Bridge as Past and Present: Whitman, World War I and the Gift of the Class of 1908

By Will Gregg ’14 | Whitman College and Northwest Archives student assistant

In the heart of Whitman’s campus between Maxey Hall and Boyer Avenue, an old stone bridge unassumingly allows students and professors to cross College Creek. Those passersby with keen eyes may have noticed that the bridge was given to the college in 1918 by the Class of 1908, when Billings Hall stood in place of Maxey. More scarcely known, however, are the circumstances of that gift.

Whitman’s 36th annual Commencement was, as was reported in the Walla Walla Union on June 20, 1918, “marked by unusual and striking features.” One of these features was the dedication of the bridge, which was not without ceremony: Two groups faced each other over the creek that day. On the south bank, Whitman’s newest graduates arrived in full regalia, marching along Boyer Avenue. On the north, representatives of the

Members of the Class of 1908 march across the bridge as part of the dedication ceremony. Children of the class preceded their parents across the bridge, tossing flowers. President Stephen B. L. Penrose stands to the right.
The Class of 1908 bridge provides a timeless and popular setting for photographers, whether today or decades ago.

Submit to FiftyPlus News

Please contribute, and encourage your classmates to contribute, stories, letters, photos and memories. We welcome stories about life at Whitman when you were here or things “Whitman-related” that have influenced your life in the intervening years. Stories should be 1,000 words or less.

Send materials to:
Rikki Gwinn
c/o Whitman College Alumni Office
345 Boyer Ave.
Walla Walla, WA 99362

or email gwinnrl@whitman.edu.
1908 class awaited them. Children of the class proceeded across the bridge, scattering flowers ahead of their parents, who followed. Reaching the other side, Edward Mason 1908 addressed the new graduates and President Penrose.

The lofty style of his speech matched its attendant ceremony. The dominant theme running through the rhetoric was neither a list of Whitman’s various virtues nor a retelling of the Class of 1918’s fondest memories, but rather the other “striking” feature alluded to by the Walla Walla Union above: World War I.

But do you suppose the real need of Whitman College for this bridge is that students may cross the creek to science hall? No, that is only half – that is only a small part of the reason. For, as I take it, this college sits, in the midst of war, like Moses of old upon the mountain top. When she raises her hands with the rod in them, there is some little part of the battle, extending through the cantonments and into the front line trenches in France, where the forces of righteousness fight the overcoming fight. And if she would lower her hands, that little bit of the battle tide would turn. But she needs someone to uphold her hands when they wax weary, as Moses had, and that is the reason for the bridge.

This speech, like the speeches of the graduating class itself, were also centered on the war. Three students were selected to give orations that day. One was absent in domestic military service, and the other two spoke exclusively on wartime themes, the role of democracy and service of the greater good.

The United States entered World War I in April 1917. By June 1918, when the Commencement was held, there were 188 stars stitched on a flag that hung in the college’s chapel. One hundred eighty-eight members of the Whitman community – graduates, undergraduates and professors – were involved directly in the war. By December 1918, after the Armistice, the list had grown to 345. And, of Whitman’s total enrollment for the 1918-19 school year, of 310 students, at least 138 students were involved in the military, whether in nursing, the armed services, or in the Student Army Training Corps.

Given these numbers, it may not be entirely surprising that the war figured predominantly in Whitman’s collective mind. And yet Whitman’s campus and new bridge were still miles from Flanders Fields and the horrors of the trenches. Perhaps the distance enabled the orators to ignore the harsh realities of war.
The alumni magazine *Whitman Alumnus* was often the most substantial connection that our small community had with its members overseas and vice versa. One soldier’s letter printed in the *Alumnus* states bluntly, “…perhaps this letter will act as a news-note to the effect that I am still in existence.”

and instead focus on the ennobling aspects of service. Consider Commencement speaker Gertrude Goodspeed’s speech, “The New Individual,” given at the graduation ceremony:

[T]housands upon thousands are gaining a practical, acting intelligence. Control of self, quick comprehension of unusual situations and the ability immediately to solve such situations are developed by actual experience in modern warfare. The actual intelligence of men is increasing, and as men advance in their intelligence, their moral judgment increases. They develop new values and new standards for valuing. Our aim here at home must be to keep pace with the moral evolution of the man at the front, so that, on his return, we shall not drag him back into his old ruts of selfishness and shiftlessness but push him upward and onward.

Goodspeed does not address the physical or psychological challenges associated with warfare, but rather she views the experience of war as a moral boon. Whether or not this was true for those serving directly is not apparent from the graduation ceremony itself. What it does show, however, is that Whitman echoed the rest of the country in portraying the war as a great struggle for democracy. As Mason said in his speech, Whitman’s role was to provide “men of the kind the war needs.”

Letters featured in the alumni magazine from former and current Whitman students overseas give us a glimpse, many years removed, into daily life there. Often the letter writers expressed a certain amount of homesickness:

Believe me, here is one who would like to be there for the commencement and the alumni banquet and meeting, but that doesn’t alter the fact that we are glad to be serving our country. We certainly should be able to have a rousing ‘get-together’ as soon as we lick the Hun. (Levi Kohlstaedt ’17)

Kohlstaedt’s is a revealing optimism. The confidence of eventual victory and the informal language and tone combine to create a feeling of ease and reassurance. On the whole, Whitmanites reported fair conditions. As one said, “Many of the boys are doubtless feeding better than they did at home.” Still, soldiers did write about hardships and sad circumstances. One described a French woman who, employed with her daughter as a maid by the army for a time, had lost her husband and two sons to fighting and a third son to disease, and the fourth son was a prisoner of war. Some soldiers, at least, grew used to the steady and monotonous sounds of war, and one Whitmanite commented that, “I have got now so I can sleep right through the firing of our big guns not a 100 yards away or up at my observation post where the German shells come screaming over-head and burst with a loud smash.” While not focused on the harsh realities of war, these letters generally also do not depict war, as Commencement speaker Goodspeed suggested, as a daily moral triumph. Most Whitmanites were homesick (“Your letter with news of Commencement week filled in a gap for me”) or wrote about the mundane intricacies of promotion or training.

The alumni magazine *Whitman Alumnus* was often the most substantial connection that our small community had with its members overseas and vice versa. One soldier’s letter printed in the *Alumnus* states bluntly, “…perhaps this letter will act as a news-note to the effect that I am still in existence.” Letters, service lists and news of domestic war efforts ran alongside more typical reports of the goings-on at Whitman, which those stationed overseas so appreciated.

Lloyd Gensel ’19, Bill Wilson ’20 and Harold Botts ’18 standing to the left of an unidentified commander during military training in 1917.
On further reflection

I so enjoyed the article focusing on Herr Fredrick Santler, as he was my favorite Whitman professor while I attended there from 1954-1958. I was a business administration/econ major, and I took German my sophomore year to fill my language requirement. I only had Herr Santler one year, but I still would vote him as my favorite professor. I had signed up for the second year of German when he became ill (a heart condition, I believe) and the class was taught by a senior student, and while that person was probably very good in German, after two classes, and the word that Herr Santler would not be able to teach that year, I decided that another year of German would not be to my liking.

Herr Santler brought to the classroom much more than being able to speak and write German. While he was great at that, he interwove personal experiences into his lectures that made me (and I should use the pronoun “us”) look forward to his classes. As students, we lived during a time when economic activity in the U.S.A. was truly expanding, and there probably weren’t many students (if any) attending Whitman who experienced the hardships that Herr Santler did, and I have always thought it was great to learn of his hardships to make certain that the conditions he went through, as did most Austrians, were in the past, and we would hopefully never have to experience them.

While he was growing up in Austria, the economy was truly in disastrous shape; I recently read where the unemployment reached 25 percent at that time. In one lecture, he spoke of how his family (his mom and dad and one sibling) would have a “gruel” (hot cereal) made of cracked wheat, oats and corn with a side dish of “one quarter of an egg each” (for a source of protein) for breakfast, as things were “so tight in Austria.” For a
On my first trip, I had written down the address of Whitman College, not knowing if Herr Santler was still enlightening the student body with his teachings, but if he was “still with us” at the time, I knew they would forward letters to him. While at a restaurant at the hotel where I was staying, I started a letter to Herr Santler, and with the help of a waitress, wrote three paragraphs in German thanking him for his talent, his patience and his dedication to his craft in teaching us German. I then went on in English to add this letter was long overdue, but the impact he made on me would last a lifetime, and I wanted him to know that.

I even added there was a possibility that he might not remember me after 30 years, so I mentioned I was from Joseph, Ore., as was another Herr Santler admirer, Ivan “Butch” Hovis ’58. I also mentioned I was including Pete Reid ’49 on the correspondence, so as to insure the letter got to him.

Some six weeks after returning to the U.S., I hadn’t heard anything from Herr Santler, so I called Pete Reid, who as the Phi Delt adviser when I attended school had helped me immensely. I asked him if he had gotten a copy of my letter, which he had, and if he had any idea that Herr Santler had received it. I was so pleased when he said to the effect that Herr Santler had received it, and while he was no longer active at Whitman, recently (at that time) he had attended a luncheon, as did Pete, and he was sharing my letter with his friends at the college and that he was pleased to have received it.

The very next week, I got a letter from Herr Santler, stating he, indeed, remembered the two Joseph, Ore., lads, and he appreciated the kinds words I’d expressed while on that trip to Germany.

While a long time had gone by, we had reconnected for a short time; I felt good about FINALLY thanking a talented professor for a job exceptionally well done, as he passed away just a short period of time after that. I would like to think we both felt good about reconnecting.

I’m glad Helen Haigh Mills ’44 reflections were included in the Fifty Plus News. I cut it out and put it in the 1958 Annual.

Kindest personal regards,

Ed Newton ’58
edmar1044@gmail.com
Make a gift to support Whitman and receive guaranteed income for life!

### Charitable Gift Annuity Sample Rates

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* Assumes 25% income tax rate and $25,000 cash funding.

If you have any questions about gift annuities or other options to support Whitman College, please contact the Office of Gift Planning or visit the gift planning website: [www.whitman.edu/gp](http://www.whitman.edu/gp)

Jamie Kennedy ’96 • (509) 527-5989 • kennedjj@whitman.edu
FiftyPlus News

Remembering the SUB

1950

Late 1960s
Like many others, I spent hours playing bridge in the SUB when I had less free time and should have been studying. Now that I have a little more free time, I can’t find anyone in the vicinity who plays bridge. Does anyone under 70 still play the game? My best memory of evening functions at the SUB was when the Gateway Singers put on their show singing “Puttin on the Agony, Puttin on the Style.” My grandkids like to sing it with me.

— Dan O’Neal ’56

My best SUB memory: the (Tues?) evening dances. I called a pretty frosh early in my senior year, and we’ve never looked back. Hearing “Chances Are” on the oldies station occasionally brings back the memory of our first dance together at the SUB.

— Don and Barb Leonard ’58

Many of us met future spouses in the SUB for coffee, a Coke, an ice cream cone in the spring or a dance. Count me among them! Raye Murray ’56 and I have been married for 55 years. Our son-in-law (Stephen Morris ’80) flipped burgers at the SUB a generation later when our daughter (Robin Murray Morris ’80) met with him.

— Jan Rubey Murray ’58

Things that come to mind are the dents in Jim Ladley’s ’58 green Chevy when he tried to drive between the posts around the parking area; a stripped Christmas tree, thanks to the Phantom; or the time there was “the Phantom almost died here” sign on the top of the old car in Lakum Duckum.

— Arnold Coe ’58
The Whitman Letter Project

The Whitman Letter Project gathered letters from Whitman alumni in the classes of 1969 to 1973, written by or to them during their college years, and from excerpts of those letters created a script which was presented on stage at the April 2012 reunion. We’re expanding this project and are grateful others are sending their letters.

July 17, 2012
Whitman Letter Project:
Enclosed are a few letters I wrote home while I was attending Whitman during 1949-50 and also some correspondence I received from Whitman.

A glimpse into campus life during those years is amazing – students leaving home and attending college were so closely monitored in every aspect. The house mother who signed us in and out and guarded the door made sure no boys went past the small reception area of our dorm. The dress code on campus, and especially the formality of dining hall, wouldn’t be believed by present day students. I, for one, took it all for granted and never felt I was overly supervised. I fondly recall the house mother shouting, “Man in dorm,” when a male was admitted to repair something. The big excitement in those days was being serenaded outside one’s dorm window by your boyfriend’s fraternity, and the thrilling arrival of a Bendix washing machine – we didn’t have to mail our laundry home or drag it into town to be washed! Of course, there was no TV, and we all guarded our radios! My “dorm” was Jacobs House – one of the three army prefabs.

One oddity I recall was the smoking in classrooms. Seems strange nowadays to think back to some, including the professor, puffing away during class.

I wrote many letters – I must have written home nearly every day! More than a few of the letters stressed my preoccupation with the Tennessee Valley Authority project. Apparently, it was for a term paper – I am happy to report I received the top grade!

If any more letters are needed for your project, I will be happy to send more.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Drennan Bishop ’53

Tuesday
April, 1950

Dear Mother,

Lots of things have happened since my last letter. You wouldn’t know the campus. It’s plastered with campaign posters and campaign jibes. Remember when we read in the Whitman book about the ingenious campaigns held every year? Well, we’re having them now. Kids from all the different sororities and fraternities – and the Indies, too – took sleeping bags and slept under all the trees on campus so that they could have the night to hang their posters on that particular tree. On the way to breakfast, you could see the kids still sleeping under the trees. Promptly at 11 a.m., when the clock tower struck, everyone on campus started madly fighting for places to put up posters and signs and jibes. The whole campus was made a turmoil. A loud speaker played music, and inside of 10 minutes, every tree, building and dorm was covered with posters.

Today the campus was really a turmoil. There are dozens more posters and signs up, and all day long, there were big campaign tricks. To give you an example, here are some of the things that happened. The Phi Delts got a real bathtub and mounted it on a stand with wheels on it, and three boys with bathing suits on sat in it, and they were kept supplied with warm water and soap suds, and they had big brushes to wash their backs. They were pulled all over campus, and as they went, they sang “Rub a dub dub, three men in a tub, vote For Cub!” Also, the Phi Delts had two guys dressed up really weirdly. One had a bloody axe. He was bloody all over, and he was carrying a dead chicken in his hand. He wandered all over campus all day and through the...
dining hall. The other guy had big fake cuts and bruises all over, and he had a big long chain tied to his ankle which he dragged around when he walked his slow Frankenstein walk. The Beta Theta Pis had the funniest old car they had all painted up, and they drove it around all day. The Tekes had an old outhouse sitting on campus with “Headquarters for Esary, our candidate” written on it. At 10 minutes to 1 p.m., a boy dressed in a real funny old fashioned bathing suit and a shower cap dove into Lakum Duckum, and swam, or rather floundered, across it. On one bank it said “Calais,” and on the other side, “Dover.” All day long, two boys rode a tandem bike all over campus and sang “Daisy, Daisy,” only they used their own words to campaign for their candidate. The Beta Theta Pis had a live goat on campus with a sign on it that said “This kid is voting for MacKinney.”

All the girls in the Alpha Chi sorority wore really funny red wigs with bangs to classes all day. They were campaigning for their candidate, who is a red head. Other sorority girls whose candidate is June Bowen wore their skirts pulled up, and you could see their slips and a sign that said “I’m showin’ for Bowen.” Some other cute tricks this sorority used included having girls standing around playing violins with signs on them that said: “I’m bowin’ for Bowen”; they also had cute, little, painted flowers sticking up all over in the grass with a sign that said, “I’m growin’ for Bowen.”

The girls from the Tri Delts rode horses around all day long with signs on their backs saying “This Jockey is voting for Herman, you know her record.”

The Alpha Phis had really cute Burma-Shave signs set up along all the walls, so you could see them as you walked along.

In our English class, there are rows of pictures of old Greek and Roman scholars all attached together, and when we came to class today, someone had slipped in a picture of one of the boy candidates over the picture of one of the Greeks. It looked so funny. Our English professor got quite a kick out of it, too.

Also at dinner every night a different group of fraternity boys hash us. Boy do they do a funny job of serving. Tonight the Indie men hashed us. At meals at each plate there are lots and lots of funny favors with funny campaign sayings on them, such as a matchstick that said “Pato, no match vote for her.”

Tonight (it’s midnight now) the boys have been clustered around the dorm since 11 p.m. Just one fraternity leaves, and another comes. They are beating drums and blowing sirens and singing. They have big torches and are dressed in sheets. It’s really an impressive sight to see a whole string of them come single-file across the campus. Earlier this evening, the Tekes had a big truck with a piano and band on it, and they cruised all around.

This afternoon, Dick and Dolores and I went to the park and fed the ducks and got some pictures of them. Also, we fooled around and somehow Dick’s sock got out in the middle of the water, and he had to wade out and get it, and his pants got soaking wet, and he had to go back to the dorm like that. Dee and I just about died laughing, and we got some pictures of him too.

Also, we got just dozens and dozens of pictures of the campus with its posters all up. We get them back Friday, so I’ll mail them, too.

Oh yes, one fraternity has been wearing these great big noses and great big black, horn-rimmed glasses all over.

May Fete is May 5, 6, 7. Please come. It’s the big affair of the year, and everyone’s parents will be coming. It’s Parents Weekend. There will be a big May Fete show outside and a banquet outside and a dance, a tea, etc. Please come!!

I finally got the battery for my radio that Wa-Wa and Dad were going to buy me when they were here once. It was $5. Do you care?

Love,
Carol
Dec. 9, 1943

Dr. Anderson Makes Talks

Dr. Winslow S. Anderson, Whitman College president, is speaking today on “The Colleges Go to War” before an annual three-day conference of the Northwest Association of Secondary and Higher Schools at Missoula, Mont.

This organization includes colleges and secondary schools in Oregon, Washington, Alaska, Montana, California, Idaho, Nevada and Utah, and is responsible for all matters concerning them, including accrediting institutions of learning in those regions.

The address of Dr. Anderson is one of a two-week series that began when he gave a speech Monday for the Kiwanis club at Pomeroy titled “Now Is the Time …”

“Independence or Charity” will be the subject of his next address to be given before the Yakima Kiwanis club Tuesday.

Dec. 19, 1953

Placement Service Locates Jobs for Students, Alumni

The total number of students with employment grants placed by the Whitman employment service is about 140, reports Kenneth Hupp, assistant to the president. In addition, approximately 80 students have been placed by the placement service in jobs both on and off campus.

“An unknown number have regularly engaged in incidental part-time jobs, such as baby-sitting, lawn work, house-cleaning and retail clerking,” added Mr. Hupp.

Meeting Planned

Later in the year, a meeting for seniors will be held, at which time the procedure involved in registering and placing interested and qualified students will be outlined, he announced. Personnel representatives from several corporations, state and federal civil services and special professional and non-professional graduates will visit the campus from time to time during the winter to explain to senior students their personnel needs and to offer employment to those qualified.

Mr. Hupp urges seniors to avail themselves of the placement service and to take advantage of meeting with as many of these visiting representatives as possible through appointment schedules.

The same afternoon, Dr. Anderson will speak to the Woman’s Century Club of Yakima concerning “True Freedoms or False Freedoms.”
**Service Finds**

The placement service is also concerned with finding satisfactory positions for teaching graduates. The placement office registers senior teaching majors and acts as a clearing agent for teaching vacancies it receives on the one hand and qualifications and needs of teaching registrants on the other.

After returning from the meeting of the Northwest Association of College Placement officials at Ellensburg Nov. 2 and 3, Mr. Hupp said, “There will continue to be acute shortages of qualified teachers at several levels and a general shortage of college-trained personnel for business and industry next year despite the truce in Korea.”

Dates of senior placement meetings will be published in The Pioneer and will also be publicized by oral announcements in the various residences.

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### Nov. 14, 1963

**Summer Work in Europe Available to Students**

The American Student Information Service, with headquarters in Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, is now accepting applications from U.S. college students who wish to work in Europe next summer.

The ASIS can place students in temporary summer work in Great Britain, France, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Spain, Sweden, Finland, Norway, Luxembourg, Belgium, Holland, Austria, Israel and Liechtenstein.

**5,000 Openings**

ASIS has 5,000 job openings within categories that include resort hotel work, office work, child care work, ship work, construction work, farm work, sales work and camp counseling work.

Wages range up to $400 a month for the highest paying positions in West Germany.

**Orientation in Europe**

Every student placed in a summer job in Europe attends a 5-day orientation period in Grand Duchy of Luxembourg that includes cultural orientation tours to Germany, France, Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg; blackboard sessions; and on-the-scene language practice.

Students may also attend lectures given by European university professors.

The ASIS, a non-profit organization in its seventh year of operation, also supplies job applicants, at no extra cost, with a complete set of records of the language of the country in which the applicant will be working.

**Travel Grants to $1,000**

The ASIS also offers travel grants that greatly reduce the cost of the summer in Europe. These grants can range as high as $1,000 depending upon individual circumstances.

Student applicants are also free to make their own travel arrangements to and from Europe.

Students interested in summer work in Europe should write to Dept. I, American Student Information Service, 22 Avenue de la Liberte, Luxembourg City, Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, for the ASIS 24-page prospectus, which includes a complete listing of jobs available, and job and travel grant applications. Send $1 for the prospectus and an air mail reply.
50 years ago …
“Mutual of Omaha’s Wild Kingdom” with Marlin Perkins begins on NBC.

60 years ago …
Actor Desi Arnaz, Jr. is born in Los Angeles.

70 years ago …
What things cost:
- Car: $1,100
- Gasoline: 19 cents per gallon
- House: $8,000
- Bread: 9 cents per loaf
- Milk: 62 cents per gallon
- Postage stamp: 3 cents
- Average annual salary: $2,500
- Minimum wage: 30 cents per hour
2013 Fifty-Plus Reunion Weekend
Friday, June 21, through Sunday, June 23, 2013

Join alumni from the Classes of 1962 and earlier for a weekend on the Whitman College campus. There will be special celebrations for the following classes:

- 55th Reunion for the Class of 1958
- 60th Reunion for the Class of 1953
- 65th Reunion for the Class of 1948

As plans develop you will receive additional information.
Watch the Reunion website for updates at www.whitman.edu/reunions.

Questions? Contact the Alumni Office at 1-800-835-9448 ext. 1 or gwinnrl@whitman.edu

The Whitman College Alumni Association
345 Boyer Ave., Walla Walla, WA 99362

On May 25, 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt addressed a crowd of 6,000 on the Memorial Hall grounds. The visit was “part of a campaign to gain western support for his forthcoming bid for the presidency,” according to the website HistoryLink.com.

Below: The original Prentiss Hall is decorated for the festive occasion.

Prof. Howard Brode, who taught biology courses at Whitman from 1899 until 1936, photographed the historic visit. In addition to his teaching duties, Brode also served as curator of the Whitman Museum. Image and information are courtesy of the Whitman College and Northwest Archives.
THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR
with Prof. David F. Schmitz, Robert Allen Skotheim chair of history
May 20-31, 2013

$4800 per person double occupancy
More than a tour, this visit to historic sites in Boston, New York and Philadelphia is a unique exploration of the birth of America. Led by one of Whitman’s most distinguished faculty members, and accompanied by local experts, this unique journey will immerse you in the lives and decisions of the founders. Prof. Schmitz’s lectures and discussions will provide a glimpse into the excellent education offered at Whitman today.

THE OREGON SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL
with Prof. Theresa DiPasquale, department of English chair
August 2-5, 2013

Enjoy this annual theater experience in the lovely town of Ashland, Ore., along with a presentation by Prof. DiPasquale, discussions, and the camaraderie of shared meals and conversations with fellow play-goers. Lodging at the Ashland Springs Hotel in downtown Ashland, one block from the theaters.

EASTERN WASHINGTON GEOLOGY AND HISTORY
with Prof. Patrick Spencer, professor of geology, and Prof. David F. Schmitz, Robert Allen Skotheim chair of history
Oct. 11-15, 2013

Ice, floods, a coulee and a dam with Prof. Patrick Spencer and Prof. David Schmitz. Learn about lava flows and ice, the Missoula floods, and the people who envisioned and built the largest hydropower project in the United States. This trip is currently sold out; please contact the Alumni Office to be wait-listed.

MORE INFORMATION ON ALUMNI TRIPS
For brochures, visit www.whitman.edu/alumnitrips. For details, email Margaret Hoglund at hoglund@whitman.edu or call the Alumni Office at (509) 527-5167 or (800) 835-9448, ext. 1.

Income generated from participation in the Whitman College Alumni Association travel program is used to pay for the travel expenses of faculty and staff and the promotional costs associated with the travel program.