What is the purpose of the Alumni Board?

In 1895, Whitman College alumni organized the Alumni Association to promote the interests of its members and their alma mater. Today the Whitman College Alumni Association continues to foster and maintain those interests between Whitman and its extended family.

To carry out this mission, the Board of Directors of the Alumni Association maintains standing committees which advise the Alumni Office on alumni matters and communicate alumni reactions to college programs.

In other words, they work to keep you connected, and to bring your concerns back to the administration. Let them know how you feel!

J Preston Frederickson ’02, Walla Walla, Wash., President
Kirsten Adams Gable ’01, Spokane, Wash., Vice President
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On Nov. 18, 2011, this college unveiled a fundraising effort for broader and deeper scholarship funds, a stronger and more comprehensive academic environment, and a more financially independent institution overall. The program is called Now Is the Time, and it's been incredibly effective: Since its beginning, Whitman has raised $128 million and counting.

In light of this, school officials have asked me to introduce the newest step in their campaign. This step is a wide-ranging outreach program aimed at newly graduated alumni and young alumni alike.

I'd like to present the newest movement in our college’s history: Now Is the Time: To Fail.

It might seem incongruous to be talking about failure at Commencement, an event which is traditionally one of the more significant markers of achievement. But, more than anything, what I have learnt at Whitman is that success and failure go hand in hand. You could say Whitman breeds success stories. Unsurprisingly, there are dangerously high levels of success in front of me right now. But the one thing that I feel is truly under-appreciated about the...
Whitman College education is how well it prepares each and every one of us to rebound and thrive after royally screwing up.

Some people just go on to runaway success right out of the gates; maybe a few of us here will go on to own catering franchises at small liberal arts colleges. Most of us will not be lucky enough to find ourselves in a position to rip off college kids.

Everybody fails at some point. Bill Gates green-lighted Windows Vista. George Lucas made the prequels. Steve Jobs failed for 30 years before he got turtlenecks figured out. For every “Wicker Man,” or “Bad Lieutenant,” there is a “Ghost Rider.” Eric Idle starred in the 1990 hit movie “Nuns on the Run.” That man has a lot to answer for. Robert Downey, Jr. shot up, John McCain got shot down, and 50 Cent was shot nine times, and we celebrate each of them for their endeavors.

Failure is inevitable. How we react to it is, therefore, crucial. To me, what’s important is not if or how someone failed, but if they harnessed the incredible powers of change and growth that come from the failure. Thankfully, this response is a skill that can be learnt and taught, and is the unlikely byproduct of a Whitman education; the development of agile, self-aware, latitudinal, and critical thinking, and effective writing and speaking allow us to rebound quickly from disappointment. It’s not something that you’ll see in the admissions brochures, but it may be the most important thing I’ve learnt.

I’ve seen people learn it. I’ve learnt it myself. I remember coming home from the one advanced class I took as a freshman in a daze, wondering what the upper-classmen were even talking about. My teacher at the time didn’t think much of my work either. It took me a few months, maybe even a semester or two, to finally catch up and understand their thoughts. Soon I could drop a dichotomy or paradigm or hegemony as well as all the other kids.

Part of accepting failure is having the humility to know that success is not a given. This stack of diplomas opens up incredible opportunities for every one of us; it does not, however, entitle us to these opportunities. There is an overwhelming collection of research which suggests that having an undergraduate degree is the key – across all intersections of race, gender, class, etc. – to a greater quality of life. But holding the key doesn’t automatically give you the right to open the door. There is so much more work to be done after today, and some of it will end calamitously; that’s OK.

Another part of accepting failure is understanding that failure and success mean different things for different people. Today, for us, success means graduation. Today, for others, success means eating. We are very lucky at Whitman to have learnt ways to be flexible and adaptive around failure. For many here in America and around the world, failure is not an opportunity; it’s a dead-end. I acknowledge that my “failures” would seem nonsensical to many, even in the boundaries of Walla Walla. This doesn’t minimize my experience; it broadens it. To understand my role in the world means I no longer take success for granted.

And let me be clear; I’m not saying we should feel guilty about being graduates of a well-known liberal arts college. I’m saying that humility is knowing the social context within which we’re situated. It’s also being able to ask for help when you’re veering off course and saying “thank you” when others pull you out of the wreckage and dust you off. I have been pulled out of a fair share of wrecks so I have to finish with thanks. Thank you to all those who stood and graduated here before us; without you, I’m not sure where we’d be. Thank you to all the faculty I’ve gotten to learn from, but specifically: Thank you to Keith for telling me, “Bad things happen to good people, and you’re certainly one of those.” Thank you to Chris for telling me, “Make bold choices. Better to be brave and screw it up than to make toast in the corner.” Thank you to Shampa for telling me, “Whatever you end up doing, you shouldn’t be able to sleep at night.” Thank you to my friends and family; without you, I’d be a graduate of a prestigious college with no friends or family. Just kidding. But most importantly, thanks to all of you, my classmates, for teaching me more than any book or professor ever has. Let’s go @@! up. Now is the time.

Thank you,

Thomas Knook ’13
When I left Whitman, I had spent four years thinking a great deal about my assumptions and my view of the world, but I hadn’t spent much time thinking about what I would do with this knowledge. After a year working in Seattle, I realized that the most important thing I learned at Whitman was that I loved learning and I wanted to keep doing it. Only this time instead of through books, I moved to India for six months, volunteering at a rural health clinic and orphanage.

In India, I fell right back into the learning process. I had to learn the language, I had to learn to cook and clean without microwaves or washing machines, to live without running water and electricity (sometimes), to take care of children with extreme physical and mental disabilities, and most importantly, I had to learn how different it is to be a woman in the developing world. In the village I lived in, many women had very little say in their lives, from whether or not they could leave the house to how many children they would have. Because I was staying with nurses and midwives, I heard women much younger than me talking about childbirth and pregnancy and their fears of dying. I realized how critical family planning and safe childbirth are to women and decided to pursue a career in public health.

Since India, I have lived in Uganda, Rwanda and Afghanistan. I have lived in refugee camps working on family planning provision with the UN, worked on an HIV vaccine trial and traveled throughout Afghanistan to study delivery and childbirth in a country where one in 10 women will die from giving birth. I received my Master’s in Public Health from Emory University and am now in my (hopefully) final year of my Ph.D. program at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Currently, I am working on a 10-country project of family planning use and will soon be traveling to Somali refugee camps in Ethiopia to study the reproductive health needs of adolescent refugees.

With each experience, I have met women and men with wildly divergent opinions about reproductive health, women’s rights, and the appropriateness of family planning, abortion and STI disease management. As a politics major at Whitman, I was encouraged to think about all sides of an issue and about the critical assumptions and context that lay behind the problem. I find myself returning to this constantly in my work. I work with men and with women who disagree whole-heartedly with me about many things, but that doesn't mean that either of us are incorrect. Whitman taught me to discuss, debate and listen. By doing so, the learning process that started at Whitman has continued and evolved for the past 10 years and I hope, will continue in the future.

Linnea Zimmerman ’04 grew up in Index, Wash., the second-smallest town in the state. At Whitman she was a politics major and chemistry minor and at various points was a member of blue moon, The Pioneer, Amnesty International and ASWC. Linnea’s current interests and activities besides earning her Ph.D. at Johns Hopkins include mentoring middle school and high school youth, mountain climbing, travel and gadding about town as the demands of work and life permit.
The Alumni Association gives the Pete Reid Award for Young Alumni to an alumnus or alumna who demonstrates enthusiasm toward his or her career, community or Whitman College as exemplified by Pete Reid ’49 in his service to the college. This award is limited to graduates of the last 15 years. Standards for recognition include outstanding recognition in his or her career or field of work, outstanding service to others and a demonstrated commitment to Whitman College.

Please use the form at whitman.edu/alumniawards.

In 2009, Wanijiru Kamau-Rutenberg ’01 was awarded the Pete Reid Award for Young Alumni for her founding of Akili Dada. Akili Dada is an international award-winning leadership incubator nurturing a generation of young African women from underprivileged backgrounds whose commitment to the underserved is transforming their communities.

We are thrilled to announce that this fall, Whitman will welcome its first Akili Dada alumna, Faith Nyakundi, to campus.

“I’m just so excited that after many years of dreaming it up, we finally have an Akili Dada girl joining Whitman just like I did those many years ago.”

— Dr. Wanijiru Kamau-Rutenberg ’01

This story was graciously submitted by Shea Morrissey ’07 who is currently the Communications and Development Manager for Akili Dada.
Submit to Livewire!

Has something wonderful happened in your life this year? Send a photo and caption for Livewire by filling out the Class Note submission form at www.whitman.edu/classnoteform. Then email your photo to livewire@whitman.edu.

Electronically submitted photos must be at least 300 dpi for a three by five-inch photo. Or mail original photos to Whitman College Alumni Office, Attn: Livewire, 345 Boyer Ave., Walla Walla, WA 99362. If you would like your photos returned to you, please include a note. Don’t forget to name everyone in the photo!

LOST alumni

If you know the whereabouts or the email addresses of any of these Whitties, please send that information to addrchg@whitman.edu.

2003
Emily J. Bennett
El Blue Eagle
Wendy M. Hanson
Yoko Hasegawa
Mark R. Hinshaw
Casey Elijah Holland
Cuong M. Luu
Charlene Renee Strozinsky

2004
Juli A. Armstrong
Cindy S. Godard-Gross
Katherine Jean Heneghan
Shannon R. Matzinger
Samuel and Jeanne K. Peterson
Noah B. Sanders

2005
Andrew M. Fraser
Kaleen E. Miller
Ayman Raouf Mourad

2006
Aaron Walter Bell
Gareth Collin Campbell
Tory Joe Corson
Corinne Cathcart Gibbon
Jena Marie Griswold
Jordan Richard Kline
Andy Chang Lee
Donnel Alexander Maksym
Natalie Udwin

2007
Carl Lee Edwards
Robyn D. Edwards
Amanda Claire King
Moanapaaaloaokalani Lyman

2008
Shaheryar Akbar
Erik Thor Andersen
Katharine Marie Avery
Gayle Lynn Chung
Beth Anne Davis
Jeffrey Bert DeGroot
Lydia Nicole Hayes
Cecil Clay Jones
Benjamin John Sexson
Jyotsna Shivanandan
Carolina Adelia Van Horn
Robert Scott Westermann
Kimberly Ann Wetter

2009
Alexander Warren Abrams
Matthew Robert Bartha
Jared Michael Burns
Jennifer Mochizuki Doane
Megan Helene Duffy
Mary-Eileen Gallagher
Vanessa Marie Johnson
Sarah Elizabeth North
Charles Beckmann Rohr
David Youngblood

2010
Evan Ross Aegerter
Kira Anna Badyka
Graham Taylor Brewer
Luc Lemoine Brodhead
Kayla Cordelia Cooper
Albert Min Lee
Kendi Marion Thomas
Karl Joseph Wallulis

2011
William Wagner Reese

WHITMAN ONLINE

WHITMAN ONLINE is the best way to keep in touch with classmates and make connections with other Whitman alumni.

Register at www.alumniconnections.com/whitmancollege/.

You’ll need your Whitman ID (WID) to verify your account. Do you remember yours? If not, contact the Alumni Office at alumni@whitman.edu or 1.800.835.9448, ext. 1.

Features:

• Search by name, class year, geographic location and more.
• Upload your résumé.
• Set up an email forwarding address to use with sites like Facebook.
Upcoming Reunions

2013 Fall Reunion Weekend

Sept. 27-29, 2013
10th Reunion, Class of 2003
More information at www.whitman.edu/reunions

2014 Reunion Weekend

Sept. 17-21, 2014
5th Reunion Cluster, Classes of 2008, 2009 and 2010
10th Reunion, Class of 2004
And more!