



The
SEC

**Whitman
College**

**STUDENT
ENGAGEMENT
CENTER**

Our Story

Welcome!

When students attend Whitman, they confront challenges, learn, grow and gain abilities and confidence that they will draw upon for their entire lives, as professionals, citizens, community members and lifelong intellectual adventurers. Our broad liberal arts curriculum and myriad experiential learning opportunities provide our students with a powerful combination of assets to take in whatever directions fit their personal and career goals.

Several years ago, under the leadership of Associate Dean Clare Carson, Dean of Students Chuck Cleveland, Associate to the Dean of Students Donna Cummins, and President George Bridges, Whitman centralized and integrated a variety of programs that invite our students to take their in-class learning beyond campus, to engage themselves in what they are fond of calling “the real world.”

After several years of intensive planning, implementation and recalibration, we are now realizing the vision of these four innovators through the Student Engagement Center. I share two examples that appeared the week this document went to print:

First, in his final column for our local newspaper, President Bridges reflected on his 10 years here, concluding:

Over the past few years, Whitman has strengthened its capacity for and commitment to creating opportunities to weave community service into our students’ experiences in a way that compliments their academic work. In doing so, our students have a broader and richer education while also having valuable opportunities to explore lines of work and possible careers they might (or might not) pursue after they graduate. By welcoming Whitman students as volunteers, Walla Walla helps us achieve the well-rounded education we define as part of our institutional mission.

Second, Whitman’s leading role in national conversations about the future of liberal arts education was recognized in a report on experiential learning. The report, “Best Practices in Experiential Learning at Liberal Arts Institutions,” conducted by Hanover Research, selected Whitman as one of four exemplar case studies. The study, which focused on “administrative structures, internship program management, student engagement and marketing, implementation strategies, and the relationship between liberal arts skills and the current job market,” highlighted pioneering ways that Whitman provides students with access to high-impact experiences.

Our Student Engagement Center is one of the unique resources that makes Whitman Whitman. I invite you to spend a few moments reading through these pages to learn more about why I believe so strongly that this is the case.

I hope that by the time you reach recently retired Associate Dean Clare Carson’s reflections on the final page of this book you will appreciate why we believe that we have created a highly effective mechanism to help our students combine their broad liberal arts education and their passion for and curiosity about the world around them so that they can succeed in our changing, technological, multicultural world.

I am eager to hear your thoughts about our Center and I welcome your reactions and questions. Please contact me directly at leavitns@whitman.edu.

Thank you very much, and happy reading!

Dean of Students Chuck Cleveland and former President George Bridges on the origins of the SEC and its mission

On a Friday afternoon in 2009, a brainstorming session took place in Memorial Hall. Dean of Students Chuck Cleveland, Associate to the Dean Donna Cummins and Associate Dean of Students Clare Carson had gathered to talk about something that wasn't quite working at Whitman: preparing students to take what they'd learned in their life-of-the-mind academic pursuits and apply those skills to the development of their futures outside the classroom.

"We had this vision of more outreach," Cleveland says. "The question was, 'What engages students?' We were looking for ways to engage the students in something outside the classroom—something that engages them in a meaningful way, that they can reflect on."

Whitman's traditional model for career services had focused on helping seniors find jobs, but it was becoming clear that that wasn't doing enough to take advantage of Whitties' natural inclinations toward experiential learning. Looking outside of Walla Walla for ideas, administrators saw Wake Forest University catching fire in North Carolina: there, a prestigious, small liberal arts university was innovating support of career services via a dedicated office for professional development, helping students from first years on up discover how to graduate with the fullest toolbox for approaching the job market or graduate school. Cleveland, Carson and Leavitt went to North Carolina and spent several days learning about the creative ways that Wake Forest was helping students understand and access professional options after graduation. They returned to Walla Walla with numerous insights that guided the organization and approach of their new Center, which built on some of Wake Forest's innovations and also incorporated Whitman's service and internship resources.

In the years since, the SEC has grown its outreach through

the campus and the community, integrating career services with business engagement, internship coordination and community service opportunities. Under the leadership of Associate Dean for Student Engagement Noah Leavitt, the SEC has ramped up its programming and capacities for engaging students every semester it's been in existence.

Through an interconnected array of community service, internships and fellowships, career development and business engagement/networking opportunities, the SEC helps students build a bridge from their classroom experiences to their futures.

"The experiences of engagement are common, even though the activities are different," Cleveland says. "You involve students in leadership positions to create and do good things. At the SEC, students share experiences in a common place, they share the belief that they are engaged in something that makes a difference, and they learn from each other."

Former Whitman President George Bridges wishes there had been something like the Student Engagement Center at his university when he was an undergraduate. His thoughts:

The Student Engagement Center enables the students to have an experience that is broader than just academics. It's a fountain of ideas over there; the work that's being done is just superb—it capitalizes on the intelligence of the students, their commitment to service and providing them with meaningful opportunities. I think it's a very powerful addition to campus. It enriches by combining academic experiences with internship and other experiences; creates a transitional bridge between the college and the community; creates a transitional bridge between college and careers or graduate school.

A photograph of three people standing in front of a glass door. On the left is a woman with red hair wearing a blue dress. In the center is a woman with blonde hair wearing a bright pink jacket over a white top. On the right is a man with dark hair wearing a blue shirt and a striped tie. They are all smiling at the camera.

Kim Rolfe

In a unique position with the SEC, I work specifically with students and young alumni interested in pursuing careers in the private sector. In addition to an advisory role for these Whitties, I also work with campus recruiters and Whitman alumni across a breadth of industries to provide access for students to careers, internships and professional networks that are available in the business community.

Gayle Townsend '80, P '14

As the Assistant Director for Career Development, the focus of my days is very student-oriented. My primary responsibility is to provide career counseling to the students and alumni of Whitman College. This can include career exploration, career assessments, resume and cover letter writing, informational interviewing, practice interviews and networking with alumni and employers. Spending my days helping students explore options for life after Whitman: Priceless!

Fernando Medina Corey '14

In my role as the Technology and Marketing Fellow, I work to improve the use of technology within the office and draw students to our events. I work on projects ranging from developing training materials for resources like the alumni database (Whitman Connect) or the jobs board system (iEngage) to interviewing recent alumni for a series entitled Right After Whitman (RAW) as a glimpse at them and their post-Whitman experiences.

Marisol Becerra

I'm one of the first faces students see when they walk into the SEC. In my role as Administrative Assistant, I juggle duties as diverse as recruiting, hiring and training office assistants to managing the SEC budget. I supervise student workers and their hours and deal with internship stipends, all while performing all general office administration. When students show up without a sense of what resources they need, I love helping them make connections.



Abby Juhasz

As the Community Service Co-ordinator I support, supervise and mentor the 11 interns who lead our ongoing nine service programs. Additionally, I connect Whitman volunteers with emerging needs in Walla Walla so that they can address community issues, explore their interests, learn through experiences outside of the classroom and engage as active citizens.

Susan Prudente

As Outreach Coordinator, I spend my time advising and mentoring Community Service Interns who oversee Whitman student volunteers and events in partnership with the local schools. I am honored to build partnerships with principals, teachers and staff which allow Whitman students to engage with K-12 students, staff and local families in real learning environments while also growing personally and professionally themselves.

Noah Leavitt

I help create partnerships with other Whitman programs and departments, and also with organizations and businesses beyond campus, so that we are providing our students with the most timely and relevant experiences and resources possible. As an Associate Dean of Students, I love helping our students find ways to solve problems and tackle challenges they see in the world around them.

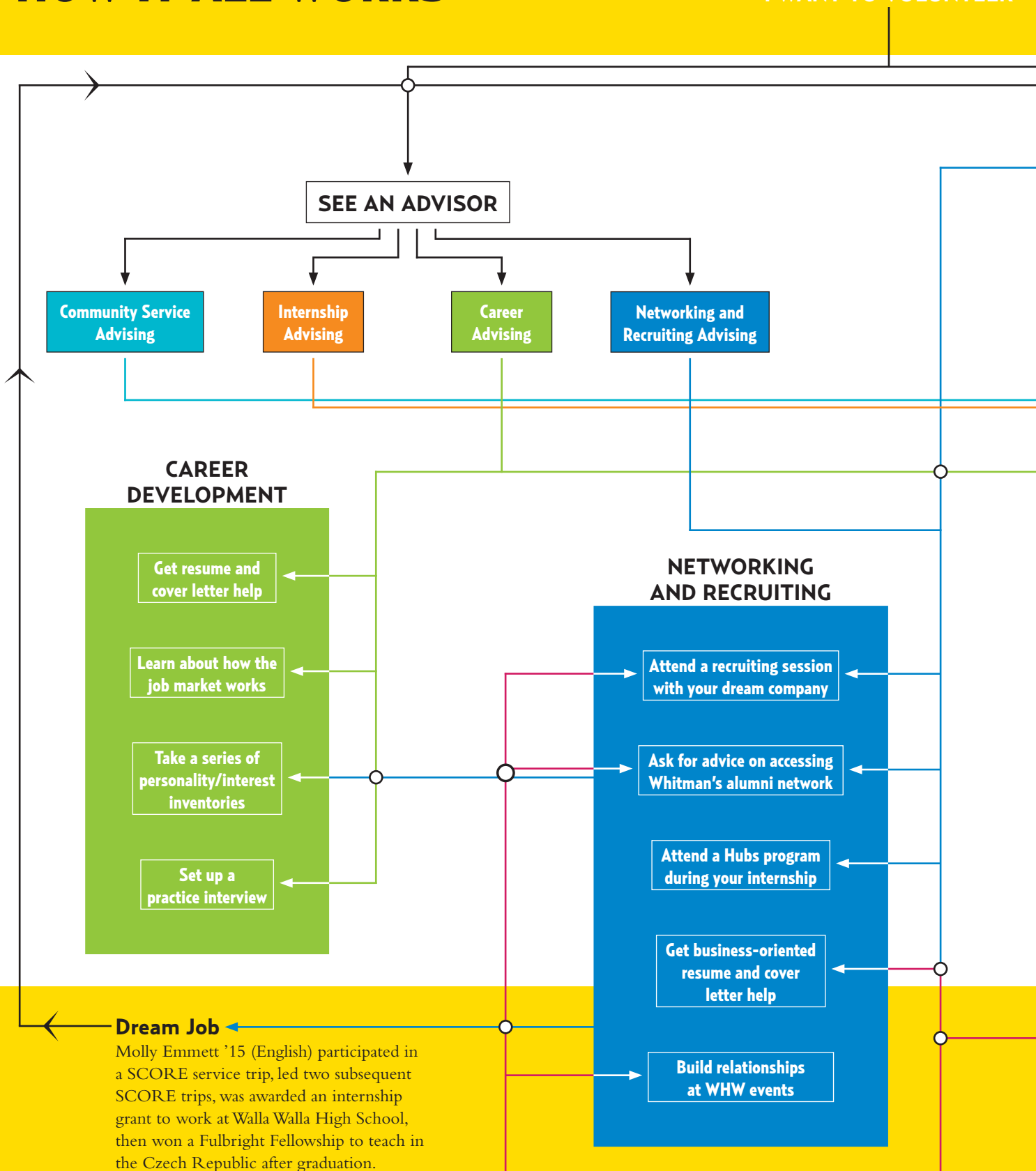
Victoria Wolff '12

As the Internship Coordinator, my role is multifaceted, collaborative and very student-centered. I oversee four different internship programs, counsel and advise students on internships and help them navigate the internship search and application process. Additionally, I collaborate with many offices on campus, work with community partners who are seeking Whitman interns and connect students to alumni who are working in their field of interest.

AT THE SEC, EVERYTHING CONNECTS TO EVERYTHING ELSE.

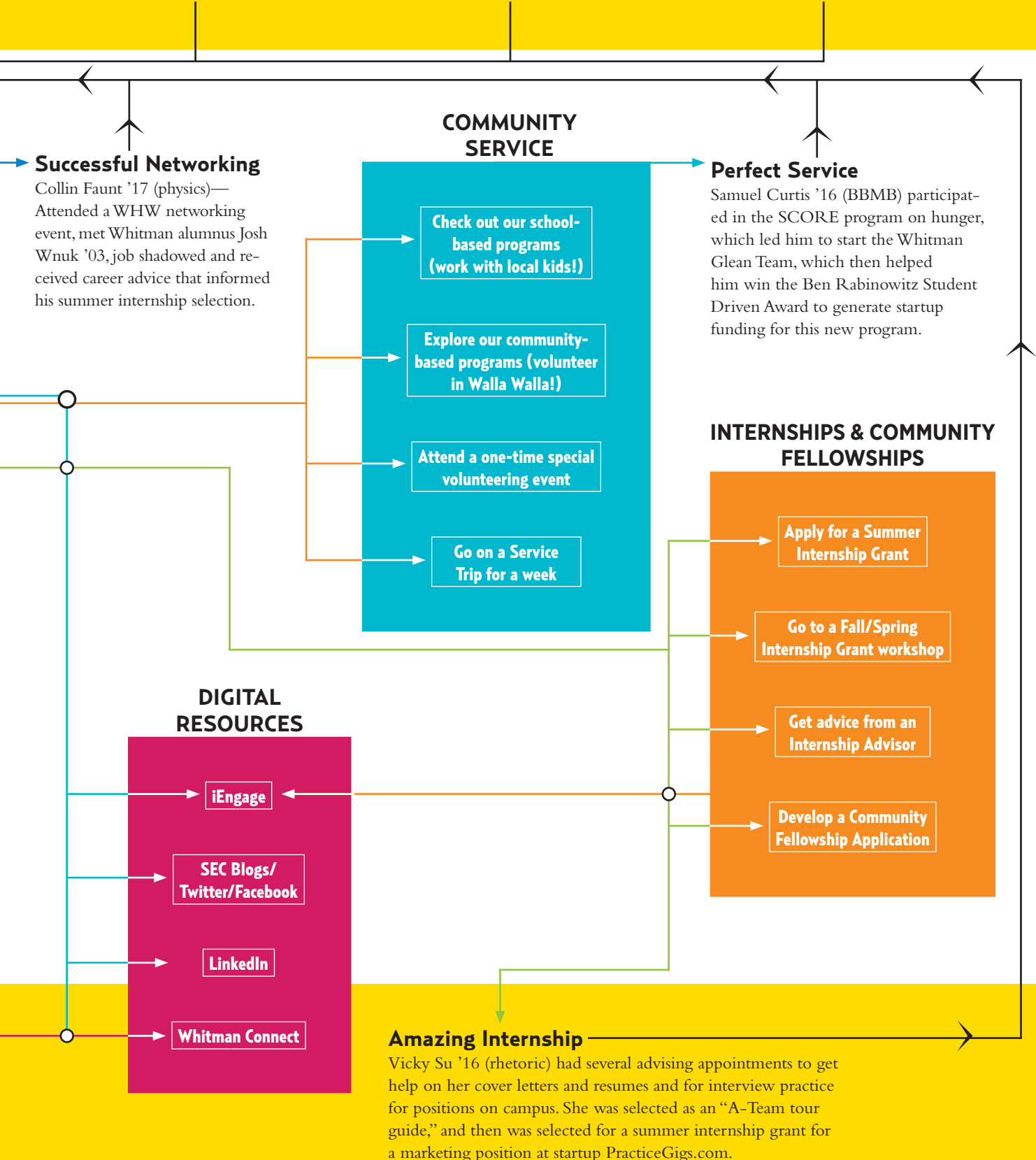
HOW IT ALL WORKS

I WANT TO VOLUNTEER



Molly Emmett '15 (English) participated in a SCORE service trip, led two subsequent SCORE trips, was awarded an internship grant to work at Walla Walla High School, then won a Fulbright Fellowship to teach in the Czech Republic after graduation.

I WANT TO FIND AN INTERNSHIP | I WANT TO FIND A JOB | I DON'T KNOW WHERE TO BEGIN



COMMUNITY SERVICE

NO
Hungry Children



Whitman students arrive with an uncommon desire to improve the world. Every week of the school year, about 320 students volunteer in Walla Walla; all in all, about 70% of the student body participates in community service annually. The Student Engagement Center has responded to this student interest by cultivating a robust series of community service programs—all of which were initially born from student initiatives.

The Whitman Mentor Program takes cues from community partners in six elementary schools to identify younger students who might benefit from a role model. Whitman volunteers spend an hour a week for a full academic year at their mentees' schools, eating lunch and "hanging out." In fall of 2014, WMP had 90 volunteers working with 90 at-risk children in Walla Walla. This program is managed by two interns.

SCORE—Summer Community OutReach Excursions—are pre-orientation, student-led service trips. SCORE participants spend a week getting to know each other while volunteering in partnership with Walla Walla nonprofits and community organizations. Each year the SEC coordinates four trips, with themes like "Food & Hunger" and "Conservation & Consumption." On SCORE trips, students learn about Walla Walla and make connections with others who are dedicated to bettering their communities, often launching them into a college career full of service.

"Beyond a doubt, SCORE was the greatest way I could have started my Whitman experience. From visiting the state penitentiary to serving at a local high school, I've gained amazing friends, unique experiences and a new outlook on Walla Walla." Deepraj Pawar '18

Volunteers in **The Green Park Bilingual Program** work with elementary school students who are making the transition from

learning in Spanish to learning in English. This program is one example of a student initiative that caught on: Devyani Gupta '15 identified a need among third-graders, gathered bilingual peers, and coordinated with administrators and teachers. Once the project had a critical mass and two years of success behind it, Gupta brought it to the SEC and helped identify the right intern to run it. The SEC now manages the GPBP.

The Buddy Program, which cultivates friendships between Whitman students and adults with developmental disabilities, was the brainchild of Michaela Lambert '14. Lambert noticed a lack of outreach to this part of the community and piloted the program with ASWC partners. By Lambert's junior year, the Buddy Program had been incorporated into the SEC, and it now matches 30 students with 30 buddies for activities like bowling and dancing.

Whitman Teaches the Movement focuses on improving Walla Walla's civil rights education. Coordinated by Whitman College, the Walla Walla Public School District, and the Southern Poverty Law Center, the program trains 90+ volunteers to go into 30+ public school classrooms and teach a civil-rights-oriented curriculum to approximately 800 local K-12 students. Other Washington schools are considering adopting their own versions of WTTM as of 2015.



**INTERNSHIPS/COMMUNITY
FELLOW PROGRAM**

Internships and the Community Fellow Program give our students a chance to see the working world from the inside and to establish roles in the larger community. Students can apply for semester-long and summer internship grants, or for the yearlong Community Fellow Program, all of which afford them practical experience with organizations and businesses both local and distant. The SEC also provides one-on-one advising, plus stand-alone internship-related events throughout the school year, which are often the result of collaboration between SEC staff and student groups. Targeted workshops for Resident Assistants, first-generation students or athletes, to give a few examples, help spread the word across campus.

Fall and Spring Internship Grants

These semester-long internship grants support students who have located a potential employer and secured the promise of an unpaid internship. After filling out a thorough application detailing the potential career, academic or professional development benefits of the experience, staff works to choose as many applications to fund as possible—12 in the most recent iteration. Students work 50–70 hours per semester. In response to student and industry needs the SEC has also begun to support remote internships in appropriate circumstances.

Examples of recent interns' organizations: Friends of Children of Walla Walla, the Children's Resilience Initiative, the Sustainable Living Center, Walla Walla County Health Department, Walla Walla Community Hospice and KUJ 1420 AM.

Summer Internship Grants

These grants are awarded to enterprising students similarly to the academic-year grants, but cover a much larger number of interns—100 in summer of 2015—working at institutions all over the country. Students receiving a summer internship grant commit more of their time as well, working 20 hours a week for 10 weeks. Starting in summer 2014, the SEC has expanded its Summer Internship Program to include five international

grants for students who have already made connections in countries outside the U.S.

Summer internship grants have supported students at organizations like HarperOne Publishing Company, Mobius Science Center and the Incarcerated Voices Radio Program.

Whitman Community Fellow Program

The Community Fellow Program offers students the opportunity to work on a year-long project (10 hours/week) with a local non-profit organization. The SEC selects community establishments which propose the most rewarding projects; in 2014–15, seven organizations were chosen from 30–40 applications submitted. Third- and fourth-year students then apply directly to the opportunities which interest them most, and interview with a staff member at the organization. Selected fellows meet at the SEC once a week throughout the year to discuss their work and to participate in career development workshops on topics like networking, creating LinkedIn profiles and learning how to effectively articulate the skills they have acquired.

Recent Community Fellows have worked at such places as Blue Mountain Action Council Pro Bono Legal Aid Program, Crow's Shadow Institute of the Arts and the Walla Walla Symphony.

PAST INTERNSHIP/FELLOWSHIP SITES NEAR CAMPUS Children's Resilience Initiative, Helpline, Walla Walla County Public Health Department, United Way of Walla Walla, Walla Walla County Department Court Services / Juvenile Justice Center, Small Business Development Center, Whitman Mission National Historic Site, Blue Mountain Action Council, Walla Walla Valley Chamber of Commerce, BMAC and Walla Walla Community College (combined placement), SonBridge Community Center, Blue Mountain Land Trust, Walla Walla Symphony, Walla Walla Sweets Baseball Club, Farm to School, Tensegrity Productions, Children's Home Society, Carnegie Picture Lab, The Interior, Clark-Arias Physical Therapy, Camp-Fire,

The Sustainable Living Center, City of Dayton, Walla Walla Public Schools, The Health Center, Port of Columbia, Blue Mountain Station, Friends of Children of Walla Walla, Walla Walla Union-Bulletin, Booth Brine, SOS Health Services, Providence St. Mary Foundation, Walla Walla Dance Festival, Trilogy Recovery Community, Washington Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, STAR Project, ProtoParadigm, Fort Walla Walla Museum, Coffee Ring Studios, Thompson Family Acupuncture Clinic, Walla Walla Public Library, West End Farm, Blue Mountain Heart to Heart, Walla Walla Community Hospice, Crow's Shadow Art Center, BMAC Pro Bono Legal Aid Program, INK-OUT: a free tattoo removal program.



CAREER DEVELOPMENT

The SEC goes beyond traditional career development centers, reaching out to and supporting students from the moment they matriculate, through their Whitman years, and beyond. In addition to one-on-one advising, the SEC coordinates career workshops targeted to different groups of students and organizes events that invite collaboration with other higher education institutions in the community.

Specialized Skills Workshops

Engaging the spectrum of Whitman students on their future careers takes specialized outreach. To this end, the SEC has put on different “What to Expect for Your Year” workshops for first years, sophomores and juniors, and seniors; run a series for first years with sessions called “Who am I?” “What Are My Values?” and “Skills and Interests,” in which students take personality tests, discuss what’s really important to them, and talk about how to get paid for what they already love to do; and opened workshops like “What Employers Really Want” to anyone interested in learning about emotional intelligence, teamwork and communication or diversity IQ.

Advising Services

With scheduled appointments, plus weekly drop-in hours every semester, the SEC’s goal is to get first years in for career advising early and often. By the time students are ready to graduate, they will have taken skills and strengths surveys and personality tests alongside of their regular academic career. The SEC has also invested in sophisticated audio visual equipment dedicated to recording the practice interviews students can schedule. Alumni are welcome to look for advice at the SEC, and they often do, asking for help with their resumes or networking.

Resume Workshops

The old standby for career services, useful as ever in 2015: resume workshops at the SEC are held a half-dozen times throughout the

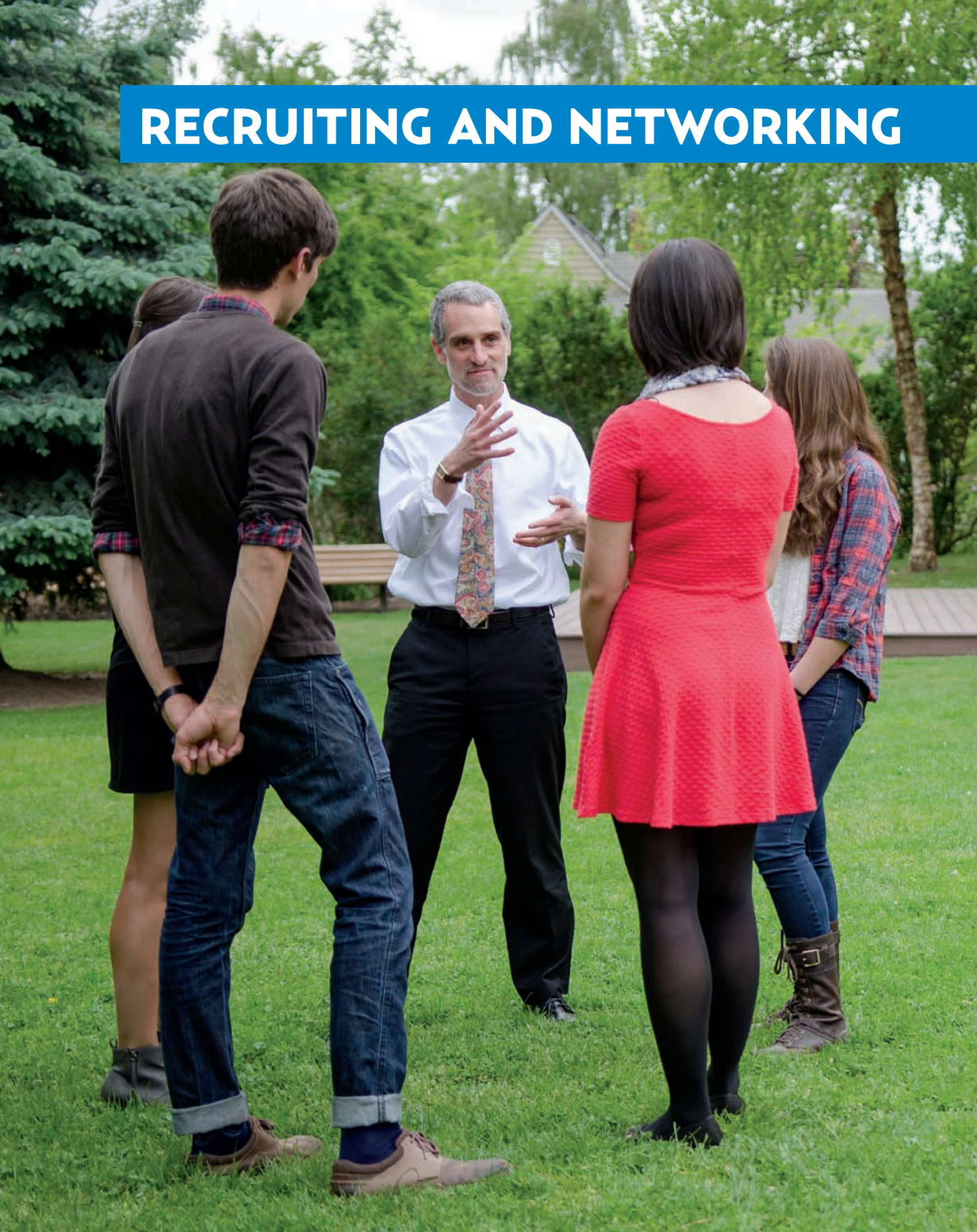
semester and always fill up. Workshops are often themed to reach specific communities: resumes for off-campus studies; resumes for service learning; resumes for internships.

Annual Events

The **Women in Leadership Symposium**, started more than 30 years ago and maintained today by trustee emerita Colleen Wiloughby ’55, brings women in leadership positions to campus to discuss their successes and challenges and serve as role models for female leaders among the student body. Business and community leaders join students, faculty, staff and administration for lunch, then an intimate dinner allows a group of students to speak candidly with the visiting leaders. The most recent symposium invited Heather Tarr, head coach of the University of Washington’s women’s softball team; Grace Chen, former executive director of the Girl Scouts of Western Washington; and Kristen Tetteh, director of communications for the Washington Global Health Alliance

In the spring, the **Sava and Danica Andjelkovic Endowed Lecture-ship** brings speakers to campus to provide opportunities for students to explore career options through collaboration with alumni speakers. The most recent Andjelkovic lecture invited siblings Stephanie Silver ’10 and Scott Silver ’05—an art history and an English major respectively, both of whom currently work in technology-based start-ups—to discuss how a liberal arts education can prepare Whitman students for careers in that kind of environment.

RECRUITING AND NETWORKING



In response to student, alumni and parent feedback, the SEC has increased its efforts to create opportunities for Whitties to meet each other in the for-profit and government sectors as well as the nonprofit sector. More and more types of potential employers are coming to campus to recruit, and staff is creating many opportunities to collaborate with other college students in the process of learning how to present themselves as desirable job candidates. Recruiters are invited to campus in person and remotely and Whitman's alumni network is tapped to full advantage in this newest segment of SEC services.

Whitties Helping Whitties is a series of networking events, co-sponsored by the SEC and the Alumni Office, that take place in cities where Whitties want to be after graduation: for now, Portland, Seattle and San Francisco. Usually, the events begin with some small program—an alumni speaker with a compelling success to share, maybe—and attract up to 200 attendees at a time. The SEC has also begun to reach out to Whitman parents in an effort to bring more career experience to the events. From the success of these events, the SEC has derived a new spring break job shadowing program; in the pilot year, 75 alumni, parents and other Whitman-affiliated professionals signed up to volunteer their time over the break so interested students could get an inside look at their fields of interest. Volunteers included teachers, doctors, environmentalists, consultants and more.

Whitman Professional Hub Program, new in 2014, is similar to WHW, but focused on internships—these are SEC-organized events in cities where Whitman students are already interning, for example, Washington, D.C. Hubs programs bring them together with established professionals in the community, helping them get acclimated to a new place and connect to people and resources in the area.

Whitman Connect is a new alumni database that electronically connects students with Whitman's 16,000+ alumni. This state-of-the-art resource allows students to search for

contacts by occupation, location or even campus activities they might have in common. Alumni who are interested in mentoring students or recent graduates can make a profile to keep in touch with what's happening on campus and events of interest to Whitties around the country. The SEC provides training for current students to learn to use the database and to start appropriate conversations with people in their networks.

The SEC Collaborates with Walla Walla University and Walla Walla Community College whenever possible. A **Tri-College Service Day** is held in the spring, attracting 400 students per year, for example; also, last winter, 115 students attended a **Professional Etiquette Dinner** organized in part by the SEC. The dinner covered the basics, from handshakes to table manners, and featured a business-appropriate fashion show and a talk from a talent acquisition manager. These collaborations give students a chance to get outside their own campuses and learn from a new group of peers.

The SEC has twice collaborated with WWU and WWCC, along with various high schools and the Walla Walla Chamber of Commerce, to host a competition in celebration of **Global Entrepreneurship Week**; the most recent competition, "Pitch it!" asked competitors to give an elevator speech for a start-up idea, awarding the winners a \$500 package to help them advance their concept.

HOW I BENEFITED FROM THE

AL-RAHIM MERALI '13

The SEC was really wonderful. I did some groundwork my freshman year so that senior year I would be educated about the resources available to me. I got an internship grant my junior year for an internship in Bellevue, Washington. The SEC was so helpful; I remember coming in and saying, 'hey, I've drafted two versions of a cover letter—can you tell me which you like and why?'

Going toward my senior year, my focus was what was happening after Whitman. The first thing I did was map out what was important to me in terms of a full-time job. I looked at urban locations I thought would be interesting, then I picked a few careers I felt were interesting to me. I looked at HR, consulting, psychology, medicine, and therapy; soul-searched, brainstormed where I wanted to be, what things I wanted to do, and then asked the SEC for a report on all alumni who either lived in one of those areas or is in one of those careers, which they got for me right away.

I spent two months working through every person on the spreadsheet I made, row-by-row, highlighting people that seemed interesting—and there were tons and tons of people—people who, if I could, I would want to have a conversation with.

I heard back from about 20, and had a conversation with those alumni. Then, I picked a few to follow up with. There were some I wanted to talk to specifically about their companies, and some I just looked to for career advice, life advice. It worked out and I wound up at Google, exactly where I wanted to be. The SEC is an awesome resource.

RACHEL QUEDNAU '13

I'm currently working at a homeless shelter in Milwaukee, running a program that is directly related to the internship I had through the SEC.

My internship was with the Walla Walla County Department of Health and Human Services. I was doing some work with homelessness, specifically trying to help start a rapid rehousing program in Walla Walla—that's a strategy to end homelessness that tries to put people into normal housing immediately after they become homeless.

It's an extremely new idea, and there hasn't really been anything like that in Walla Walla. My internship was definitely helpful in understanding homelessness in general, then putting that understanding into direct use in a more professional job capacity.

An internship helps you prepare for the working world. Mine was a good opportunity to do that while being in school. [SEC] staff were super receptive, too—I asked for help with my cover letter and resume, and they also hosted some good networking events.

I think it's really important for Whitman to have this kind of program.

SUSANNA BOWERS '15

I've been an intern at the SEC for three years. It's the best job I could have gotten on campus, really rewarding, and I've learned so much.

As one part of my job, I help students with their resumes. There's no way I could have done that when I first started; being immersed in the culture [of the office] and getting excellent training from the staff... my own resume has gotten a lot better. Plus, learning how to search for jobs, to use the alumni network—while I'm helping other people I'm learning myself. I've gotten real work experience, especially in marketing. I do a lot of graphic design and social media outreach. I'm an economics major.

[At the SEC] we're really the only office or resource on campus for helping with post-graduate searches, and part of that has to do with, while you're in school, getting into internships. It's helpful for a

lot of students. When they're looking for a job, or need a resume, or are asking 'how do I do that?' Just going in the office, even if you don't have anything to say, just learning about the resources is so helpful. One of the major resources is alumni networking, something a lot of students don't use yet, but that's basically the way you get a job, and I think it's valuable.

I had a Spring Internship grant my third year, was a marketing intern for the Walla Walla Sweets baseball team. I couldn't have gotten that experience without the SEC. It was fantastic. I worked in the front office with the general management staff, mostly doing social media, opening new accounts and doing graphic design for them.

One value the SEC has instilled in me throughout my time working with them is that networking is key, and this was definitely the case in my job search. Expedia was one of my first choices of companies to work for after graduation, so I reached out to all of the contacts I could find who were connected to it in some way... My title at Expedia will be Market Associate, and I will be working with hotels in the Northwest to build new partnerships and maintain current partnerships. I'm psyched!

The SEC has been a really integral part of my Whitman experience. I'm there all the time, and the staff members are like my family now. Always checking up on me.

DAVID FLEMING '14

I'm working at Redfin Real Estate—I turned an internship there into a full-time marketing position. I was a music and psychology double major and I didn't have a lot of experience in the for-profit sector, but I ended up going to a networking event at Redfin put on by the SEC. [An alumnus I met there] kept in touch, and come June, I emailed about an internship opportunity.

As a Whitman Community Fellow my entire third year, I ended up at the local Chamber of Commerce, making connections. I got to see what was going on—

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT CENTER

that was fantastic. The Fellowship gave me relevant talking points in interviews; I got to say I worked in the Walla Walla community with area business leaders.

Eventually, I plan to own my own company. Something revolving around education, social ventures—now that I've acquired a variety of different skills. There was a lot of talk on campus about entrepreneurship my senior year; Whitman is doing a great job fostering entrepreneurship, showing you that you can do something that makes a social impact, and they're weaving impact into other avenues besides simply the nonprofit sector.

JAZMIN MOLEDINA '14

I used most of [the SEC's] resources junior year and the first semester of my senior year.

First was the internship grant. The summer between my sophomore and junior year, I found an internship in San Francisco. I'm an economics major interested in investment management; the internship I found was at a small operation, so it was really great to have the grant. That experience led me to getting the job I have after graduation. The following summer I worked for a different mutual fund company, and one of the stories that really stuck out to them that they asked me about in my interview was my internship. They were impressed that coming from a liberal arts college I had already worked in the finance industry.

In September, I'm starting at Dodge and Cox, a mutual fund company. I'm going to be in operations, spending three-to-six months in various departments getting a feel for the company, figuring out what aspect of the industry I want to work in.

The focus of my cover letter and resume was related to the number of interviews I was offered—out of ten or 12 applications. [The SEC] helped me refine the wording and responses in my resume and cover letter, and even in a computer-generated pile of people, I still stood out in a compelling way.

I also found a job on iEngage, and

that was perfect because it was a virtual job, writing for a company while I was at Whitman, on my own time. It was exactly the job I needed, writing content for this company, because I wanted to keep up my writing skills, as that's key, and it was helpful to be able to point [later] to this job and say 'hey, look at this, I'm writing consistently, communicating effectively.'

The SEC is critical. Absolutely critical. At Whitman, we're all good students, bright, but you need to know how to present yourselves to businesses in a way that makes sense to them, which isn't something we specifically learn in class. The earlier students get to know the members of the SEC and their resources, the better off they are.

ASHLEY HANSACK '15

I went to the SEC the very first week I was on campus, during my freshman year. Now that I've spent four years here, I realize a lot of schools don't have resources like this. The SEC has been a vital resource for me; I identify as a first-generation working-class student, and the resources there are super-applicable to the real world. My mom used to work as a house cleaner and now is a security guard—[before college] I hadn't been exposed to networking and that kind of professional development.

The resources at the SEC are some of the most important ones on campus. My involvement—I did College Coaches, a Community Fellowship, I led a spring service trip—I try to tap into the different workshops they have and keep a good relationship with the people there.

Everything I've learned through my classes and the programs facilitated through the SEC, I not only have those skills, but I am also able to translate them in other ways, like into communities that desperately need them. I can use those skills to build other people and other communities up. After graduation, I'm heading to a (paid!) summer internship working for the Department of Cultural Affairs for the City of Los Angeles. In the fall, I'm hoping to be a Program

Associate at a community land trust called TRUST South LA. I initially worked there thanks to a Whitman Internship Grant.

MICHAELA LAMBERT '14

When reflecting on my four years at Whitman, I can easily see that the three years spent as the Buddy Program Community Service Intern through the SEC most impacted the manner in which I approach my daily job, and the volunteer work I perform outside my role as an HIV Counselor and Health Promotion Educator for LGBTQ Latino youth at La Clínica del Pueblo in Washington, D.C.

While my internship taught me essential skills such as program development and time management, the most influential outcome of this position was my desire to focus on social justice within the healthcare system. Whether advocating for individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities as the Buddy Program intern, or helping transgender HIV positive women seek asylum, I have learned the value of advocating for those whose voices are often silenced in the healthcare system.

Furthermore, working in the SEC solidified my belief that volunteerism is an essential component of my life. In addition to my work at La Clínica, I serve as a volunteer birth doula to physically and emotionally support women during the entirety of their labor and advocate for their wishes during the birth process. I am in the midst of applying to graduate school to become a nurse-midwife, where I hope to continue to use my Spanish and advocate for women's rights to make informed decisions about their own reproductive and sexual health.

I am so grateful that I was given the opportunity to serve as the Buddy Program Intern. To this day I still point to this role as the most influential part of my time at Whitman and the position that pointed me on the path I am on today.

Clare Carson, recently retired associate dean of students for academic support services, looks back at the SEC from its conception to today.

In 2008, there were a lot of myths out there about what liberal arts colleges were about. It's true that many of our graduates go on to the Peace Corps or to Doctors Without Borders, and that there's a magic between faculty and students at Whitman. And we knew that the experiences students were already having outside the classroom were relevant to their futures, but we also knew that students themselves were not articulating that connection.

We found we could do more.

The standard career center wasn't enough. Students didn't see it as relevant; it wasn't serving the function that we needed. The idea, when [Chuck Cleveland, Donna Cummins and I] sat down to brainstorm, was to focus on this question: "What is the Whitman Experience?"

We called it the Whitman Experience Initiative, and it was the groundwork for what became the Student Engagement Center.

First, we surveyed alumni who were 20 years out. One question we asked was, "what do you think contributed to your success?" They answered, saying that personal relationships with faculty were among the most important parts of their college experience, but they also listed community service and internship opportunities as being key.

We felt we needed to engage students. It's not that we needed to convince them to do these high-impact ventures—they were already doing them—but by taking "career" out of the title of the office, we could help them focus on how to prepare for all of life after Whitman, taking what they learned in the classroom and tying it in to their co-curricular activities.

Right away, we saw changes, because of an intentional effort to bring in the internships that we fund, the career

development, to connect with local businesses and alumni; Noah [Leavitt] has been the impetus we needed to take it in so many directions, expand the SEC and get the private sector involved.

Also, the outreach the SEC has done to parents and alumni is a bridge, making education more relevant to students' futures. All of the decisions we made focused on what worked for Whitman specifically; we've been working to understand and expand the center based on student interests. One big thing that sets Whitman aside is the funding for internships, adding the international opportunities and making them accessible.

Whitman students often arrive with ambition and preparedness, or with connections that have helped map their routes out for them, but there have always been a lot of students who didn't have that. One thing we're most proud of is how the SEC had made it so all our students can take advantage of these connections.

With the iEngage software, for example, students can register and show what they're interested in, and we have alumni who have been very hungry to reach back to current students—this is the kind of exposure we've really doubled-down on. It's about helping students and enriching their education; making any kind of transition poses challenges, but it was obvious [the SEC] was the right step to take.

Students need to be on a path to success as they see success. And careers are changing. Having a resource to turn to, one that can stay abreast of what's going on, is critical. We're proud that we were ahead of the game, and proud of the edge we're giving our students.

I think that, in general, Whitties are more engaged when they have the opportunity to be more than just students. The opportunity to go out then return to the role of student—that makes their student experience much richer.

Heidi Chapin, Science Outreach Coordinator

I refer students [to the SEC] all the time to talk about what happens after graduation. “I wish they’d have had all these programs and funding when I was a student! The SEC has been very good about taking the time for people. We need it in terms of quality of life... experiential learning, how could that not be of value? Experiential learning is so important.

Kyle Martz, Intercultural Center Program Advisor

I am an ally of the SEC and I support its mission. I strongly value a bridge between the curricular and the co-curricular, to help students connect what they learn in the classroom with what happens in an internship or a summer experience adds some richness and depth to their understanding. The SEC threads [students’] academic experiences through their summers in ways that help the academic mission of the college.

Professor of Sociology, Michelle Janning

The SEC is the single most effective way we can connect students with alumni in a helpful manner. Alumni and students occupy two different worlds; alumni have valuable experiences to share with current students relating to the job search process. We try to make these connections and encourage students to think broadly about their future—even if you major in biology, you might end up writing technical manuals—in conversation with alumni, ideas open up, contacts can be made, leading to internships and potentially jobs. In terms of career services, networking: there’s a new energy there with the SEC. They are making incredible resources available to the students.

Director of Alumni Relations, Nancy Mitchell

The Student Engagement Center's Mission

*We prepare Whitman students and alumni
to connect with the communities and experiences
that help them cultivate their futures.*

Support for Student Engagement Center programs is provided by gifts to the Whitman College Parents Fund and gifts designated to its programs by alumni and friends of the College. Named funds supporting the Student Engagement Center and internships include:

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