



## A Force For Change

Students, faculty, and staff of Washington's independent colleges are breaking the "ivory tower" image by creating innovative opportunities for community involvement. Together we're making a big difference! Community involvement offers student leadership opportunities, changes to neighborhoods, and transformations to the future of the state by creating a more diverse workforce. Through connections to elementary and secondary school students, community action groups, and local businesses, independent college students, faculty, and staff are a force for change in their communities.

### Building leadership among urban youth

Tacoma has sent 31 urban student leaders to **Whitworth College** on fully funded, four-year scholarships, through an innovative program — *Act Six* — that is a joint venture between Whitworth and the Northwest Leadership Foundation, a foundation developing leadership for the renewal of Tacoma.

Each year, working with the foundation to narrow the applicant pool, a culturally and economically diverse group of 10 student scholars are selected by Whitworth to receive the coveted full-tuition scholarships.

In Tacoma the scholarship winners, nearly 70 percent of whom are the first in their families to attend college, devote much of their senior year to intensive training that equips them to support one another, succeed academically, and grow as service-minded leaders. Group support and leadership development activities continue *once the students arrive at Whitworth, including weekly meetings and mentorship programs that continue until college graduation.*

According to Lincoln High School math teacher and *Act Six* director Tim Herron, the difference between *Act Six* and other scholarship programs that serve underrepresented students is the support students receive. "It's not enough that these young people get into college," explained Herron. "What's important is that they succeed and become leaders once they arrive on campus."

They appear to be doing just that. Of the 31 *Act Six* students who enrolled at Whitworth, 30 are still attending and are making a significant impact through their involvement and leadership across the campus.

These scholarship recipients, maintaining a 3.42 median GPA, are not the only ones benefiting from this partnership. Faculty give the program high praise and peers say that the presence of these students has generated new conversations on campus and a heightened sensitivity to the importance of diversity and inclusion.

"It's more than just a diversity initiative," added Herron. "It's also about everyone benefiting from the skills, talents, and aspirations these new faces in leadership bring to one another, to the college as a whole, and ultimately back to their communities." Learn more at [actsix.org](http://actsix.org).

### Filling a mentoring niche in Walla Walla

**More than 100 Whitman College students** volunteer their time to work with elementary and middle school children in seven local schools. Started as a student's senior thesis project, the longstanding partnership between the Walla Walla Public Schools, Whitman's Center for Community Service, and several other community-based programs ensures that at-risk young people are matched with college mentors who provide caring and consistent, one-on-one attention.

Rebecca Sickels, director of Whitman's Center for Community Service, says their program fills an important niche, as most local mentoring activities tend to focus on high school students or youth involved in the juvenile justice system. "Our program is solely aimed at first through sixth graders with the hope that

we can provide positive role models and foster mutually beneficial relationships at a time when young children are still impressionable."

Public school teachers and intervention specialists identify at-risk students in their classrooms. These students, referred to Whitman College, are matched with a college mentor. Community mentoring teams affiliated with Walla Walla Friends of Children and the Washington State Mentoring Program are consultants throughout the mentor training process.

Each mentor meets with his or her student once a week for a full year. "The year-long commitment is essential for the program's success," insisted Sickels. "Mentors can provide a consistency that's often missing in the homes of these school children. What is more, some of the children look to their mentors for the only one-on-one attention they get."

Whitman participants, often staying involved for multiple years, benefit tremendously from their mentoring work. Sickels notes, "Our students learn life skills, civic responsibility, and how to apply book skills to real life. Along the way, they come to realize just how much their care and concern can impact the life of another."



*Act Six*, a collaborative initiative between Whitworth College and the Northwest Leadership Foundation, is sending 10 more students to college on fully-funded scholarships. Above are seven of the first 41 scholars.