Tagging along with hungry orcas

WWU research associate and NOAA Fisheries affiliate Jennifer Tennessen is studying the hunting behaviors of endangered orcas of the Salish Sea.

Tennessen and her colleagues at NOAA Fisheries and Canada’s Department of Fisheries and Oceans use suction cups to stick sensors to the sides of whales such as this 21-year-old male known as L78, leaping from the water off the west side of San Juan Island. The sensor is on L78’s lower left flank.

The tags capture data on what the whales are doing up to 400 meters underwater, and whether noise from ships interferes with their search for food.

“Because a scarcity of salmon prey is one of the primary threats to population recovery, identifying how hunting occurs and the factors that may interfere with it are critical to determining how to protect and recover the population,” Tennessen told Penn State University, where she received her doctorate.

The ultimate goal, Tennessen says, is to provide scientific information that managers can use to help recover the whales.
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**On the cover:** Environmental sciences student Celida Moran and her mentor, Assistant Professor Marco Hatch, during a field sampling trip on the beach at Larrabee State Park in Bellingham. By Rhys Logan, ’11, visual journalism.
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What future will our children inherit in a shifting world order?

The last thing Uzma and I expected on our recent visit to Pakistan was air space closed to travel. The latest conflict between India and Pakistan triggered memories from our youth of the 1965 and 1971 wars between the two countries, memories of air strikes, blackouts, nights in trenches, displaced people and ultimately, the continuing impact those conflicts have had on communities.

While we were traveling throughout South Asia and the Middle East to promote Western Washington University and higher education opportunities in the U.S., the conflict also reminded us of the important role that universities play in increasing cultural competency, and the responsibility we have to create circumstances that allow individuals from all backgrounds, races and ethnicities to learn, live and work together.

As the population of the U.S. continues to increase, so does its diversity. The U.S. Census Bureau projects that by 2044, more than half of all Americans will be part of an ethnic minority group, and by 2060, nearly one in five of the nation’s total population will be foreign born.

Our personal and professional experience in the United States and abroad has convinced us of higher education’s potential for transformative impact. We have seen firsthand that its benefits are not just for individual students, but a fundamental public good that creates brighter futures for communities, states, nations, and indeed, the world. We believe that increased international access to higher education can dilute the alarming growth of nationalistic and tribal conflicts, and enlighten people beyond their borders and internet bubbles, too.

The road to healing many of the domestic and international disputes that divide us will require the creation of more opportunities for people to share experiences with those different from themselves, including people from other countries. These interactions are valuable whether one is traveling to another country or welcoming people from other countries into one’s community. Beyond being just a path to a good job, increasing access to high-quality higher education in the U.S. is a powerful tool for international peace and unity.

The future of our children is inextricably tied to the future of the rest of the world. We hope that our nation’s excellent colleges and universities—including Western, of course—can play an even greater role in promoting intercultural understanding, economic prosperity, and peace. At Western, we are committed to training the next generation of leaders by encouraging independent thinking, complex problem solving, cultivation of respect for all, and cultural competency that embraces and values diversity for the good of the world.

Sincerely,

Sabah Randhawa
President
Yenna's 1968 photo of Western cheerleaders and sailors. Hooper spotted two of the sailors wearing Antarctic Service Medals, indicating they were probably from an icebreaker stationed at Pier 91 in Seattle. Hooper served on an icebreaker in 1962, the U.S.S. Staten Island, which cruised up to Bellingham. “I still remember the trip in ’62 to Bellingham,” Hooper writes. “That was why I later chose Western to continue my education.”

Finally, Earl Hooper, ’90, spotted something familiar in ’71 grad Karen (Filer) Dunsdon’s 1968 photo of Western cheerleaders and sailors. Hooper spotted two of the sailors wearing Antarctic Service Medals, indicating they were probably from an icebreaker stationed at Pier 91 in Seattle. Hooper served on an icebreaker in 1962, the U.S.S. Staten Island, which cruised up to Bellingham. “I still remember the trip in ’62 to Bellingham,” Hooper writes. “That was why I later chose Western to continue my education.”

These memories and more objects from WWU alumni are being posted at window.wwu.edu. Or, find us on online at window.wwu.edu. You may also send a note to Window Magazine, Office of University Communications and Marketing, 516 High St., MS 9011, Bellingham, WA, 98225.

A cover illustration by Brandon Doak, a design student from Battle Ground, won a bronze award from the Council for Advancement and Support of Education Region VIII earlier this year, one of three awards to Window magazine.

Doak used dry-erase markers to recreate a nighttime photo of Old Main for the cover of the summer 2018 edition of Window. That board remains in Window magazine’s office—as if we could ever erase it.

Two stories by John Thompson also won silver awards for feature writing: “Alaska Stories” about WWU journalism alumna, novelist and Pulitzer-Prize finalist Eowyn Ivey, ’95, appeared in the fall 2017 edition, and “Megafire: Strategies for Fighting a Growing Threat to the West” was in the summer 2018 issue.

The Council for the Advancement and Support of Education, or CASE, region 8 includes colleges and universities from throughout the Pacific Northwestern U.S. as well as western Canada.
Three new buildings planned on campus

The Ridge is going to get a new look in the next few years as Western’s Highland Hall will be replaced by a new residence hall by 2021.

Design for the new building is under way. Amenities, designed with rooms offered with different price points and amenities to entice upper-division students to stay on campus, will include laundry and storage, lounges, common kitchens, kitchenettes in some units, and study areas.

The new residence hall will have about 400 beds, a net gain of 264 beds after accounting for the loss of beds at Highland Hall. The $65 million project will be funded with a combination of revenue bond proceeds and current cash in the University Residence system.

Plans are also underway for two more campus buildings, including a 50,000 square-foot Interdisciplinary Science Building just south of Biology and connected with a sky bridge. The $66.5 million, state funded project is expected to be complete by fall 2021.

And a Consolidated Academic Support Services Facility will be located just south of main campus to accommodate nonacademic staff, leaving more space on campus for academic functions. Pending legislative approval, the facility will be financed through a state-issued Certificate of Participation sale.

The new residence hall in the Ridgeway Complex, top, will replace the 60-year-old Highland Hall. The Interdisciplinary Science Building, bottom, will provide much-needed class and lab space for biology, chemistry and other STEM degree programs.
$1 million NSF grant to support low-income students in WWU engineering

Western’s Engineering and Design Department has received a five-year, $1 million grant from the National Science Foundation to help low-income students in their pursuit of a bachelor’s degree in one of Western’s three engineering programs.

Funded by the NSF’s Scholarships in STEM program, Becoming Engaged Engineering Scholars, BEES, aims to address challenges in recruiting and retaining academically talented, low-income students from diverse backgrounds in engineering.

The BEES program, coordinated by WWU Engineering faculty members Andy Klein and Sura Al-Qudah, will provide scholarships of up to $10,000 a year to about 48 students over the life of the five-year program.

Cohorts of 12 students per year will enter the NSF-funded program, and while their first two years are spent receiving monetary, academic, and social support from the department, their second two years flip the script and have them acting as peer support for the newest, incoming student cohorts.

“We want as diverse a group of students as possible,” says Al-Qudah. “We are working to make it clearer that our doors are open to students from different groups and backgrounds, because we know what diversity of thought and experience brings to a campus, and how important that is.”

After a life well lived, a couple creates new scholarships for teachers

John and Mary Polikowsky spent long, happy careers teaching art and English. Now, more WWU students who dream of a life as a teacher will get their chance, too.

The Polikowskys decided to bequeath their estate to Western for a scholarship for prospective English and art teachers. While neither graduated from Western, Mary was an assistant professor of English at Western from 1987 to 1994 and was well known for training and mentoring future English teachers.

Both Polikowskys built a rewarding life around their teaching careers. John, a World War II veteran who spent some of his time in the Army as a ski instructor in Europe, earned an MFA in ceramics with the GI Bill and later taught art at Ingraham High School for 20 years. The Polikowskys met at Ingraham, where Mary was a language arts and social studies teacher with a doctorate in English literature. They married in 1993.

In retirement, they shared their love of books and travel, sailing the 44-foot sailboat John had built out of an empty hull. While Mary passed away in 2016, the book club she created more than 20 years ago lives on. John, 95, lives in Edmonds.
Port Orchard estuary restoration gets help from WWU students and faculty

A professor and two students from Western's Huxley College on the Peninsulas are doing environmental monitoring work for the restoration of Port Orchard's Harper's Creek estuary.

Assistant Professor of Environmental Sciences Jenise Bauman and students Tera Dummitt and Caitlin Sidhu are monitoring water quality, looking for invasive species and sampling for the presence of salmonids and other wildlife at the estuary, the site of an $8 million restoration effort led by Kitsap County and the state Department of Ecology.

The site of a former brick factory, the estuary has important value for fish and wildlife, not to mention the local residents who use it recreationally and as a boat launch. The group will compare the restored areas to the rest of the estuary, and see how they compare to other natural and restored estuaries around the state, Bauman says.

The project illustrates the need to restore estuaries and riparian zones that are so important to salmon and other species, says Sidhu, who lives in Port Orchard.

“It also allows me to give back to the community,” she says.

Reimagining Ferndale

Western's urban planning students have Ferndale on their minds these days.

Residents and officials in the northern Whatcom County town of Ferndale know their community is expected to grow, and they want that growth to energize their downtown. It's a perfect challenge for the Urban Transitions Studio, the applied research lab of Western's urban planning and sustainable development major, where students are immersed in the question all year under the direction of Professors Nick Zaferatos and Tammi Laninga.

“For years, Ferndale residents have been calling downtown Bellingham their downtown,” says Zoe Watson, an urban planning student from Puyallup. “They want to create an image and character for Ferndale through the revitalization of their own downtown.”

All year the students have been analyzing data, meeting with community members, and presenting suggestions. “We had to find ways to be creative, inventive and imaginative while also remaining practical, ethical and rational,” says urban planning student Allison Tompkins of Sultan.

Students created three plan alternatives and about a dozen studies of parks and trails, affordable housing, urban design guidelines and infrastructure improvements. Their work will wrap up this spring, which the students hope will help Ferndale imagine its own future—while marking the beginning of the students’ own professional careers.

Students met with residents of Ferndale to gather input on proposals to revitalize the community’s downtown.
Studying Climate Change on the Roof of the World

John All, director of Western’s Mountain Environments Research Institute, is leading an international team of students and researchers on an expedition to Mount Everest and its neighboring peak, Lhotse, this spring to research the impact of global climate change on the Himalayas.

The group headed to Nepal in late March and includes a pair of WWU graduate students, Colin Schmidt and Morgan Scott, ’16, B.A., Environmental Studies, and Biology Professor Eric DeChaine, as well as other researchers: Sébastien Lavergne from the Laboratoire d’Ecologie Alpine at the Université Grenoble Alpes, France, Chris Dunn, a graduate student from the University of Colorado, and Kamal Humagain, assistant professor at the State University of New York at Potsdam. After collecting data in the surrounding valleys, they pushed higher on the mountain slopes of Everest and Lhotse to increase their altitude tolerance with the goal of summiting the peaks at the end of May.

The expedition is covered online by Outside magazine and will be part of World Clean Up Day, to promote litter reduction around the world.

All and the researchers will be looking into how black carbon deposition—essentially soot and particulate air pollution generally referred to as Light Absorbing Particles, or LAPS—increase the rates at which the Himalaya’s snow and glaciers are melting. LAPs absorb solar radiation, which is converted to heat energy that is conducted into the surrounding snow and ice, leading to melting.

The expedition will also be looking to see how deforestation and the loss of shrub cover in Nepal’s Sagarmatha National Park is impacting the region. Schmidt’s research is focused on soil erosion modeling, while Scott will be looking at how climate change and tourism affect the community development of local Sherpa communities.

Follow along on the expedition at www.climberscience.org/blog
Alumni Reunion Weekend features homecoming for Death Cab for Cutie, ODESZA

It all started with a few musicians deciding to return to the town where they got their start and perform together for the first time.

Death Cab for Cutie and ODESZA will perform at Bellingham’s Civic Field Saturday, May 18, in a sold-out show for about 11,500 fans during WWU Alumni Weekend. The show is also a benefit for the Western Washington University Alumni Association Scholarship Endowment.

The show, Double Major, is a homecoming for both bands. Death Cab’s lead vocalist Ben Gibbard, ’98, B.S., studied environmental science at Western and bass guitarist Nick Harmer, ’98, B.A., got his degree in English. Meanwhile ODESZA’s Harrison Mills, ’12, B.A., design, and Clayton Knight, ’12, B.S., physics, started collaborating their senior year at Western.

“Bellingham and WWU is where it all began,” Harmer says. “And as we have continued on, it’s been amazing to see and hear so much music continue to flow out of Bellingham, too. So when we met ODESZA our bond of being ‘from Bellingham’ was an instant connection.”

Alumni Weekend May 17-19 also features some big WWU reunions and other events, including the 50th year of the AS Outdoor Center and the 45th anniversary of KUGS radio. Other reunions and gatherings include Biology, Management Information Systems, Academic Technology and User Services, Behavioral Neuroscience, Health and Human Development and Modern & Classical Languages. Athletics will also host gatherings for men’s golf, men’s soccer, rowing and volleyball.

Learn more at alumni.wwu.edu/wwualumniweekend.
Composting comes to WWU residence halls

Western is among the first universities in the nation to provide composting bins to students living in residence halls.

Last fall, residents received small bins and biodegradable bags in which they could deposit their apple cores, paper napkins, pizza boxes, coffee grounds, ramen noodles, and other compostables of college living.

Students in the Sustainability Representatives program worked with University Residences to launch the program last fall and student educators continue to work with their peers on many waste reduction topics, including where to empty their compost at FoodPlus! toters near residence halls.

“For many of these students, it is their first exposure to composting,” says peer educator Hope Peterson, Zero Waste coordinator and an environmental policy major from Everett. “Residence hall composting is an excellent opportunity to teach young adults sustainable living habits they can continue throughout their lives.”

– Story and photo by John Olson, ’20

Student borrowing is going down for WWU grads

The percentage of WWU undergraduates who borrow to pay for college has declined for three years in a row – and the average amount they’re borrowing has been cut nearly in half.

About 44 percent of 2017-18 graduates had borrowed an average of $11,907. By comparison, more than 55 percent of ’14–’15 Western grads borrowed an average of $22,357.

This makes Western an exception to the national trend—average student loan debt upon graduation rose to $29,800 for ’17-18 graduates nationwide, about 2.5 times the average debt for Western grads that same year.

Clara Capron, Western’s director of Financial Aid, says several factors are at play: Both the Washington State Need Grant and the federal Pell Grant have gone up, a rising minimum wage means students are earning more, and many families are able to contribute more, according to their expected contributions determined by their FAFSA forms.

WWU financial aid counselors often reach out to students who are accumulating very high debt loads and award a Viking Assistance Grant in order to reduce the need to borrow, Capron says. Western spends about $700,000 annually on Viking Assistance Grants.

Western has also created its own Work Study program, in addition to federal and state programs, to help high-borrowing students reduce their loans. WWU students earn about $600,000 per year through the Institutional Work Study program.
Ella Higginson's work is rooted in place—this place. As Washington state’s first poet laureate Higginson wrote about the Pacific Northwest in a time when it wasn’t very well known. “She was the person who described the Pacific Northwest to the world,” says Laura Laffrado, professor at Western Washington University’s English Department. Laffrado has spoken in numerous venues about Higginson’s work and is always met with enthusiasm. It’s as if, Laffrado says, they’re hungry to read about their own place.

Higginson, globally famous at the height of her career, was among the first settlers of European descent to the Bellingham area, moving to Whatcom County in 1888. She wrote prolifically during the late 19th century and early 20th century, producing hundreds of short stories, poems, and newspaper articles, in addition to a novel, screenplay and a travel book.

Her work still feels relevant to mod-
ern discussion and policy, such as in the tension between wilderness conservation and the housing crisis. Higginson depicted Nature with a capital N, before it had been suppressed or destroyed by and for those of European descent: vast mountains, wild waters and extensive forests, where trees grew so large and so closely not even a squirrel could squeeze between their massive trunks.

Higginson continues to inspire students because she set this region in print, Laffrado says, which is why Laffrado teaches Higginson’s work not only to English majors but also to others in her 200-level American literature General University Requirement courses. Often students who learn about Ella Higginson become inspired by the injustice of Higginson’s work being forgotten—and sometimes they’re even inspired to create their own works based on Higginson’s.

Talking to Crows, a Bellingham collective of multimedia artists and filmmakers, has adapted Higginson’s long-lost screenplay, “Just Like the Men,” for a modern audience. Laffrado found the screenplay among Higginson’s papers at the Center for Pacific Northwest Studies, as Higginson had shelved it after finding it a difficult sell, most likely due to the fact that its political commentary was not commercial enough. Higginson’s original screenplay, a silent film based on Frances Axtell’s campaign for Washington state senate, drew on Higginson’s experience as Axtell’s campaign manager. Axtell was one of the first women to hold office in the state of Washington.

Filmmakers Stacy Reynolds and Cassidy Brooks filmed the adaptation last summer and hope to send the film to the festival circuit later this year.

Just as Higginson’s work inspires its readers, Laffrado’s work also taps into a larger movement.

“Recovering Higginson,” Laffrado says, “also becomes part of a process of bringing forgotten writers back to prominence—in particular women and people of color.”

The first time Laura Laffrado talked about Ella Higginson was at the Whatcom Museum. When someone asked her, “What next?” Laffrado replied, “A bust would be nice.” The next time she mentioned it audience members dug into purses to donate—to a fund Laffrado wouldn’t establish until November 2017.

A year later, a bronze bust of Ella Higginson was installed in the entrance to Wilson Library opposite the portrait of Higginson’s friend and Western’s first librarian, Mabel Zoe Wilson. Thanks to a generous grant from a philanthropic organization run by Higginson’s descendants, donations from community members and matching funds from Western, the fundraising campaign also provided for three plaques. The first plaque, beside Mabel Wilson’s portrait, contains Wilson’s bio. The second explains the origin of the quote above Edens Hall, “Here is the home of color and light,” from a Higginson sonnet about Western. The third marks the location of Higginson’s home in what is now between the Viking Union and Mathes Hall.

The plaques give Higginson a much more permanent presence on Western’s campus, Laffrado says. “Instead of people having to come to talk to me, you can walk around campus and actually see installed bronze information about Ella Higginson. It adds to the historical nature of the campus in what I think is a really valuable way.”

When asked that question, yet again, “What next?” Laffrado says she has an extensive list of what she wants to accomplish in order to recover Higginson’s literary reputation but at the top of that list: a biography. She says, “That is usually the landmark that signals an author has arrived.”

It’s clear that Ella Higginson isn’t just arriving after a long sojourn among those history temporarily forgot. With the bust and the plaques, with her name being pinned back on American literature’s map, she’s coming home.

Jemma Everyhope-Roser is a writer and editor whose work has been seen in Window, Glimpse, and multiple fiction venues.
“We should teach young people to look for more than consent—they should look for enthusiasm, an emotion hard to mistake for anything else in any circumstance.”
Consent is not enough

Alumna novelist Amy Hatvany points out where ‘yes is yes’ falls short in the conversation about consent and sex.

By Amy Hatvany, ’94

Content warning: Includes a description of sexual violence

As a novelist, I take seriously the responsibility of showing the “truth inside the lie,” as Stephen King once put it. When I decided to write my 2017 novel, “It Happens All the Time,” I drew from my own emotional experiences of being a survivor of sexual assault, but also chose to include the perpetrator’s point of view, with the specific intent of depicting how a seemingly “good” man crosses the line and commits an unthinkable act. I took this approach not to excuse a rapist’s behavior, but rather to spark a conversation about why, as a society, we focus on educating our girls to protect themselves from getting raped, but rarely do enough to teach our boys how to ask for and identify consent.

Many people, it turns out, weren’t ready for this conversation. When I asked parents on social media whether they had spoken to their sons about the intricate nature of sexual consent, much of the conversation turned to the topic of protecting boys. “Boys get raped, too!” the chorus called out. (This is true, of course. But women are sexually assaulted at a much higher rate than men: 90 percent of all adult rape victims are female).

Initially, it seemed the outcry was an all-too-common, knee-jerk response to shift the conversation away from holding men responsible for their errant behavior. But I soon realized that this fervent reaction was rooted in a much deeper problem: our general inability to find the proper context in which to have a balanced discussion about sexual assault. I started wondering if educating our young people about consent as an antidote to sexual violence is enough.

The trouble with relying only upon consent to determine if a person wants to have sex with you is that it doesn’t address the silent, highly complex circumstances that often contribute to the misunderstanding or miscommunication of whether or not a person legitimately wants to proceed with sexual activity. “No means no” and “Yes means yes” are inadequate slogans. What if a person says yes, at first, but then changes their mind and communicates the “no” they feel by becoming unresponsive? What if the person they are with doesn’t notice this, or even worse, doesn’t care? What if a young person submits because he or she has been threatened with physical violence, or has suffered sexual abuse in the past where consenting to an attacker’s demands was the only way to survive? Consent given by a person merely submitting to sexual interaction is not consent.

I’m not saying that we should stop teaching the importance of getting consent from a potential sexual partner. I’m saying we need to challenge the notion that girls are always responsible for giving consent and boys are always demanding sex. We should hold all young people responsible in the decision-making process and teach them to look for more than consent—they should look for enthusiasm, an emotion hard to mistake for anything else in any circumstance.

The difference between enthusiasm and mere submission can be taught long before our children are ready to learn about the mechanics of sex. We can help them understand that a rough game of dodgeball is only a game if everyone is enjoying it, and ceases being fun if someone is being singled-out, teased or hurt. We can teach our children how to not bully others into doing things they don’t want to do, and how to recognize and interpret non-verbal communication.

I had to do this with my own son, who, around age 6, developed a habit of unexpectedly invading others’ personal space. He would stand too close for too long, and tenderly stroke peoples’
arms or faces without permission. We were a loving, expressive family, and he was a sweet, sensitive boy, so it wasn’t the showing of affection that concerned us. It was the slightly aggressive insistence of his behavior that made us uncomfortable, and we worried if left unchecked, this tendency would grow into a feeling of entitlement to others’ physical affection. We had to explain to him time and again that showing love through touch was a wonderful thing, but it was important to ask for a person’s permission, first.

We worked with him to pay attention to things like facial expressions as tools that would help him decide whether it was a good time to initiate affection. We talked about how when a person stiffens up when he hugged them, it meant they didn’t want to be touched and that he should let them go, immediately. We taught him it was possible for a person to say they wanted a hug, or even initiate one themselves, but then change their mind in the middle of it. It wasn’t until years later, when he was 14 and we had a frank discussion about consent that I realized in teaching him about how platonic relationships work—respecting others’ boundaries and feelings, expressing physical affection only with permission, reading subtle body language cues—we’d already laid the internal groundwork for him to understand the more complicated dynamics of sexually charged situations.

Without having specifically set out to do so, we taught him the basic tenets of emotional intelligence—loosely defined as the ability to recognize emotions and their impact, in yourself and others. Having empathy, being aware of another person’s emotional state, (which can be communicated in a hundred different ways other than verbally), is the element missing from the transactional, cut-and-dry idea of obtaining consent. It’s what’s missing from every situation where a young man who would never consider himself a rapist ignores his victim’s tense muscles and hot, salty tears as he climbs on top of her and takes what he wants from her body. It’s what was missing the night a boy I knew and trusted grabbed me by the back of the neck and sent me home an hour later barely able to swallow.

We can’t wait until our children are old enough to understand the complexities of human sexuality to teach them about consent as a way to prevent sexual assault. By then, the 6-year-old who disregards another child’s feelings by bullying them into playing a rough-and-tumble game has become the teenager who threatens, manipulates, and cajoles his dates into submitting to sex against their will.

Imagine, instead, a world where teaching a child how to have empathy is as important a part of a school’s curriculum as learning to read. Imagine that interpreting and respecting body language and other emotional cues comes as naturally to us all as taking a breath. Taking steps toward living in a world like this might not completely eradicate the occurrence of sexual assault, but it’s a start. We need to do a better job of addressing the root causes of this epidemic our country faces, and focus on the kind of early education and intervention that will actually make a difference in the long run. Until we do, more men will become rapists, and more women will continue saying, “Me, too.”

Amy Hatvany’s ’94 B.A. in sociology informs much of her writing as she tackles timely and controversial issues in her many novels, which include “It Happens All the Time” and “Outside the Lines” (a Target book club pick and a Costco Pennie’s Pick). Amy lives in the Seattle area with her family.
STARTING THE CONVERSATION

While sexual health programs in college have traditionally focused on STD and pregnancy prevention, the emphasis on consent is relatively new.

By Tom Kertscher
When WWU health educator Tracy Dahlstedt-Rienstra talks to Western students about the importance of consent in sexual activity, she’ll often refer to a go-to college staple: pizza.

“When you’re going to share a pizza with someone for the first time, the first thing you do is talk about it—what you like, what they want—and you figure out what kind of pizza you can share that you’re both going to enjoy,” says Dahlstedt-Rienstra, who oversees Western’s Peer Sexual Health Educators, students trained to provide programs on a variety of sexual health topics.

While sexual health programs in college have traditionally focused on STD and pregnancy prevention, the emphasis on consent is relatively new and reflects more recent developments in the national discussion about sexual assault, says Dahlstedt-Rienstra, ‘98, B.S., community health.

“Some of our societal notions of certain people being entitled to take what they want from other people, particularly when it comes to sex—I think that those ideas are being challenged much more openly,” she says.

Western’s Peer Sexual Health Educators aim to provide the information that students need to “experience their sexuality and sexual relationships in ways that are empowered, healthy, positive and pleasurable.” In addition to the safe-sex workshop “Cookies and Condoms,” the “Hot and Ready” presentation refers to pizza as it explores sexual attraction and desire, personal boundaries, and tips for navigating issues of consent and pleasure with intimate partners.

While students may be initially motivated to attend for the free pizza, the programs have consistently been well-attended and well-received, says Dahlstedt-Rienstra. Students comment on how much they appreciate learning specific ways to communicate about consent with a partner, and especially the frank discussion about the role that alcohol can play in making that communication more complicated.

“It’s important to acknowledge that sex happens when people have been drinking, and to provide some guidance on how to make sure it’s consensual and safe,” Dahlstedt-Rienstra says.

Peer health educators also emphasize that sex with someone who is incapacitated by alcohol or other drugs is rape, and that using alcohol or drugs to make someone more vulnerable and exploit them is unethical and unacceptable.

“People have a right to autonomy over their own bodies and choices,” says Emily Ehlers, a sophomore from Portland and one of 11 trained student volunteers in the program. “One doesn’t have to feel pressurized into any sexual activity and that should never be a part of sexual activity.

“And consent is an ongoing process,” Ehlers adds.

“Saying yes to one thing doesn’t mean you’re saying yes to a bunch of other things, or saying yes one time doesn’t mean there’s a yes for another time.”

Ehlers, a double-major in secondary education and women, gender and sexuality studies, says more teaching about consent must be done both at the college level and much earlier—even in preschool.

“You can teach kids to know that their bodies are theirs—how to ask for a hug or for a high-five (instead)—and to understand other people’s personal boundaries,” Ehlers says.

Young children receive a lot of mixed messages when it comes to consent and are often pressured to let adults hug and kiss, says Dahlstedt-Rienstra.

“And children get messages over and over that it is more important to be polite and not make an adult feel embarrassed, than it is to be able to declare a boundary and expect for that to be respected,” she says. “Parents and families play a huge role in how kids learn about consent, and we need to get more intentional about what we’re really teaching.”

Milwaukee journalist Tom Kertscher was a 35-year newspaper reporter, finishing that career at the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. Now a freelance writer, his work includes fact-checking for PolitiFact and sports reporting for the Associated Press.
These tips on teaching kids about consent are from various sources and recommended by Tracy Dahnledt-Rienstra, a health educator who oversees Western’s Peer Sexual Health Educators.

- Ask for your child’s permission to touch them or come into their personal space.
- Teach them that their “no” matters — if you ask to hug your child and your child says no, don’t force it or make them feel bad for saying no.
- Teach kids to ask “Is it okay if I…?” before touching another person, and to respect the answer they get.
- Teach them that consent can be removed at any point during any interaction.
- Teach that assault is sexual touching or other sexual activity without consent is assault, and is never OK.
- Teach them that everyone deserves to be safe and respected in their relationships.
GBTQ+ Director L.K. Langley is an educator, change agent and community builder. As Langley describes it, they “engage the Western community with transformational knowledge, resources, advocacy, and celebration.”

It’s a big job so it’s a good thing they’re not alone: “I lead these efforts in community with tremendous students, staff and faculty across the university,” says Langley, who became the director when LGBTQ+ Western was established in August 2018.

A lawyer by training with a reputation as a gracious, encouraging and powerful leader, Langley worked for six years in Western’s Equal Opportunity Office. They also have experience as an attorney and civil rights advocate in Massachusetts.

How can LGBTQ+ Western make a difference for LGBTQ+ students?

The ways this role can improve the experience of LGBTQ+ students are multidimensional. From talking with faculty about shifting pedagogical practices and incorporating diverse queer and transgender perspectives throughout the curriculum, to connecting students with affirming wellness resources or helping them navigate housing, to simply sitting with a student who is beginning to explore their gender identity or sexual orientation and saying explicitly that they are important and valued exactly as they are, I am privileged to have opportunities every day to support LGBTQ+ students in being their wonderful, full selves.

Why was the position created?

In different ways and to different degrees, most of us in the United States are socialized into cultures that assume and privilege heterosexuality and binary gender normativity, and that
Our wonderful, full selves carry living histories of racism and settler colonialism. These realities have real, harmful impacts on the experiences of diverse LGBTQ+ people. Changing our institutional structures and interpersonal behaviors to stop perpetuating these harms requires persistent engagement. While everyone bears responsibility for this engagement, dedicated leadership to move this work forward is crucial too. Queer and trans staff, faculty, and students, along with active allies, were instrumental in articulating the need for this role at Western. I think creation of the LGBTQ+ director position recognizes the importance of this strategic leadership in providing an inclusive and transformative education for all students. In my mind, creation of this position is also a tangible statement that LGBTQ+ students, faculty, and staff are important and valued participants in the intellectual, artistic and social life of Western.

What excites you the most about this job? What gives you hope and energy?

This work is both challenging and filled with reasons to be hopeful. I work in partnership with students and colleagues wrestling with what it means to lovingly understand themselves and engage caringly with one another in the context of a culture that so often still tells queer and trans people that we are less worthy, fabricated, or impossible. There are staff, faculty, and students across fields of study who recognize that learning about LGBTQ+ topics strengthens our capacities to engage with human complexity and fluidity in ways that are necessary to do our work well and justly, whatever that work might be. A number of Western faculty are engaged in powerful research and creative work on queer and trans embodiments, histories, and cultures. For me, the loving commitments, collaborations, and work of students, colleagues, and community partners are grounding and inspiring.

How can all of us create more inclusive environments for LGBTQ+ people in our families and workplaces?

This is an important question, and one that I could talk about for days! I think a first step is recognizing that LGBTQ+ people are everywhere, regardless of one’s geographic location, racial or ethnic identity, community of faith, or the industry one works in. So this question is relevant regardless of who we are or what we do. Related to this, because LGBTQ+ people exist across cultures and hold many different identities, being truly inclusive of LGBTQ+ people means addressing other systems of oppression, including racism, anti-immigrant bias, sexism, and ableism.

What are some ways to engage these concepts in practice?

One, avoid assumptions. So often the language we use and questions we ask unintentionally assume heterosexuality or that we can know someone’s gender identity just by looking at or hearing them. Deliberately shift your words to avoid this. Two, speak up. If you hear someone making a joke at the expense of immigrants, transgender people, a gay person, a person of color, say something. Chances are, someone who holds one or more of those identities heard the joke or cares about people whom the joke targets. Saying “not cool” or “that can be really hurtful” sends a small but important message that other people’s humanity isn’t expendable. Three, make use of the many resources out there about how to support LGBTQ+ people. The LGBTQ+ Western website, at lgbtq.wwu.edu/written-resources, shares resources for supporting loved ones who come out as LGBTQ+, respecting transgender people, understanding personal pronouns, and creating learning environments that are welcoming to LGBTQ+ students.

“I am privileged to have opportunities every day to support LGBTQ+ students in being their wonderful, full selves.”
Knowledge Sharers

Faculty mentors transform students’ experience in college

Story by John Thompson
Photo by Rhys Logan, ’11
“Mentorship—real mentorship—is a long-term thing that goes far past any one class.”

Environmental science student Celida Moran and Assistant Professor Marco Hatch pause during field research at Larrabee State Park.
“I cry every time I watch this,” says WWU Assistant Professor of Environmental Sciences Marco Hatch.

Hatch, a focused, serious man with an easy smile and an obvious passion for his work, hits “play” on YouTube.

The video begins and runs for just a few seconds before Hatch hits “pause.”

“Yes,” he says, his eyes reddening just as the subject of the video, Environmental Sciences student Celida Moran from Hatch’s coastal ecology lab, walks into his office with a smile bright enough to light up the room.

The video that brings Hatch to tears is Moran’s presentation from last summer at the University of Washington, where she had just completed the first half of a prestigious two-year Doris Duke Conservation Scholars Program fellowship, doing fieldwork across the state, from the mudflats of Skagit County’s Padilla Bay to the crags and valleys of the Olympics. In the video, Moran talks about who she is, where she came from, and how hard it has been at times to be a person of color in a field dominated, more or less, by people who don’t look like her.

“She spoke her truth,” Hatch says. But for Moran, it goes deeper than that.

“Most likely, I wouldn’t still be in Environmental Sciences if it wasn’t for Marco. I wouldn’t have gotten the Duke fellowship if it wasn’t for Marco,” Moran says. “But most importantly, I probably wouldn’t have had the confidence in myself to say those things in the video without his mentorship and faith in me.”

Moran says Hatch works tirelessly to build community within Huxley’s Coastal Communities and Ecology Lab and as a faculty adviser to Western’s chapter of SACNAS, the Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science—from hosting potluck dinners where the students can talk about anything but school, to facilitating tough discussions about racism and bias within the scientific community.

“He remembers what it was like to be an undergraduate, and he knows that (including) a broad mix of students in his lab just creates a richer environment for everyone,” she says.

Moran recounted when, after an electrical fire swept through her rental house, Hatch was among the first to offer assistance, and his truck, to help relocate the students.

“His attitude was just basically ‘Let us know what you need.’ And he kept following up, and he would have done that for any of us. That’s just who he is,” she says.

While reflecting on his role as mentor, Hatch recalled a personal story about a beautiful woven cedar clan basket, given to him by Bill James, master weaver and hereditary chief of the Lummi Nation, and Lummi member Troy Olsen.

“They told me that it wasn’t something just to put somewhere and admire—it was something I had to actually use. The gift came with the obligation to use it, it was created for a purpose, and the way you pay homage to its creator is by using it for that purpose,” says Hatch, who taught at Northwest Indian College before he came to Western and is a member of the Samish
Indian Nation.

“Mentoring and my relationships with my students have that same kind of sense of purpose. I provide a level of support to them that I feel obligated to provide, because that support was given to me when I was their age,” he says. “And when I see Celida taking on that role of providing support to the new students in this lab, I know she feels the same way … which is how we build a mutually supporting community of scholars.”

That, in a nutshell, lies at the core of what so many Western students and faculty say is the beating heart of any mentor/mentee relationship: that both sides come away richer, having gained in the process.

“She absolutely shifted the way I think about my education”

When Fairhaven Associate Professor Hilary Schwandt was looking to continue her research into reproductive health and reproductive rights in Central Africa, she knew that involving her undergrads in Fairhaven College of Interdisciplinary Studies would only make the work stronger and give it a more distinctive voice.

“Students do that,” she says. “Their thoughts and their input take something good, and make it better.

“Unfortunately, students also tend to totally undersell themselves in regards to what they are capable of doing and bringing to the table in terms of research.”

Two of Schwandt’s students, Abigail Miller and Madi Stapleton, could only nod their heads and laugh at Schwandt’s point.

“I knew almost nothing about qualitative research before we went to Rwanda in 2018,” says Miller of Port Angeles, now a veteran of two trips to Rwanda, the first for research into the country’s state-of-the-art family planning programs and the second to present the results of that research at a national conference.

“I didn’t know how messy it can be. There are communication and language problems. There are connection difficulties. There are so many roadblocks to getting the data you need that you have to navigate. In the end, you just have to learn to roll with the realities of what is around you, and do your job,” she says.

“And to know that Hilary was so solidly behind us, encouraging us as we sort of wound our way through the learning curve, was really the only thing that made it all possible. It was a steep hill to climb. But that’s what a good mentor does: She had higher expectations for me than I had for myself.”
Looking back on those two trips, Miller says it was always her goal to find a mentor within Fairhaven, but that her relationship with Schwandt has grown into so much more than that. “I never thought I would end up with not just a mentor but a lifelong friendship,” she says, looking out the window at the woods surrounding Fairhaven and the students walking down its gravel paths on their way to class. “I’ve achieved so much more here than I ever thought I could.”

Stapleton agreed, saying that Schwandt’s inclusion of them in her research has created a relationship and collaboration that she didn’t even know was possible when she first came to college. “Mentorship—real mentorship—is a long-term thing that goes far past any one class,” says Stapleton, a Fairhaven College student from Kansas City, Kansas. “She was so confident in us, and so sure that we would grow. And we did. She absolutely shifted the way I think about my education, and I feel like so many new doors are open to me now.”

In fact, Stapleton says the research collaboration with Schwandt has been so fruitful that she can now see herself staying in the field and working toward a doctorate of her own. “That opportunity to collaborate with Hilary has given my education such an incredible focus, and that’s something I can’t thank her enough for,” she says.

Schwandt, like Hatch, says everything given is returned. “There isn’t a day when I am not reminded about how my work is so much better, so much richer, because of what I get from these students,” she says.

“I can see myself five years from now emailing him for help”

Sometimes, a mentor is a professor you continue to learn from, even after you’ve turned in your last project.

That’s the story of new grad Hannah Wong, ’19, of Bellingham, and Assistant Professor of Journalism and Public Relations Derek Moscato, who taught the introductory course that persuaded Wong to major in public relations. She says she went 18 months without taking another class with Moscato, but that didn’t stop him from helping her with projects, portfolio critiques, or from answering emails on PR topics large and small.

But perhaps his most important gift to Wong, she says, was a focused ability to teach a skill, nurture its growth in his students, and then help them understand exactly how that skill will be put to use once they graduate.

“I think everyone, even in a major or program they are passionate about, has those moments when they think ‘Why is this important? How will I ever use it?’ And that’s where Derek shines,” she says. “He knows I want to do nonprofit work after I graduate, for example, so he always weaves that interest into discussions on the broad framework of PR careers. With his broad expertise, I can see myself five years from now emailing him for help. And I know I would get it.”

Moscato can visualize the effects of students like Wong stretching far into the future, too. Sometimes those ripples begin in the quiet moments after Moscato puts forth a topic for discussion. He would often see Wong chewing on new concepts—and he knew she would return with thoughts about them later.

“There is this sense of quiet deliberation with Hannah, more of a period of ‘extended mulling.’ You know she’s not done with it,” he says. “She’s very astute.”

Those discussions lead to new insights that Moscato says change the way he teaches. “It’s a feedback loop. Classes evolve. Teaching evolves. Students give us the information we need to stay current,” he says. “The same class I am teaching now looks totally different from when Hannah took it, and that’s because our students make us, as educators, think about the ‘big questions’ about our discipline or profession, and help us pass that on to the next group.”

It is easy to think that Western’s students are the primary beneficiaries of these mentoring relationships, but, like Hilary Schwandt and Marco Hatch, Derek Moscato says that simply isn’t the case. “Their insight and inspiration bleeds over into what we do every day at Western,” he says. “Because without that passion that they bring, what would we have? This would be just another place where a lot of folks are grading a lot of papers—to the exclusion of so much else. But it’s not.

“In the end, that passion is why Western is such a truly special place.”

John Thompson is the assistant director of Western’s Office of Communications and Marketing. He hopes his two biggest mentors, fisheries biologist Dave Potter and journalist Terry Plowman, will read this story and smile, realizing the impact they had on his life.
“I provide a level of support to students that I feel obligated to provide, because that support was given to me when I was their age.”

MORE STUDENTS NEED MENTORS

Western has begun a number of programs to get more students into mentoring relationships with faculty members.

“These relationships are so important, and for many students, they become the cornerstone of their time here,” says Steve VanderStaay, Western’s vice provost for Undergraduate Education.

One example: FIGs, or First-Year Interest Groups.

FIGs are a cluster of three courses at the beginning of the freshman year: two general-education courses and one small-group seminar class with a maximum of 25 students. The seminars create a supportive cohort of fellow freshmen who are also visited regularly by the teachers of the bigger classes to build rapport and engagement.

“Our numbers show that FIG students achieve higher GPAs, are more engaged in their classes, and return to Western after their first year at higher rates than those students who were not in a FIG,” VanderStaay says. “And we tried a pilot program this year where the faculty members kept in touch and interacted with their seminar students for the entire year, not just the first quarter, and those numbers bumped up a bit there, too.”

About 20 percent of freshmen enroll in FIGs now, a number VanderStaay says will climb as they build more courses for students bound for the College of Business and Economics or that are headed for the sciences.

FIGs and mentoring are also part a new $1 million grant from the National Science Foundation to help low-income students in their pursuit of bachelor’s degrees in engineering at Western.

While about two thirds of that funding goes to scholarships the other third will be used to study the effectiveness of academic, social, and career support specifically designed to enhance the success of low-income engineering students, including mentorship from faculty.

The engineering program is modeled after similar programs on campus that include mentorship, such as a project funded by the Howard Hughes Medical Institute in the sciences and another NSF-sponsored program in Math and Computer Science.

“We know the relationships are being built, and that by the time our students are nearing graduation, these mentoring relationships are extraordinarily impactful,” VanderStaay says. “Finding new ways to build that faculty/student relationship earlier in the process is how we go from good to great.”

– John Thompson
Alumni Conversations

WESTERN’S NEWEST DOUBLE MAJOR

I’ve spent more than two decades sharing the amazing WWU story and helping alumni support students and university programs. I’ve seen philanthropy, big and small, make an important impact, and I continue to be pleasantly surprised by just how giving Western alumni are. Once again, I’ve found myself surprised.

Eight months ago, ODESZA’s Clayton Knight ’12 and Harrison Mills ’12 contacted my office and asked if we’d be interested in having them perform at the upcoming WWU Alumni Weekend, then asked if it would be okay if Death Cab for Cutie, whose band members Ben Gibbard ’98 and Nick Harmer ’98 are also alumni, could join them for the concert. The two bands had connected at a music festival and thought that performing at Western, where they both got their start as student bands, would be fun. They let us know that they wanted the concert to be affordable for students to attend, as well as to raise funds for student scholarships. Clearly they remembered what being a student meant and how alumni could make a meaningful difference.

On May 18, these alumni and their fellow band members will perform the first concert ever held in Civic Stadium to a sold-out crowd of 11,500 WWU students, alumni and supporters. This benefit concert will provide in excess of $25,000 for student scholarships through the WWU Alumni Scholarship Endowment Fund. Hundreds of students over the coming years will benefit from this support.

Ben, Nick, Harrison and Clayton thank you for your generosity and inspiring us all by doing what you do best for WWU!

Go Vikings!

Deborah DeWees
Executive Director, WWU Alumni Association
Is getting an education a political act? How does resistance to change and fear of the unknown impact your life? These are just a couple of the questions developed by students and explored through the Western Libraries Teaching-Learning Academy, where people from the university and surrounding communities come together to listen, understand and appreciate different perspectives. Students are the creators of the topics and facilitators of the discussion, because at Western, students can be teachers too.
October will be Filipino American History Month in Washington, thanks in large part to Rey Pascua, ’71, B.A., political science, who authored and championed the bill that awaited the governor’s signature at presstime. Pascua, who helped create the Asian Student Coalition at Western in 1970, is retired from Washington Child Welfare Services, where he organized culturally appropriate service delivery models. He’s president of the Filipino American Community of the Yakima Valley and a trustee of the Filipino American National Historical Society. The Washington State Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs recently honored him with the Vanguard Award for his lifetime of work and service.

1959 – The Shelton School Board has named the field at Highclimber Stadium after former football coach Jack Stark, B.A., P.E., ’69, M.Ed., P.E., principal’s certificate. Stark coached at Shelton from 1969 to 1993 and took the team to the state playoffs six times.

1965 – Bill Kindler, B.A., chemistry, is retired from the paper products industry and active in community affairs in Port Angeles, where he’s a member of the Port Angeles School Board and vice president of the Port Angeles Waterfront Center Group. Kindler spoke at WWU Commencement in June 2018.

1967 – Ken Apt, B.A., chemistry, has mostly retired from his work with the U.S. government in international nuclear nonproliferation. He received a Recognition of Excellence from the U.S. Department of Energy National Nuclear Security Administration, which noted Apt’s work in nuclear nonproliferation and safeguards throughout the globe, including Southeast Asia, North Africa and the Middle East, and his work on some of the administration’s earliest nonproliferation partnerships. Apt lives in New Mexico and continues consulting through his company, Capstan Global LLC. Patrick Harrington, B.A., industrial technology, recently celebrated his 50th wedding anniversary with his wife Bonnie. After graduation he spent six years in the U.S. Navy then spent 34 years working for Motorola, traveling all over the U.S. and most continents.

1970 – Bill Hawk, B.A., English – secondary, recently retired after teaching English for 48 years in Enumclaw, Battle Ground, White River and Muckleshoot Tribal School. Hawk was also a basketball coach and is in the Washington State Basketball Coaches Hall of Fame. “It’s time for new adventures,” he writes. He now lives in Arizona.


1972 – David Swanson, B.A., sociology, is professor emeritus of sociology at University of California Riverside and recently gave three lectures as an invited visiting professor at Aoyama Gakuin University in Tokyo.

1973 – Samuel Green, B.A., English, ’81, M.A., English, a former Poet Laureate of Washington and recipient of the 2008 Washington State Book Award for Poetry and the National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship in Poetry, was the speaker at the 2018 Seattle University graduate school commencement, where he was awarded an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters. Green has taught in Seattle University’s summer abroad program in Ireland for 16 years and has served several terms as the Distinguished Visiting Northwest Writer at SU.

1974 – Calvin Knight, B.A., speech-language pathology, ’77, M.A., speech-language pathology, CEO of John Muir Health in the San Francisco Bay Area, is the 2019 chair of the California Hospital Association’s Board of Trustees.

1975 – Ken Johnsen, B.A., urban and regional planning, the managing director and partner in the project management firm of Shiel Obrecht Johnsen, has helped manage the design and construction of many high-profile urban development projects during his career in Seattle, including Safeco Field, Pike Place Market, King Street Station and the waterfront seawall. He spoke at WWU Commencement in June 2018.

1976 – Sandy D. Rose, M.Ed., retired after teaching for 40 years, including 28 in Lodi, California. She was a 2018 inductee into the Everett Community College Athletic Hall of Fame for her selection to the 1966 All-American Collegiate Gymnastics Team as well as the college’s varsity basketball, field hockey tennis and badminton teams.


1980 – Kathryn Nicholas, B.A., political science, ’99, teaching certificate, is the managing editor of History of Education Quarterly at the University of Washington and completed her doctorate the same year as her daughter, Jessica A. Nicholas, ’06, B.A., French/Spanish and ’08, MIT. Kathryn graduated in June 2018 from the UW with a Ph.D. in educational leadership and policy studies, while Jessica’s Ph.D. was in French Linguistics in May 2018 from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

1981 – Quentin Walter, B.A., art, loved reading in Window about WWU’s acquisition of Sculpture Woods on Lummi Island for eventual use as an arts retreat. Walter lived on Lummi Island while attending Western and is now the artistic director of Stouthouse, an artist retreat in Indian River County, Florida.

1982 – Cheryl Sullivan-Colglazier, B.A., history, was honored by Gov. Jay Inslee for her outstanding leadership at Washington’s Department of Enterprise Services, where she serves as chief learning officer. Will Reichardt, B.A., political science, recently retired as Skagit County Sheriff.

1988 – Michael C. Myers, B.A., industrial/organizational psychology, became vice president of sales and marketing at Duncaster, a continuing care retirement community in Bloomfield, Connecticut.
1989 – John Handley, B.A., art, is director of art galleries at Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas. Dimitri Stankevich, B.Mus., music education, recently became the executive director of the Orcas Center performing arts center in Eastsound. Stankevich was most recently the director of YMCA Camp Orkila on Orcas Island.

1992 – Lori Church-Pursley, B.A., English and ‘93, M.A., English, completed her Ph.D. in rhetoric, composition and teaching at the University of Arizona in 2003 and is now the development director for a nonprofit in Seattle that provides healthy produce to Northwest Harvest, Food Lifeline and other food banks. She also volunteers with Rotary, Girl Scouts and foster families.

1993 – Kimberly Farley, B.S., applied environmental geology, recently became deputy CEO of Sound Transit. Previously, Farley worked with Washington State Department of Transportation on the Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Program and with the New York State Thruway Authority’s Tappan Zee Bridge Replacement Project. Mike McQuaide, B.A., English – writing, writes about his life in Luxembourg on his Facebook page, “An American in Luxembourg.” His book by the same name was recently honored as the People’s Choice winner in the Lëtzebuerger Buchpräis, which Mike called “the Oscars of the Luxembourg book world.”

1996 – Douglas Dreier, B.A., theatre, recently joined the board of trustees of the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History. Dreier is executive director of the The Dreier Group, which works with private collectors and museums.

1999 – Rosanna Hughes, B.A., theatre, co-founded Mistletoe Theatre in Seattle, a gender-inclusive theatre group that produces plays with diverse stories from all types of people, particularly plays with pro-woman and LGBTQIA-positive roles. Jesse Salomon, B.A., Fairhaven interdisciplinary concentration, was recently sworn into the bench on the Washington State Court of Appeals, Division 1, District 3, covering Island, San Juan, Skagit and Whatcom counties. Previously, Hazelrigg-Hernandez served in the Skagit County Public Defender’s Office. Marc Eaton, B.A., sociology/psychology, is an associate professor of sociology at Ripon College in Wisconsin, and studies paranormal investigators. He co-edited “The Supernatural in Society, Culture and History,” published in 2018 by Temple University Press and is working on a sole-authored manuscript for Routledge.

2002 – Jesse Trushenski, B.S., biology - marine emphasis, recently became the president of the American Fisheries Society, which is dedicated to fisheries science. Trushenski is the director of science for Riverview and Evaqua Farms and received the society’s distinguished service award in 2011. Cecily Hazelrigg-Hernandez, B.A., American cultural studies, Fairhaven Upside-Down Program, was recently elected to the bench on the Washington State Court of Appeals, Division 1, District 3, covering Island, San Juan, Skagit and Whatcom counties. Previously, Hazelrigg-Hernandez served in the Skagit County Public Defender’s Office. Marc Eaton, B.A., sociology/psychology, is an associate professor of sociology at Ripon College in Wisconsin, and studies paranormal investigators. He co-edited “The Supernatural in Society, Culture and History,” published in 2018 by Temple University Press and is working on a sole-authored manuscript for Routledge.


2008 – Taylor Zajonc, ’04, B.A., general studies, is an author, adventurer and shipwreck expert whose most recent novel, “The Maw,” was the winner of the 2018 Clive Cussler “Grandmaster” Adventure Writers Competition, a finalist for the Oregon Book Awards and recipient of a Silver Medal from the Independent Publisher’s Book Awards.
“The Sun is a Compass” by Caroline Van Hemert, ’05, M.A., English, recently published by Little, Brown Spark, is the story of her 4,000-mile journey with her husband Patrick Farrell, ’05, art – sculpture, from Bellingham to the western coast of Alaska by rowboat, foot, packraft, canoe and skis. Fellow writer and Alaskan Eowyn Ivey, ’95, B.A., journalism, called it “My favorite book of 2019 and one of the best Alaskan books I have ever read.”

2004 – Amber Parsons, B.S., marine biology, earned a master’s degree from the University of Washington in quantitative ecology and resource management and is now a data scientist at Allstate. Sarah McKee, B.A., human services, ’07, M.A., rehabilitation counseling, recently became the city of Philadelphia’s director of ADA Compliance.

2006 – Robin Vazquez, B.A., Spanish, political science, is the section chief of Workforce Strategies in the State Human Resources Division of the Office of Financial Management. She is also working toward a Master’s in Public Administration degree with a public policy focus at Evergreen State College.

2007 – Sarah Greenstreet, B.S., physics, completed her doctorate in 2015 from the University of British Columbia and is a senior researcher at the B612 Asteroid Institute.

2008 – Ardith Feroglia, B.A., communication, is a senior account manager at Aduro Biotech Inc. Amy Harder, B.A., journalism, was selected to be a Visiting Fellow in Journalism at the Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago for the 2018-19 academic year. Harder, an energy reporter for Axios, is moderating a series of events on campus and sharing her expertise through workshops and discussions. U.S. Navy Lt. Aaron Hicks, B.S., biochemistry, was selected to be a flight surgeon for the 2019 Blue Angels Team. Katy Gratton Cooke, B.A., humanities, is a federal prosecutor in Virginia. She graduated from William & Mary Law School in 2012, where she was a lead articles editor on the Law Review and volunteered with the Children’s Advocacy Law Society. She also clerked for U.S. District Court Judge Mark S. Davis.


2010 – Brooke Costa, B.S., computer science, is the lead engineer for Jam City’s “Harry Potter: Hogwarts Mystery” game. Stephanie Grow, B.S., Huxley College of the Environment student/faculty designed major, completed her Masters in Public Health from Columbia University and is now living and working in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, for Project Concern International.

2011 – Rashawn Nadine Scott, theatre, is an actress and comedian who has appeared on “Empire” and “Wait, Wait, Don’t Tell Me.” After several years with Second City in Chicago, Scott recently moved to Los Angeles to perform in the 2019 CBS Diversity Sketch Comedy Showcase and will be a part of the upcoming Comedy Central series, “South Side.” Devin Dattan, B.A., history, French, spent a year teaching English in France, then moved to England and completed a Ph.D. in history at the University of York. Hannah Sturtevant, B.S., chemistry, completed her doctorate in chemistry and chemical education at Purdue University in 2016 and is a postdoctoral research associate at University of Virginia’s Center for Teaching Excellence. Nhan Nguyen, B.S. mathematics, ‘13, M.S., mathematics, completed his doctorate in mathematics at the University of Montana in 2018 and recently became a research staff member in the Information Technology and Systems Division of the Institute for Defense Analyses.

2012 – Callie Halstead, B.A., communication sciences and disorders, Spanish, is a speech pathologist in Longmont, Colorado, working with people recovering from strokes and other brain injuries. Sherri Reed, B.A., Fairhaven interdisciplinary concentration, recently completed her M.A. in religion from Yale University, where she specialized in religion and literature.

2013 – Emily Mulnick, B.S., biology-anthropology was a teacher for two non-traditional high schools in Idaho, the Alzar School, where she taught Spanish and science and led backpacking trips in Chile, and the One Stone School, which focuses on project-based learning and design thinking. Now, she’s back in school herself to become a physician’s assistant. Joseph Connelly, B.A., recreation, is a firefighter for Spokane Valley and came in 14th out of about 2,000 firefighters in the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society’s Big Climb at the Columbia Center in Seattle in March, climbing 69 flights of stairs in about 13 minutes to raise money for blood cancer research.

2014 – Taneum Bambrick, B.A., Fairhaven interdisciplinary concentration, was awarded the American Poetry Review/Honickman First Book Prize for her manuscript, “Vantage,” which will be published in September by Copper Canyon Press. Bambrick
Join Vikings around the world on Thursday, May 30 for our 4th annual WWU Give Day. Give to your favorite department, program, team or scholarship. With your support for student success, we will Make Waves!

A percentage of every gift will be matched.
Ben Dragavon
’07, B.S., exercise science
Soccer (goalkeeper)

Dragavon was a four-time Great Northwest Athletic Conference all-star as a goalkeeper and set numerous WWU game and season records, completing his Viking career as the program leader in shutouts, with 18, and third in goals against average at 1.38. He went on to play for the Seattle Sounders and made his Major League Soccer debut in 2009. After several years as a coach, Dragavon operates a private goalkeeper’s academy.

Courtney Schneider
’08, B.S., community health
Volleyball (libero)

Schneider averaged a school-best 7.0 digs per game during her four-year career at WWU, crushing the NCAA II national record by nearly one dig per game. She finished third nationally among NCAA II career dig leaders with a GNAC and school record of 2,695, and was named Western’s Co-Female Athlete of the Decade. In addition to coaching, she now serves as an administrator and youth director for Liberty Towers Church and Community Impact Center in Sacramento, California.

Lindsay Mann-King
’07, B.S., fitness science
Rowing (No. 7 seat)

Mann-King was part of seven straight national championships in women’s rowing at Western, an unprecedented event in NCAA I and II rowing. Mann-King won three titles as a rower in the varsity eight shell and four as an assistant coach. She’s one of just nine Vikings in any sport to earn All-America honors three times. The WWU co-Female Athlete of the Year for 2006-07, Mann-King also was featured in Sports Illustrated’s “Faces in the Crowd” for the issue of June 25, 2007. She’s now the wellness coordinator and ergonomics specialist at BP Cherry Point Refinery.

Sean Packer
’08, B.A., business administration – marketing
Golf (No. 1)

Packer was the WWU Male Athlete of the Year for 2007-08, tying for third place at the NCAA II National Tournament that spring, the second-highest finish in school history and just one stroke behind the co-leaders with a 72-hole total of 1-under par 279. He earned third-team Golf Coaches Association of America All-America honors in 2008, helping the Vikings place eighth at nationals, second at regionals and first in the GNAC with a 72.3 scoring average. A three-time Tacoma City Amateur champion, Packer works for the Social Security Administration.
2016 – Danny Edgel, B.A., economics, earned a master’s degree in economics at the University of Toronto in 2017 with the help of a Fulbright grant and now works for the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond as a research analyst in Baltimore. He’s also preparing to apply to doctoral programs in economics.

Cami Gates, B.Mus., music education P-12, is a high-school orchestra director in the Houston, Texas, area and preparing for graduate school.

Le’Ana Freeman, B.A., Fairhaven Interdisciplinary Concentration, is an English teacher and travel consultant in Bangkok, Thailand.

2017 – Adam Kane, B.A., English literature, recently began a Ph.D. program in English at Boston University. Alicia Duncombe, B.A., sociology, is working toward a Ph.D. in sociology at the University of Texas at Austin, where she recently received a 2019 NSF Graduate Research Fellowship. Dayna Patterson, MFA, creative writing, was an editor for “Dove Song: Heavenly Mother in Mormon Poetry,” recently published by B10 Mediaworx.

2018 – Sierra Shugart, B.A., communication studies, and Caitlyn Jobanek, ’17, B.S., environmental science — freshwater ecology, signed contracts last year to play soccer for Motala AIF in the Sweden Professional League.

Marriages


Obituaries

1944 – Bernice Vossbeck, 95, a long-time teacher and the first woman principal in the Lynden School District, on May 12, 2018, in Lynden. Lynden’s Vossbeck Elementary School was named in her honor.

1945 – Sister Margaret Rose O’Neill, who taught in Catholic schools and colleges and helped launch the Jubilee Women’s Center transitional housing program in Seattle, on June 8, 2018, at St. Mary-on-the-Lake in Bellevue.

1949 – Arlene Eleanor Niegemann, 89, a former teacher who lived and volunteered in Mukilteo for many years, on April 17, 2018.

1952 – Al Cornett, 91, a World War II veteran, WWU Athletic Hall of Fame honoree, and retired teacher and coach in the Anacortes School District, on July 12, 2018. Memorials may be sent to the Charles Lappenbusch Athletic Scholarship with the Western Foundation.

1954 – Jack L. Bowman, 86, a musician and retired pharmaceutical executive who with his wife Jo Ann endowed the Bowman Distinguished Professorship in Leadership at Western, on Nov. 2, 2018, on Lummi Island.

1955 – Norman Richardson, 95, a U.S. Navy veteran of World War II who later worked as a teacher and coach in Olympia and in construction for more than 30 years, on Oct. 18, 2018. Eugene C. Thrasher, 90, retired principal of Harmony Elementary School in Whatcom County, on Jan. 24, 2019.


1962 – William H. Hutsinpiller, 81, who served as a parks and recreation director in Yakima, Bellingham, Renton and King County, on March 7, 2019, in Bellingham.

1963 – Arthur Alan Antilla, 75, a longtime customer service agent for United Airlines, on May 19, 2018.

1965 – Shelley J. (Dempster) Weldon, 76, a former elementary school teacher who helped direct student musicals at LaVenture Middle School in Mount Vernon and served as the volunteer coordinator at the Lincoln Theatre, on March 13, 2019, in Mount Vernon.

1969 – Juanita C. Bravard, 93, a retired teacher and world traveler, on March 26, 2018.

1971 – David K. Thompson, 69, a longtime science teacher at Centralia Middle School, on July 30, 2018.


1977 – Pamela Hall Lane, 63, who retired from Boeing, on June 17, 2018.


1979 – Sarah “Sally” Funkhouse, 78, who was a former teacher, clothing store owner and commercial fisher, on Oct. 28, 2018, in Bellingham.


1991 – Peggy Spreadborough Jones, 80, who worked for Catholic Community Services, on Nov. 4, 2018, in Bellingham.


2017 – Anlya Grace Folsom, 24, a poet who worked at Haggen, Creativitea and The World is Fun, on Aug. 9, 2018, in Seattle.

Faculty, Staff and Friends

Mabel Chappelle Arnett, 84, who taught physical education at Western for 30 years and helped develop the kinesiology curriculum, on April 13, 2019.

Mabel Snowdon (Pace) Benedict, 100, who worked in Western Libraries, on Dec. 1, 2018.

Don Dean Eklund, 92, a retired history professor, author, and former president of the Whatcom County Central Labor Council, on Jan. 7, 2019, in Stanwood.

Richard J. Fowler, 88, a longtime faculty member in the Technology Department, on Sept. 4, 2018.

Donald H. House, 89, a former operations manager at WWU, on Dec. 15, 2017, in Bellingham.

Sebastian Mendes, 69, a professor of art and head of the sculpture program who had taught at Western since 2001, on April 26, 2018. Much of his art was inspired by his grandfather, Arístides de Sousa Mendes, a Portuguese diplomat who helped thousands of refugees flee the Nazis during World War II.

Kurt W. Moerschner, 96, a former German professor, on Nov. 3, 2018.

David Rystrom, 73, who taught finance and economics in the College of Business and Economics and was a supporter of the arts and athletics at WWU, on Feb. 21, 2019. A memorial scholarship is being created in his name for Western’s Arts Enterprise and Cultural Innovation Program.

Ronald Savey, 80, associate professor emeritus and chair of the Accounting Department from 1976 to 2000, on May 27, 2018, in Bellingham.

Joan Karolyn (Sargent) Sherwood, 84, former vice president and dean of Student Affairs at Western, on Dec. 9, 2018, in Wichita, Kansas.

Tom Sherwood, 81, an artist and former assistant professor of aesthetics, art history and the philosophy of religion at Fairhaven College of Interdisciplinary Studies in the 1970s, on Feb. 7, 2019, in Bellingham.

John C. “Jack” Street, 87, a Mongolian linguist who donated significantly to Western’s extensive Mongolia Collection, on Aug. 6, 2017, in Janesville, Wisconsin.

Richard Vogel, 82, a longtime faculty member in the Technology Department where he taught industrial graphics and AutoCAD, on Nov. 27, 2018.
Western was experiencing a significant housing shortage in the late 1960s and early ’70s as baby boomers came to college. Campus housing and the surrounding community could barely accommodate the student body, and an emergency housing committee implored local homeowners to rent rooms to students.

Buchanan Towers was built over a massive rock, which can be seen to the right of the building under construction in this 1970 photo. It can still be seen in BT’s “Rock Room” which appeared in the winter 2019 edition of Window, “A History of Western in 125 Objects.”

Buchanan Towers got an addition in 2011, and the older section is under renovation this spring and summer. Workers will upgrade plumbing, ventilation, fire detection and security systems, replace doors and windows, and refresh interior finishes and exterior masonry.
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Meet L.K. Langley, Western’s first LGBTQ+ Director

Photo by John Olson, ’20