and educate the community.”

Awards for Window magazine

Window magazine won a trio of awards recently from the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education’s Region VIII. The Spring/Summer 2017 edition, featuring stories about Mount Baker, won a Bronze Award in the magazine special issues category. And writer John Thompson won two Silver Awards in feature writing for “Editors of the Species” from Fall/Winter 2016 and “The Heights of Climate Science” from Spring/Summer 2017. We’re delighted with the awards; CASE Region VIII includes colleges and universities from throughout the Pacific Northwest U.S. and western Canada.
After the Olympics, back to the books

After an impressive debut at the Winter Olympics in PyeongChang, South Korea, WWU student Breezy Johnson returned to Bellingham in March to continue her pursuit of an English degree.

Johnson, who placed seventh in the Olympic downhill race and 14th in the super G, is a World Cup ski racer and lover of Shakespeare who spends one quarter a year in Western's Honors Program.

Life at the Olympics: In preparation for her Olympic premiere, the Wyoming native spent nearly a month in South Korea with the other women of the U.S. Olympic Ski Team.

They spent most of their time near the alpine venues, away from the Olympic Village. But after finishing her main events Johnson joined the rest of the team at the Olympic Village, one of the high-points of her trip, and found herself hanging out with the silver-medal German men's hockey team.

“Racing was obviously my huge highlight, but the night we saw the closing ceremonies and went to the German hockey house was very fun,” Johnson says.

A talent for speed: Bode Miller, an Olympic gold medal skier and commentator during the NBC Olympics broadcast, said during Johnson's downhill race that she has a great chance of moving into a leadership role on the team.

“She's one of the more gifted downhillers we've seen in the last 15 years,” Miller said.

Johnson cut short her 2018 season after injuring her shoulder during training in Sweden, but was recently back on the slopes training at Mammoth Mountain to prepare for her next World Cup race in October.

Back at Western: Johnson says life as a student is more hectic these days.

“A lot of people think once you become an Olympian you have a manager and the whole gamut, but that’s not completely true,” Johnson says. “You need to make a lot of money to afford those people, and ski racing isn’t that lucrative unless you’re winning medals regularly. So I basically have to do it for myself.”

Johnson says she likes the business side of the sport and hopes to make it her career after retiring from ski racing. She eventually wants to use her education by working as an agent for other athletes.

“I want to graduate, then either go to business or law school and become a sports agent—but not only just in skiing, I’m interested in other sports too,” Johnson says.

—by Sascha Guenter-Schlesinger, ‘18
The fight against Huntington’s disease has its ‘most exciting clinical advance so far’

Psychology Associate Professor Jeff Carroll’s work to better understand Huntington’s disease got a boost with a recent $100,000 grant from Ionis Pharmaceuticals, which is developing a drug that has shown promising results in early trials.

Carroll’s lab creates tools and techniques to investigate the normal role of the HD gene. Mutations in the gene cause Huntington’s disease, a fatal degenerative brain disorder.

Ionis and partner Roche Pharmaceuticals recently completed a safety study of the experimental drug, IONIS-HTTRx, which reduces the levels of the protein connected to the gene mutation. Reducing that protein, called huntingtin, can relieve symptoms of Huntington’s disease.

The completion of the safety study is “the most exciting clinical advance in HD so far,” Carroll says. “The demonstration that increasing doses of the drug lead to decreasing levels of the mutant huntingtin protein in the spinal fluid is a remarkable vindication of Ionis’ many years of hard work and dedication to this project.”

Carroll, who carries the HD mutation himself, is among many in the HD community watching the progression of the drug trials very closely. He and Ed Wild of University College London run HD Buzz, a patient advocacy project that shares scientific news on HD research with HD families.

“The HD community is justifiably excited about and ready to participate in the pivotal study which will be required to demonstrate if the drug has an impact on HD symptoms, thanks to the observed reductions in the huntingtin protein,” Carroll says.

New degrees in marine sciences, education

Western will soon offer two new degree programs, in marine sciences and in early childhood education, thanks to funding from the State Legislature.

The early childhood education program, a collaboration with Olympic College, will graduate up to 25 people each year. It will be the 12th WWU bachelor’s degree available through Western on the Peninsulas in Poulsbo, Bremerton and Port Angeles.

The marine, coastal and watershed sciences bachelor’s degree responds to students’ growing interest in marine sciences—and the state’s need for more people trained in the field. While many classes will be offered in Bellingham, students will also work at Western’s Shannon Point Marine Center in Anacortes beginning in 2019.

The 2018 Supplemental Budget also provided funds to study the feasibility of expanding the Western on the Peninsulas Program for more four-year degree offerings.
Carbon-neutral
WWU by 2035

Western has long been a leader in sustainability, from establishing Huxley College of the Environment, the nation’s first, in 1969, to recent student-led initiatives to bring more local food to campus dining halls.

Now, Western’s new Sustainability Action Plan lays out a roadmap for not only protecting local and global ecology, but upholding social equity, creating economic vitality and maintaining human health.

Among the highlights: Launching a new Institute for Sustainability and creating options to learn about sustainability in all majors. The plan establishes the goal of carbon neutrality by 2035, reductions in water consumption and drive-alone rates to campus and adopting zero-waste operations in dining halls.

Learn more at sustain.wwu.edu to see dozens of goals for more academics, engagement, operation, and planning and administration.
The surprising economic power of food banks

Food banks make a huge difference in the household budgets of families in need, but it turns out they’re also an economic engine for their communities, too.

Western’s Center for Economic and Business Research in the College of Business and Economics recently found substantial economic ripple effects generated by two Skagit County food banks.

Help from the food bank means families have to spend less on food, of course, which means they can spend more on other needs, such as rent, utilities, transportation, clothing and health care. That money is often spent in the community. Using Skagit County consumer spending patterns, the researchers estimate that the food distributions by Helping Hands in Sedro-Woolley and Neighbors in Need in Mount Vernon generated between $1.3 million and $3 million annually in the Skagit County economy.

For example, Neighbors in Need serves 667 households per week. If those families spent 70 percent of the value of the food on local goods and services, they’d pump more than $1.5 million into the economy.

By the same measure, Helping Hands and its 730 weekly household clients create an estimated $1.4 million in new local spending.

The researchers found that food banks also generate local jobs: together, the two food banks support anywhere from 12 to 51 jobs thanks to the additional funds that families can spend in their communities.

James McCafferty, co-director of the Center for Economic and Business Research, said not much research has been done on the regional economic effects of food banks. He recently presented the study to a conference of food bank directors: “I bet none of you came in here thinking you’re job creators,” he told them.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, more than 12 percent of U.S. households are “food insecure,” which means their diet consists of low-quality or low-variety foods—or that they don’t have enough food and sometimes go hungry.

Food banks’ economic power lies in their bulk food purchases at 4 to 10 cents a pound. That means individuals—not to mention government and non-profit agencies—who financially support food banks are actually engaging in a relatively low-cost way to support regional job growth, the researchers said.

“I hope communities and political agencies will end up taking a look at food banks in a different light,” McCafferty says. “They are becoming increasingly important to their communities’ economies.”

The researchers, including several students, used an economic modeling system called IMPLAN to estimate the impact of the food banks on employment, income and other macroeconomic factors. The results are specific to Skagit County and don’t necessarily translate to other regions.

The data also show that food banks are linked to lower crime figures in their areas. And if food banks help families make rent or car payments, their housing and employment are more stable. Another unmeasured impact: When grocery stores sell their nearly expired food to food banks, less goes to landfills.

“There’s all sorts of ripples and levers and multipliers,” says Hart Hodges, co-director of the Center for Economic and Business Research. “Literally tons of food that was going to go to a landfill, instead goes to allowing more spending in a community. That’s a heck of a switch.”
An island retreat for the arts

Artist Ann Morris gives her breathtaking Lummi Island studio grounds to Western

Artist Ann Morris spent two decades creating bronze sculptures and other artwork at her 14.5-acre wooded retreat on Lummi Island. Now, Morris is making sure the beautiful enclave known as Sculpture Woods can be a creative retreat for WWU artists, faculty and community members for years to come.

Morris and her two children, Brook Morris of Los Angeles and Clea Costa Van Voorhis of Chicago, have given the property to the Western Foundation to preserve as a space for art, performance and education.

“This is a creative retreat that is welcoming to artists of all kinds,” says Kit Spicer, dean of the College of Fine and Performing Arts. “There is a palpable creative energy in this space and I think a lot of that is due to Ann and her work. But it’s also due to what Ann has done to maintain the natural integrity of this space, the land and the trees, and the studio and the gallery.”

Sculpture Woods includes a studio and gallery along with 16 of Morris’ own larger-than-life bronze sculptures, which are situated throughout the wooded hillside overlooking the water. Morris continues to work in her studio, where she was recently adding to her “Crossings” series of tiny boats crafted from found materials such as twigs, seaweed, leather, wasp nest paper and wisteria pods. She’ll lease the property from Western as long as she wants to.

The Western Foundation, which has established an endowment to maintain the property, will preserve Sculpture Woods as a “creative generator,” Spicer says.

There are many ways Western students and faculty can use the space, he says. Perhaps it could be offered for artist residencies, or as an intimate performance space for student capstone concerts. Art faculty could offer intensive courses in the studio itself. And students could serve as docents on the monthly open house days at Sculpture Woods.

“Very few universities have anything like this,” Spicer says. “This is one of the coolest places in the world.”

Details of Ann Morris’ bronze sculptures, clockwise from top: “Trinity,” “Merlin Wakes?” and “Gifting the Giver.”

Opposite page: "Acceptance of Sorrow"
Sculpture Woods is open to the public the first Saturday of the month from 10 to 5. Learn more at sculpturewoods.com
To learn more about the endowment to maintain Sculpture Woods, get in touch with Sonja Sather at Sonja.Sather@wwu.edu or 360-650-3384.
See a video about Sculpture Woods at window.wwu.edu
Juan Galvez
Senior double-majoring in sociology and Spanish. Leader of Mariachi Bahía Azul de WWU.

“My first two years here at Western, I didn’t really feel like I fit into the whole university thing,” Galvez remembers. “When the mariachi club was founded, that was the spot where I felt safe at, the spot where I belonged. The people—it was cool to be around them.”

Performing for the first time was terrifying, he says, but when he saw how much people enjoyed the music, he knew there was a place for mariachi at Western.

Galvez also spends several evenings a week teaching guitar to kids at Bellingham’s Sterling Meadows apartment complex for families of migrant workers, where 95 percent of the residents are Latino.

Sharing a love for Mexican music and culture

Galvez and WWU mariachi club manager Jessica Alvaro organized Western’s first mariachi conference in April, drawing 42 student musicians from University of Washington, Central Washington University, Burlington and Wenatchee. After an afternoon of workshops in Baile Folklórico, Spanish linguistics—taught by Changemaker Fellow and student linguist Maria José Palacios Figueroa—and a panel on “What I wish I knew before applying to college,” the groups performed a free concert in Western’s Performing Arts Center, joined by two of Galvez’s young students at Sterling Meadows.

Mariachi Bahía Azul de Western is already raising funds for next year’s conference at www.viking-funder.com/bahiaazul.
More Than Passion

Western’s eight IDEA Changemaker Fellows work to bring the change they want to see in the world

Story by Mary Lane Gallagher
Photos by Rhys Logan, ’11

Every time a student walks in to her wedge-shaped Arntzen Hall office vibrating with the need to make a difference, Danica Kilander, ’13, asks something like this:

On a scale of one to 10, what’s your commitment to making this change in the world? Eight? Nine? Hm.

Kilander, associate director of Western’s IDEA Institute, isn’t looking for students who are merely willing to juggle their jobs and classes to work on something that will make the world better. She’s looking for students who are an unstoppable force, who have a kind of inspiring—and even maddening—single-minded devotion to understanding and addressing a problem. Those are the students she recruits for the IDEA Institute’s Changemaker Fellowship.

“Action is the only way forward for them,” Kilander says, “because they each feel like they’re holding the world in their hands.”

This year’s Changemaker Fellows pursued projects on the politics of language, support for formerly incarcerated students, and justice for undocumented immigrants. One organized Western’s first conference for young mariachi musicians. One fellow is planning a road trip documentary featuring people with a zero-waste lifestyle while another tackled the thorny problem of improving energy efficiency in rental housing.

They meet once a week to work on their projects and share ideas. Kilander teaches them some basics of project management, marketing and crafting an elevator pitch to resonate with audiences. Occasionally, she makes a call to someone on campus who could help, but the fellows are often their own inspiration and coaches.

“They get inspired by each other,” says Kilander, who earned her bachelor’s degree from Fairhaven College of Interdisciplinary Studies. “Somebody might have a low week or two, and they hear these stories of success and it builds a fire again. Other times, when someone has a question, a fellow will get up and share a tool or lesson of their own.”

The fellowship is supported by the IDEA Institute—InterDisciplinary Entrepreneurship in Action—which focuses on unleashing more entrepreneurial and innovative leaders. About 80 to 100 students are enrolled in the institute’s interdisciplinary minor in entrepreneurship.

Thanks to a $25,000 grant in fall 2017, the Changemaker Fellows also received funding fall and winter quarters to focus on their passion projects. This makes the fellowship more accessible to low-income students, Kilander says.

“The people who deeply understand these problems are often the people who have experienced them some way in their personal lives,” she says. “Often, these students have three or four jobs outside Western. We try to buy out some of their hours so they can put their focus into their commitments and passions.”

Changemaker fellowships are about building capacity in the student to make change in the future, not just what they can accomplish before they graduate. Not every successful fellowship ends with a completed project, Kilander says. It’s about deepening their knowledge of the problems—and their own commitments to addressing them.

“Fellows might identify barriers, but they will work right along with other people to take them down,” Kilander says. “That’s what makes them unique and powerful. I want a million more like them in our world.”
Gwen Larned
Senior in business and sustainability. Minoring in entrepreneurship and innovation. Zero Waste coordinator in Western’s Office of Sustainability. Fits a month of landfill trash inside a pasta sauce jar, because there’s no such thing as throwing something “away,” she says.

**Zero-Waste Roadtrip**
“We create single-use products made from plastic, a product that will last forever, that so often get used just long enough for us to finish a drink or meal,” Larned says. “Yet by 2050 studies show there could be more plastic in the oceans than fish.”

Larned and her roommate, Carrin Romain-McErlane, are producing a web documentary about a roadtrip to visit others who have adopted a zero-waste lifestyle.

Larned, who blogs as “Trashy Radical,” has noticed that most of her fellow zero-waste bloggers, like her, are white, middle-class and relatively privileged. She wants her road trip to include visits with zero-wasters who are people of color, have modest incomes, or live in a rural area without access to recycling.

Follow along at @ZeroWasteRoadTrip on Facebook or Instagram or at wp.wwu.edu/zwroadtrip.

Hugo Sanchez Garcia
Senior in marketing, minors in entrepreneurship and innovation as well as education and social justice.

“Being where I am today, I feel like I hold a huge responsibility to make it that much easier for the folks coming in,” he says. “What would have made my transition better four years ago?”

**Valuing the Unpaid Labor of Students of Color**
Students of color volunteer hundreds of hours to organize Ethnic Student Center club events that celebrate the richness of culture and diversity of the campus community. But these events aren’t just fun food and entertainment, Sanchez says. They provide the kind of affirmation that can be rare on a predominately white campus.

And the students who need the events the most, Sanchez says, tend to be overextended with school, work and family obligations—even without planning cultural events that contribute to their own survival. Sanchez wants to see compensation for more students working to organize ESC club events, in wages, workstudy hours or even credit for internships or independent study.

Over-burdened students of color need help, Sanchez says, and the university needs to show it truly values their work.
**Maria José Palacios Figueroa**

**Beyond Language: Creating Opportunities for Heritage Speakers**
Palacios Figueroa wants more WWU students to bring their first-language Spanish skills and cultural knowledge to local schools that have lots of Spanish speakers. The young students would learn much more than new vocabulary words, she says. They’d get a chance to explore questions of language politics and cultural identity.

But she found that while Spanish-speaking students thought it was a great idea, they didn’t have time. “They’re the very ones that are already overburdened with trying to find support and create community at Western,” she says.

As Palacios Figueroa keeps exploring language and social justice, she hopes people will support the Changemaker Fellowship itself. “Students need a place to dream big and totally fail without dire consequences,” she says. “I want this to be a possibility for future students at WWU.”

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**Phil Swisher**
Senior in electrical engineering. Raised on energy efficiency as a family value.

**Conservation’s landlord-tenant problem**
It’s a split-incentive problem: Why should building owners upgrade the insulation or install more efficient appliances if renters are paying the monthly power bill? But if owners pay the utility bills, tenants can jack up the thermostat without paying for it.

Swisher estimates that 14 percent of U.S. greenhouse gases come from rented housing and commercial space. But he hasn’t found an answer—yet.

This fall, Swisher begins graduate school in sustainable energy engineering in Norway.

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**Victoria Matey Mendoza**

“‘There hasn’t been a single time I’ve presented that I haven’t reached someone on a deeper level,’” Matey says. “I can see it in their faces.”

**Human rights for undocumented immigrants**
Matey speaks about her own experiences as well as those of students she met as former president of the Blue Group, Western’s undocumented student club. She’s led campus workshops and was a 2018 TEDxWWU speaker. Matey challenges common narratives about undocumented immigrants that reduce human beings to “disposable economic variables,” she says.
Stephanie Arroyo

Outstanding Graduate in kinesiology. Minors in sport psychology and Spanish. Personal trainer.

Arroyo, who is contemplating a career in naturopathic medicine, wants to inspire more women of color to adopt healthy lifestyles and exercise habits. People in marginalized communities already face barriers to obtaining health care and information about preventing chronic illnesses, Arroyo says, and many face higher rates of chronic illness such as diabetes, hypertension and obesity.

Arroyo fell in love with basketball at age 7, but by 17 and already a knee surgery veteran, she knew she needed to give up the game. But for what? At Western, during her first visits to the Student Recreation Center, learning new activities by herself felt lonely and awkward.

After she became a certified personal trainer, she found that many women of color sought her out for help. She started thinking about how to create a welcoming, culturally relevant, active community for women of color.

A fitness program for womxn of color

Arroyo’s answer is Tumbao, a word drawn from Afro-Cuban music and other elements of black and Latino culture. “Tumbao” refers to the rhythm of a conga drum. It can also mean strong and empowered or an in-your-face self-love that Arroyo wants to bring to the group. In a welcoming atmosphere for womxn of color—“womxn” signaling her inclusion of all who identify as female—Arroyo wants her audience to discover a different kind of exercise each week, from swimming and lifting to dancing and hula hooping.

“I think a lot of why people are convinced they don’t like fitness is not because they don’t like exercising. That’s what our bodies are meant to do: We’re meant to move,” Arroyo says. “I honestly think it’s because you just haven’t found the right movement for you.”

Find more about the IDEA Changemaker Fellows, including video profiles and how you can help the program continue, at window.wwu.edu
Steven Simmons
A senior in Fairhaven College of Interdisciplinary Studies’ Upside Down Program. Minoring in law, diversity and justice. Helped build a re-entry program at Skagit Valley College for students who had been incarcerated.

Re-entry programs for formerly incarcerated students
Nationwide, about two-thirds of people who have been incarcerated go back to prison. Finding meaningful employment is the greatest single disruptor of the recidivism cycle, Simmons says, and community colleges are well-suited for those who want to rebuild their lives.

At Skagit, Simmons is helping to strengthen a student club and a sense of community for students who are building their lives after imprisonment.

After graduating, Simmons wants to pursue a joint law and social work degree to work to reform—or abolish—the prison system.
TJ Martin knows we can handle tough, emotionally complex stories

Documentary filmmaker TJ Martin is drawn to stories that ask big questions about race, gender and class inequality. His documentary "LA92" was recently honored by the Television Academy Honors, which recognizes work that inspires social change.
Documentary filmmaker TJ Martin, ’05, has a dozen projects cooking—some just glimmers of ideas and others backed by multi-million-dollar budgets—but they all have something in common.

A playlist.

Now that he’s won an Oscar and an Emmy, Martin says some of his friends think he must be living the glamorous Hollywood life. But between the premieres and the location shoots, Martin is still a guy who works every day to make a living along with a creative life.

As each idea starts to become real, Martin carefully selects songs to reflect the mood and tone he’s trying to evoke in his films. “It’s crucial to the creative process,” Martin says. “I’ll curate extensive playlists for whatever project I’m working on. I get in that headspace and listen to it over and over again.”

Martin’s current playlist-in-progress: Tina Turner. He and production partner Dan Lindsay are producing the first full-length feature documentary about the iconic singer.

In addition to music and other creative inspiration, Martin, who graduated with a Fairhaven interdisciplinary concentration and a major in American Cultural Studies, is constantly on the hunt for compelling stories to bring to the screen. His first big film with Lindsay was “Undefeated,” about an underdog high school football team, which won the 2012 Academy Award for feature-length documentaries.

Then last year, he and Lindsay directed “LA92,” a documentary treatment of the 1992 Los Angeles riots that won an Emmy award. Lindsay and Martin chose to tell the 25-year-old story through archival footage rather than people’s recollections in interviews.

“We were inviting people from different political leanings, different ideologies, to go through this emotional experience,” he says. “Hopefully, they’re going through the experience with a lens of empathy and emotion rather than, ‘Who’s right and who’s wrong.’”

Martin is drawn to projects that ask big questions about race, gender and class inequality—and he wants audiences to ask those questions, too.

“But people don’t want to acknowledge their own biases within those dynamics—to the point where people feel they have to guard themselves,” he says. “It’s about doing it with sophistication and not dumbing down to your audience, but allowing people to recognize these issues are complicated, and they deserve some sort of nuanced, deeper thinking.”

Martin himself grew up looking for nuanced reflections of his own story. The son of two musicians who sometimes lived paycheck to paycheck, his family wasn’t viewed by society as traditional or wholesome. And as a mixed race kid, he felt even more left out of what he saw on screen.

“I still have to force myself to be on my own journey and not figure out who I am as a result of what someone else thinks of me—what the media thinks of me,” he says. “It’s still hard for people to wrap their heads around the idea of embodying multiple identities, and multiple ways of thinking and being. I find myself being very attracted not just to good storytelling, but to the nuance and messiness of it all.”

Even some of Lindsay and Martin’s more commercial projects—their literal commercials—have their social imprint. Their 2014 “This is Wholesome” campaign for HoneyMaid profiled a series of families with parents who are gay, interracial, and, possibly not coincidentally, a dad who’s a rock musician—all depicted as traditional, loving families.

Their most recent commercials may be among their most widely seen work. Martin and Lindsay spent several weeks on the road for Comcast filming four Olympic athletes starting their journeys to the Winter Olympics in South Korea. Another commercial depicted people in Afton, Minnesota, crowding into a diner in the middle of the night to watch fellow resident and cross-country skier Jessie Diggins win an Olympic gold medal.

By telling the stories of athletes, musicians, people in the news and people on the margins, perhaps Martin is working his way back to telling the stories closer to his own life, the ones he longed to see when he was a kid.

But there’s one project he’s not yet ready to pitch, about another Tina. His mom, Tina Bell, grew up learning to sing in black churches, then had a career fronting Bam Bam, a punk-proto-grunge band in Seattle in the 1980s and ’90s. People still talk about the musicians who played with Bam Bam and went on to make it big—and about the power of Tina Bell’s voice.

Martin admits to being a little intimidated by the responsibility of telling a story so close to his heart. But when that playlist comes together, maybe he’ll know the time is right.
Megafire
Strategies for fighting a growing threat to the West
By John Thompson
Wildland firefighter Caitlin Chinn, '13, B.A., recreation, took this photo while working in the Colville Indian Reservation on her 13th day of working Eastern Washington fires in September 2015. “The days are long and can range from tedious, to exhausting, to downright fun,” she says. “You’re dirty, sweaty, wearing a heavy pack all day, incessantly moving up and down steep slopes. If you’re a sawyer then you’re packing a saw and cutting trees and brush and tossing it out of the fuel break to make way for the diggers to put in a handline behind you. That’s the bread and butter of firefighting: cutting and digging.”
It’s a whimsical riddle that couldn’t possibly have a real answer:

“What’s 150 feet tall, sounds like a freight train, leaps across the Columbia River, and creates its own weather patterns?”

But as Pacific Northwest residents know well, wildfires are becoming a bigger, more threatening part of our lives.

“The earth is getting hotter. With climate change come more droughts, earlier springs, and hotter, drier summers. Maybe not every year, but they will happen with more frequency. For the Pacific Northwest, any combination of those things is almost a guarantee of a long and intense fire season,” says Michael Medler, an associate professor of Environmental Studies at Western whose primary research area is pyrogeography—the geography of fire.

Residents of the Evergreen State need only look at three of the last four summers to see a trio of the deadliest, most active fire seasons in state history.

In 2014 the Carlton Complex fire roared through the Methow Valley and became the largest wildfire in Washington history at more than 256,000 acres; that ignominious title lasted less than a year.

In 2015, an extraordinarily hot, dry spring set the stage for more than 300 wildfires across the state before June was even over, and fires kept raging throughout the summer. The season culminated in August with the next newly crowned largest wildfire in state history, the Okanogan Complex fire—complexes consist of many different blazes—that claimed the lives of three wildland firefighters near Twisp and consumed more than 300,000 acres.

At the same time, the Chelan Complex fire just to the south burned 100,000 acres. As these two monster fires were tearing through the east slopes of the Cascades, the Pacific Northwest was so strapped for firefighters that President Obama sought help from Australia and New Zealand. Nationally the news wasn’t any better, with the fire season claiming, for the first time, more than 1 million acres in a single summer.

The 2017 fire season was kindled by record heat and dryness on both sides of the state but was perhaps best-known for “Smokezilla,” the smoke plume from the record number of fires in British Columbia that choked the Puget Sound. In Washington, Diamond Creek in Okanogan County was consumed by a “megafire,” a relatively new term for any blaze that tops 100,000 acres. And Skamania County’s Eagle Creek fire was ignited Sept. 2 when a massive blaze in Oregon jumped the Columbia River and kept burning until after-Thanksgiving rains.

“The numbers don’t lie,” says Medler. “Even the way we describe wildland fires has changed: We used to talk about them in acres, now we use square miles. A huge fire back in the ‘80s was 50,000 acres, now it takes 300,000 or more to move the needle.”

What has changed?

Wildland fires are not new and are a part of nature’s renewal process; they burn down unproductive grasslands and replace them with lush new growth. Lodgepole pines actually need fires—very hot fires—for their cones to open and spread their seeds to start a new generation of trees. Many types of trees are genetically prepared to resist fire: While they might lose branches and part of their outer layers of bark, they can bounce back after a fire and survive.

What has changed is the frequency, duration, and intensity of the fires, as our region’s recent fire history shows. The warmer climate is a part of it, Medler says—but playing just as big a role is how the nation responds to and prepares for fire seasons.

For example, federal wildfire policy is focused on suppression, scrambling the fire crews when fires reach a certain size. But spending our resources on extinguishing smaller blazes may actually put communities at greater risk of massive fires.

“And these fires, with the abundant fuels propelling them, can literally just explode; they grow and expand in ways typical fires do not.”

Periodic fires burn at a cooler temperature and scorch away the dead wood, underbrush and other fuels in the forests, Medler says. Such fires might typically kill only about 20 percent of the trees in the burn area.

“But when we race to extinguish fires, the fuel is never exhausted, and it just builds up to the point that when a big fire comes—maybe once every 50 years instead of once every five or 10—the fire burns with such heat that perhaps more like 80 percent of the trees are lost, a term called ‘complete canopy mortality,’” he says. “And these fires, with the abundant fuels propelling them, can literally just explode; they grow and expand in ways typical fires do not.”

And the federal government’s current efforts to “thin” the forests to reduce fuel buildup are not enough, Medler says.

“We’ve got 400 million acres in need of thinning right now—today. That’s roughly the size of Alaska, and to do that would take, no exaggeration, 10 million people, full-time. Not going to happen,” he says. “Right now the Forest Service is thinning about half a million acres a year with the funding and people it has on the ground; we’re not going to fix this with chainsaws. The only thing that will fix it is fire.”

Rather than focus on suppression, Medler instead suggests using some of those funds to hire more fire managers and fire mitigation specialists, and to checkerboard the forests near population centers with periodic prescribed burns to remove the fuels.
“We are not exactly what people picture when they think of the crisp firefighter in the red truck,” says Chinn, who first became a seasonal firefighter during her time at Western to pay her way through school. “We’re gross. Vulgar. Gritty. Opinionated. Ultra-athletic. Disgusting humor. However, the bonds are incredibly deep and last lifetimes. The community really takes care of their own. You just get to know people on such an extreme level when you spend 16 waking hours with them every day, 14 days at a time, five months a year, in remote places and stressful situations. Sometimes we know each other better than our own families or significant others.”

After several years with the hotshots, Chinn is now on a crew that rappels from helicopters into remote hotspots. Follow her on Instagram at @caitlinchinn

See window.wwu.edu for more photos and stories from Chinn.
What’s 150 feet tall, sounds like a freight train, leaps across the Columbia River, and creates its own weather patterns?”

MAKE YOUR HOME SAFER FROM FIRE

Former wildlands firefighter and WWU Associate Professor of Environmental Studies Michael Medler says that there are a number of key things we can all do to make our homes safer from fire:

- **Prepare the space around your home**: Remove as much potential fuel as possible, and make sure firefighters and fire trucks, if needed, could have access to all areas surrounding your home.
- **Plant fire-resistant landscaping** whenever you can, especially if you live in a drier climate such as Eastern Washington.
- **Clean your gutters!** Dried sticks and leaves from last winter’s storms are just kindling waiting for a drifting spark. Remember, a wildfire jumped the Columbia River last year – it’s not a stretch for an ember from your neighbor’s fire pit to land in your gutters.
- **Fireproof as you build**: If you are building a new home, consider “fireproofing” it by using insulated concrete and fire resistant roofing and siding for better protection.
- **Work with your neighbors**: Especially on the east side of the state, if your neighborhood is not a Washington Firewise community, begin the work to make that a goal.

More at www.dnr.wa.gov/firewise

buildup before they could be used to start a megafire.

It’s not lost on Medler, a former wildland firefighter himself, that wildland firefighters’ biggest single tool is to literally “fight fire with fire”—to back-burn areas so that the main fire advances into an area already deprived of fuel. Annual prescribed burning could also be used to create no-burn zones in communities and other critical areas.

“To do that, someone would have to make the call that taking money away from fighting fires and putting it into this fire management protocol at a large scale was wise, worthwhile, and politically feasible,” he says. “I don’t think the first two are a tough sell, but the third one sure would be, because wildland fires are just too far up in the consciousness of the public right now to take a dime from those funds, or use them to actually start fires instead of put them out.”

When a fires come to town

As a pyrogeographer, Medler focuses his research on areas where high fire hazards overlap with development; in states like California especially, the line between wildland firefighting and urban firefighting is becoming increasingly blurred.

These areas, called the wildland-urban interface, are often seen on newscasts as whole housing developments reduced to ash and rubble. When wildland-urban interface zones burn, firefighting strategy often takes a backseat to political reality.

“In the forest, you can easily understand sacrificing 200 acres of woods to save 5,000 more, but no crew can burn a fire line through 20 homes in a development in order to save 500 other homes. They just can’t do it,” he says.

Medler says that crews currently working on thinning projects would be put to better use clearing quarter-mile buffer zones around high-risk communities such as those in the eastern foothills of the Cascades.

“Cutting those zones would be a fraction of the work of
thinning those 400 million-plus acres, and the work would make these communities more resilient and better able to withstand the kinds of tragedies we see in California almost every summer,’ he says.

In the wake of the disastrous 2015 fire season, Medler was called to testify before a special meeting of the U.S. Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee led by Sens. Maria Cantwell of Washington and John Barasso of Wyoming.

He talked to them about suppression as a practice, about thinning, about buffer zones and fire mitigation strategies, and about the system known as “fire borrowing”—using next year’s mitigation and preparation funds to fight this year’s fires—and how the system was untenable.

Before he studied wildland fires, Medler battled them. He fought fires in Washington, Oregon and the infamous Yellowstone fires in 1988, where almost 800,000 acres burned. He was once “burned over,” his head down in a scratch-dug hole as he blacked out, only to wake as a member of his crew was dragging him feet-first to safety.

Medler described his work on the crew as an exhilarating combination of exhaustion, euphoria, and camaraderie. “When you are on a fire crew that has been dispatched to a fire, it is all you are going to be doing. You don’t make a lot of decisions. It is like the military,” he says. “You eat, sleep, and work within a few yards of everyone on your crew for weeks at a time. You learn to recognize each of them at a hundred yards in the dark just by their walk. You know who is going to say which joke before they say it. The result of months of this can be a little disconcerting when the season ends.”

The fires themselves also proved to be endlessly fascinating. “When you are anywhere near an active and moving wildfire it really holds your attention like few other things in nature. If it is big and making a run, you are out of the way, or doing everything you can to get out of the way. However, when you get a moment to watch and contemplate what you are seeing, it really is one of the most spectacular things you can see,” he says. “It breathes and moves a little too much like it is alive. It is really hard not to anthropomorphize its behavior. In fact, even on my crew we talked about ‘fire habitat’ as if fire was an organism, and that very notion still informs some of my research.”

At Western, not surprisingly, that research has been focused on wildfires and wildfire risk and response, so he knows wildland fires aren’t going away. “The only thing that can change is how we choose to plan for them, prepare at-risk communities, and react once the season begins,” he says.

“The good news is, there are things we can do individually and locally to make our homes and communities safer, and we can push for change on a state and federal level if we have the will to do so. But it may take another couple of fire seasons like 2015 before there is the political capital to look at the old system and truly understand it just doesn’t work anymore.”

John Thompson is the assistant director of Western’s Office of Communications and Marketing. As a lover of the region’s backcountry, his esteem for the work of the nation’s wildland firefighters cannot be overstated.
Ian Vincent, ‘14, is the Men’s Resiliency specialist in Western’s Counseling Center.

Photo by Rhys Logan (’11)
His own man

Ian Vincent thought strong men didn’t talk about their pain. The silence almost killed him.

By John Thompson

Ian Vincent admits he wasn’t a super-focused or driven student when he first came to Western in 2011.

In fact, it was just the opposite.

After stints at two community colleges and the Art Institute of Seattle, Vincent moved into Nash Hall with an idea to do some scholarship around comparative religions. But he really just planned to sort of wing it and see how things panned out.

At 21, he almost immediately became a kind of “big brother” to the younger men who lived on his floor, many of whom were away from home for the first time.

“Our floor got very close, very quickly, and remained that way. We all sort of latched onto each other,” he says.

Those first few months, even if Vincent still had not zeroed in on a field of study that wowed him, he had a core group of friends. He felt he was in the right place. Then, that spring, everything changed.

In April, as the first cherry blossoms were opening and campus was at last casting off the gray mantle of another long winter, one of his floor-mates took his own life, a tragedy that would prove to be just the first step down a long, dark road for Vincent.

How did he not know that his friend had gotten to this place? After all, he was the floor’s “big brother”—it was his job to know. What signs did he miss? What could he have done?

“I just kept asking myself these questions, over and over, but I had no answers,” Vincent says.

“I was just a wreck, we all were,” he says. “Nobody had an inkling that something like this was on his mind. Part of that was that we didn’t know what to look for; the other was that we probably wouldn’t have known what to say to him or to anyone else. For the most part, society doesn’t equip men to talk about things like that with other men—it’s a barrier most of us have real problems navigating.”

The following fall, Vincent came back to Western shaken but ready to try to move on. But that school year, he would suffer through the breakup of a longtime relationship, the natural deaths of three family members including his grandmother and grandfather, and in November, another friend took his own life, a former floor-mate from Nash who had left school the previous year.

Vincent was devastated.

“I kept thinking that I could just tough my way through it, but in reality, I was bottoming out. I was depressed. I was sure I had no future, and that was when I also began having suicidal ideation,” he says. “I felt rudderless.”

Finally, at absolute rock bottom after the death of his grandfather, Vincent reached out for help. After witnessing his grandfather’s death, Vincent was so on edge that he had panic attacks that triggered minor seizures and black-outs.

“I ended up talking with Brennan Gilbert, who was at the time coordinating Men’s Resiliency efforts at Western and is now an instructor in the Psychology Department, and I think he saved my life,” Vincent says. “He got me to see that I had spent all my energy trying to help other people, as a way of not needing to address my own needs and the fact that I needed help myself. And I finally sought out that help—professional help.”

One day he was driving back to Western and, like many people with depression and anxiety, he hadn’t been sleeping well. He dozed off at the wheel, and as the car’s tires left the road and rumbled onto the shoulder, Vincent awoke with a start.

“In that second or two I was asleep, I actually had been having a dream, and the only scene I can really remember was that...
Starting Over

Slowly, Vincent began to pull himself out of the hole that had been dug for him.

“Brennan told me that although my experiences were unique, someone might relate to them and find hope,” he says. “That was huge, because it gave me purpose again.”

He also began volunteering with suicide prevention efforts on campus. “I began to feel like not only was I getting better, but that I was gaining insight into what I wanted to do with my life,” Vincent says.

Vincent also had a meeting with former WWU vice president Eileen Coughlin.

“Eileen just sat me down, and looked at me and said that whatever it was going to take to get me through this, that she was going to support me – that Western was going to support me. I can’t tell you how important that was, because that’s all I think I really needed – to feel supported,” he says.

Around this time, Vincent was interviewed for a story in the student-produced Klipsun Magazine in which he shared his previous suicidal ideation.

“Sadly, I didn’t realize how soon the article would be out, and my parents saw it before I could tell them that my depression had become so advanced,” he says. “They were pretty freaked out.”

His family had, in fact, noticed signs of his depression, he says. They were very concerned and had tried to talk to him about it. “The problem was that I felt ashamed of my feelings, began to isolate myself, and acted out,” he says. “I think society has a misperception that when someone is struggling, they will simply step forward. For me, it was hard to admit when I was struggling because I didn’t want to burden others with my struggles.”

Vincent’s reticence to share his real feelings with the people he loved most illustrates why there’s a growing field of mental health devoted to men’s resilience. Cultural expectations that men be independent and self-reliant can actually undermine their mental health. Study after study shows that men of all ages and ethnicities are less likely than women to seek mental health services. Meanwhile, men die by suicide at more than 3 ½ times the rate of women.

Vincent began analyzing how he had communicated with other men—from his father to his friends to his floor-mates in Nash. He knew that if he had had healthier relationships that broke down these barriers of communication, he would have fared so much better through those incredibly tough times.

“Working in the mental health field has taught me that if we are observing signs of depression, we need to address those behaviors in a way that does not shame the person. Addressing the behavior, supporting the individual, validating their emotions, and referring them to professional services is a helpful way to support someone we are concerned about,” he says.

“We need to reach out and do better, which is a huge part of what I do now. And maybe the hardest lesson to learn through all that was that suicide is preventable, and I have a role in that,” he says.

The Helping Hand

Almost a year after graduating in 2014 with a bachelor’s degree in religion and culture, Vincent became the Men’s Resiliency specialist in Western’s Counseling Center. His role now is to connect students with each other, and with additional resources on campus when they need help.

Today, he gives presentations in residence halls where discussions often turn to depictions of men in films and other media—and how men of color are often portrayed as villainous, college-aged men are excessive partiers, trans men are rarely seen, overweight men are the comic relief, and characters that don’t fit the stereotypical male rarely play the lead. He loves watching young men become more confident in themselves as they reject the narrow definitions of ideal masculinity portrayed in media.

He also offers twice-monthly brownbag lunch discussions and works with student volunteers to help with Counseling Center events. And this year, Vincent brought to campus Keith Edwards, whose “Ending Rape” presentation illustrated how men can act to disrupt campus rape culture. “The typical student who comes into my office reminds me so much of myself five years ago. They have trouble forming authentic friendships, and I try to help them get past that,” he says.

“It’s interesting how many men use substances as the way of overcoming barriers and having authentic conversations,” he says. “We want to have dialogs like these that don’t require sub-
stances to get started.” The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that about 23 percent of adult men report binge drinking five times a month, averaging eight drinks per binge.

Vincent says he is aware that men’s typical inability to talk about the things that bother them, combined with societal norms surrounding sexuality and “what it means to be a man”—as if there’s only one way to be a man—often undermine the work he is trying to do to get Western’s young men to be authentic about how they feel.

As an example, Vincent often refers to the 2015 documentary, “The Mask You Live In,” about how abiding by society’s stereotypical, hyper-masculine expectations for young men—powerful, protective, strong, emotionally in control, heterosexual—can overwhelm them and lead them to the very place Vincent struggles to keep them from.

“Society has determined what being a man needs to look, act and sound like, and that prototypical male—or a young man striving to fit himself into that image—is often who I end up working with. Just like I was when I was a student, they think they need to be strong and ‘just deal with it,’ when the reality is that mindset is one of the biggest things holding them back from healing,” he says.

When Vincent talks about masculinity, he prefers the term “masculinities,” plural: “You have your own unique experiences and your own definition of masculinity,” he says. “We try to encourage students to recognize they are good enough in their own definition of their identity and encourage them to feel comfortable and confident in expressing their identity.”

**Authentic conversation by the water**

Vincent works hard to figure out ways to break down the walls young men tend to build around themselves. For example, he co-hosts with the WWU Fly Fishing Club a student retreat called “Casting for Care,” where over the course of a daylong outing, they create a space in which young men have the ability to express their thoughts openly and authentically, in an endeavor to better understand what it means to be a happier man.

“I had a student tell me that he shared more over the past five hours of the retreat than he had over the past five years with his roommates. That’s what we are trying to get to—the place where being open and honest is the norm, where real conversations about the things around us that affect us take place as a matter of course, because that’s what being healthy is all about,” he says.

And Vincent is not done growing, either. This fall, he’ll leave campus to take on his next challenge: getting his master’s degree in Social Work at the University of Denver.

“Every day I pass my old residence hall to get to my office. The community I formed in that building as an undergraduate, along with the support from staff, is what encouraged me to pursue a career in mental health,” he says. “I am excited to watch the Men’s Resiliency program continue to grow under a new specialist.”

But first he’ll continue a tradition he started as a college student at Western, spending his summers as a commercial fisher in Alaska’s Bristol Bay.

“Bristol Bay restores me. I need it,” he says. “But even there, with the guys on the boat, I’m trying out these conversations—pushing them to talk to me in ways that they aren’t necessarily used to. I guess it’s just who I am now,” he says.

“I just have to be myself,” he says. “Because getting here was a journey.”

**See Ian Vincent discuss men’s resilience at window.wwu.edu**

**John Thompson is the assistant director of the Office and Communications and Marketing at Western. As the father of an amazing teenage boy, he is grateful for the work that Ian and those like him do to break down the walls being built around today’s young men.**

*A version of this story previously ran in Western Today.*
Brandon Doak creates ephemeral art with the tips of dry-erase markers

At first, he let his art do all the talking.

For months, student **Brandon Doak** of Vancouver, Washington, simply signed “rebel-whiteboard” on his intricate, vibrant—and temporary—artwork on public white boards across campus: Scenes from Star Wars, portraits of comic book heroes and interpretations of Van Gough masterpieces.

Doak’s work is as ephemeral as it is colorful: All are rendered in a pointillist style with dry-erase markers. Each one takes him hours, dot by dot. Some celebrated his love for superhero stories, including a fiery portrait of Wonder Woman. Others are inspired by paintings of nature scenes. He recently dedicated a red and yellow fall foliage piece to Jose Diokno Ono, a popular and kind custodian in Mathes Hall where Doak lives.

These days, Doak’s dry-erase pointillism is much in demand. The Writing Center often commissions him to decorate their white boards. And of course, he’s spending time on other work—he just got word he was accepted into Western’s competitive design major.

He knows his art is meant to be temporary. When presenting the cover of this edition of Window magazine to University Communications and Marketing staffers, he said he had a fixative spray but he didn’t want to apply it without asking.

“I figured you’d want to repurpose the white board,” he explained to wide-eyed writers, photographers and designers.

Not yet.

Student Brandon Doak called this painting, left, “The Janitor” in honor of Jose Diokno Ono, a custodian who worked in Mathes Hall where Doak lived. Ono is “as supportive as he is kind,” Doak wrote on his Instagram feed. “His spirit glows like autumn leaves.”

“Midnight Waterfront,” top right, is a recreation of a painting, Doak says.

At right, a close-up detail of Doak’s Window magazine cover, and the flowers he left in the Writing Center in honor of Mothers Day.

See more of Doak’s art, captured in photos by fellow WWU student **Reece Budinich**, on Instagram at @rebel_whiteboardart.

And see a video of the artist in action at window.wwu.edu
John Bergen, PJ Ohashi, and Josiah Johnson

WWU Entrepreneurs of the Year aim to change the culture at EY

By Mary Doherty

What if you got to build a professional life with your childhood neighbor and the guy who worked next to you in the mall during college? Even better, imagine your two friends meet on their own, become friends, and the three of you go on to build a business that aims to disrupt the culture of one of the world’s financial giants.

That’s the story of Western alums and friends Josiah Johnson, ’99, history and economics, John Bergen, ’92, biology, and PJ Ohashi, ’97 B.A., economics. All were young entrepreneurs with long-standing relationships whose professional lives gravitated together until 2008 when they founded Society Consulting, a data analytics company that provided digital analytics and big data professional services to enterprise clients across the country.

That first year, their five-person staff grew to 40 in a boutique staffing firm known as The Job Mob, which ran on Society’s own combination of personality, hip culture, and expertise in harnessing data to provide a more personalized experience. They continued to thrive—even as the economy tanked—in part because of their reputation for integrity, for offering a less transactional employee experience, and for their strong relationships in the industry.
THE VIKING NETWORK

John Bergen

“I’m not a naturally gifted student; academia wasn’t something that came easily to me. Western is where I developed the awareness and rigor to apply discipline on top of work ethic, to get value out of the experience … and ultimately apply all the value to my career.”

- Bergen won the 3,000-mile bicycle Race Across America in the two-person division in 2017 with Derek Hill; he has also completed the race solo and numerous IRONMAN and UltraMAN triathlons.
- He’s a former speaker, with Johnson, for the College of Business and Economics in the Strategy Speaker Series. Two students they met during the workshops work with them at EY.

PJ Ohashi

“We didn’t have crazy budget (on the tennis team). We weren’t flying all over the country, we were bootstrapping it and driving our own cars down to PLU or over to Central to play these tennis matches. It was very raw, not glamorous, but it was so much fun being embedded with the team. The rapport you build with your colleagues and teammates — that sticks out the most.”

- Ohashi is the youngest of four siblings to attend Western.

Josiah Johnson

“My role with Society was on the business development side. It required a lot of navigating politics of relationships which was something I completely gleaned from Dr. Vernon Johnson’s class. He taught me about ‘contestation,’ understanding the importance of relationships, and making sure that you don’t burn bridges. I still talk to Dr. J a couple times a year.”

- Johnson grew up with Bergen as a neighbor and met Ohashi at Western
- He’s married to Chase O’Connor, ’99, who attended Ohashi’s tennis clinics in high school.
- His dad, Cleotis Johnson, ’80, B.A., history, helped start Western’s Black Unified Society, a forerunner of the Ethnic Student Center.

“The climate in 2008 was pretty brutal. It was really challenging to create a new services company in that timeframe,” Johnson says. “What really differentiated us was the relentless focus we brought to building the company that was really inclusive around our team and our people, and building a really special unique culture is really what fueled the business. It was the backbone of our success all the way through to the point where EY acquired us.”

After securing relationships with Microsoft, Expedia and other major tech companies, Society Consulting had over 200 employees in 2016 and was the nation’s largest independent digital analytics consulting company. They became well-known for helping clients aggregate, organize and visualize their data to find new markets, personalize customer experiences and generally adopt a big-data approach to their strategy and operations.

That’s when accounting and business management giant Ernst & Young came knocking. The culture the WWU alums had built was exactly what EY was looking for as it was spearheading its own new digital initiatives. Society Consulting is one of the largest of the 20 digital companies EY has acquired in the past three years.

“Every entrepreneur wants their baby to be acquired,” Bergen says, “but we wanted it to be acquired by a brand like EY.”

Now, Society is helping EY modernize its growing set of digital solutions and capabilities, and applying them to solve the challenges of tomorrow. And they’re still growing: EY Society is in the hunt for data engineers and other digital specialists who might not otherwise consider a career at a giant global accounting firm.

“How do you create a culture that’s going to attract a big data engineer, a real technical analyst or data analyst to choose EY over going to Amazon or Microsoft or somewhere else?” Bergen says. “It’s really been a work in progress to bring that culture and coolness factor to EY to attract those types of applicants.”
Gabriel S. Galanda
Human rights attorney
Distinguished Alumnus,
College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Few cases have brought the titans of sovereignty and individual rights head-to-head quite like the famous Nooksack tribal disenrollment case, but WWU alumnus and attorney Galanda, ’97, B.A., English, is up to the challenge of representing those whose tribal membership status is at risk.

“It’s a civil rights issue,” he says plainly, his voice choked with emotion.

For Galanda, this kind of struggle isn’t new. An enrolled member of the Round Valley Indian Tribes of California and a native of Port Angeles, Galanda grew up steeped in both the traditions and hardships of Indian country. He knew from the time he entered Western what he wanted to do: “I went to WWU and law school knowing I wanted to represent tribes and tribal communities—that was the focus I carried through law school.”

In 2010, Galanda started his own law firm. “I was working out of my home. I went to work in my sweats. I was seen as more accessible, and individuals began calling me regularly with civil rights, religious rights cases representing tribal members in whatever form of crisis or controversy they found themselves in.”

As an attorney, Galanda is often cited for his eloquence. “Studying English literature taught me how to think critically and write analytically. I hit my stride studying English in particular.”

Armed with a copy of James Baldwin’s “Native Son” under one arm and “Critical Theory and Practice” in the other, Galanda took off from Western for law school at the University of Arizona, where he received his law degree in 2000.

In his mission to serve underserved Native American populations, Galanda has also founded Huy, a nonprofit organization dedicated to rehabilitative opportunities for American Indian prisoners.
Andrew Dumont
Serial technologist, marketing rock star
Young Alumnus of the Year

Dumont, ’11, B.A., marketing, relishes the energy of startups, the passionate developers with new ideas, and the high-level problem-solving of small businesses. Dumont has built and supported companies like Moz, Seesmic (acquired by Hootsuite), Stride (acquired by ProsperWorks), Tatango, and Betaworks. He also served as the Chief Marketing Officer for Bitly. In 2014, he was selected for Forbes prestigious 30 under 30. His current venture is Curious Capital, a venture capital firm in Seattle that has invested in 11 startups this year. His dedication to Western is equally passionate, serving as a keynote speaker at Business Summit 2017, hosting a happy hour in Seattle for alumni, and guest lecturing in courses at WWU.

Catharine R. Stimpson
Scholar and author
Distinguished Alumna Campus School

Catharine “Dodie” Stimpson, a pioneer in the study of women and gender, founded Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society in 1974 and was the first director of the Women’s Center at Barnard College. From 1994 to 1997, she was the director of the MacArthur Foundation “Genius” Fellows Program. She has published eight books, more than 150 monographs, essays, and stories, and served as co-editor of the two-volume Library of America edition of the works of Gertrude Stein. She chaired the National Council for Research on Women, served as president of the Modern Language Association, and was a board member of PBS. She also chaired the Ms. Magazine Board of Scholars. She is Dean Emerita of the Graduate School of Arts and Science at New York University, where she is also a University Professor of English and teaches a course in “Law and Imagination” at NYU Abu Dhabi. And she cherishes her Campus School education; she still wears her t-shirt from the 2007 reunion.
Jeffrey Fisher  
Retail Store Experience Leader, BATA Brands SA  
Distinguished Alumnus, College of Fine and Performing Arts  
Fisher, ’89, B.S., visual communication, an industry leader in retail design, helps shape the retail store experience at BATA, one of the world’s largest shoe and clothing retailers and manufacturers. His resume lists several other globally recognizable brands, including LEGO, the NBA, Sprint, Sunglass Hut, and Universal Studios. Fisher was also responsible for the merchandising at the first NBA retail store, in New York City.

Coll Thrush  
Author and History Professor, University of British Columbia  
Distinguished Alumnus, Fairhaven College of Interdisciplinary Studies  
Thrush, ’93, B.A., Fairhaven interdisciplinary concentration, law & diversity, a history professor at University of British Columbia, writes books that explore corners of history, such as indigenous culture and downtown Seattle in “Native Seattle: Histories from the Crossing-Over Place.” His most recent “Indigenous London,” explores how indigenous visitors from the U.S., New Zealand, Canada, and Australia influenced the decision-making, culture, and popular discourse in London beginning in the 16th century.

Anne Blanchard  
Instructor, Health and Community Studies, WWU Everett Campus  
Distinguished Alumna, Woodring College of Education  
Blanchard, ’97, B.A., human services; ’99, M.Ed., adult education, is deeply committed to her students in human development, human services, holistic health, addiction and recovery, and other essential courses she teaches in Western’s Human Resources and Rehabilitation Counseling Program in Everett.

Christie True  
Director, King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks  
Distinguished Alumna, Huxley College of the Environment  
True, ’81, B.S., ecosystems analysis, oversees King County’s trail development, natural resource protection, and historic properties. Among her department’s recent accomplishments: King County Land Conservation Initiative protecting 65,000 acres, progress on a tree planting project that will plant 1 million trees by 2020, and a landmark fish, farm and flood agreement.

Ed Roddy  
Business Services Loan Officer, WECU  
Larry “Go Vikings” Taylor Alumni Service Award  
Not only is Roddy, ’84, B.A., business administration, a Western Athletics super-fan and season ticket-holder, Roddy’s advocacy secured the WECU Court sponsorship in Carver Gym, along with $250,000 in scholarships for Western athletes. He also serves as a mentor to student athletes and volunteers at every Graduation Celebration.
**Peter J. Hallson**  
**Former President, Diversey Water Technology**  
**Lifetime Achievement Award**

Hallson, ’58, B.A., biology, fell in love with the sciences at Western. In 35 years at Nalco Water, he worked his way up from sales to president of Diversey Water Technology, which was acquired by Nalco. Now retired, he is on the College of Science and Engineering’s External Advancement Group, advocating locally and in Olympia to support Western. An avid bicyclist, Hallson also leads group rides in his community, advocates for bike education in elementary schools, and conducts safety courses for cyclists.

**Raymond Merle “Bud” Burke**  
**Professor Emeritus of Geology, Humboldt State University**  
**Distinguished Alumnus, College of Science and Engineering**

Burke, ’68, BAE, geology; ’72, M.S., geology, was one of the first Master of Science students at Western and remains an active supporter of the WWU Geology Department. Though retired, he is a beloved former professor at Humboldt State, where he received the Outstanding Professor Award in 1998.

**Russ Wilson**  
**CFO, Legend Brands**  
**Distinguished Alumnus, College of Business and Economics**

Not only did Wilson, ’79, B.A., accounting, gather tremendous financial support for Western while he was at Moss Adams, he has also established and supported many funds for students and professors, and programmatic support for the accounting department.

**Kate Stevenson**  
**Family Outreach Manager, WWU New Student Services/Family Outreach,**  
**Campus Volunteer Award**

As one of the forces behind programs for new students and families, Stevenson, ’00, B.S., physical education, plays a crucial role WWU students’ success.

**City of Bellingham and Mayor Kelli Linville**  
**Community Volunteer Recognition Award**

Western is grateful for amazing support from Linville, ’74, B.A.; ’81, M.A., and the city, including funding for Paint B’ham Blue and WWU Alumni Weekend.
If you’re like me, you have a stash of rewards and membership cards from a slew of companies, from grocery stores and coffee shops to gym memberships and online retailers. Another day, another card. So why should you join another membership program to support Western?

Simply put, it’s not just about the benefits and discounts. Sure, it’s nice to save money on food, entertainment and travel, have access to Lakewood and the Student Recreation Center, but those are just bonuses.

For Western it is personal. Membership continues the relationship you started as a student; it says “I want to keep it going.” Membership is an easy way to raise your hand and say, “I still care about Western and want to do something to help.” That’s what more than 700 alumni did when they signed up during our March Membership Month.

Here’s what those memberships have done: This year, the WWU Alumni Association provided an all-time record $107,000 in scholarships to students through the WWU Alumni Scholarship fund. Those memberships make a powerful impact in the lives of the deserving student recipients.

Your membership challenges us, the WWU Alumni Association, to be active in our relationship with you: Whether it’s providing the opportunity to reconnect with former faculty, network with fellow alumni, come for a campus visit, or mentor a current student, the Association will help you make it happen.

I invite you to make it personal. Raise your hand and do something for Western through a WWU Alumni membership. That small gesture says a lot and says it loudly. Visit alumni.wwu.edu to learn more.

The Association and I look forward to serving you into the future.

Go Vikings!

Deborah DeWees
Executive Director, WWU Alumni Association

PS: If you signed up during March Membership Month, thank you! Post a picture of you with your Viking socks, mugs or WWU hammock. Use #WWUAAlumni and I’ll be sure to see it.
News

1961 – Marilyn Redmond, BAE, music education, hosts an online call-in radio talk show, “Love Never Fails,” on boldbravemedia.com

1965 – George Bowen, B.A., biology, is a retired U.S. park ranger who served in 10 national park areas and now lives in Hoodspor.

1974 – Steven W. Morrison, B.S., ecology, retired in 2013 from the Thurston Regional Planning Council after a career in local government. He’s now the president of the Puget Sound Chapter of the Association of Professional Genealogists and speaks to genealogical societies throughout the Northwest. In 2016 he received a Scholar Award from the American Society of Genealogists.

1975 – Kristina Bak, B.A., art, has published a new novel, “From Here to Argentina: A Tango Love Story,” about five people with deep secrets who meet in a tango class.

1977 – Carolyn Price, B.A., journalism, is the founder and publisher of OutdoorsNW, a free outdoor recreation magazine with more than 100,000 readers. This year marks the 30th year of publication for the family-owned magazine. John McIntyre, BAE, music education, is a songwriter and professor of music at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College in Indiana.

1979 – Martin J. Brown, B.A., sociology, who teaches English and coaches track in Long Island, New York, just published “Chuckanut Dreams,” a coming of age novel. Scarlett Kanistanaux, BAE, art – elementary, is an artist in Erie, Colorado, who sculpts portraits of nuns and monks of the Buddhist tradition. Her work has been honored at the Colorado Clay Show and the National Sculpture Society and is now represented at Piece Art Gallery in Vail, Colorado.

1983 – Tom Badger, B.S., geology, retired chief geologist for the Department of Transportation, recently gave a talk in Port Townsend about landslide hazards around the state of Washington. He also serves as a consultant on slope hazards and risk management. Paul Meehan, BAE, physical education, was recently named head men’s soccer coach at Gonzaga University.

1990 – Jordan Rubín, B.A., broadcast media studies, is the director of community engagement for Northwest Harvest, the largest hunger relief agency in the state of Washington.

1991 – Todd Sproul, B.A., business administration – finance, became vice president of system operations at Alaska Airlines. Monya Mandich, B.A., political science, is a global senior director at Expedia Media Solutions, overseeing Expedia’s integrated marketing and communications.

1992 – Jackson High School’s Jack in the Bot robotics team, advised by Maggie Thorleifson, M.Ed., school administration-instructional technology, recently placed second in the FIRST Robotics Competition in Houston, which drew more than 15,000 finalists from around the world. John Van Dyke, B.A., PE – exercise and sport science, became the athletic director for Oregon Institute of Technology.

1993 – Christina Castorena, M.Ed., student personnel administration, served as interim president at Edmonds Community College, where she is vice president of student services.

1994 – Bridget Gorman, B.A., sociology, is a sociology professor at Rice University in Houston and was recently named dean of undergraduates. Susan Ruth, B.A., English, is the voice behind “Hey Human,” the podcast is humanist in nature, Ruth says, and covers an unbiased view of people’s stories, histories, goals and belief systems. Mary Alida Brisk, B.A., Fairhaven interdisciplinary concentration, became the director of client services for the Virginia Mason Institute.

1995 – James Werle, BAE, general science-secondary, recently became executive director of the United States Unified Community Anchor Network program for Internet2 a nonprofit computer networking consortium. Andrew “Durandy” Golub, BA, sociology, has a massive Duran Duran memorabilia collection, some of which he’s displayed in public exhibits and on loan to the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. His second book, “The Music Between Us: Concert Ads of Duran Duran,” is available on Amazon and he’s working on a documentary.

1996 – Justin Neal, B.A., Fairhaven interdisciplinary concentration, is developing a television script, “Boundary Bay,” which he describes as “an epic drama that spans present-day Pacific Northwest back to Indigenous life there as it encountered colonial expansion in the 1800s.” Tedra Meyer, B.A., journalism, became the East Coast Bureau chief for the Wall Street Journal. Previously, she led a team of WSJ editors focused on breaking news.

1997 – Matt Kaeberlein, B.A., mathematics, B.S., biochemistry, is a pathologist at the University of Washington, where he studies aging at the molecular level to find ways to slow the process of aging, along with chronic disease and disability. Sam Cushman, M.S., environmental science, is director of the Center for Landscape Science at the Rocky Mountain Research Station of the U.S. Forest Service in Flagstaff, Arizona. He recently received the 2018 Distinguished Landscape Practitioner Award from the U.S. Chapter of the International Association for Landscape Ecology.

1998 – Bryan Champ, B.A., communication, recently became marketing research and analytics manager at the Atlanta Journal Constitution and AJC.com. Kris McDaniel, B.A., philosophy, is a philosophy professor at Syracuse University. This spring, he was a Pantinga Fellow at the Notre Dame Center for the Philosophy of Religion. Oxford University Press published his “The Fragmentation of Being” in 2017.

1999 – Jody Gehman’s psychological suspense thriller, “Watch Me,” was recently published by St. Martin’s Press. Gehman, M.A., English, has written 11 published novels and several plays and is a professor of communications at Mendocino College in Northern California. Amy Morgan, B.A., journalism – public relations, is senior engagement editor for National Public Radio. Jesse Salomon, B.A., Fairhaven interdisciplinary concentration, is a public defender in Seattle Municipal Court and was recently selected to be deputy mayor of Shoreline.

2000 – Sarah (Sanders) Harless, B.A., psychology, is an attorney in Wisconsin who was recently elected to be a judge in Eau Claire County. She was inspired to go to law school while volunteering as a WWU student at a domestic violence shelter in Bellingham.

2001 – Patricia Relay, B.A., art history, is the executive director of the Valdez Museum & Historical Archive. Kristin Ferrera, B.A., anthropology, was appointed by Gov. Inslee to the Chelan County Superior Court.


2003 – Cassandra Torstenson, B.S., environmental science, recently became the city administrator for Brainerd, Minnesota. Previously, she worked as a senior scientific policy adviser for North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum. Sita Symonette, B.S., student-faculty designed major, owns an acupuncture practice and recently became the chair of the board of directors for Planned Parenthood Columbia Willamette.

Julie Reiber, ’98, B.Mus, performance, is performing on Broadway as an understudy in five of the six leading roles in “Come from Away.” As a standby, she knows all five roles and can be notified in as little as 30 minutes that she’ll go on stage. Reiber has also performed on Broadway in “Wicked,” as Elphaba, and in “Newsies,” “Bklyn,” “All Shook Up,” and “On a Clear Day You Can See Forever.”
Ijeoma Oluo, ’07, B.A., political science, is known for her poignant, profound writing about racism, social justice, mental health and politics. Her first book, “So You Want to Talk About Race,” is a New York Times bestseller for people who want to explore the topics of race and privilege with people of different backgrounds.
teacher, counselor and administrator, on Feb. 7, 2018, in Bellingham.


1957 – Leon Chase Golden, 83, former director of Western’s Academy of Lifelong Learning and a retired teacher, coach and counselor in Sedro-Woolley, Forks and Lynden high schools, on Dec. 24, 2017.

1958 – Harold Odegaard, 84, retired teacher in the Nooksack Valley School District and manager of several Whatcom County senior centers, on Feb. 13, 2017.

1959 – Fred Emerson, 82, a retired educator, coach and member of the WWU Athletics Hall of Fame, on April 8, 2018. Dennis Johnson, 81, a retired teacher, coach and student activities coordinator in at Kent Meridan High School, on Jan. 4, 2018, in Buckley. Thomas Sawyer, 84, a retired teacher and track coach in Port Townsend and the Franklin Pierce School District who later spent 25 years in the water quality field, on Dec. 5, 2017.

1961 – John Riseland, 78, a retired school counselor and basketball coach in Edmonds and Bellingham who served as the scoreboard operator in WWU’s Carver Gymnasium for 35 years, on Feb. 1, 2018, in Bellingham.


1964 – Graham Carl Quick, 82, who once owned a furniture store and worked in real estate development, on Jan. 28, 2018.

2018 CLASS OF WESTERN'S ATHLETIC HALL OF FAME

Jason Stiles
‘96, B.A., communication
Football (quarterback)

A four-year starting quarterback for the Vikings, Stiles had a 30-9 record while directing the offense and finished as Western’s career leader in yards passing, with 7,854, and touchdown passes, 67. As a senior in 1995, he led WWU to its first undefeated regular season since 1938, the first No. 1 ranking in the final national poll, and the NAIA national playoffs.

Stiles is a regional sales manager for a medical device company and a color commentator for football and basketball on ROOT SPORTS Northwest.

Alison Richards
‘99, B.S., mathematics
‘01, M.S., mathematics
Softball (pitcher)

Three years after Richards joined Western’s softball team as a walk-on freshman in 1995, she pitched a complete-game victory for the Vikings in the NAIA national championship game. It was the first national title for any WWU team.

Richards is a technical project manager at the Naval Undersea Warfare Center in Keyport.

Joni Slagle
‘78, B.A., physical education
Women’s basketball (forward)

Coach Lynda Goodrich called her “one of the best all-around forwards in the country” during the 1976-77 season, the year Slagle averaged 20.1 points per game and 11.3 rebounds, leading the Vikings to the national championship tournament.

Now retired from BP, Slagle manages a cargo safety company.

Katja Trygg
‘06, B.S., PE: fitness and health
Women’s Golf

Trygg holds or shares WWU records in women’s golf for best season scoring average (75.4), lowest scoring round (69), tournament medalist performances (eight) and top finish at nationals (fifth).

Trygg lowered her scoring average by nearly 10 strokes during her four years at Western. “Over her time here, she matured into not only the best player WWU has ever had, but towards the end of her collegiate career one of the best players in the country,” said her coach Bo Stephan.

Trygg lives in Bend, Oregon.

Anne Cooper
‘86, B.A., psychology
Women’s Basketball (Center)

Cooper set WWU records for blocked shots in a game (nine), a season (114) and a career (332). “Anne had long arms and great timing,” remembers her coach, Lynda Goodrich. “But what amazed me was the number of assists Anne had per game. She could score, but she was also a very good passer. When the defense collapsed on Anne, she found an open player.”

Cooper is now a senior vice president and chief human resources officer for Sammons Financial Group in Des Moines, Iowa. She’s also a member of the WWU Foundation board.

1967 – Don Burgess, 85, one of Canada’s greatest rugby players and inventor of the Barge kicking tee, on Feb. 6, 2018.


1971 – Char Hunt, 68, who was very active in Thurston County Democratic politics, on Oct. 31, 2017.


1976 – Louis John Phillips, 62, who worked for King County for 20 years, on Oct. 9, 2016.


1982 – Morris Ray Pullig, 74, who owned a highway construction company then worked for Boeing, on Jan. 7, 2018.

1984 – Marilyn Diane Mihelich, 67, a former administrative counselor at Whatcom Community College, on Feb. 15, 2018, in Clear Lake. Carl Douglas Swanson, 60, a former personnel analyst for the city of Seattle and a former member of the WWU Alumni Association Board of Directors, in April 7, 2017.


1994 – Elizabeth Manke Dalton, 46, a former elementary school teacher and expert crafter and jewelry maker, on Feb. 16, 2018, in Oahu, Hawaii.


Faculty and Staff

Jeanne Armstrong, 71, a member of the Western Libraries faculty for 20 years, on Nov. 17, 2018, in Bellingham. Dr. Armstrong was also an accomplished editor, writer and researcher whose most recent work was in genocide theory.

Paul Chalmers “Chal” Beisenherz, 78, who taught science education for Western in Everett for 10 years, on Oct. 16, 2017, in Seattle. Previously, Dr. Beisenherz had taught at the University of New Orleans for 28 years.

Nita Clothier, 91, a 1951 graduate of Western and assistant professor emeritus of liberal studies, on Oct. 20, 2017. During her time at Western, she took many students to Greece to learn about its history, art and culture.

Kevin T. Dargan, 57, who worked as a custodian at WWU, had degrees in criminal justice and psychology from Northern Illinois University, and served as a youth soccer and wrestling coach, on April 2, 2018.

Peter J. Elich, 85, retired dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and former chair of the Psychology Department, on April 10, 2018. The Peter J. Elich Excellence in Teaching Award was named in his honor.

Jim Johnson, 75, a 35-year faculty member and former chair of Western’s Computer Science Department, on Feb. 14, 2018, in Bellingham. Dr. Johnson, who had been with the department since it began, published two books on computer science and consulted for the National Security Agency.

Gloria Anne McDonald, 80, a former administrative assistant at Western, on Feb. 1, 2018, in Ferndale.


Norval Lee “Pete” Pielstick, 91, a former faculty member in the Psychology Department, on Feb. 7, 2017, in Mesa, Arizona.

Joan C. Stevenson, 66, a faculty member of Western’s Anthropology Department since December 1979, on Dec. 4, 2017. Dr. Stevenson specialized in physical anthropology and was a prolific researcher in a wide variety of topics like Mennonite demography, the evolution and human biology of ADHD and statistical tools for sexing skulls.

Mark Wicholas, 77, former chair of the Chemistry Department, on Nov. 20, 2017, in Bellingham. During his time as chair, Dr. Wicholas brought more emphasis on engaging students in travel, research and professional development. The Wicholas Endowment helps remove financial barriers for chemistry students to engage in research or travel to conferences.

G. Valmont Thomas, ‘93, was a beloved, award-winning actor in the Pacific Northwest who completed the actors’ “hat trick” at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, playing Falstaff in “The Merry Wives of Windsor” as well as both parts of “Henry IV.” He passed away at age 58, on Dec. 18, 2017, in Ashland, Oregon.

In the Oregon Shakespeare Festival’s 2017 production of “Henry IV Part I,” Falstaff (Michael Gabriel Goodfriend) and Mistress Quickly (Michele Mais) are unconvinced by Sir John Falstaff’s (G. Valmont Thomas) account of his bravery during a robbery. Photo by Jenny Graham, OSF.
A Look Back

Students in this 1979 photo by Tore Ofteness, ’77, gathered in a television studio in Miller Hall to learn how to use what appears to be an Ikegami HL 70 series camera. The students may have been preparing for a studio production, or a location shoot with a portable VCR, says Robert Clark, manager of Western’s Digital Video Services.

Today, Western’s video production studio is the Digital Media Center in Haggard Hall, where Deran Browne works with students to produce a wide variety of projects. Some are completing a minor in film studies in the English Department, while others are working on assignments for classes that incorporate video production in journalism, communication studies, art, theatre and Fairhaven College of Interdisciplinary Studies. Students also work on projects for Digital Video Services and University Communications and Marketing.

WWU students who are learning their way around a camera for the first time have something in common with TJ Martin, ’05, who studied film production at Western—and has gone on to win an Oscar and an Emmy for his documentaries.
TO SEE ALL WWU ALUMNI EVENTS GO TO WWUALUMNI.COM

For disability accommodations please call (360) 650-6832. Western is an equal opportunity institution.
Breezy
After the Olympics, student Breezy Johnson is back on campus.

Photo by U.S. Ski & Snowboard