The mission of University Advancement is to build relationships through meaningful engagements that foster pride, encourage advocacy, and promote private support for Western Washington University.
Capital Campaign

The capital campaign is continuing to make progress toward its $20M goal. University Advancement personnel are expanding outreach to individuals and businesses as the campaign enters the home stretch.

Key conversations include companies that have the capacity and potential interest to become the primary sponsor of the carbon-neutral design for the building. The addition of Jason F. McLennan, the internationally acclaimed sustainable design expert, to the team has elevated interest in the project. Jason and his colleagues are working with University Advancement staff to identify potential partners for financial and “in-kind” contributions.

The carbon-neutral goal for the project enhanced its prominence as a capital request and was fully funded in the Governor’s budget. Key regional business, environmental, and philanthropic leaders who endorsed the project to the Governor, are now also assisting with the identification of potential donors and making introductions.

The final phase of the campaign also includes an effort to encourage visible support from university and volunteer leadership. The Western Foundation Board of Directors is assisting with the fundraising effort, and many board members are personally supporting the project. **In addition, individual donors such as Dale Durrwachter ’62 have made significant personal donations. Learn more about Dale on the next page.**
Educator and alumnus donates $50K to Capital Campaign

Dale Durrwachter (‘62) is deeply grateful for the success he achieved in the field of education. The retired educator is particularly appreciative because when he was a child, an education was not guaranteed.

“In 1945, my father moved us to rural Washington,” he said. “No road, no electricity, no running water, no phone—we lived an entirely subsistence existence. We had no money.”

Dale, his twin sisters, and his younger sister, worked the homestead, chopping wood, building structures, and gardening. When he was six years old, an aunt and uncle offered to drive him several hours to Olympia to attend pre-K each day. That strong early start set him up for a successful elementary school experience.

“I went to Crescent Consolidated Elementary School in Joyce, Washington. It’s a K-12 school that still graduates fewer than 19 students each year,” Dale said.

Dale was a dedicated student, though he doesn’t consider himself extraordinary. Nevertheless, his teacher and her husband (the school principal) took an interest in him. They drove him 20 miles to their home to do chores around the house—during which time he would help with gardening, cleaning, and painting. What was stunning to Dale is that they paid him.

“I had never known money before,” he said.

He began to keep a ledger which he has to this day. Every penny earned, every penny spent—an ice cream cone, a trip to the movies, a haircut. He also began his journey to higher education.

“Without Western, I don’t know where I’d be now.”

“I had decided I wanted to be a teacher and a principal, and I was not to be deterred,” Dale said.

When he graduated from Crescent Consolidated—a school he supports to this day—he chose Western for college.

“It was the best college for teachers,” he said.

He stayed in a comfortable homestay near the library, which he described as “the key to all knowledge.” He loved his lodging, his proximity to downtown, where he dug oysters from the mudflats, and his studies. He particularly loved his professor, the legendary Charles Flora.

“I had done well in genetics, and he wanted me to go into research, but I wanted to be a teacher,” said Dale.

Dale paid for college by working in Olympic National Park each summer. He was a trail crew foreman for four years, making enough to pay for Western and to put his sisters through college.

After graduation in 1962, he went to Alaska for a teaching job in an elementary school. His classes were informed by his humble roots. He taught hands-on projects in addition to classroom lessons. He taught his students how to build a greenhouse, staged an operetta, and built a masted ship in the gym. He was promoted to principal and worked in the same school until his retirement in 1988.

This year, Western launched a capital campaign to aid in the construction of a new interdisciplinary science building to be named Kaiser Borsari Hall. Dale generously gave $50,000 to the project.

“I absolutely relish the publications Western sends out,” said Dale. “I see the direction of the college, and that the attitude is ‘we’re good, but we can be better.’ I like to see Western’s goals for the future and the emphasis on STEM. The focus on women in STEM really struck me. The school has a bright future and is acknowledging that future in a big way.”

Reverence for science, a dedication to education, and a belief in progress inspire Dale to give so much to the school he loves.

“Without Western, I don’t know where I’d be now. I wouldn’t have lived this long.”
University Advancement secures project to assist low-income communities in Whatcom County

The First Federal Community Foundation allocated funding to Western Washington University’s Sustainable Communities Partnership for a program that engages community members and university faculty and students to address real community challenges in a low-income, rural community in East Whatcom.

The original application, submitted by Western’s Corporate and Foundation Relations team, requested $22,000 that would have allowed the Sustainable Communities Partnership to engage in four community support partnership projects. After receiving a $5,000 grant, the Sustainable Communities Partnership selected the following project for implementation:

**Park Planning**

The Columbia Valley Park and Recreation District (CVPRD) was created for east Whatcom County in 2016. A handful of park initiatives were discussed, and there was widespread support, but the community had limited capacity to prioritize, design, and construct these spaces.

This project engaged Western faculty and students in developing a parks implementation plan, opened for public review during fall 2020, that includes:

- Park design based on community preferences, with particular effort to involve residents who don’t typically attend public meetings.
- A timeline for development of one or more parks, which prioritizes improving health outcomes for low- and moderate-income residents.
- Presentation materials, including visuals, that are suitable for the community to use in seeking capital funding for park construction.

To help inform the Comprehensive Park Plan, Western students designed and implemented a series of community engagement initiatives, including a survey, interviews, and a focus group as part of a course—a task made more difficult by the COVID-19 pandemic, which prohibited in-person gatherings. Based on their analysis, the students compiled a summary of the community’s preferences and concerns regarding park development. An additional student was hired to create park designs based on the community’s input. The resulting data, and the designs incorporated into the Comprehensive Park Plan, will be used for future park design and development.

As a final component, the students created a new user-friendly CVPRD [website](#) and a communication plan.
The Western Alumni Association Board of Directors is pleased to announce the appointment of seven new members

**Nabeel Chowdhury ('12)**
Nabeel has spent the last decade in the recruiting industry. He currently serves as vice president and general manager at 24 Seven, a specialized marketing and design recruitment agency that focuses on helping individuals find jobs in the greater Seattle area. He takes passion in helping students enter the workforce and acts as a career coach as they progress throughout their careers. He has spent the past year serving on Western’s Marketing Advisory Board and currently leads alumni relations for the department.

**Edward Coe ('11)**
Edward has worked for Microsoft for eight years. He currently serves as senior category manager overseeing the company’s North America Surface business. To date, the Orcas Island native has held various positions across planning, supply chain, replenishment, new store openings, and category management. He has worked with products such as Xbox, Surface, Office, Hololens, and Accessories. Edward brings a wealth of diverse experience across many functions of the information technology sector.

**Brandy Corujo ('97)**
Brandy has been in the insurance industry for more than 20 years. She currently serves as a partner at Cornerstone Insurance Group where she specializes in the senior insurance market and focuses on Medicare and long-term care insurance. She co-founded Cornerstone in 2007 in order to provide her clients the experience that she felt they desired and deserved with a focus on education and providing them the tools they needed to make important life decisions. The Lynnwood resident is also an active volunteer in her community and in her children’s school.

**Janis Velasquez Farmer ('03, '11)**
Janis is the first director of equity, diversity, and inclusion at Bellingham Public Schools and founder/co-owner of Emerge Strategic Designs. As a first-generation American (the daughter of Filipino immigrant parents) and a first-generation university graduate, she navigates conversations about equity and justice from a human systems perspective. During her career, she has emphasized educational access for Black and Brown scholars. She worked in Western’s Office of Admissions as assistant director of admissions, multicultural outreach and campus recruitment programs, and has also worked for Student Outreach Services. She holds a B.A. and a master’s degree from Western in addition to a master’s in organizational development & change and a Ph.D. in human development from Fielding Graduate University.
Hamraj Ghumman (‘14)  
A finance professional and Bellingham native, Hamraj currently serves as a corporate finance leader with Expedia, a Fortune 500 company. He manages global budgets and provides financial guidance and analytics solutions to leadership. His connections to Western are long-standing—his father served the university for over 35 years. As a student, Hamraj won the Boeing Business Case Competition which helped him realize his passion for business. An active volunteer, he has been involved with community organizing within the local Sikh community and helped grow a small family business in Whatcom County’s agricultural center. He has been recognized as one of Expedia’s top 5% performers within his division.

LaShawn Morgan (‘95)  
LaShawn is an HR expert and corporate recruiter with a specialty in talent acquisition. She has spent more than 10 years working for companies such as Starbucks, Microsoft, and Facebook, and has served as Nordstrom’s principal recruiter since 2018. Her family moved to Bellingham from Atlanta, Georgia. LaShawn graduated from Western with a major in Law, Diversity and Justice from Fairhaven College. She was actively involved with student programs and served as president of the African American Alliance/Black Student Union in 1994. During her last year of college, she worked as an intern for the City of Bellingham in human resources, and as an assistant to Larry Estrada, former Vice Provost for Diversity. She’s looking forward to building career connections for WWU students and alumni.

Corey Spears (‘20)  
Corey earned his B.S. in computer science. After graduating, he searched for a career that would benefit society through technology. He found that opportunity in the healthcare industry, applying his knowledge and skills towards improving healthcare IT. He recently joined Mitre Corporation, a not-for-profit organization that works in the public interest across federal, state, and local governments, to help solve healthcare problems. He works as a principle in computer science. Corey, his wife, and young daughter live in Kent, Washington. In his free time, he enjoys hiking and home improvement projects, especially those with a technology focus, such as home automation.
WWU Alumni Association forges partnership to enhance professional development opportunities for BIPOC students

In collaboration with Effie Eisses, director of the Career Services Center, the Alumni Association has been working to increase professional development opportunities for BIPOC students as part of a larger commitment to enhancing diversity and inclusion at Western. In January 2021, alumnus Atiavo Jude '95 was hired to serve as a career resources specialist through June 2021.

In this part-time role, Atiavo will develop, implement, and promote professional development and career activities that focus on creating connections and mentoring opportunities between BIPOC students and alumni utilizing the WE Connect platform. Atiavo will report directly to Effie Eisses and Victoria Martinsen, director, alumni and constituent engagement, University Advancement. He will also work closely with Stephanie Wiley, assistant director, WE Connect, WWU Alumni Association.

With more than 1,900 members, WE Connect is Western’s online community for alumni and students to make professional connections, expand career growth, and discover shared interest groups and events: weconnect.wwu.edu
Opening doors for students of color: Woody Wheeler and Lori Cohen

Huxley alumnus Woody Wheeler ('76) and his wife Lori Cohen have dedicated their lives to environmental protection and conservation. Recently, they channeled their passion into a generous contribution to the Huxley 50th Anniversary Diversity Scholarship.

Among his many accomplishments, Woody was a founding member of the Seward Park Audubon Center in the heart of urban Seattle. After a career working for several environmental non-profit organizations, he started a birding and nature touring company, Conservation Catalyst, and led birding and nature tours for Naturalist Journeys. He has led tours from Canada to Antarctica.

Lori, a University of Maryland graduate, worked for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for 37 years, from 1978 to 2015. During her career, she assumed many positions, but her last was as associate director of the agency’s Regional Superfund program where she managed the cleanup of contaminated properties throughout the Pacific Northwest.

During their careers, both environmentalists have championed overlooked and underrepresented populations, whether by creating access for underserved youth in outdoor spaces (Woody) or cleaning contaminated properties near
low-income neighborhoods (Lori). They have each worked hard to broaden and diversify the environmental movement.

“We deliberately sited the Audubon Center in the most ethnically diverse corner of Seattle,” said Woody. “In order to make certain the neighborhood wanted us there, the City asked us to conduct a needs assessment. I interviewed 40 key stakeholders as a part of this effort, and almost to the person they said, ‘Of course we want this. It would be good for our families and our community.’”

Cohen has sought to hire people of color and to advocate for environmental justice as part of her focus at EPA.

“Many of the projects I worked on were in ethnically diverse, low-income neighborhoods,” she said. “We worked hard to be inclusive and to address environmental justice issues by engaging tribal governments and the local community in our cleanup projects.”

When Huxley appeared to be falling short of its fundraising goal for its biennial anniversary celebration, the couple pledged $12,000 in matching funds to the college’s 50th Anniversary Diversity Scholarship to boost the campaign. They made lists of friends and family members who could contribute, appealed to Huxley board members who had not previously engaged philanthropically, and sent a letter on Huxley’s behalf from a noted conservationist of color to alumni supporters.

“People of color have been disproportionately affected by environmental pollution, and this scholarship will help create opportunities to gain entry into the environmental field to address these problems,” said Woody.

Thanks to the couple, and donors who stepped up to match their gift, Huxley met and exceeded its goal for the 50th Anniversary Diversity Scholarship.

“We wanted to do something tangible, to put our money where our mouth is, and to make change happen in our society,” Woody said. “Western and Huxley are taking bold steps in committing to diversity. We hope these new students will be comfortable and nurtured from their first year to graduation, that they get a degree in environmental science, and work for the environment in their careers. We all need their talent and perspectives.”

For Woody and Lori, diversity isn’t just a “should,” it’s a “must.”

“The environment needs all of us,” said Woody. “We have to do this—it’s for our very survival as a species.”

Woody and Lori are both mostly retired now and have enjoyed traveling the globe to spot penguins, monkeys, and manakins. While Lori tutors elementary school children in disadvantaged neighborhoods, Woody shares his passion for nature through birding and natural history tours, educational presentations, and by serving as a tree advocate in Seattle.
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