Excellence

Wes Leid Retires
Colin and Kris White are Benefactors
Dear Alumni and Friends of the WSU Honors College,

It is with great pleasure that I am writing to you as the Interim Dean of the Honors College, a position I have held for the past year and will continue in for the coming year. Having joined the College in 1996 as Assistant Dean and becoming Associate Dean in 2004, I have had the pleasure of getting to know hundreds of you during your undergraduate years at WSU, and remaining in touch as you took your place as leaders in many fields across the globe. Today’s students have much in common with those who preceded them in the Honors College, yet they have opportunities and challenges that are unique to them. I believe in this issue of Excellence you will learn about some of them and also read about the impact some of your fellow alumni are having on the world.

I do want to be the first to tell you about some important news from Honors. As I perused former editions of this newsletter, I noted a former Dean’s Message from Mary Wack (Honorable Mention, Fall 2004). Dean Wack (who is now the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education at WSU) referred to the “first fundamental reevaluation of the Honors curriculum since the program started in 1960.” She introduced to you the term “learning outcomes,” i.e., what we want our students to know and be able to do as a result of the Honors curriculum.

I am happy to report that, after very careful deliberation, numerous meetings among the faculty, and input from Honors alumni, we developed a new Honors curriculum which was approved by the WSU Faculty Senate in February 2008. It indeed reflects many of the concepts originally mentioned by Dean Wack—competence in a foreign language, restructured requirements in science that will result in greater interdisciplinary knowledge and capabilities, and a renewed emphasis on public speaking, team skills, and leadership.

The Honors College also formally adopted the theme “Preparing Students for Global Leadership.” This theme integrates three facets of our program—a set of Honors courses focused on global awareness and international case studies, our long tradition of encouraging Honors students to take advantage of international education opportunities, and a foreign language proficiency requirement.

We are confident that all of our students, regardless of major, will benefit from the new curriculum and a greater emphasis on the critical importance of being multi-lingual in an increasingly global marketplace. Feedback from corporate employers, graduate program representatives, and alumni has been uniformly positive.

I would also like to share that preliminary planning has begun for the 50th Anniversary Celebration of Honors at WSU in 2010. If you have ideas about how this celebration should unfold, please send me your thoughts. Our goal is to include activities that will be meaningful to all of our alumni.

That said, please know that we value your input and feedback in general regarding the Honors College. You are among our most important stakeholders. We would like to hear from you, and if your plans bring you to Pullman, please visit us.

Sincerely,

Libby Walker, Ph.D.
Interim Dean
Tabaski is a major Muslim holiday that commemorates Ibrahim’s willingness to sacrifice his son, Ishmael. Senegalese celebrate with friends and neighbors.

Honors graduate Amanda Porter (’01) traveled from her family home in Walla Walla on a mid-winter day recently to meet with Honors College students and discuss career options.

“I love my job, it’s the greatest in the world,” she says. “When I was a student here, I had no idea this career existed. I wanted to plant a seed with the students here now.”

Porter was partway through her one-month leave and in between overseas assignments when she visited Pullman. A Foreign Service officer with the State Department, she had returned recently from a two-year assignment as a consular officer in Senegal. In May, she left the United States again for a new position as a labor economist in the U.S. embassy in Harare, the capital city of Zimbabwe. Following her home leave and a cross-country road trip, she spent time in Washington, D.C., learning more about economics in general and about Africa in particular.

“The inflation rate in Zimbabwe is at just about 100 percent, and it’s hard to get gasoline, electricity, and transportation,” she told the students. “In my job, I’ll report to the political/economic chief on what I find about human rights, political freedoms, and freedom of the press, for example.”

When she came to WSU, she had an interest in immigration issues, but steered toward science classes thinking she might work in a lab as a scientific researcher or go to medical school. The first recipient of the Honors Dean’s Award, Porter graduated with majors in Spanish and zoology and a history minor. But it was an experience related to her Honors College thesis that sparked her interest in a Foreign Service career. During a year-long study abroad adventure in Costa Rica, she came in touch with social issues, including public health and international development. She decided to change her career path and went to graduate school at George Washington University, earning an M.P.H. in international health in 2003 while working full time at the National Institutes of Health on grants, mainly to Africa.

While working for a year in the U.S. embassy in Uruguay, she pursued the rigorous Foreign Service exam, in hopes of joining the diplomatic corps. In 2005, she was hired by the State Department and trained for six months in intensive French language courses before going to Senegal.

“The Foreign Service doesn’t feel like work,” she says. “And I might never have discovered it if I hadn’t studied abroad and been willing to consider a new career.”

She concluded with encouraging words. “You should follow what feels right, get world experience through travel and working, do whatever you find interesting, and remember: it’s okay to change your mind.”

“The rest of the world is so much more aware of us than we are of them. Experience and knowledge will always serve you well.”

—Amanda Porter, on the value of studying abroad and learning other languages
While WSU Honors College students are finishing lunch in the Pacific Northwest, Honors alumna Leslie V. Rowe is starting the business of the next day, literally, as the sun rises over her home in the South Pacific.

As U.S. Ambassador to Papua New Guinea (PNG), the Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu, the Spokane native is three-quarters of a day ahead of Pacific Standard Time and 7,000 miles around the globe from Pullman, Washington. Her executive duties representing the United States and running the embassy in Port Moresby fill her calendar 24/7.

She joined the U.S. Department of State in the 1980s and, with her husband Ted Dieffenbacher and children, has lived in Washington, D.C.; Sao Paulo, Brazil; San Jose, Costa Rica; Recife, Brazil; Lisbon, Portugal; Bangkok, Thailand; and Nairobi, Kenya prior to Port Moresby, PNG, in Melanesia. In a recent online interview, Ambassador Rowe discussed her career and shared insights for today’s students.

Q. What are the challenges of your current position?
A. Papua New Guinea is a fascinating country with over 800 tribal groups and a thousand distinct languages. It is also an environmental paradise with the third richest biodiversity in the world. Reporting on the political, economic, and social issues of one country is a challenge, but trying to keep abreast of issues in three countries is a real challenge. Also, in previous posts I’ve been able to learn at least some of the language. Luckily English is one of PNG’s two national languages along with Melanesian Pidgin. I have managed to learn some Pidgin and greetings in a handful of others.

Q. What has been your biggest career challenge and how did you overcome it?
A. I faced my biggest career challenge at my last post as Deputy Chief of Mission (# 2 at the embassy) in Nairobi, Kenya, our largest mission in sub-Saharan Africa. Our embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania were bombed by terrorists in 1998. Two hundred fifty people were killed in the Nairobi bombing (36 were embassy employees). A new embassy was inaugurated in 2003. When I arrived a few months later, most of our staff and families had left Nairobi because of a credible threat to blow up the new building.

The following year, after the threat subsided and families came back, the atmosphere at the embassy was extremely tense...The ambassador and I set “taking care of our people” as the most important mission goal. One of my key objectives was to improve morale and make people feel more secure...Nairobi is still a dangerous place and, because Kenya borders both Somalia and Sudan, it will continue to have problems. But at least during our time in Kenya, our employees and their families were safe.

Q. Please describe how you responded to various challenges as an ambassador.
A. One of President Bush’s most positive initiatives is PEPFAR (President’s Emergency Program for AIDS Relief). Under this program Congress authorized $15 billion dollars over five years
to address the AIDS crisis in 15 focus countries, most of which are in Africa. The first year of the program, Kenya was allocated $50 million. I chaired the embassy interagency team that implemented the program... to help Kenyans through HIV/AIDS prevention, care, and treatment programs.

My experience in Kenya really paid off when I got to Papua New Guinea, the only country in the Pacific with an AIDS epidemic. By working with USAID experts and PEPFAR contacts, we managed to increase the U.S. program here by almost 700 percent over three years.

The Solomon Islands earthquake/tsunami presented another challenge. We formed an embassy team to address the crisis. As ambassador I authorized an immediate $50,000 in relief aid which USAID quickly raised to $250,000. A number of other donors rushed in to assist, but our team wanted to make sure that whatever assistance we provided would not duplicate what others were doing...[We heard that] aid workers were having difficulty getting to remote areas and that there was a great need for helicopters. I contacted the head of the U.S. Pacific Command in Hawaii who sent a Navy ship equipped with helicopters. The crew ferried aid workers and supplies to areas where survivors had received no assistance a full week after the tsunami. They also performed a daring night rescue of injured aid workers stranded on a boat that had been wrecked on a coral reef.

Q. What advice would you give to today’s students at WSU?
A. On the career front, as the old advice goes, “If you find something you love to do, you will never work a day in your life.”

But no matter what career they choose, I encourage students to gain experience beyond Pullman, Washington—and the borders of the United States. The world is so interconnected now that it is even more important to understand other cultures and peoples.

For the complete interview with Ambassador Rowe, visit the Honors College Web site at honors.wsu.edu.
Honors students in this year’s Model United Nations program had several once-in-a-lifetime opportunities. Not only did they meet Fijian ambassador Mason Smith when they traveled to New York City for the national meet in March, but he also came to Pullman to visit them just a few weeks later (pictured here with Honors faculty Bill Smith). And the students’ Position Paper on Fiji won an Outstanding Award, given to just 10 percent of those submitted.

Fourteen Honors students participated in this year’s Model U.N., studying and traveling together with nearby University of Idaho students. Students from both schools participated in the Fiji project. WSU Honors students also represented Finland at a simulated United Nations committee session.

WSU Honors teams have attended the Model U.N. conference for the past seven years. The program provides opportunities for students to develop their critical thinking skills by taking on the perspective of another country and adopting the positions those countries already hold on a variety of issues.

Experiencing Foreign Cultures

Computer engineering and Honors graduate Kylan Robinson believes in making a mark on his world. As a senior, he traveled to India as a featured presenter at the International Conference on Bridging the Digital Divide. He also completed his capstone design project to create plans for a solar-powered hospital in Sudan through Engineers Without Borders. In 2006, the Distinguished Regents Scholar was part of a student team that set up an Internet café in rural Rwanda. Now a master’s student at WSU, he plans to “make meaningful contributions to the field of reconfigurable computer hardware.”
Honors’ Julian Reyes is Seeing Green

In 2000, Germany collected and recycled more than five million tons of recyclable commercial packaging material using their simple “Green Dot” system. Today, that color-coding recycling system has grown more complex. And, this summer an Honors College student studied abroad on a project that could possibly improve the system.

Regent Scholar Julian Reyes, an Honors College sophomore and civil engineering major, was in Germany working on measuring the lifespan of a scan code that is placed on recyclable goods, such as plastic bottles. It allows machines to scan and sort through recyclables, speeding up the process and furthering benefits to the environment in a country where 40 percent of the people regularly recycle.

Reyes was at the University of Kassel in northern Germany to participate in that country’s prestigious Research Internships in Science and Engineering (RISE) program. It gives science students the chance to spend significant time working with German doctoral students on serious research projects.

The internship is further evidence that Reyes’ interest in expanding his international and cultural awareness has grown since he came to WSU. In high school in Renton, he had studied Spanish. In summer 2007, he traveled to Madrid, Barcelona, Toledo, and Valencia in Spain on an Honors College faculty-led study abroad program to view and study Spain’s artistic traditions.

He became interested in the German language when his Honors advisor, recently-retired Senior Honors Faculty Fellow R. Wes Leid, told him that it is always beneficial to try something new. So Reyes signed up for a German class from Associate Professor Rachel Halverson, who also teaches in Honors.

“It is important to know a foreign language, especially in my field, because America is finally realizing that it must become global—America isn’t the only country in the world—and the only way Americans can do this is by learning foreign languages,” says Reyes.

He hopes to use his engineering education to help the environment when he graduates.

Visit the Web site at honors.wsu.edu/studyabroad/recentexperiences.

New Endowment Funds Global Experiences

Without exception, WSU students—especially Honors College students—returning from overseas say their international experience changed their lives.

Studying abroad often presents financial challenges to students and their families. Thanks to the new “WSU Education Abroad Endowment,” however, the dreams of many outstanding students to study abroad can come true.

It was established by Honors alumna Carolyn L. (Ofstad) Hubman (’67, Foreign Languages and Literatures/French) and her husband, George E. Hubman (’65 Business Administration). Income from the endowment will provide one or more scholarships to WSU’s most qualified undergraduates who want to study abroad.

The first awards may be made as early as spring semester (2009). The dean of the Honors College and the director of WSU’s Education Abroad program will review applications, make selections, and determine the size of each award.

It was Carolyn who conceived of the gift endowment. While enrolled at WSU, she spent a wonderful year studying at the Université Paris-Sorbonne and traveling throughout Europe on an exchange program between WSU and L’École de Haut Enseignement Commercial (HEC) in Paris. The impact of her experience was life changing, as well as lifelong.

The new endowment is the Hubmans’ way to say “Merci beaucoup!” to WSU as well as to create a way for today’s students to pursue an education abroad and gain personal knowledge of the world and its cultures. They invite others who have participated in international programs through WSU to join them in providing study abroad opportunities for students today.

For more details about the WSU Education Abroad Endowment, and to explore making contributions to it, see the Web sites at honors.wsu.edu/scholarships and ip.wsu.edu/education_abroad/wsustudents/scholarships.shtml.
In the News

Thesis Topic Music to This Alumnus’s Ears

Christopher Wang (‘05 and ‘06 Business Administration and Honors), published an abstract of his Honors thesis in the journal of his international professional music fraternity, Mu Phi Epsilon. The paper also won the Musicological Research Award in the category of undergraduate research paper.

Wang’s paper is titled, “Ever Truly a Musician: Connections Between Edward de Vere and the Development of English Madrigals.” De Vere, a poet and the 17th Earl of Oxford, is believed by some—including Wang—to have been the “real” William Shakespeare. In his paper, Wang considers whether de Vere also penned madrigals, another blossoming art form at the time in England.

Wang reports that life in the New York City region is exciting. He works for PricewaterhouseCoopers as an Experienced Associate in PwC’s Entertainment, Media, and Communications market group. His career provides many opportunities and, he says, “new challenges never stop coming.” He was recently pleased to be assigned as part of the audit team for a major global business information company. He is also active in the “Big Apple Cougs” alumni organization and joins WSU friends to watch televised games in the city.

Sundquist Elected to Seattle School Board

Alumnus Steve Sundquist (‘79 Computer Science and Honors) was elected in November 2007 to serve as one of seven directors on the Seattle School Board.

“We need to raise standards, improve academic achievement for all students, and turn around struggling schools so that all children, in all neighborhoods, get the quality education they deserve,” Sundquist wrote in pre-election materials online.

This is only the latest in a long list of work for his community. In 2005 and 2006, he worked with a team of citizens to establish the International Baccalaureate Program at Chief Sealth High School, offering the students a rigorous international curriculum. Sundquist was a member of the WSU Honors College Advisory Board for many years, and serves on the WSU Foundation Board of Trustees. He is president of the Board for Climate Solutions, a volunteer lead partner with Social Venture Partners, on the board of ONE/Northwest, a member of Downtown Seattle’s Rotary Chapter #4, and moderator of Fauntleroy Church, United Church of Christ.

Sundquist retired from Russell Investment Group where he served in a variety of senior management roles, including managing director of national accounts and chief information officer.
Honors Junior Appointed as Student Regent

Washington Governor Christine Gregoire appointed Honors College student **Derick Chike En’Wezoh** in July to be the student member of the WSU Board of Regents for the 2008–2009 academic year.

A junior majoring in neuroscience with a pre-med emphasis, En’Wezoh is WSU’s eleventh student regent. A graduate of Kamiakin High School in Kennewick and recipient of a WSU Future Cougars of Color scholarship, he has played an active role in the university’s multicultural community and was elected to be a student body senator as a sophomore. He was president of a WSU residence hall, was a Cougar Quest summer camp counselor, and participated in benefits to raise money for children in Malawi and Uganda, the American Cancer Society’s Relay for Life, and American Red Cross-sponsored blood drives. He plays intramural flag football and basketball.

“This year I plan to build on the foundation forged by previous student regents while advancing student and university interest,” En’Wezoh said.

He is the son of WSU alumni Erick En’Wezoh and Dawn Adams, of Kennewick.

Meeting with a WSU Regent

At the invitation of Honors Interim Dean **Libby Walker**, WSU Regent and alumna **Constance M. Niva** visited the Honors College to meet with students and discuss a wide range of topics ranging from their education and career goals to community service. Refreshments at the gathering were served using several silver pieces donated to Honors by alumna **Pat Anderson**.
Honors students are often in the spotlight for their academic accomplishments and community service. But one subset of Honors students has the distinction of having their leadership, teamwork, and especially their successes—and defeats—he observed and known to many.

They are Honors’ WSU student athletes. And, at any given moment, there are many of them, competing in just about every sport the University offers. What is it like, to be world-class college athletes while simultaneously challenged to perform as world-class scholars? According to three recently-graduated stars—Cougar football quarterback Alex Brink, basketball forward Robbie Cowgill, and track-and-field runner Haley Paul—participating in the WSU Honors College provides awesome opportunities outside of sports.

“I enjoyed the Honors College,” says Brink, a sports management major, “especially for its class sizes and personal feel.” The record-breaking quarterback from Eugene, Oregon, who threw for 10,913 yards and 73 touchdowns as a Cougar, was picked up by the Houston Texans in the 2008 National Football League Draft in April. That same month, he was named one of 15 honorees to win a prestigious 2007 National Scholar-Athlete Draddy Award from the National Foundation and College Hall of Fame.

Robbie Cowgill, the Austin, Texas, 6-foot-10 member of the popular and successful 2008 Cougar basketball team, agreed that the Honors College was a great experience at WSU.

“I enjoy being challenged and learning, and Honors classes were often more interesting than others. Because the class sizes were smaller, you were almost sure to learn better, be more involved and engaged.” Cowgill, who was named to the PAC-10 Men’s Basketball All Academic First Team in 2008 and was the PAC-10 Men’s Basketball Scholar-Athlete of the Year, majored in business (management and operations) and minored in human relations, and received the 2008 Honors Dean’s Award. He plans to pursue ministry as a career, having been active in WSU’s Athletes in Action program.

Track and field All American Haley Paul, an anthropology major with a Spanish minor, worked on the Daily Evergreen student newspaper as a columnist and at Tukey Orchard, an organic produce farm at WSU, during her undergraduate career.

“I appreciate that I could talk one-to-one with the professors of my Honors College classes. My experiences there definitely enhanced my college experience,” says Paul, who this fall began her master of arts degree in sustainability at Arizona State University.

Like these stars before them, many student athletes in fall 2008 are excited to be in the Honors College. Honors student stories are featured on the Web site at honors.wsu.edu.
Leid Retires from Honors College

In December 2007, Senior Honors Faculty Fellow R. Wes Leid retired from the Honors College and Washington State University. “Being on the Honors faculty and getting to know hundreds of Honors students over the years has honestly been one of the greatest honors of my life,” says Leid.

In the Honors College, Leid served several years as the well-respected director of the Honors Thesis program, spending countless hours each year advising and mentoring students on their projects and research, and administering the program.

“It was a joy to watch their research interests take off, and I certainly learned much from their work, as well.”

He is also credited with sowing the seeds for WSU’s Week of Remembrance program in the early 1990s. Every semester for nearly 18 years, he taught Honors courses about medical ethics and the Holocaust. Starting in spring 2003, Leid and other organizing faculty welcomed guests and speakers from diverse areas of Holocaust study to campus for presentations and interactions with students, faculty, staff, and the community. In 2007, Leid secured a grant from the Holocaust Education Foundation to help support Week of Remembrance activities.

“It’s important to me that young people be exposed to world issues like those raised with the Holocaust. They need to think about ethics and how the decisions they make and actions they take will impact others.”

With a doctorate in microbiology from Michigan State University, the Eastern Washington native returned to the Pacific Northwest when he joined the WSU faculty in 1980 and the Honors College faculty in 1991. He had been a fellow of Harvard College and an instructor in the Harvard Medical School for four years and also taught at MSU. At WSU, he was a faculty member in veterinary microbiology and pathology and served on numerous University committees, including the Faculty Senate. He spent two year-long sabbaticals at the Leiden University Medical Center in the Netherlands working on kidney transplantation, an experience that inspired him to encourage Honors students to study abroad. His research interests are in medicine and infectious diseases.

In his retirement, Leid says he plans to busy himself in his workshop at his Dayton, Washington, home and spend more time with his wife, Katie, and visit their children and grandchildren. He welcomes calls, e-mails, and visits from his students and friends at 509-382-2257, kmleid@msn.com, and 240 Wolf Fork Rd.
Message from the Development Director
Dear Honors Alumni and Friends,

As I read through the stories featured in this issue of Excellence, I am deeply struck by the realization that students and alumni from the Honors College at Washington State University are high achievers who make a significant impact on the world. They are not only passionate about gaining knowledge and skills, they are also fervent about reaching out to others and working hard to improve lives and society wherever they are around the globe. Their stories are inspiring.

In my work as Development Director, I have the privilege of getting to know many of Honors’ outstanding students, faculty, staff, and alumni. It is my pleasure and my responsibility to make connections so that others can invest financially in the Honors College. This helps to turn opportunities into actions and realities.

Many people, for example, provide funding for scholarships that assists Honors in recruiting and retaining the finest young scholars. Private support facilitates study abroad experiences where students apply their knowledge, critical thinking, and foreign language skills to real-life cultural and academic situations. Contributions also support faculty development programs and general initiatives, which ultimately, of course, benefit Honors students.

In the coming weeks and months, as you follow news from WSU and its exceptional Honors College, I invite you to consider lending your support to the students, programs, and faculty of the college. I would welcome the chance to learn about your interests and to facilitate a connection with the appropriate people and programs to help you reach your philanthropic objectives. Thank you for considering the Honors College, and I look forward to hearing from you.

—Deb Dzuck
Development Director
Office of Undergraduate Education/Honors College
509-335-2108
ddzuck@wsu.edu
honors.wsu.edu/support

Honors Students
Statistics

At a Glance:
Honors’ Most Recent Graduates
Sixty-seven Honors students graduated in May 2008. Their many accomplishments are evidenced in these statistics.

■ 48% completed dual degrees, majors, or options
■ 37% received a “Pass with Distinction” designation on their Junior Writing Portfolio
■ 38% completed at least one foreign language at the sophomore level or higher
■ 25% completed course work in an approved study abroad program
■ 82% graduated with “Latin Honors”—summa, magna, or cum laude
■ 61% are continuing to graduate or professional school

Colleges in which Recent Honors Graduates Majored

■ 39% Science, Pharmacy, Vet Med, and Nursing
■ 31% Liberal Arts
■ 19% Engineering and Architecture
■ 7% Business
■ 4% Other
The WSU Honors College
Dean’s Excellence Fund

The Dean’s Excellence Fund is used to support student enrichment, faculty excellence, and discretionary funds to be allocated by the college dean. This past year, the Honors College was able to provide support to help students attend conferences (e.g., 14 students traveled to New York City with their National Model United Nations team, and another 6 students presented their research at the Western Regional Honors Conference in Flagstaff, Arizona); fund field trips; offer a new student orientation in fall; pay for student research posters and publications; and support Honors Student Advisory Council activities including Mom’s and Dad’s Weekend brunches, guest speakers, and special events.

Scholarships for Honors College Students

This past year, the Honors College was able to provide a total of $83,400 in scholarship support to 88 incoming and current students. The scholarships help to recruit and retain top scholars, support study abroad opportunities, fill financial needs, and more.

Honors College Commemorative Tile Campaign

Gifts to the Honors College Commemorative Tile Campaign are gifts to the Endowment of the Honors College. Interest from the permanent endowment supports scholarships, student research support, study abroad, special class materials, and much more.

Purchase of tiles creates a legacy in your name or the name of someone you wish to honor. An engraved commemorative tile will be placed permanently in the Honors Hall Lounge, which is used for some Honors classes, guest programs, thesis presentations, meetings, and social events. Two sizes of tiles are available.

honors.wsu.edu/support/priorityneeds

Your Gift Makes a Difference

I want to donate to:

- The Dean’s Excellence Fund
- Scholarships for University Honors College Students
- Honors College Commemorative Tile Campaign (funds go to the Honors College Endowment). Each tile will be engraved with up to 14 characters on each of two lines.
  - Scholars Tile, 4x4-inch engraved stone ($300)
  - Medallion Tile, 4x4-inch engraved stone with Honors Medallion ($1,000)

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- Please contact me about including WSU in my estate plan.
- Please contact me about establishing a named endowed scholarship.

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Would you like to receive an e-newsletter from the Honors College?

Mail this form to:
Attn: Development Coordinator Kara Olson
WSU Honors College
PO Box 644532
Pullman, WA 99164-4532

honors.wsu.edu/support
“Why Not Now?”

Young Alumnus Colin White Prefers to “Lead by Example”

Honors College alumnus, businessman, and entrepreneur Colin White, 28, (’03 Business and Honors College) is soon to achieve a notable milestone at his alma mater.

Because his total gifts and pledges to WSU, made with brother Kris, 26, total more than $100,000 cumulatively, the Whites will be recognized this fall by the WSU Foundation as Benefactors to WSU. This puts them in a prestigious category of donors that fewer than a thousand others in WSU history have attained.

“I see the influence alumni can have over students to see a bigger picture beyond the classroom and to have a voice in how programs can improve,” says Colin, “and I decided not to wait for someone else to make that happen.

“I don’t think I’m too young or it’s too early for me to give back to my school. In some ways, I think I’m late! Why not now?”

The Colin and Kris White University Honors College Scholarship Endowment is funded through gifts and pledges from the brothers plus matching funds from Colin’s employer, Deloitte Consulting LLP. Two students have already received this scholarship. Colin and Kris—former varsity football and baseball players at WSU, respectively—also support WSU Athletics. Partnering as WSU donors is not their first joint venture. In 2007 they began the White Brothers Academy in their hometown of Spokane Valley, mentoring athletes in grades 8-12 in “sports, academics, and life,” says Colin.

“I always wanted to be a coach, and by running our own business to teach life skills through athletics, there are no restrictions on how high the bar can be set for the kids at our own academy. We want to inspire them to shoot for the stars!”

The sport the academy is first concentrating on is baseball, given Kris’s background of playing for the minor leagues after earning his bachelor’s degree in finance from Gonzaga University and before earning his master’s in international management from Whitworth University.

Their 5,000-square-foot indoor facility offers the only dirt-and-clay realistic pitching mound in the region, as well as room for practicing hitting and fielding. When parents and youngsters sign up, the players become “members” of the academy and agree to work to become better scholar-athletes by working on their character-building, nutrition, goal-setting, self esteem, and community service as well as their sports skills.

“We look for the type of person who would be a good fit with us, not the kind of athlete they are,” says Kris. In 2008-09, they plan to have 20 academy members. The company Web site is www.thewba.com.

Colin, who has a Deloitte office in Seattle and clients in Los Angeles, returns to Spokane as often as possible to help at the academy. This summer, both brothers worked with a 15-member youth travel league baseball team that played 60 games in 45 days.

They also made an investment in Pullman and the WSU community by purchasing the Pita Pit restaurant in Adams Mall in the University Hill district. “It’s healthy, it’s established, and it’s in Pullman,” explains Colin. “It was just a great idea.”

And another example of keeping their business in the family—both the White family and the Cougar family.

For more information, check the website at www.thewba.com, or Colin and Kris at colin.white@thewba.com and kris.white@thewba.com.

Brothers Kris and Colin White.
A vacuum cleaner that produces music?
Yes, in Honors student Austin Schlichting’s original musical composition, “The Bells.” Or at least a modified bassoon with a vacuum cleaner attachment that is used to produce music.

Schlichting graduated in spring 2008 with a bachelor of music in Composition and a bachelor of music in Violin and Viola Performance. He applied to the Honors College during his sophomore year at WSU.

“A great number of my friends were involved with Honors and I admired the attitude I saw coming from the students,” he says.

He came up with the basic idea for “The Bells” after his friend demonstrated the basic technique to him. “I was hypnotized by the sound. It sounds so un-human and unnatural, yet an acoustic instrument is creating it.”

The bassoon is used in “The Bells” without the bell attached, which allows a vacuum cleaner accessory to fasten to the head of the instrument. The sound the bassoon makes is caused by the flow of air being sucked from the reverse side of the double reed, as opposed to being blown properly through the front of the reed.

The text that is being “read” by the bassoon is the poem “The Bells,” by Edgar Allan Poe. “Listeners familiar with the poem should be able to hear the specific rhythm of the poem being played,” says Schlichting. “It can be helpful to listen to the piece while following the poem.”

“I also feel that, as the music of the 19th Century was evoking nature, a lot of current art music evokes technology or man’s presence. The piece ‘The Bells’ and the poem are observations of this mechanical force. Also, my piece includes an instrument that produces a sound, but is it really what one would describe as traditional music? At the same time, does one categorize the ringing of a bell as traditional music?”

Schlichting’s repertoire includes music composed for the Washington-Idaho Symphony, the WSU Concert Choir and Madrigal Singers, and recently a work for the Pierrot Ensemble called “Three St. Vincent Millay Poems.” He was the first-time winner of the Washington-Idaho Symphony Young Artist’s Composer competition for his symphonic work “Scenes from Titus Andronicus,” and he also won the Washington State ASTA competition last year playing the viola.

Schlichting will attend graduate school at Ithaca College in New York on an assistantship, pursuing a Master’s of Music in Composition.

You can listen to “The Bells” and other Schlichting compositions at www.myspace.com/austinschlichting.

“A great number of my friends were involved with Honors and I admired the attitude I saw coming from the students.”

—Austin Schlichting
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