

WHITMAN COLLEGE FROM THIS MOMENT...

Aspirations for Whitman College's Future



A liberal arts education is more relevant than ever

Welcome to From this Moment, the first in a series of newsletters that share with our alumni and friends Whitman's plans to build on the strength of more than 125 years of academic excellence and to reinforce the value of a liberal arts education in the 21st century. Whitman remains committed to seeking new approaches to teaching and learning that will ensure our relevance in today's world. The call for leaders who will take on society's challenges with creativity, character, and responsibility is clear. Our students' aspirations for the future inspire this academic plan.

George S. Bridges
 President

Adapting the liberal arts and sciences for 21st century leadership

Students today face greater uncertainty in their lives and career paths than ever before. Whitman, as a liberal arts college, offers a compelling answer to what is needed to prepare students for success. With a focus on analytical abilities and communication skills, this distinctive form of education affords students the much-needed flexibility for an ever-changing world.

Liberally educated students learn new skills quickly and interpret the uses and limitations of emerging technologies from a critical perspective. This perhaps is why science Ph.D.s disproportionately begin their educations in liberal arts colleges, and CEOs cite language ability as setting liberally educated workers apart from their peers. Our students need adaptability for careers we cannot now envision, and Whitman is responding to those needs.

As a small college with superb facilities, Whitman is in a unique position to provide a comprehensive and personal liberal arts education. It has a tradition of excellence, of rigor, and of leadership; it has held true to its academic mission and standards for more than a century and through multiple curricular evolutions in the liberal arts.

In this vision for Whitman's future, we are committed to creating concrete

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opportunities for students that further our goal to educate leaders who approach problems with knowledge, passion, imagination, and commitment. The intention is to create a student experience like no other — one that nurtures multi-dimensional thinkers who relate to different cultures and make a difference in their communities and the world.



A place apart for inquisitive minds

Whitman has always been a place apart for inquisitive minds. To continue this tradition, we must advance the Whitman curriculum and adapt our academic program to better prepare our students for their futures.

Nothing is more important to this end than close, collaborative faculty-student relationships. Our understanding of the ways students learn best is evolving, and in response, faculty are redesigning their courses and the curriculum to increase

> interaction with the material and to provide a more personalized, handson learning experience. Additionally, the Whitman curriculum must reflect the emergence of subjects such as bioethics, global studies, and

environmental humanities that only a few years ago were uncommon or relegated to graduate programs or research institutes. At the core of this remains the goal of improving students' intellectual and ethical abilities and teaching them to engage in critical analysis and debate on a variety of subjects.

Provost and Dean of the Faculty Timothy Kaufman-Osborn and the elected leadership of the faculty have engaged in a comprehensive planning process and developed a set of guidelines for investments in the academic program. The faculty has carefully evaluated the first-year core course, distribution requirements, established major and minor programs, interdisciplinary programs, and the system of electives, and has constructed a purposeful response to the challenges we now face and will face in the next five to 10 years. Whitman graduates are creative catalysts of change, responsible citizens, and the leaders of tomorrow. Curricular planning will ensure that our future graduates are prepared to take on these roles.

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- "First and foremost, a Whitman education seeks to cultivate in students certain virtues that we consider inherently valuable. These include but are not limited to the capacity to engage in critical inquiry about received wisdom; the capacity to draw connections between apparently discrete domains of knowledge and experience; and the capacity to communicate in diverse modes of expression."
- Building on Excellence, 2010

Our vision to strengthen the academic program

Whitman will fortify its history of strong relationship-based teaching and advance its rigorous curriculum through several targeted initiatives. The teacher/scholar model of the past is changing. No longer are professors expected to simply serve as founts of knowledge. They now engage and collaborate with students more than ever before.

To support this new model, Whitman must expand its faculty and provide greater support for research, innovation, and collaborative efforts. The curriculum must expand beyond the acquisition of knowledge in single disciplines, with increased emphasis on using knowledge to solve concrete problems and to cross traditional disciplinary boundaries through creative articulation. Priorities that are congruent with these developments in teaching and learning and contribute to the

core values expressed in Whitman's mission statement are included in the plan.

Among the key goals are to:

- · Globalize the curriculum;
- Provide experiential learning opportunities;
- Create more cross-disciplinary learning and teaching opportunities;
- Strengthen the faculty.

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Globalize the curriculum

In 2008, Whitman launched a largescale effort to develop a critical focus on globalization within our liberal arts curriculum. We aim to create an experience in which students and faculty from a variety

global awareness and understandings broadly in the College curriculum and co-curriculum.

of backgrounds and experiences We must infuse routinely come together to critically assess their role in global networks of knowledge, commerce, politics, technology, environment, and culture. To do so, we must infuse global awareness and understandings

broadly in the College curriculum and cocurriculum.

With the help of a Mellon Foundation grant, we have begun expanding academic programs that support this vision. In the first two and a half years, we have



appointed a faculty global studies director who has organized faculty development seminars to infuse global themes into current courses and to develop new team-taught courses that examine globalization through different disciplinary lenses (see page 7 for an example). In addition, Whitman has held three successful campus-wide global studies symposia (see story below).

Moving forward, we plan to expand shortterm, off-campus studies domestically and abroad by supporting faculty-led programs that immerse students in community issues. These programs develop intercultural competence and provide an opportunity to negotiate linguistic differences. Examples include an ethnographic fieldschool in highland Ecuador and geologic studies in Mongolia. Sustained student engagement with communities in programs such as these encourages wellrounded, responsible global citizenship.

As the Mellon grant that launched the Global Studies Initiative ends, the College is committed to a robust global studies program. Whitman graduates who understand global issues and have the intercultural competence to work within differing cultures are better equipped to effect change on a global scale.

Global Studies Symposium

Launched in 2009, the Global Studies Symposium brings together an interdisciplinary panel of experts for presentations on issues of profound importance. In its first three years, the symposium has addressed themes of Torture, Contagion, and Global Media and included visiting educator talks like these:

- "When We Torture: Image Guilt Consequences" by Mark Danner, an acclaimed journalist and contributor to The New Yorker and The New York Review of Books.
- "Bio Terror: The Globalization of Infectious Diseases" by Stephen Morse, professor of clinical epidemiology and founding director of the Center for Public Health Preparedness at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health.

• "Media Spectacle and the North Africa Arab Uprisings: Some Critical Reflections" by Douglas Kellner, Philosophy of Education Chair of Social Sciences and Comparative Education, University of California-Los Angeles.

Whitman faculty and students prepare and present formal responses to the experts, and then the audience joins the dialogue, spurring debate and reflection in the community and encouraging students to develop their own voice in these matters of global significance. 2010 student respondent Seth Bergeson '10, a history major, commented: "The symposium was thoughtprovoking and created a fantastic interdisciplinary dialogue with good friction." Associate Professor of Politics Shampa Biswas added, "In all, this was an intellectually sophisticated, yet accessible, conversation on a very difficult and controversial issue."

Provide experiential learning opportunities

At Whitman, the development of new learning experiences for students and the integration of pedagogical enhancements are vital pursuits. *U.S. News & World Report* recently ranked Whitman as the No. 3 "Up and Coming" college in the nation among those "making the most promising and innovative changes in the areas of academics, faculty, and student life."

Recently, gifts from alumni and friends have created new funds to support *innovation in teaching and learning*. These competitive grants allow faculty and departments to develop and implement new approaches to advancing the academic program. The grant program has already supported equipment, laboratory exercises, field trips, community-based learning initiatives, course development and more (*see sidebar*).

In addition to providing an outstanding classroom experience, faculty members serve as mentors for individual theses and other student research projects, often involving students in their professional scholarly work (see page 6 for some examples). The Louis B. Perry Awards and the Sally Ann Abshire

Awards support several *collaborative student/faculty research projects* each year, but demand now far exceeds the available resources to support these life-changing opportunities for students to work with their faculty mentors.

Students also are encouraged to design their own experiential learning opportunities through the *Whitman Internship Program*. Internships enable students to integrate their liberal arts education with experience in the professional world. The selection process is highly competitive; funding is currently available for only about 30 students in 10-week summer programs.

Whitman seeks to enhance the quality, while also expanding the range and accessibility, of these and other scholarly opportunities for students. We must support as many worthy projects as possible, giving every faculty member, student, or team committed to a course of inquiry the opportunity to explore and learn. These programs provide new ways to enrich student understanding and prepare them for graduate school and jobs in industry.



Sample projects:

Albert Schueller

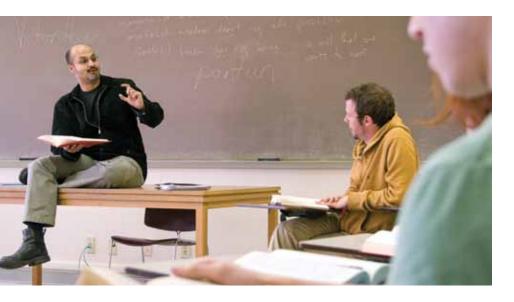
(mathematics) provided the mathematics department with a classroom set of Lego Mindstorm robotics kits that will be used to teach introductory and advanced topics in computer science and control theory.

Deborah Wiese (psychology) led "Shinrigaku: Psychology in Japan" — a three-week summer course on cross-cultural psychology that focused on Japan and included field-study there.

Heidi Dobson (biology) and Brian Dott (history) created two interdisciplinary courses on the history and ethnobiology of the Silk Roads in China.

Sarah Hurlburt (foreign languages and literatures -French) and Mike Osterman (Technology Services) created a graphic, interactive timeline application for the College's online course management system in collaboration with staff and faculty from Pomona and Claremont-McKenna colleges. This will have the potential to enhance visual and kinesthetic learning in nearly all disciplines taught at Whitman.





Create more cross-disciplinary learning and teaching opportunities

Because potential solutions to the problems that we face in the world today do not fall neatly into the boundaries of one academic discipline, Whitman faculty work collaboratively to draw connections across domains of knowledge and experience. We aim to encourage collaborative curricular projects, team-teaching, and academic symposia that cross academic fields

and employ multi-faceted approaches to knowledge.

Whitman currently recognizes 15 combined majors, and faculty often collaborate and colead cross-disciplinary classes and programs. To encourage expanded interaction between disciplines, we are soliciting proposals from faculty to conduct workshops to share ideas and approaches, integrate materials and themes into existing courses, or develop new cross-disciplinary courses or field experiences. In the coming years, the College will also consider adding faculty positions assigned to multiple departments and increasing the number of recognized cross-disciplinary majors.

Today's world demands cross-disciplinary collaboration on our most pressing societal issues, such as the economy, the environment, ethics, and politics. Whitman is shaping its curriculum to prepare students to meet this challenge.

The depth and breadth of Whitman's curriculum is dependent on faculty development and expansion.

Recent student/faculty research projects

A study elucidating whether bacteriophages (bacteria-eating viruses) could be an effective and environmentally safe way to combat resistant superbugs in place of antibiotics. — **Kendra Golden**, associate professor of biology, and **John Hodges '11.**

An analysis of the distinctions of deservingness in the 2009-2010 federal health-care reform debates. — **Susanne Beechey**, assistant professor of politics, and **Abby Neel '12**.

A study of the effectiveness of social technologies at work in the global nuclear nonproliferation regime within a post-cold-war context of shifting global dynamics of economic power and security. — **Shampa Biswas**, associate professor of politics, and **Thomas Friedenbach '12**.

Creation of a first edition of composer Elfrida Andrée's "String Quartet in D minor," a work that won second place in an 1890s international competition, but was never published. — Susan Pickett, Catharine Gould Chism Endowed Chair of Music, and Jonathan Spatola-Knoll '11.

Collection and analysis of soil samples from vineyards throughout the Columbia Basin to determine genuine differences in physical terroir within the American Viticultural Areas. — **Kevin Pogue**, professor of geology, and **Liesl Olson '11.**

A paper titled "The 'Reel' Thing: The Art of Argentine Testimonial Cinema." — Janis Breckenridge, assistant professor of Spanish, and Bécquer Medak-Seguin '10.

Strengthen the faculty

We must fortify Whitman's history of strong teaching and relationship-based education with additional, permanent faculty positions. Maintaining a low student-to-faculty ratio in all disciplines enables faculty to continue delivering a personalized and dynamic educational experience while exploring cutting-edge pedagogical styles and innovative teaching programs. In the coming years, we will need to direct greater attention to emerging areas of emphasis for our 21st century world, including expanding our foreign language options and bolstering interdisciplinary fields from neuroscience to environmental humanities. It is our vision to be a leader among colleges pushing the horizons of teaching and learning.

The connection between faculty and students is at the heart of a Whitman education. Students are best served when instruction is provided primarily by full-time, tenure-track faculty. These professors have proven to be exemplary teacher-scholars and have a permanent stake in

the success of the College and its students. Permanent faculty members serve as long-term mentors and provide continuity for students and for the academic program. They establish enduring relationships with students, supporting them throughout their education at Whitman and beyond.

Adding depth and breadth to the Whitman curriculum through additions to the faculty will improve the student experience by addressing areas of consistent enrollment demand, supporting new interdisciplinary fields and reducing our reliance on temporary, visiting faculty.

None of the innovations and advancements in teaching and learning described in this newsletter is possible without the highest-quality faculty.



A new course with interdisciplinary inquiry

Professor **Zahi Zalloua**, French, and Professor **Bruce Magnusson**, politics, have worked together to develop a new course that they will team teach during the 2011-12 academic year. "Violent Subjects" will interrogate the relationship between violence and subjectivity from multiple disciplinary perspectives including politics, literary theory, philosophy, and anthropology. It will focus on a range of problématiques, including colonial logics, the emergence and dissolution of subjectivities, structural and symbolic violence, racism and genocide, nationalism and globalization, sovereignty and justice, and the "War on Terror."



The Mission of Whitman College

Whitman College is committed to providing an excellent, well-rounded liberal arts and sciences undergraduate education. It is an independent, nonsectarian, and residential college. Whitman offers an ideal setting for rigorous learning and scholarship and encourages creativity, character, and responsibility. Through the study of humanities, arts, and social and natural sciences, Whitman's students develop capacities to analyze, interpret, criticize, communicate, and engage. A concentration on basic disciplines, in combination with a supportive residential life program that encourages personal and social development, is intended to foster intellectual vitality, confidence, leadership, and the flexibility to succeed in a changing technological, multicultural world.



Next "Moments"

June

Scholarship Support: Making Whitman accessible to the finest students from all backgrounds.

September

Whitman College's Financial Base:

Maximizing educational quality through stewardship of the College's financial assets.

Questions or comments: president@whitman.edu



The personal and societal impact of liberally educated Whitman graduates

Whitman graduates are lifelong learners. For decades, Whitman has successfully guided our students as they learned to read, listen, and communicate thoughtfully and purposefully, in the liberal arts tradition. In our globally connected world, it is more important than ever that we know what we mean and how to articulate it.



Whitman College will educate the next generation of innovators and leaders — those informed and responsible citizens who have the intellectual skills to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world, while considering the impact of their choices on the lives of others in their community and around the globe. A comprehensive education in the liberal arts and sciences has the potential to ignite and fuel the spark in our students that unlocks their ability to change our world for the better.

Stay informed about our initiatives and our progress on the Whitman website, in the Whitman Magazine, and through future issues of this newsletter. You, our alumni and friends, are our partners in this ambitious plan to advance the academic program at Whitman. We look forward to sharing this exciting journey with you.