Debaters No. 1 in combined policy, parliamentary debate

"This is the third year in the past four that Whitman has advanced teams to elimination debates in all four tournaments. I don’t think any other team in the nation can say that."

— Jim Hanson
professor of forensics
(National Debate Coach of the Year 2004)

Whitman’s debate team capped a brilliant year of competition with an inarguable result: the No. 1 ranking in the country in combined policy and parliamentary debate based on National Debate Tournament and National Parliamentary Debate Association figures.

Whitman unseated perennial rival University of California, Berkeley, for top honors. In varsity policy debate, Coach Jim Hanson’s crew triumphed over powerhouse Harvard, Emory, Northwestern and Dartmouth.

Whitman also was the only school in the country this year to send teams to elimination rounds in all four national championship tournaments. These teams included seniors Chris Channness, Matt Schissler, Ross Richendrfer, Ben Meiches and Meghan Hughes.

The college qualified three teams to the NDT, the smallest school to do so in the history of the tournament. "Debate is a critical part of Whitman’s liberal arts mission," said Hanson. "Debaters are exposed to diverse ideas from such fields as philosophy, science and politics, and they have to analyze and synthesize those ideas into their own when they communicate their arguments."

"How much our students dedicate themselves to the work that debate requires will always amaze me. But knowing their commitment, and the strength of this particular team, I’m not surprised with the results."

On the heels of the NDT, Richendrfer was selected as a Scholastic All-American by the Cross-Examination Debate Association for his four-year record of achievement. (Richendrfer’s great-grandfather attended Whitman, and his great-great uncle, Stanley Yates, was an accomplished debater and the college’s first Rhodes Scholar in 1911.)

In parliamentary debate, Channness and Jeff Wilson ’08 reached the elimination rounds of the National Parliamentary Tournament of Excellence in Laramie, Wyo. Their showing put them at No. 25 in national rankings.

Hanson’s indelegrable helpers include Aaron Hardy, assistant for policy debate; Rob Olsen, assistant for parliamentary debate; and student assistant Andrew Lum ’07.

Premed student’s jazz earns him top spot at Lionel Hampton

Eddie Fisher ’07 had just driven the 124 miles from the Lionel Hampton Jazz Festival in Moscow, Idaho, to Walla Walla when Professor of Music David Glenn called to tell him to turn around and head back. Fisher had earned “Most Outstanding College Jazz Musician” honors at the festival in February.

His reward: an invitation to perform with the Lionel Hampton New York Big Band. It was a moment Fisher relished, but only for a moment. The saxophonist, history major and chemistry minor is not one to rest, particularly on laurels. Especially when there were senior orals to worry about, and medical school acceptance to sort out for fall.

"I’m pretty serious about my academic expectations," he said. "But I’m not competitive. I’m not out to learn something at somebody else’s expense.”

Fisher’s music education came early and easily.

Both of his parents play piano (his father doubles on guitar), and both have had a longstanding love affair with American music; be it blues or Broadway show tunes. Fisher took up piano when he was 8. Two years later he switched to saxophone.

In his sophomore year at Roosevelt High School in Seattle, he earned a chair in the school’s nationally celebrated jazz band and a year later traveled to Lincoln Center in New York, where Roosevelt earned first-place honors in the Essentially Ellington Festival. The competition is the yardstick of jazz musicianship at the secondary school level. "To share the stage with Wynton Marsalis at Lincoln Center... I doubt there will be a single bigger moment for me in jazz," Fisher allowed.

He said this knowing that music is an integral part of his life, not the ruler of his life. This fall Fisher will enter medical school at Pennsylvania State University after turning down offers from Drexel and St. Louis Universities.

He’s already asked himself the obvious question: What will become of his musical ambitions, given the demands of his medical studies? The answer lies between the lines of Fisher’s initial list of schools. Most are in cities with lively jazz scenes. His mind tells him he can do both — medicine and music. His spirit tells him he has to do both.

"I know I’ll need the music to balance the schoolwork."

Whitman community mourns with Virginia Tech after shootings

When a gunman turned the Virginia Tech campus into a killing field in April, Whitman students, faculty and staff responded with shock, followed quickly by love and support.

The campus community came together on April 18 for a vigil to remember the 31 students and faculty being mourned 2.500 miles away.

Vigil organizer Natalie Knott ’07 said she was “amazed and so happy to be a part of this community at that moment” when students, staff, faculty and community members gathered to express their thoughts on a poster later sent to Virginia Tech.

Strong attendance at the vigil was “a testament to how powerfully many folks at Whitman experienced the shootings at Virginia Tech,” said Adam Kirtley, Stuart religious counselor.

Response among Whitman students, staff and faculty ran the gamut of fear, anger, sadness and numbness, Kirtley said.

“The vigil was an opportunity for people to come, to be there for each other and take account of their relationships at Whitman,” he said.

“A lot of people interviewed on TV after the shootings said Blacksburg (Va.) was the last place they’d expect something like that to happen. We would describe this place in exactly the same way. A lot of people here were affected by that.”

“I couldn’t imagine that we — as a community of students much like Virginia Tech’s community of students — wouldn’t do something to remember them. I couldn’t imagine just going on about our daily lives.”

— Natalie Knott ’07
Students garner record number of Fulbright scholarships

Eight Whitman students and two alumni were awarded national Fulbright scholarships this spring, a record for the college that earned a spot in the Fulbright Program’s top 5% of Fulbright-producing schools in the nation. In the last five years, Whitman’s students and alumni have brought home 20 Fulbrights.

Anthropology major Daniel Beekman ’07 earned a Fulbright to travel to China to study “how Beijing will present itself to a global audience when it hosts the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. ... The Chinese have invited the world to scrutinize three decades of development. For better or worse, the Games will punctuate China’s quest for modernization and global legitimacy.” Eric Cates ’07, a Spanish major, will teach in Spain. Ezra Fox ’07 will teach English in Malaysia. A philosophy major, he is going there “to gain firsthand experience of a Muslim country and give my students a view into the United States.”

Kyle Martz ’07, a gender studies and German studies major, will travel to Germany to teach English as a second language. He hopes to use the experience to provide German students with a better understanding of other countries through conversation and exposure to U.S. culture. “I plan to use cultural ‘points of orientation,’ such as classic and contemporary literature, film and music to compare and contrast cultures,” he said.

Megan McConville ’07, a chemistry-environmental studies major, will do research on soil and sediment and study water management in the Netherlands. Katherine Pease ’07, an economics major, is embarking on a journey to South Korea where she will serve as a high school teaching assistant. She, too, hopes to promote interactive cultural exchanges in the classroom and out.

Ari van Schilfgaarde ’07, a physics-environmental studies major, will teach English in secondary school students in an Islamic boarding school in Central Java, Indonesia. In Botswana next year, Veronica Willette ’07, a history and race and ethnic studies major, will study cultural tourism. “One form of tourism in Botswana is indigenous cultural tourism,” she said. “Though cultural tourism is an alternative preferable to industrial tourism, there are still negative impacts.”

Fulbright fellowships also went to two alumni. Tanya Henderson ’05 will serve as a teaching assistant in Germany, and Emily Mraz ’04 will conduct research in South Korea.

Fun conservation notebooks draw international attention

They make the coolest cereal box notebooks, ones that fly out of the Whitman Bookstore almost before they hit the shelves. But making a “cool” notebook isn’t their goal. Jay Heath ’07, Kristen Kirkby ’07 and other members of the Paper Campaign make the notebooks from one-sided paper discarded on campus and recycled cereal boxes collected by the Environmental Studies House.

The object of the enterprise is to reuse materials before they are recycled and draw attention to paper waste on campus. Paper consumption has been a focus for Heath and Kirkby since they started a reduce-recycle program as first-years with the goal of raising money to help the college buy 100 percent post-consumer waste recycled paper. When they began the push, 30 percent of the paper purchased by the college met this standard.

Today it all does. The clever cereal box notebooks have drawn international attention after a video showing the production and purpose of the notebooks was a winner in a national contest.

In memoriam

Beloved biology professor dies at 97

Arthur Rempel, a professor who spent 37 years influencing generations of Whitman students with a love for biology and the world of nature, passed away May 1, 2007, in Walla Walla at age 97. He is survived by his wife of 73 years, Lucille.

“I learned in my first year at Whitman (1973) how great an influence Art Rempel had on his students,” said Charles Drakeb, the biology professor who holds the endowed chair in Rempel’s name.

“He has so much talent,” said geology Professor Bob Carson, who is quick to point out that the scholar-athlete also has a talent for the fine arts. Schupack participated on the cycling team and served as lead trombonist in the Whitman Jazz Band.

As for his Morse code skills, that’s more of a hobby. Schupack said, although he does hold the CQ Worldwide International DX Contest World Record.

How do you write "$120,000 National Science Foundation Fellowship” in Morse code?

Ben Schupack ’07 holds a world record in Morse code, but that didn’t earn him a $120,000 National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship. Rather it was his talent for geology nurtured through Whitman’s intensive field-based work, and competitive writing skills honed through college writing classes, that Schupack feels earned him a fellowship rare for undergraduates.

In the fall, Schupack will attend graduate school at the University of Colorado, Boulder, to work with the Institute of Arctic and Alpine Research, focusing on the interaction between volcanic eruptions and Arctic climate variability.

The senior from Sammamish, Wash., discovered his love for geology and environmental science at Whitman, where he found the enthusiasm of his “brilliant and passionate” geology professors “quite contagious.”

“Whitman geology students have the great advantage of an active field component in the curriculum,” Schupack said. “The best geologists in the world are the ones who can stick to their noses in the outcrops, get their hands dirty, make detailed observations and have unbiased curiosity.”

As an undergraduate researcher, Schupack presented at five professional meetings, four of which were national, on subjects ranging from high Arctic lakes in the Svalbard Archipelago to the eruption styles of volcanoes on Mars.

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Leadership, academic acumen earn juniors prestigious Beinecke, Truman scholarships

Before they have reached their senior years, Erik Andersen ’08 and Joseph Bornstein ’08 are the recipients of prestigious scholarships that will pay each of them $30,000 toward graduate studies. Andersen’s Beinecke Scholarship is one of few available for graduate studies in the humanities, according to the Whitman Grants and Fellowship Office.

The Northern Californian student’s volunteer experiences in Tibet in 2004 and his study of Foucault and Kant in his sophomore year at Whitman were key elements in his development of a self-designed major in politics and philosophy. “The freedom Whitman has provided me in designing my major allows me to ask the questions that are most relevant to me,” Andersen said. “At the same time, my professors have helped me to structure my work in such a way that pushes these questions and draws out the tensions between politics and philosophy.”

After much soul-searching in Tibet, he decided on a teaching style that was not simply culturally sensitive but also nonviolent and unimposing — “one that could accommodate possibilities that neither my students nor I could know in advance.” Consequently, he said, “I began to find ways for our class to address Tibet’s multifaceted problems through an interdisciplinary approach that combined theater, visual arts and prose with health education and indigenous nutritional and medicinal knowledge.”

Andersen is considering graduate programs in rhetoric, social thought, the history of consciousness, and comparative studies in discourse and society. His ultimate goal is to be a professor who works with students to imagine radically different ways of living, “as my work on the philosophy of nonviolence continues to transform and be transformative.”

Bornstein is well known to Whitman Magazine readers for his large-scale community activism and service projects. Recognized for his leadership potential and the likelihood he will make a difference to the world, Bornstein is one of only 65 Truman Scholarship winners selected from 585 candidates across the nation.

A philosophy major from Ashland, Ore., Bornstein spent the summer after his sophomore year spearheading the Build-A House Project, which raised money to construct a home for a Nicaraguan mother and her son left destitute by her husband’s death. He came back to Whitman that fall and helped found Whitman Direct Action, a group dedicated to social and economic justice and environmental sustainability. Members learned how to build a biodiesel processor, and the following summer he and other students traveled to Central America to teach community leaders there how to build the processors. The student group provided a 110-page technical manual (in English and Spanish) that they wrote to document the process.

Bornstein sees some of his success as a product of the faculty and student community at Whitman. “They helped me give me the capacity for thoughtfulness and the courage and support to follow my true aspirations,” he said.

Bornstein plans to pursue a master’s degree in public administration at Columbia University’s School of International Public Affairs and hopes to eventually find a nongovernmental organization focused on environmental and social research.

Three Whitman students earned Projects for Peace awards for work proposed in Chiapas, Mexico, and Sierra Leone. Four students were among 57 undergraduate students nationwide to earn Humanity in Action fellowships. See campus news at www.whitman.edu.

Professors close Whitman careers

Professor Clark Colahan has seen the teaching of Spanish language and literature undergo a transformation in his 24 years at Whitman.

“I was educated by the model that called for you only to read great literature and enrich your life,” Colahan said.

While Colahan’s students still do so, for the past several years some of them have also used their skills by volunteering in the community as translators.

Colahan, who received the college’s G. Thomas Edwards Award for Excellence in Teaching and Scholarship in 2004, says he will miss in retirement the opportunity to get to know Whitman students. “When students believe you have something to offer and thank you for sharing it with them, it feels good and it makes you feel useful. Being useful is important to me,” he said.

In return, Colahan tried to teach his students to think critically and logically. “I hope I also taught them that literature can be a wonderful window into the rest of the world. Literature opens you up to understand other cultures and what people felt five, six or 200 years ago. There’s a lot to be said for empathy, and I think literature is a way to create it.”

Although Colahan says he’s had many incredible moments during his career, one that stands out is an Spanish-English translation class of only two students.

Since both had an excellent command of Spanish, they were able to spend their time translating poems. “We were like a trio writing poetry — when you translate poetry, it’s like writing a new poem; we had some extraordinary moments.”

Colahan plans to forge ahead with his research and will present a paper at Hebrew University in Jerusalem in December on the role of the Bible in the Picassero novel of the century. He also hopes to visit national parks, play Spanish Celtic music with his band and do volunteer work.

Charles Drabek

“Dr. Drabek will be remembered by the proper image of his students not only as a highly motivated professor but also as a dedicated and exceptionally kindhearted mentor who genuinely cares about the success of every student,” reads a plaque on the second floor of the Hall of Science.

The 2007 biology graduates presented it to Professor of Biology Charles Drabek at the annual senior tea at the home he and his wife live in Washington, D.C., and it now hangs next to the biology alumni photo board he created to honor graduating biology seniors.

During a 32-year Whitman career, Drabek has collected many accolades, but the surprise retirement reception his biology seniors threw him April 21 was one of the most special. “I had the best time,” he said, noting that Art and Lucille Rempel attended, and alumni reminisced about the Rempel Lecture series Drabek has coordinated since 1987.

Although Drabek doesn’t mention them, other career highlights include the Dr. A.E. Lange Award for Distinguished Science Teaching in 1992 and the naming of Drabek Peak, Antarctica, in his honor by a U.S. Advisory Committee for his “scientific research and contributions in the Arctic.”

Drabek is happier to speak of his students. “I hope they have learned how they can be successful in life with the proper mentoring and education; and I hope they have learned how to be objective, tolerant, understanding and giving people,” he said.

“When a student returns from presenting their research at a scientific conference to say, ‘I felt so good about myself,’ and when alumni look up when they return to campus and tell him how much they appreciate how he influenced their lives, ‘that’s why I love doing what I do,’ ” Drabek said.

Even so, Drabek says it’s time for him to make room for one of the many young professors who need the opportunity to find what I found at Whitman.”

Traveling with his wife, Jane, reading, volunteering and spending time with his grandchildren are on his to-do list.

— Leisel Parish
Riding high: Cyclists win fourth U.S. team trial

The Missionary women’s contingent was as dominating as ever, but the Whitman cycling team fell just short of a third consecutive National College Cycling Association (NCCA) Division II championship in Lawrence, Kan., in May.

While Whitman finished in third place in the combined men’s and women’s scoring, the women’s team won its fourth consecutive team time trial with Rebecca Jensen ’07 (Mukilteo, Wash.), Mara Abbott ’08 (Albuquerque, N.M.), Mia Huth ’09 (Ketchum, Idaho), and Kendi Thomas ’10 (Greencastle, Ind.) posting a time of 28:14.8. Jensen and Abbott were on the teams that took the last three titles.

Abbott outclassed the field in the women’s 56-mile road race, winning that event for a third consecutive year. Her winning time of 2:57:15 was 33 seconds better than that of her closest opponent. In the criterium, the Missionary foursome of Jensen, Abbott, Huth and Thomas dominated the women’s race, which ran for 55 minutes plus three laps on a one-mile course on the narrow, tree-lined streets of Lawrence.

In the final sprint to the finish line, the winner (with a time of 1:01.29.7), edged Thomas into second place and Abbott into third. Huth and Jensen, who set the early pace for Whitman, placed 21st and 30th, respectively.

Abbott, who won last year’s criterium, finished this year’s championship with a total of 274 points in the criterium and road race. That gave her all around individual title by 48 points over her closest competitor, was her second consecutive individual crown. In her first trip to nationals, Thomas finished fifth in the individual standings with 196 points. Spilka placed 19th overall with 84 points. Abbott spent part of her spring season riding with a professional cycling team, winning the Tour of Gila and placing second overall at the Redlands Bicycle Classic.

In the team time trial for men, a young Whitman squad finished ninth in 25:00.4, seven seconds out of fifth place. The men’s road team, which totaled 86 miles or three laps around a 28-mile course, was marred by controversy. A portion of the original course was under water due to flooding, forcing race organizers to use a gravel road that proved disastrous for many riders. With competitors falling victim to flat tires and crashes in the gravel, less than half of the 115 riders finished.

Whitman’s Duncan McGovern ’10 (Peterborough, N.H.), one of the fortunate few to survive the gravel grinder, finished third in a three-man sprint to the wire, the highest finish ever in the men’s road race for Whitman. Based on McGovern’s strong showing in the road race, he finished sixth in the final men’s individual scoring with 148 points.

For more sports news, visit www.whitman.edu/athletics.

Whitman Sports Scoreboard

Achievements by Whitman scholar-athletes

Information compiled by Dave Holden, sports information director

MEN’S TENNIS
Phalkun Mam ’07 (Salem, Ore.)
ITA All-Americas, singles
NWC Player of the Year
All-NWC First Team
School Record- Most wins in a career
Outstanding Senior Performer®

Steven Ly ’07 (Shoreline, Wash.)
ITA All-Americas, doubles
R.V. Borleske Trophy/Top Male Athlete®
All-NWC First Team
NWC Player of the Week

Women’s Tennis
Hadley Debrose ’10 (Westham, Idaho)
All-NWC First Team
NWC Player of the Week

Mauria Flaherty ’07 (Salem, Ore.)
All-NWC Second Team
NWC Player of the Week
NWC Sportswoman of the Year
Unbeaten NWC singles season

Women’s Tennis
Matt Solomon ’10 (Los Gatos, Calif.)
ITA All-Americas, singles
NWC First Team
Outstanding Senior Performer®

Men’s Tennis
Katie Borsato ’07 (White Rock, B.C.)
Figueroa Borleske Trophy/Top Female Athlete®

Rosa Brey ’09 (Baseman, Mex.)
Outstanding Sophomore Performer®

Women’s Soccer
Kristen Berndt ’08 (Plamson, Wash.)
Outstanding Junior Performer®

Men’s Swimming
Clint Czubaj ’08 (Albuquerque, N.M.)
Outstanding Senior Performer®

Volleyball
Rachel Walker ’07 (Winter, B.C.)
Outstanding Senior Performer®

Women’s Alpine Skiing
Devon Spika ’10 (Ontario, Canada)
Outstanding Freshman Performer®

Women’s Nordic Skiing
Heidi Tate, a two-time Northwest Conference Coach of the Year in women’s tennis, left Whitman to pursue a career in the medical field. Tate compiled a 67-32 NWC win-loss record over the past seven seasons. This year she was named Intercollegiate Tennis Association Coach of the Year for the Western Region. She will coach tennis at Northwest Nazarene University.

Hannah Swee ’05, Tate’s assistant coach, will coach the Whitman women next year on an interim basis.

Seniors lead men’s tennis team to No. 12 in national rankings

Phalkun Mam ’07, Steven Ly ’07 and Robbie Munday ’07, who led the men’s tennis team to its best season in two decades this spring, didn’t share their winning of the past four seasons. Playing in singles and doubles, the trio walked off the courts with a combined (and incredible) total of 443 victories.

Mam, a philosophy major from Salem, Ore., finished with a school record 156 victories in his four seasons. Munday, a biochemistry, biophysics and molecular biology major from Okanogan Falls, B.C., wasn’t far behind with 145 career victories, which leaves him with the third highest total in school history. Ly, a biochemistry major from Fairview, Ore., finished with 138 victories for fourth place on the all-time victory list.

With Munday, Ly and Munday leading the way, Whitman rose to No. 12 in the national rankings and qualified for the NCAA Div. III national championship tournament. The Missionaries advanced through the second round before losing to No. 8 DePauw University in the Round of 16. Whitman finished its season with a 24-8 win-loss record, including an unblemished 16-0 record during the Northwest Conference regular season.

The men’s tennis team capped its season by winning the first George Ball Sportsmanship Award. Whitman’s Student Athlete Advisory Committee will give the award on an annual basis.

Steven Ly ’07, center, runs to celebrate after a win at Whitman.
Staff honored with Janice Abraham awards

Fran Meyer, accounts payable coordinator, is a patient teacher as she explains college policies and procedures, and a problem-solver as she anticipates problems and finds solutions in her own department and others. Patti Moss, Division III assistant, is a computer and copy-machine guru whose positive attitude, professionalism, accuracy, tact and calm demeanor make the division operating smoothly.

Both winners of the 2007 Janice Abraham Awards are exceptional staff members who help create a positive working environment.

Moss, an employee since January of 2000, college since June 2000.

The Whitman Admission Office shares the following details about incoming first-years:

**Class of 2011 at a glance**

- **Expected size of entering class:** 425
- **Record number of applications:** 3,047 students
- **1,447 admitted**
- **Most academically diverse class in the history of the college. Students of color and international students make up 25 percent of the entering class.**
- **Students from 35 states and 22 countries.**

**New Web site design and features enhance the user experience**

- What does the Whitman experience feel like? What makes the college so special? What kind of people are “Whitman people?”
- Answers to these questions will leap off the screen when you visit the Whitman Web site this summer. A new design includes streamlined navigation and several new special features.
- The design is reflective of the college’s admission view book, using the same colors and similar visual presentation.
- Home-page navigation is enhanced with crisper audience lines and the addition of a “Go Directly To” drop-down. New features give the site interactivity and will be helpful in targeting prospective students. The main image and the stack of three photos lead to a feature called “Uniquely Whitman.” A series of profiles — people and programs — gives site visitors firsthand insight into the exciting things that happen at Whitman, in and out of the classroom. A second new feature remains under construction.
- When completed, “Experience Whitman Virtually” will give visitors an “experiential tour” of campus. Through a combination of interviews, video footage and photos, it targets prospective students and reflects the college’s outstanding academic program and the myriad opportunities for co-curricular involvement.
- Venturing off the home page, visitors see the design theme carried through to content pages, many of which feature enhanced copy. Alumni and parents can use the site in exactly the same way as they did before: the portal pages will include nearly all the same links. The Harris Online alumni community will remain accessible through the alumni site.

**Faculty lauded at Commencement for advising, teaching, mentoring**

Six Whitman College faculty members received awards at Commencement.

**Suzanne L. Martin Award for Excellence in Mentoring**

Halefom Belay

**associate professor of economics**

Halefom Belay encourages his students to “think long-term and globally, bring his diverse experience to his advising, sharing personal stories to bring economics alive, and helping students to clarify their own areas of interest,” one student said. Another noted that “I shall remain eternally grateful not only for encountering someone of such great spirit, with such wisdom to share, but even more so for having someone like him as a mentor and friend for life.” Belay joined the faculty in 1996.

**Robert Y. Flumo Award for Distinguished Teaching in the Social Sciences**

Kay Fenimore-Smith

**assistant professor of education**

Kay Fenimore-Smith “exemplifies what it is to be an outstanding Whitman professor,” a student wrote in support of the nomination. “She encourages us to think critically, to examine our own philosophies as well as those to which we are exposed, and to understand how our own personal beliefs, backgrounds and assumptions influence our actions and perceptions of the world.”

**Thomas D. Howells Award for Distinguished Teaching in Humanities**

Robert Bode

**Alma Meisnest Endowed Chair of Humanities**

A fellow faculty member commended Robert Bode for his ability to call a crowd of 100 undergraduates to order quickly and to “focus their attention and concentration on the task at hand. He covers an astonishing amount of music in each rehearsal session, and yet under his direction the quality of the music is always foremost.” Bode joined the faculty in 1986.

**G. Thomas Edwards Award for Excellence in Teaching and Scholarship**

Melissa Clearfield

**assistant professor of psychology**

Students and the Psychology Department faculty nominated Melissa Clearfield. “She is already a master teacher whose students love her and who mentors other colleagues, including us,” members of the Psychology Department wrote in their nomination. “Her teaching is characterized by optimal ratios of organization and creativity, rigor and warmth, and confidence combined with a sincere commitment to keep improving. Her classroom and research lab are charged with energy and vitality.” Clearfield joined the faculty in 2001.

**Barry Balof**

**assistant professor of mathematics**

Students lauded Barry Balof’s enjoyment of mathematics and teaching. “His enthusiasm is contagious,” said one student. Another noted that Balof is always available for extra help and “never made me feel silly for asking silly questions.” Students said his “abilities in mathematics are unquestionably amazing.” Balof joined the faculty in 2003.
One last assignment for the accomplished Class of 2007: End extreme poverty by 2025

On a cool day that threatened rain and delivered sprinkles, international economic adviser Jeffrey Sachs told the 2007 Commencement crowd gathered on Memorial lawn that, given the weather, he would set aside his lecture on global warming. Instead he began the keynote address with warm respect for the 367 graduates of the Whitman Class of 2007, a group that has “already commenced to show its leadership in the world.”

“This is a class that has studied abroad, solved environmental problems in the Caribbean, won countless Fulbright scholarships, joined the Peace Corps and embarked on world-changing Projects for Peace as part of a highly prized and competitive nationwide effort,” Sachs said. “And you haven’t even gotten your diplomas yet.”

Sachs, director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University, has served as economic adviser to the United Nations and to governments around the world. He advised the Class of 2007 that it will face three great challenges: the extreme gap between the rich and the poor; the extreme threat of global environmental degradation, climate change, water stress and the destruction of other species; and learning to live in peace with China and India while realizing that the United States is “one nation among many proud and powerful nations” and not a self-styled sole superpower.

“Our generation has left you with a bit of a mess,” Sachs said. In 2000, world leaders agreed to the Millennium Development Goals to fight poverty, hunger and disease. “We have not yet honored those promises. You don’t even hear about them from our leaders. It is as if they do not exist.”

Honoring these millennium promises will be “your generation’s rendezvous with destiny,” Sachs told the graduates. And being the professor that he is, he couldn’t resist giving them one last homework assignment. “I assign you to end extreme poverty by the year 2025. The midterm exam is to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by the year 2015,” he said. “But don’t despair, this is an open-book assignment, and you can — and indeed must — work in groups.”

While Sachs honored the service that seniors have already offered the world while at Whitman, the college honored him with an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters, a degree also conferred on Paula England ’71 (see page 28).

Senior class speakers Stephen Carter ’07 and Dru Johnston ’07 drew hearty laughs from the audience and platform party during their speech. (Above) Seniors gather for the traditional group photo on Ankeny Field. (Top left) A joyous Kristy Nowak ’07 gets a hug after Commencement. (Left) Lázaro Carrión celebrates after the ceremony with his diploma. (Below) Friends and family found many ways to cheer on their graduates.

For the complete speeches by Jeffrey Sachs, the senior speakers and the Baccalaureate speakers: www.whitman.edu/commencement/
Coaches who understand how players learn have an advantage

By Juli Dunn
Associate Professor of Sport Studies

In 2004, I met my research cohorts in Christchurch, New Zealand, for the first time in person. We had been collaborating via email on learning-preference research since the late 1990s. It is a collaboration of strange bedfellows in a sense: an American professor, a New Zealand rugby coach and a Kiwi educational consultant brought together by a shared passion for learning the gap between how educators teach and how students learn.

“Ah-a” moments and hallway conversations

My involvement in this group happened by accident. As the professor of an introductory sports medicine course, I found myself constantly perplexed by one student’s inability to grasp elementary concepts. Because this student also was a varsity soccer athlete, I enjoyed interactions with her outside of the classroom in the other realm of my job as the college’s certified athletic trainer. Our exchanges always seemed fluid and easy, but in the classroom, her interactions, abilities and skills seemed disjointed and unpredictable. In search of a tool to help understand why we were so far apart in the classroom, I stumbled upon educational consultant Neil Fleming’s VARK inventory.

While learning-preference knowledge is not the silver bullet ... it can begin to lessen the gap between how coaches present information and how athletes receive it.

While students in the classroom have time to process information presented in a modality outside their primary preference(s), student-athletes must often make snap adjustments in the stress of a performance setting constrained by time. Any delay in response between coach and student-athlete could equal a missed opportunity or ill-timed motor response. The time-sensitive nature of sport necessitates that coaches and athletes speak a common language of instructions, verbal cues and appropriate motor responses.

Reshaping the coach/athlete dynamic

Results from the VARK inventory for athletes have power-punching potential. The power of knowledge of one’s learning preferences and the preferences of other athletes and coaches can enhance coaches’ and athletes’ motivation and skill acquisition. Coaches who are able to use a variety of methodologies to reach a range of preferences within an athletic group have the potential to enhance athletes’ performances. They recognize that by matching coaching methods to athletes’ learning preferences they lessen the potential for miscommunication.

Richard Smith, coaching manager of the New Zealand Academy for Sport, began using the VARK inventory for athletes with Olympic-caliber competitors prior to the 2004 Olympic Games. Our paths converged when my data from the States supported his data from New Zealand and Australia. Similar to the classroom data, we discovered coaches seem to be at odds with the athletes they coach. The most noticeable difference occurs in two bi-modal variables: read/write-kinesthetic and auditory-kinesthetic.

Athletes are far more likely to have read/write preferences than the athletes they coach. Similarly, athletes are more likely to have auditory modalities. In data collected thus far (1994), coaches with read/write preferences outnumber athletes 2-to-1. The converse also is true: Athletes outnumber coaches 2-to-1 in auditory modalities. By developing strategies that coaches can employ with the athletes who have particular VARK profiles, we are revolutionizing coaching strategies in a range of settings: pre-performance, performance and post-performance.

Coaches internationally (New Zealand, Australia and Canada) and nationally (U.S. Men’s Volleyball, NCAA Division I/II/III colleges and high schools) are using their own VARK inventory results in concert with the results of their athletes to transform the impact that their coaching methods have on their athletes.

For better or worse?

For high school football coaches in North Dakota, VARK inventory data explained why college and high school athletes leave playbooks in locker rooms across the nation. With less than 1 percent of the athletic population demonstrating a visual preference, the tried-and-true playbooks are becoming obsolete. Athletes and coaches are having trouble making sense of their elite coaches, they anticipated it would serve as a coaching advantage, but they might have underestimated the extent to which the coaches used the knowledge they acquired.

A national-level coach, who also coached professionally, had knowledge about how her national-team athletes preferred to receive input. When she found herself coaching professionally against one of her national athletes, the information became the key to victory. As a strong visual learner, the athlete required spatial input to position her on the field of play and thus was in constant contact with opposing players. Armed with this knowledge, the coach instructed her players to keep a considerable, and perhaps unorthodox, distance from this marquee player.

The result: The visually dependent athlete grappled around the field of play, appearing for the first time in her professional career to be unaware of the objective of the game.

While learning-preference knowledge is not the silver bullet to enhanced coaching methods and athletic performance, it can begin to lessen the gap between how coaches present information and how athletes receive it. Such knowledge is perhaps most important in the high school and developmental arena where many athletes stop playing because the gap between instruction, learning and performance becomes too great, and the differences between coaches’ learning preferences and student-athletes’ learning preferences are at the greatest odds.

As athletes rise in the ranks of elite performance, the differences between athlete learning preferences and the learning preferences of the coaches diminish, leading us to ponder: Do certain learning preferences advantage athletes and coaches in the elite ranks? Are certain athletes disadvantaged because of their learning preference and not necessarily their athletic performance? Can diverse coaching methods aid in developing a group of diverse learners that persist into the elite athletic ranks?

We hope future research can help to answer these questions.

By Juli Dunn
Associate Professor of Sport Studies

Juli Dunn is associate professor of sport studies, varsity women’s soccer and head athletic trainer at Whitman, where she has worked since 1993. To see the athlete VARK inventory, visit www.vark-learn.com/english/page.aspx?4=athletes

In their words

Scolarshps from the classroom and beyond