

CRIMSON & BLACK

Central
Washington
University
Fall 2025

Ted King Builds Legacy
by Pushing Boundaries
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Taking Stock of CWU
Magazine's History
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Online Edition

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Connect with CWU     

On the Cover: An exterior view of the North Academic Complex, which will open on the Ellensburg campus in fall 2026.

Photograph: David Dick

Left: Members of the Jump Start program attend a farm to table event this fall, put on by CWU Dining Services.

Photograph: David Dick

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CWU LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Central Washington University acknowledges the people who have been on this land since time immemorial. The Ellensburg campus is on lands ceded by the Pshwanapum and other bands and tribes of the Yakama Nation in the Treaty of 1855. The Yakama people remain committed stewards of this land, cherishing it and protecting it, as instructed by elders through generations. We are honored and grateful to be on their traditional lands, and give thanks to the legacy of the original people, their lives, and their descendants.

Hannah Shamloo prepares a rock sample with a microscope welder in her Discovery Hall lab.

A woman with curly brown hair, wearing a white lab coat over a black top, is focused on her work in a laboratory. She is using a microscope welder to prepare a rock sample. The microscope is mounted on a stand, and she is holding the rock sample with both hands. The background shows various laboratory equipment, including a white cabinet and a window with blinds. The lighting is bright, highlighting the woman and her work.

A Fascinatingly Rocky Planet

By Rune Torgersen

“Don’t be afraid to ask questions; those questions are what drive us to improve our understanding of the world.” Hannah Shamloo

Hannah Shamloo discovered her fascination for her home planet just as she began exploring the universe beyond it.

“I was that classic kid who wanted to be an astronaut,” the CWU Geological Sciences professor said. “I loved the stars, and whenever there was a book fair at school, I’d always pick up books about spaceships and NASA. Once I went to school for astrophysics, I realized that what I was actually interested in was rocky planets, and then just by accident, I took a geology 101 class. That changed everything, and while it took me longer to finish my bachelor’s degree, it was completely worth it.”

Following this newfound passion, Shamloo earned her PhD in Geological Sciences from Arizona State University in 2020, and began pursuing a professorship that would allow her to share that passion with others.

“I’ve always loved teaching,” she said. “I see it as a form of science communication, and a way to connect with the geologists of tomorrow. One of the things that attracted me to CWU was the heavy emphasis on teaching.”

In addition to teaching, Shamloo serves as primary investigator for the Center for High-Temperature, Volcanic, and Experimental Studies (CHIVES), a CWU research group dedicated to exploring the conditions that make volcanoes erupt, through the lens of Washington’s Cascade mountain range.

The group is currently examining the early history of Goat Rocks, a cluster of volcanoes in the north Cascades featuring unique properties that leave their past visible to the naked eye.

“Goat Rocks is very understudied, and in fact we only just recently classified the ages of some of these erupted units. So, to

me, it’s a treasure trove just sitting there waiting for us,” she said. “It’s a unique place because the entire life history of a Cascades volcanic system is exposed from erosion and glaciation there, which just doesn’t happen all that often. This is a huge opportunity for us, so we’re looking to explore what fueled the volcanoes in this era of time for the Cascades.”

The group’s research into Goat Rocks is funded by a four-year, \$495,196 grant from the National Science Foundation. Shamloo knows that while the day-to-day work of sifting through

magmatic crystals hunting for clues to their origin might not seem like earth-shattering science, it is that very dedication to incremental exploration that may eventually help communities prepare for future volcanic eruptions.

“Sometimes what we do can feel very esoteric,” she said. “We’re studying chemical signatures in tiny crystals to understand the massive systems that power volcanoes. Every part of the puzzle is important for the broader picture, so I’m an advocate for that ‘no small parts’ mentality.”

With her research plucking away at the big questions underpinning volcanic activity, and her classes reaching more future geologists every year,

Shamloo reflects on the road that led her to the career of her dreams.

“I was curious, and I was okay with failure,” she said. “If there’s anything I try to instill in my students, it’s that you don’t have to be a Stephen-Hawking-type to be a scientist; you just have to be curious and willing to chase that curiosity. Don’t be afraid to ask questions; those questions are what drive us to improve our understanding of the world.” ■



Photograph courtesy of Jordan Carey.

The summer 2024 CHIVES Goat Rocks Project team.
Back row (L to R): Fuji the dog, Nick Zentner, Daryl Gusey.
Middle row (L to R): Kellie Wall, Hannah Shamloo, John Lasher,
Sabrina Ansari, James Genero IV.
Front row (L to R): Yusei O’Leary, Hailey Finch.

Turning Imagina Unforgettable Ex



The original cast of the "Hoop-Dee-Doo Musical Revue," one of CWU alum Ted King's favorite creative endeavors during his five-decade career in the entertainment industry. This summer, King joined the original cast of "Hoop-Dee-Doo" at Walt Disney World in Florida to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the popular stage show.

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Ted King
has built a
four-decade
career
pushing
the bounds
of human
creativity

By Robin Burck

Ted King's career has taken him from the stages of Walt Disney World to the creative helm of billion-dollar theme parks across the globe.

But long before he was developing record-setting attractions like The Sphere in Las Vegas or overseeing the media for Warner Bros. World in Abu Dhabi, King ('77) was a CWU student immersed in theatre, music classes, and the tight-knit campus community that would shape his future.

What began with a single postcard in the CWU Theatre department grew into a 40-year journey of blending storytelling, technology, and the art of creating wonder.



Photos courtesy of Ted King.

Nearly 50 years since he graduated from CWU, Ted King ('77) enjoys giving back to his alma mater.

It Started with a Postcard

King's career arc began with an unexpected opportunity during his sophomore year as a music major at CWU.

While performing in *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, directed by beloved CWU professor Dr. Milo Smith, a postcard came to the theatre department from the Walt Disney Company, King recalls. The postcard advertised the "All-American College Workshop," a fine arts program at Disneyland.

"Milo Smith handed me that postcard, and though it seemed like it was just a postcard, it was probably one of the biggest game-changers of my entire life," King says.

He auditioned for the program by recording a videotape of himself in Hertz Recital Hall singing, dancing, and discussing why he wanted to be part of the program. Out of 600 applicants, King was one of only eight selected.

That summer, he joined the original cast of *Hoop-Dee-Do* at Walt Disney World, now one of the longest-running stage shows in American history, having just celebrated its 50-year anniversary.

"For a 20-year-old kid from Central to get cast in that show was pretty amazing," King says. "At 20 I was like a huge sponge, just soaking it all in. By the time I got back to Central, I was thinking, 'man, maybe I want to move to L.A. and give it a go.' I was so inspired by that experience."

A year later, Disney was recasting the show and invited him back as a professional performer rather than as a college student. Shortly after, he completed his degree at CWU and moved to Los Angeles to work at Disneyland, setting the stage for his life-long career.



King helped create the popular "Spongebob" attraction at Circus Circus in Las Vegas.

From Performer to Creative Visionary

While working as a performer at Disneyland, King soon became interested in joining the creative side of the industry.

In 1983, he joined Landmark Entertainment Group, where he spent 20 years learning how to design, develop, produce, and operate themed entertainment, theme parks, resorts, world expos, and more.

"Disney had its own internal design and production company, but other theme parks, resorts, hotels, and expos around the world wanted Disney-quality entertainment but didn't know how to do it," King says. "We filled that niche for decades producing projects in Japan, South Korea, Thailand, Europe, and Australia."

King contributed to landmark projects such as the Jurassic Park ride at Universal Studios Hollywood, which, at the time, boasted the highest free drop of any water-based roller coaster.

"Back in 1994, when we designed that attraction, we had to have the biggest drop so we could tell people that there was no other ride like it in the world," King says. "Steven Spielberg loved the ride and how we brought his movie to life for the guests at Universal."

More recently, he worked on The Sphere and the High Roller Observation Wheel in Las Vegas, and the goal remained the same throughout: to present something new that nobody has experienced before.

At the time of its opening, the High Roller was the tallest observation wheel in the world, beating the Singapore Flyer by 50 feet.

"Every project starts with an idea and a blank piece of paper, and you start to formulate a creative vision for what this thing is going to be," King says. "It doesn't matter if it's a themed retail store in Tokyo, or if it's a billion-dollar theme park. The process is the same."



A conceptual drawing for the entrance to Warner Bros. World in Abu Dhabi, the world's biggest indoor theme park.



King played a major role in launching Warner Bros. World. Here, he shows off the plaza inside the park.

The World's Biggest Stage

In the 1990s, King was part of the creative team designing a show for the MGM Grand in Las Vegas, which was the largest single-building hotel in the world at that time.

"MGM wanted to do a show that was bigger and more spectacular than anything in Vegas," King recalls. "Our company won the creative competition for the project, and we called the show 'EFX.'"

The production starred Michael Crawford, one of the world's best-known performers in the early '90s. When it came time to write the music, King and his colleague decided to take a risk.

"I looked at my writing partner and said, 'Why don't we write the songs?' We knew that because Michael Crawford was doing the show, we could have hired any famous songwriter," King says. "But my writing partner and I said, 'Why don't we do it?' And we did."

King wrote the soundtrack and eventually played the songs for Crawford in a Los Angeles studio.

"The first time Michael Crawford heard the songs, it was me sitting at the piano in a studio in L.A. where he was recording his Grammy nominated album, 'A Touch of Music in the Night,'" he remembers. "I sat at the piano and played him these songs he'd never heard before."

Crawford took the recorded demos home to England over Christmas, and a month later called King and said, "By the way, I really like your songs. I played them for my voice coach, and he was quite amazed at how well you've written them in my key."

The songs King wrote for "EFX," recorded by the London Symphony Orchestra at Abbey Road Studios in London, were performed in Las Vegas for years.

"We took a big chance and it became one of the highlights of my career," he proudly states.

Connected to His Roots

King continues to stay involved with his alma mater in many ways, including sitting on the College of Arts and Humanities Advisory Board, working with the alumni association to create a fund to help students purchase their graduation caps and gowns, and establishing an endowment to honor his late father, Waldo King.

He was also recently selected as an alumni entrepreneur whose leadership has positively impacted the broader CWU community, with a banner hung on campus to highlight his achievement.

"Every time I think of Ellensburg I smile," King says. "It was such a fantastic four years that I spent there on that campus, and I'm lucky to still have Central be part of my life."

He wants current and future CWU students to know that uncertainty is part of the journey.

"There are thousands of kids at Central right now, but they might not have a clue what they're going to be doing in five or 10 years," he says. "Don't be afraid of the unknown. Don't be afraid to take chances. I am living proof that an average student from a modest background was able to take advantage of opportunities, use my skills and talent, and develop it into a rewarding career."

After four decades in the entertainment business, King remains driven by the same curiosity that sparked his first trip to Walt Disney World. Whether the project is a Las Vegas stage show or a sprawling theme park overseas, his mission to create experiences that draw people in and keep them coming back has never changed.

It's a standard he set early on and, by his own account, was shaped in part by his years at Central. ■

North Academic Complex

Center of



Attention

New academic facility expected to be a hub for CWU students, environmental stewardship

By Rune Torgersen

As the North Academic Complex (NAC) nears completion, Central Washington University looks to a future of leadership in sustainability and shared experience.

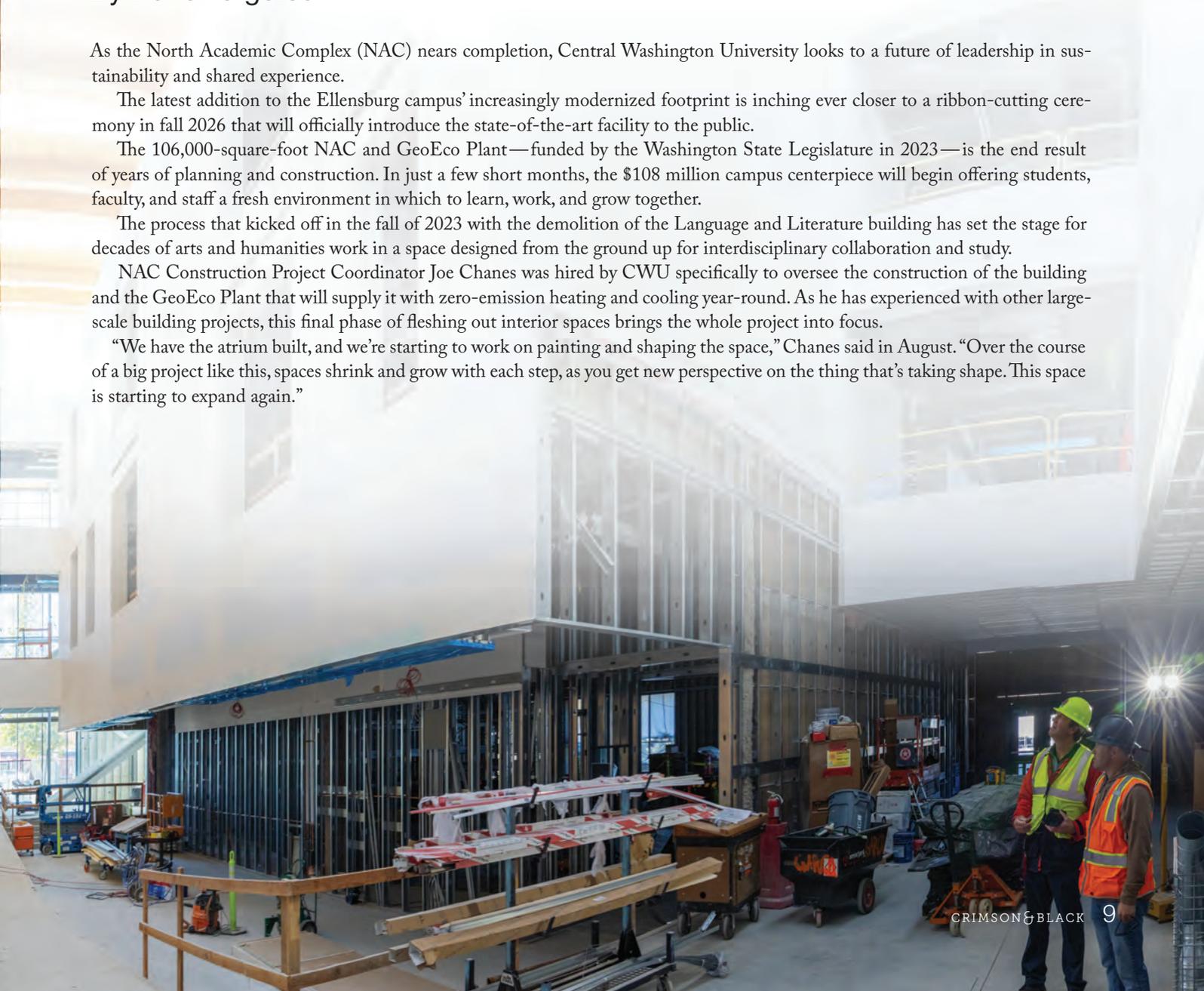
The latest addition to the Ellensburg campus' increasingly modernized footprint is inching ever closer to a ribbon-cutting ceremony in fall 2026 that will officially introduce the state-of-the-art facility to the public.

The 106,000-square-foot NAC and GeoEco Plant—funded by the Washington State Legislature in 2023—is the end result of years of planning and construction. In just a few short months, the \$108 million campus centerpiece will begin offering students, faculty, and staff a fresh environment in which to learn, work, and grow together.

The process that kicked off in the fall of 2023 with the demolition of the Language and Literature building has set the stage for decades of arts and humanities work in a space designed from the ground up for interdisciplinary collaboration and study.

NAC Construction Project Coordinator Joe Chanes was hired by CWU specifically to oversee the construction of the building and the GeoEco Plant that will supply it with zero-emission heating and cooling year-round. As he has experienced with other large-scale building projects, this final phase of fleshing out interior spaces brings the whole project into focus.

“We have the atrium built, and we’re starting to work on painting and shaping the space,” Chanes said in August. “Over the course of a big project like this, spaces shrink and grow with each step, as you get new perspective on the thing that’s taking shape. This space is starting to expand again.”





The 245-seat TED Talks-style auditorium is expected to become a centerpiece on the Ellensburg campus.



The modern design of the NAC mirrors other recent capital projects on campus.

Featuring a 245-seat lecture hall modeled after the widely seen TED Talks series of speeches, as well as timber sourced from Yakama Nation Forest Products, the NAC is destined to become an integral part of CWU students' lives from the moment it opens for business in fall 2026.

The NAC also will house a mock courtroom for the Law and Justice program that features a judge's bench, witness stand, and jury panel. The two large skylights and ceiling-to-floor window panels will provide ample natural light, while the solar and geothermal energy infrastructure will help the university achieve our goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 45% no later than 2030.

Director of Capital Planning and Projects Delano Palmer has overseen the project since its inception, and he knows the impact that such spaces can have on the student experience. He's a big fan of showing it off, too.

"I love giving tours of the building at every stage of construction and getting to educate people on how it will serve our campus for years to come," Palmer said. "Building something that students will have life-defining experiences in, and meet friends and loved ones who they'll cherish for the rest of their lives—that's what gets me excited about the work I do, and about the NAC. We're not doing this for ourselves but for all the future students who will call this building home."

Geothermal Pioneers

As impactful as the building itself will be for the campus community, the GeoEco Plant that will heat and cool the NAC has broader implications for the entire state. The largest public geothermal heating and cooling project in Washington State will be capable of maintaining the indoor temperature of approximately 500,000 square feet of building space across campus, utilizing existing HVAC networks to serve up to three buildings, in addition to the NAC.

CWU's Sustainability Director Jeff Bousson sees the effort as an important step forward in realizing CWU's Climate Action Plan, which was published in July 2024.

"It's a really exciting project that will enable CWU to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and support the objectives listed in our Climate Action Plan," he said. "Hopefully this is the

first of many projects to come, all of which will produce significant economic and environmental benefits for our campus and community."

Those projects include three additional GeoEco Plants spread across campus, along with solar arrays on several existing buildings. The second plant received funding from the state Legislature for the 2025-27 biennium and construction work is already underway across from Black Hall.

Thanks to the construction of the first GeoEco Plant—located across Dean Nicholson Boulevard from the NAC—CWU has become a regional leader in sustainability in higher education. Bousson hopes to spread that success around through continued engagement with other environmentally minded institutions. The first Geothermal Symposium was held last April, and he sees enough opportunities ahead to continue convening the events on a regular basis.

"We aim to continue holding geothermal symposiums and share our experiences with other entities seeking to harness this cutting-edge technology," Bousson said. "When we open our doors and share our story on how we were able to advance geothermal energy on our campus, we help build a more sustainable future for everyone."

Once the GeoEco Plant comes online next summer, it will feature an open design, allowing visitors to peek behind the curtain of a truly unique approach to combatting climate change.

Palmer views this aspect of the project as central to CWU's mission.

"The fact that we're designing the GeoEco Plant to be a learning lab is a key component for us," he said. "Whether you're 2 or 92, you'll be able to walk up to the building and see the inner workings of the geothermal process. As a university, we try to infuse learning and education into everything we do."

As Bousson explained, the Climate Action Plan is a living, breathing document that is designed to be implemented over the next 15 years. Each step is vital, and CWU is proud to have laid the foundation for lasting success as we pursue these climate-critical and cost-saving initiatives.

"It's imperative that we start on the right foot as it relates to incorporating sustainability into new construction projects on campus," Bousson said. "This project illustrates that we are committed to starting on the right foot and reducing our environmental footprint for the next several years." ■



The NAC's cross-laminated timber support beams were sourced from Yakama Nation Forest Products.

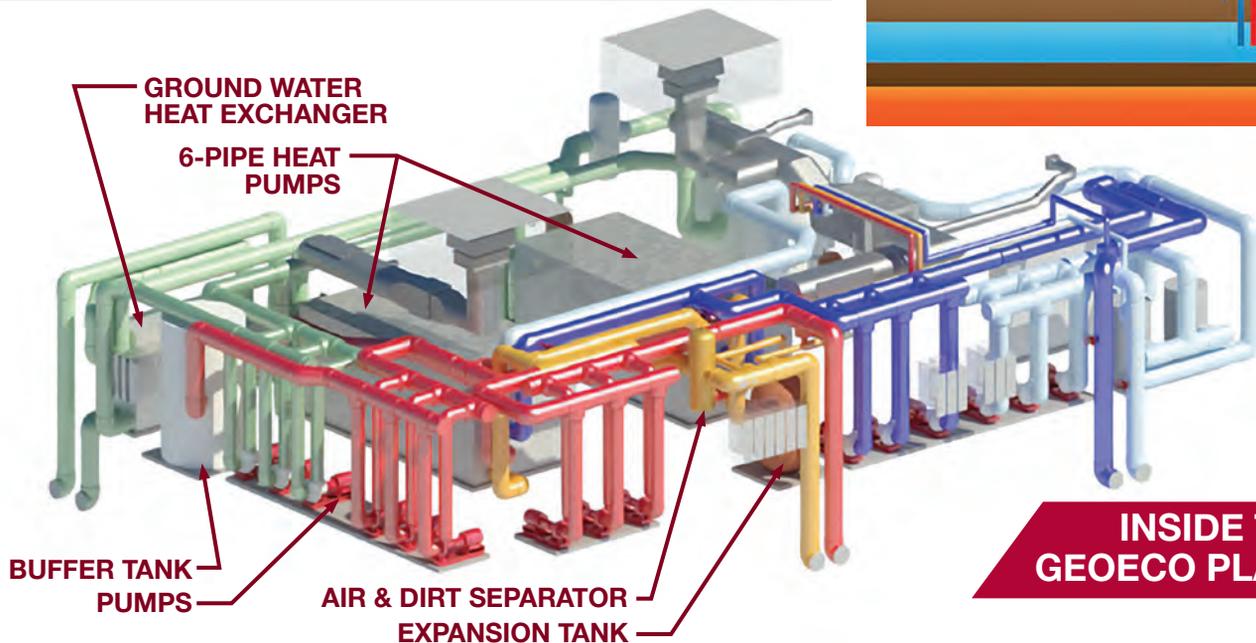
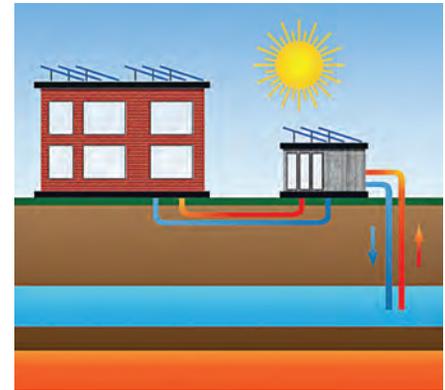
North Academic Complex (NAC)

- **Size:** 106,000 square feet
- **Floors:** 4
- **Total Cost:** \$108 million
- **Funding:** Washington Legislature (2023)
- **Opening Date:** Fall 2026
- **Building Highlights:**
 - ▶ Geothermal heating and cooling systems
 - ▶ 245-seat TED Talks-style auditorium
 - ▶ Mock courtroom for Law and Justice program
 - ▶ Meets LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Gold standards
 - ▶ Atrium space that spans the building from east to west
 - ▶ Abundant natural light from atrium skylights and large-pane windows
 - ▶ Full array of rooftop solar panels
 - ▶ Open support beams made of cross-laminated timber



Capital Planning and Projects began digging the first geothermal well on campus during the spring of 2025.

WATER SOURCE HEAT PUMP



INSIDE THE GEOCO PLANT

Graphic Design Professor David Bieloh, center, aims to help his students enter their professional careers as “better citizens, thinkers, and problem-solvers.”





FROM blank canvas to *Polished* *Professionals*

CWU Graphic Design program takes holistic approach to molding future visual artists

By David Leder

There's a lot more to becoming a graphic designer than many students realize when they enroll at CWU.

As Professor David Bieloh explains, graphic design isn't just about creating a compelling logo or dynamic poster design. Developing into a professional graphic designer relies just as much on a student's art and design foundation: understanding composition, visual experience, effective use of color and typography, and dozens of other core competencies.

"We're not just trying to teach our students how to design the next commercial product package," Bieloh said. "We have a much more human-centered philosophy. We're more concerned with teaching them concepts and strategies that they can use to solve problems, both in the industry and in society."

Bieloh and his colleagues, Associate Professor Justin Beckman and Senior Lecturer Matthew Wenz, take a holistic approach to teaching that ensures their students are prepared to tackle any challenge they are presented with in their careers.

At its core, the CWU Graphic Design program is just as much about developing people as it is about graduating talented designers (about 40 per year, on average).

"You can build a good portfolio at a lot of places, but for us, it's about the full process," Bieloh said. "It's so hard to keep up with everything that's happening in the design industry today. I focus on what's going to make them better citizens, thinkers, and problem-solvers."



The CWU Graphic Design program gives students a well-rounded experience that prepares them for a wide variety of professional opportunities.

Likewise, Beckman and Wenz try to give their students a well-rounded view of how the industry works and how they can chart their own path in an ever-changing landscape.

Beckman believes it's his responsibility to help students understand the many potential directions they can go with a degree in graphic design.

"We give our students an overarching experience that includes a wide array of possibilities," he said. "It's not just logos and branding; it's not just building websites. You can work for a large company or a small company. You can work for an ad agency, an in-house design agency, or start your own product line.

"You might work for a newspaper or magazine, or a nonprofit," he continued. "Or you might decide to freelance. We have graduates doing all of those things and more, and we feel like it's important to show them everything that's out there."

All three faculty members have built extensive professional networks over the years, and they have helped connect graduates with companies as far away as New York, Texas, and Ohio.

CWU Graphic Design alumni can currently be found working at places like John Paul Mitchell Systems, Gap Inc., the Seattle Mariners, Alaska Airlines, Xbox, Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, Pearlfisher, and many other top brands and marketing agencies.

More often than not, program alumni end up working in the Puget Sound area or other Northwest locales, including Ellensburg. They may even find a job with their alma mater.

In Bieloh's experience, CWU is unique because of the many on-campus graphic design opportunities available to students and recent graduates.

"I've worked at other higher ed institutions, and I've never had such a strong connection with all of the different design areas across campus," he said. "We have students and alumni

working in the Publicity Center, Auxiliary Enterprises, the Office of Marketing and Communications, student media, and various other departments. Most of those job opportunities are competitive, which is good experience for them. They also get paid while receiving good creative direction that they can take with them to their next job."

Wide Range of Experience

Not all graphic design majors at CWU join the program with an extensive art background. In fact, most of them start out not knowing much at all.

But, as Bieloh explained, that lack of experience can be to their advantage.

"Sometimes it's better to work with them from the very beginning," he said. "A lot of work goes into teaching them what good design is and what it is not."

Beckman and Wenz teach most of the entry-level graphic design classes, and they see students from a wide range of creative backgrounds. Some come in with an innate understanding of the subject matter, while others have no artistic training.

"Most of them are very green, but we also have students who have grown up in an artistic household and already have amazing drawing skills, a great sense of composition, and an instinctual approach to color," Beckman said. "Those students definitely come in with an advantage, but having an art background isn't required. We're here to help them build their artistic foundation, and everything else eventually comes together."

That's why CWU stresses the importance of the creative process, he added. The end product matters, but there's so much that happens before you can arrive at the finish line.



Designers Making Their Mark

CWU graduates about 40 graphic designers every year, and many recent alumni have gone on to successful careers with notable companies.

Lana Robinson

John Paul Mitchell Systems, Los Angeles
Graphic Designer

Mackenzie Blue Loete

Gap Inc., San Francisco Bay area
Senior Manager of Textile Design

Leo Andraca

Seattle Mariners, Seattle
Graphic Designer

Sione Sausau

TGD | Xbox Digital Marketing, Auburn
Digital Designer

Devyani Pare

Pearlfisher, New York
Graphic designer

Jake Lunde

Greenlight, Seattle
Design Lead

Alexa Tymecki

Cushing Terrell, Denver, Colorado
Graphic Designer

Vanessa Cruz-Rivera

Smith-Western Co., University Place
Art Director

Elizabeth Mason

Indigo Slate, Seattle
Designer

Alexander Jones

Anchour, Bothell
Marketing Designer

Michael Redick

Prottime Sports Inc., Mountlake Terrace
Graphic Designer | UX Designer

Justin Lee

UZ Marketing, Cincinnati, Ohio
Marketing Director

Katie Jo Stewart

Greensource, Renton
Graphic Artist

Morgan Rosentrater

Purple Coyote Printing, Ephrata
Lead Graphic Designer

Amanda Smith

Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, Seattle
Graphic Designer

Karly Heitman

Alaska Airlines, SeaTac
Graphic Designer

Drew Lamond

Optic Gaming, Dallas, Texas
Graphic Designer

Bekah Blum

Edgeworks Climbing + Fitness, Bellevue
Marketing and Design Manager

Justin Kloster

Single Hill Brewing Company, Yakima
Visual Designer

Ryan Weier

Explored Co, Roslyn
Owner and Vice President

Edgar Roa

The Print House, Lewisville, Texas
Graphic Designer

Ryan Moffatt

Thomson Reuters Special Services, Denver, Colorado
Senior Product Designer

“We want our students to fully understand what it means to be engaged in a thoughtful artistic process,” Beckman said. “That includes everything from doing research in the initial stages to thinking about the end user, to talking to clients and identifying the objective of a specific project.”

During his 12 years at Central, Bieloh has found that a “systems approach” is the most effective way to show students how all of the pieces fit together across different mediums and campaigns.

“We want them to understand how their designs fit into a larger whole,” he said. “Design does not exist in a vacuum. We don’t teach students to focus on single, stand-alone artifacts when they solve design problems. Rather, we focus on systems thinking, where each project they work on involves whole families of designed artifacts—all parts of a much larger system within each brand. It’s about designing in a way where you are always thinking bigger and deeper than just the single product or artifact.”

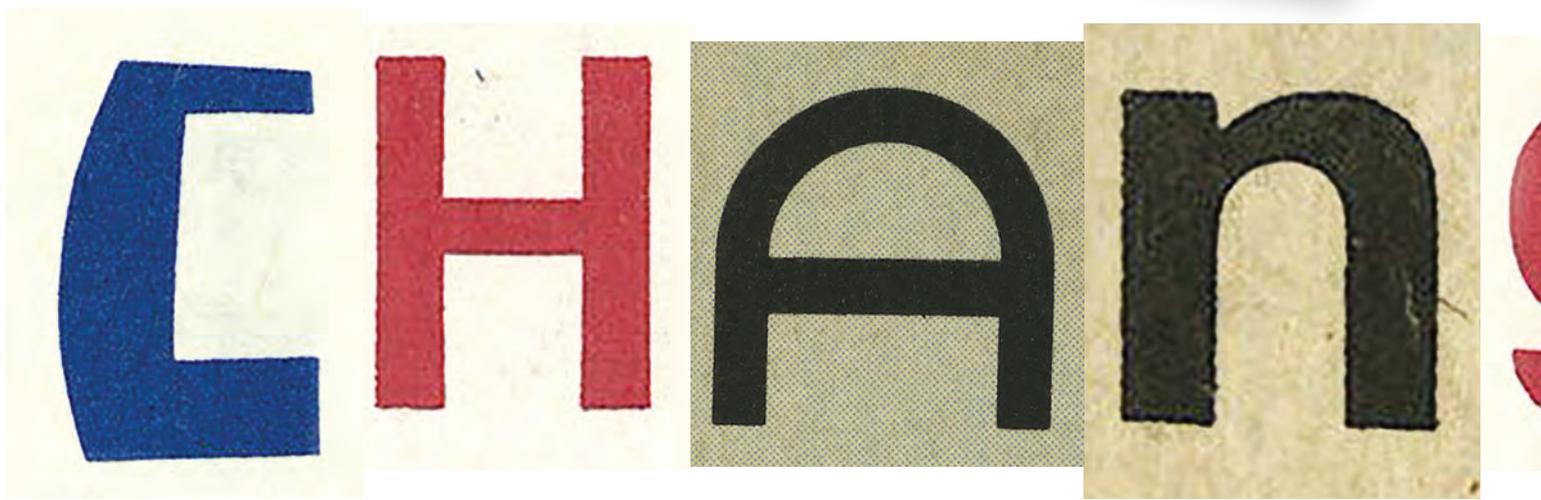
In the end, Bieloh and his colleagues feel like they have done their jobs when their students leave CWU understanding the importance of good ideas, and how they can employ conceptual solutions to address real-world design problems.

Based on the feedback the faculty members receive from their industry colleagues and alumni, they know they are doing something right.

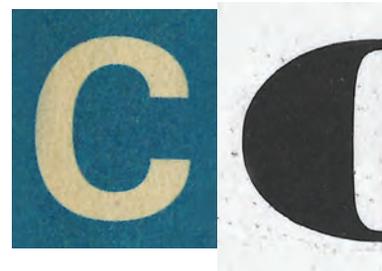
“We just want them to leave here knowing what’s truly important: foundational systems, a people-centered approach, conceptual problem-solving, and a focus on the user,” Bieloh said. “If they are able to grasp those core concepts and learn to create beautiful work—which they inevitably do—they will be well-positioned to enter the workforce. That’s our ultimate goal.” ■



embracing



and making it





As the Greek philosopher Heraclitus once said, “The only constant in life is change.”

Like everything else in world history, Central Washington University’s magazine has undergone its share of changes over the past 126 years.

This fall, we find ourselves at another crossroads. The name of the publication is the same, but our readers are likely to notice that the look and feel of this edition of *Crimson & Black* is somewhat different than what you’ve grown accustomed to in recent years.

While the elements herein are mostly familiar, you will notice that the fall 2025 version of CWU’s signature publication is more streamlined than past editions. The articles are shorter and, as a result, the page count has been reduced.

As we await the results of our online survey, introduced in the spring 2025 issue, we are considering what the future of *Crimson & Black* might look like.

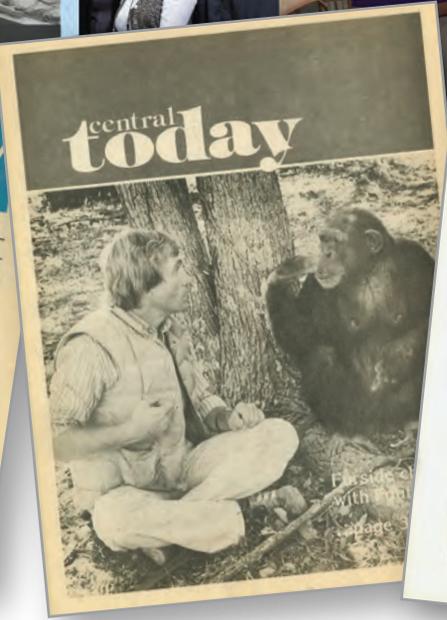
These discussions are ongoing, and a number of options are being considered. But our primary objective for the publication has not changed: to provide the CWU community with dynamic, engaging content that instills a sense of pride in our students, faculty, staff, and alumni.

With a new era for *Crimson & Black* now upon us, we thought it would be fun to walk you through the history of CWU’s signature publication (although most of the examples we could find were from 1968 until now).

Hope you enjoy this retrospective, and thanks for reading!

David Leder
Managing Editor





In the Beginning

The *Normal Outlook* was a magazine published by the Washington State Normal School. It was first published as a quarterly magazine in January 1899 by the Washington State Normal School Student Body.

In 1902, the magazine was published as a monthly journal by the Senior Class and the YWCA until April 1905. The publication ran into debt in late 1905 and ceased operations. The following year, the student body decided to publish an annual to replace the monthly magazine. The student body reestablished the *Normal Outlook* for a brief time in 1914, but ceased publication after three issues, ending in October of 1914.

Long-Anticipated Return

CWU's second known print magazine, titled *Central Today*, was published with varying frequency for 40 years, from 1968-2008. In September 1977, the front page proudly declared, "We're a University!" when the institution, previously known as Central Washington State College, became Central Washington University.

After three decades of appearing only in black-and-white and single-color (i.e., red or blue ink), *Central Today* changed to four-color printing, which greatly enhanced the magazine's visual appeal.



Fresh Approach

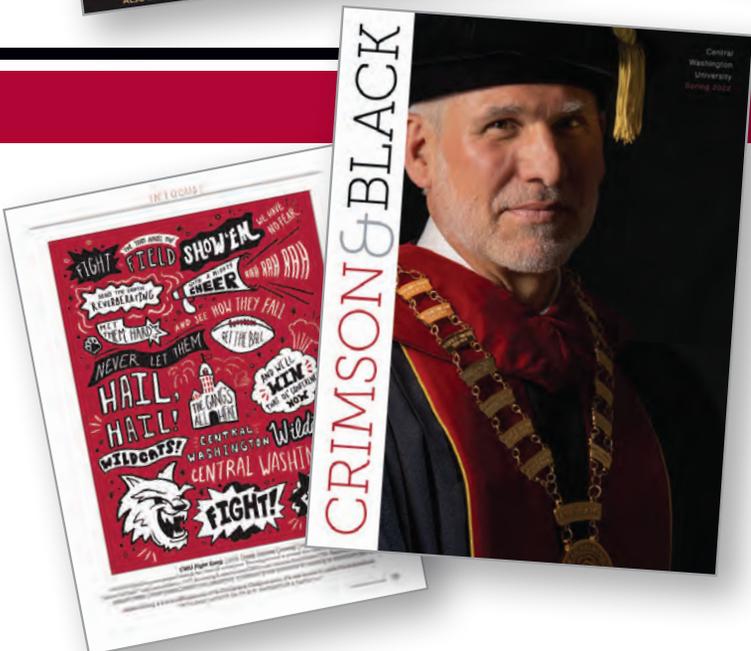
In the fall of 2005, the magazine's name changed to *Central Connections*, which featured a revamped design approach, more eye-catching imagery on the cover, and more in-depth news stories on the inside.

Like its predecessor, *Central Connections* covered a variety of topics across campus, as well as the work CWU faculty, students, and alumni were doing in the broader community. In the winter of 2013, the publication dropped "Central" from its name, and was known simply as *Connections* through the end of 2018.

Steady Evolution

The magazine's name changed to its current moniker, *Crimson & Black*, in the spring of 2019 and has been printed 14 times, including the current edition. The semi-annual, four-color publication is sent to more than 29,000 CWU alumni, donors, students, employees, and community members. *Crimson & Black* is also distributed to local media organizations and businesses, and is available on news racks across campus.

After developing content around a specific theme for the first four years, the editorial focus shifted to a more general assortment of stories in 2023. This allowed the team to explore a broader variety of subjects. The shift resulted in a Best of District VIII recognition in the 2024 CASE Awards, competing against university publications from five Western states and Canada.



What's Next?

While changes are likely on the horizon for this publication, our team continues to be excited about what's to come in 2026 and beyond. The page count and frequency of the magazine may change, depending on the survey feedback we receive from our readers. But rest assured that CWU remains committed to sharing the same award-winning content with you in a variety of formats.

No matter what the future of *Crimson & Black* ends up looking like, it won't be going anywhere anytime soon. Please continue sharing your feedback about what you would like to see in these pages and we will do our best to meet—and hopefully exceed—your expectations. ■

A special thank you to Julia Stringfellow in CWU Archives and Special Collections for helping us find and scan magazine covers from decades past.

SHAPE THE FUTURE OF CRIMSON & BLACK

Since 2019, you've received *Crimson & Black* in your mailbox twice a year. As we build a sustainable future for Central Washington University, we want your feedback on your magazine. We ask that you take five minutes to let us know what you enjoy about *Crimson & Black*, what you would like to see more of, and if you want to continue to receive a print copy of *Crimson & Black* or would like to get your CWU news through a redesigned online platform.

Questions? Contact alumni@cwu.edu for more information.

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University
Advancement

Prevalence of Diabetes Related to Acculturation, Dietary Quality, and Sedentary Lifestyle in Mexican Americans: National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey 2011 to 2018

Kivima Acevedo¹, Kathaleen Briggs Early², Katy Williams¹, & David L. Gee¹

¹Department of Health Sciences, Central Washington University and ²College of Osteopathic Medicine, Pacific Northwest University of Health Sciences

ABSTRACT

Approximately 38 million Americans have been diagnosed with diabetes, with 90% classified as Type 2 diabetes¹. When comparing by ethnicity, those of Mexican American (MA) descent have a significantly higher prevalence of diagnosed diabetes (13%) compared to whites (8%)². This study will utilize data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) to explore how factors such as acculturation levels, dietary quality, and sedentary lifestyles contribute to the elevated rise of diabetes in the MA population. The study aims to better understand the impact of cultural integration on diabetes risk within this community.

Data from the years 2011 – 2018 data was used and obtained from the CDC's website for this analysis was performed using Statistical Analysis System (SAS) version 9.4 (SAS Institute Inc., Cary, NC, USA).

MA adults exhibited substantially higher rates of diabetes (12.8%) compared to NHW (8.75%). Factors contributing to the prevalence of diabetes included age (60+), body mass index (BMI) (30 kg/m²), and low educational attainment (high school education). Highly acculturated MA-adults had poorer diet quality (HEI = 50.4). Low acculturated MA-adults had a higher diabetes prevalence (18.2%) despite having the highest diet score (HEI = 55.4). MA-adults reporting over eight hours of sedentary lifestyle compared to NHWs.

Acculturation, sedentary lifestyle, and diabetes prevalence among MA-adults did not have a linear relationship. Diabetes risk was partially explained by age, BMI, and low educational attainment (high school education). A low sedentary lifestyle had the lowest prevalence of diabetes among MA-adults. Low-acculturated MA-adults had the highest Healthy Eating Index (HEI) score, reflecting better dietary quality compared to their more acculturated counterparts.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Table 1. Prevalence of Diabetes in MA and NHW, Stratified by Risk Factor Categories

Diabetes risk factors	Mexican American % ± Std Err	Non-Hispanic Whites % ± Std Err	P-value
Biological sex			
Overall population	12.9 ± 0.9	9.0 ± 0.4	< 0.0001
Male	12.7 ± 1.0	10.5 ± 0.5	0.161
Female	13.0 ± 1.0	7.4 ± 0.4	< 0.0001
Age			
20-39 y	3.8 ± 0.6	1.7 ± 0.2	0.0001
40-59 y	17.3 ± 1.4	8.7 ± 0.4	< 0.0001
60+ y	33.9 ± 2.2	15.8 ± 0.8	< 0.0001
P-Value	< 0.0001	< 0.0001	
BMI			
18.5 - 24.5 kg/m ²	6.4 ± 1.3	2.4 ± 0.3	0.0001
25-29.9 kg/m ²	10.0 ± 1.0	6.4 ± 0.5	0.0001
≥ 30 kg/m ²	16.6 ± 1.0	16.0 ± 0.8	0.8005
P-Value	< 0.0001	0.8005	
PIR			
Low- income	13.5 ± 1.1	10.3 ± 0.6	0.0001
Middle income	13.4 ± 1.3	10.0 ± 0.7	0.0001
High- income	9.5 ± 1.5	7.6 ± 0.6	0.0001
P-Value	0.15	0.0005	
Sedentary Lifestyle *			
Lowest	13 ± 1.0	7.0 ± 0.3	0.0001
Low	10.6 ± 1.4	7.2 ± 0.9	0.0001
Moderate	13.8 ± 1.2	9.2 ± 0.7	0.0001
High	14.7 ± 2.8	10.0 ± 0.8	0.0001
P-Value	0.288	0.0001	

- Compared to NHW:
 - MA population exhibited a higher overall prevalence of diabetes at 12.9% compared to 9% in the NHW population.
 - MA females showed the highest prevalence of diabetes, particularly among those in the middle and high-income lowest prevalence of 10.5%.
 - MA exhibited a higher prevalence of diabetes, and in all sedentary lifestyle categories except for those in the most sedentary category.

Table 3. Odds of Developing Diabetes from Independent Risk Factors

Factors	Odds Ratio	95% CI	P-Value
Single Logistic Regression Model			
Lowest ACC	1.28	1.12 - 1.46	0.0001
Low ACC	1.28	1.12 - 1.46	0.0001
High ACC	1.28	1.12 - 1.46	0.0001
High ACC	1.28	1.12 - 1.46	0.0001
Multiple Logistic Regression Model			
Female			
Female	1.21	1.04 - 1.40	0.010
Age group 20-39			
Age group 20-39	1.2	1.0 - 1.3	0.040
Age group 40-59			
Age group 40-59	1.34	1.14 - 1.57	0.0001
Normal weight			
Normal weight	1.8	1.6 - 2.1	0.0001
Overweight			
Overweight	1.6	1.4 - 1.8	0.0001
Obese			
Obese	1.8	1.6 - 2.1	0.0001
College graduate or above			
College graduate or above	1.3	1.1 - 1.5	0.0001
Low income			
Low income	1.2	1.1 - 1.3	0.0001
High school graduate			
High school graduate	1.2	1.1 - 1.3	0.0001
High income			
High income	1.2	1.1 - 1.3	0.0001
High income			
High income	1.2	1.1 - 1.3	0.0001

CONCLUSIONS

While the degree of acculturation among MA-adults was associated with different rates of diabetes, after adjusting for the mean of age, weight status, and educational attainment, acculturation was no longer significantly associated with diabetes risk. Differences in diet quality (measured by the Healthy Eating Index) between ACC groups also suggested an association of eating more whole fruits, greens & beans, and low sodium and saturated fats in the prevention of diabetes.

Results from this study support the vital role of healthcare providers in emphasizing maintaining a healthy body weight, the importance of eating a nutritious diet, particularly in the consumption of more grains and beans, and whole fruits while restricting sodium and saturated fat, and encouraging physical activity to reduce diabetes prevalence and related complications.

STUDENT SUCCESS, AT ITS SOURCE

Nutrition master's student Kivima Acevedo ('25), left, talks about her research project with a classmate at the 2025 SOURCE Conference on the Ellensburg campus.

Annual research symposium provides opportunity for CWU students to grow and prosper

By Rune Torgersen

Each year, toward the end of spring quarter, the CWU community comes together in celebration of research, mentorship, and our students' contributions to the work that moves the world forward.

The annual Symposium of University Research and Creative Expression (SOURCE) provides a space for students from any discipline to show off their expertise, through performances, presentations, and poster showcases. The three-day event, held in a variety of campus venues, presents a unique opportunity for attendees and participants, whether their futures lie in academia or elsewhere.

Landen Hashimura ('24), a 2024 SOURCE presenter and cultural and environmental resource management graduate, saw the potential of the conference firsthand. He hopes other students get as much out of the symposium as he did.

"The world isn't made of textbook problems," he said. "The reason we go to school to study is so we can go out and solve big-picture problems, regardless of what field you're in. Research is the best way to get ready for that, and SOURCE is a fantastic opportunity to get started on that while you're still earning your bachelor's degree."

In addition to offering students the chance to show off their research, SOURCE pairs them with capable faculty mentors, in order to guide their process and help them develop the best possible product.

These mentorship opportunities often lead to longer conversations about ways in which the participants can improve not just their own research but the conference as a whole.

Former Office of University Student Research Director Hideki Takei spent two years overseeing SOURCE, and while he has taken on a different role at CWU, he knows that the collaborative network at the core of the conference will maintain its momentum far into the future.

"Since SOURCE is an ongoing collaboration between faculty, students, and the university as a whole, it's only going to get better and better every year," the current co-chair of the IT Management department said. "We take feedback seriously, and are always working to give our students the best possible way to present their hard work."

New Leader, Same Focus

As Tishra Beeson settles into her new role as Interim Dean of Undergraduate Studies, she has been able to apply her understanding of SOURCE from a faculty perspective as she begins planning for next year's conference.

"As faculty members, we teach certain skills and competencies that we want our students to walk away with," the former Health Sciences department chair said. "SOURCE is one of those exceptional opportunities where you get to see all of those things come together in a practical setting. Students take what they've learned inside and outside the classroom, put it together under the guidance of faculty mentorship, and then share it with an incredibly receptive community."

Since each year's presentations are filed with the Library of Congress, participants can rightfully claim to be published academics as a result of their engagement with SOURCE. The conference regularly sees presentations from undergraduate and graduate students, as well as some high school students via Running Start.

Beeson also sees potential in bringing alumni into the fold to offer additional mentorship and support.

"We welcome alumni participation, both as attendees and as mentors, panelists, and judges," she said. "Our alumni are an important part of our community, and we love to foster connections across several generations of Wildcats."

Beeson believes presenting at SOURCE is often just the beginning of a student's expression of their work, opening the doors to further conference involvement at the local, state, and national levels.

"I often see students who present at SOURCE go on to deliver those presentations at other conferences, based on the work they've started with their faculty mentors here at CWU," she said. "It really serves as a launching pad to a bunch of different opportunities, depending on what the student's aspirations might be. The chance to articulate a project from conceptual design all the way through impact can represent incredible value to a student's next steps in their career or advanced study."

Start of Something Great

Kaleb Javier spent seven years at CWU from 2010 to 2017, earning his bachelor's degree in economics in 2014 before pursuing a master's in cultural and environmental resource management.

Shortly after presenting at SOURCE toward the end of his undergraduate program, he was invited to take his presentation on the road.

"One of my mentors taught me that every talk is a job talk, so you need to approach every public speaking opportunity with some preparation," Javier said. "The summer after my first SOURCE, I went on to present at the Western Economics Association in front of economists who've been in the field a long time. Having that SOURCE experience helped me prepare for taking my show on the road."

After graduation, Javier took his talents to Stanford University as a research fellow, until he began pursuing his PhD at the University of California-Berkeley in 2020. With his doctorate in sight, Javier knows that the skills he gleaned from CWU and SOURCE have been an invaluable resource along the way.

"The number one thing I've found that makes a job interview go well, and makes an application really strong, is that ability to talk about the work you've done with fluency and passion," he said. "SOURCE gave me an early opportunity to develop that skill, and to pursue my own work outside of faculty-guided classes. It's important to employers to see that you can finish a job in a timely manner, and SOURCE is a great way to show that you can do that." ■

Every spring, SOURCE gives dozens of undergraduates a chance to present their research to the CWU community. Presentations range from traditional scientific research to humanities-based projects—and everything in between.



Girard Montejo-Thompson is a former Seattle School District teacher who now serves as president of the Seattle Education Association.



Shaping the Future of Seattle Schools

Education alum Girard Montejo-Thompson represents best interests of 6,500 educators

By David Leder

Having spent nearly a decade in K-12 classrooms throughout the Seattle School District, Girard Montejo-Thompson understands well what teachers go through every day.

So, when he was approached about an opportunity to run for vice president of the Seattle Education Association (SEA) in 2024, he felt like he had enough first-hand experience to be an effective representative for the district's 6,500 educators and support staff.

"I used to attend the representative assemblies when I was a teacher, and I was told by the previous union leaders that the things I was saying stood out," said Montejo-Thompson, a 2013 CWU School of Education graduate. "I joined a couple committees and, eventually, they encouraged me to run for office. I was flattered, but I was also really excited about the opportunity to effect change in our district at the leadership level."

Montejo-Thompson was elected as SEA vice president in June 2024 and, just a few months later, he became president after the former union head stepped down. The biggest challenge he faced during his first few months on the job was that he didn't have a VP.

"The president is usually the one who goes out in public and handles all of the messaging for the union, while the vice president is the lead bargainer, doing all of the behind-the-scenes work," he said. "I was having to do both jobs for a while, but I survived."

The SEA elected former union treasurer Davina Diaz as vice president in June, allowing Montejo-Thompson to focus more of his attention on leading the organization.

"I've been surprised at how well I've settled into the role," he said. "I'm really proud of what we have been able

to accomplish so far, and I've been getting a lot of good feedback from the membership."

Before joining SEA leadership, Montejo-Thompson taught in a wide variety of classroom settings, from kindergarten through middle school, both as a full-time teacher and substitute.

In his first nine years with the Seattle School District, he taught seven grades at five different schools. And while he never was able to get too comfortable in any of those roles, Montejo-Thompson feels like his varied experiences helped him grow as an educator and as a person.

"I got pinballed around, but it ended up being a blessing in disguise," he said. "I got to see how things worked at a lot of different schools in the district, and I was able to identify the unique needs that some of our schools have. That has helped me a lot in my current position."

Looking back on his time in Ellensburg, Montejo-Thompson feels grateful that he came across the School of Education after spending his first couple of years unsure of which direction he would go with his studies.

At his family's urging, he chose to pursue teaching, which turned out to be an ideal direction for his career.

"I feel like teaching is one of the best ways to make a positive change in the world," Montejo-Thompson said. "Teachers are investing in our future by helping their students become more informed, how to work with one another, how to manage their emotions, and so much more. The work we do helps build communities, and it helps create a more successful workforce. We truly are making a difference, and that gives me a lot of pride." ■



CWU Communication alumna Mariah Lane realized her childhood dream of working in the Seattle TV news market for two years before accepting a job with Everett Public Schools this fall. Photo courtesy of Mariah Lane.

TV News Career Gives Way to New Career Path

By Robin Burck

By the time she graduated from CWU in 2020, Mariah Lane had already stacked up a résumé full of newsroom experience from working for the *Observer*, Central News Watch, and 88.1 The 'Burg.

But her passion for journalism started long before her time in Ellensburg; she began eyeing the profession when she was 5.

"I'm one of the very lucky people who got to live out their childhood dream," Lane says. "Not many people can say that."

Her earliest memories of television news go back to sitting at the breakfast table, watching the Seattle news broadcasts with her grandparents.

"I took my first journalism class in middle school, and the rest is history," Lane says. "From then on, I took every opportunity to study and practice journalism."

Lane (née Valles) continued her passion for journalism in college, where she quickly ascended to a leadership role in the *Observer* newsroom, serving as managing editor and editor-in-chief, among other responsibilities.

"Honestly, in every one of those roles, I learned something new and different," she says. "The biggest part about the *Observer* was that you were doing real world work while you were also in classes learning skills you could then apply."

That preparation paid off. Immediately after graduation, Lane joined KHQ-TV in Spokane as a news and digital producer, later becoming a senior producer. She covered news events, including wildfires, the 2022 University of Idaho murders, and many other local stories in Washington, Idaho, and Montana.

"The skills I learned during my time at Central prepared me to jump right into a professional newsroom

without skipping a beat," Lane says. "I am so thankful for the versatile skills I learned through the digital journalism program."

After nearly three years in Spokane, Lane made the leap she had dreamed of since childhood, landing a position in the Seattle TV news market.

In her two-plus years at FOX 13, she produced the station's lifestyle and entertainment show, *Studio 13 Live*, featuring local businesses, nonprofits, artists, events and day-to-day trending topics. Highlights include meeting Bill Nye the Science Guy and Mariners broadcaster Rick Rizzs. Beyond *Studio 13 Live*, she also produced special projects for *Good Day Seattle*.

Lane learned a lot in the fast-paced world of television news, but after five years pursuing her childhood dream, she decided to embrace a new challenge this summer by accepting a digital media producer role with Everett Public Schools.

"My 5-year-old dream was to work in TV, which I got to do and loved doing," she says. "But my high school journalism teacher, Mr. Kaup, inspired me to want to work in education. I hope to continue his legacy and teach journalism one day."

In her new position, Lane oversees the school district's website and social media platforms. In her free time, she volunteers with the Washington Journalism Education Association. And through it all, she carries the advice that her late father wrote in her June 2020 graduation card: "Keep going."

"That has turned into my life mantra," she says. "Everything I do is to honor my dad." ■



Photograph courtesy of Nathan Herde, CWU Athletics.

SAM BOWMAN

Basketball Star Continues Development Down Under

Samantha Bowman can hardly believe she already has three years of professional basketball experience under her belt. But even though the 2023 NCAA Division II National Player of the Year has been tearing it up in Australia's NBL One league since she graduated, she is nowhere near being satisfied.

"My goal is still to make it to the WNBL," Bowman said, referring to Australia's top professional league. "I'm probably not big enough to play in the post, so I've been working on my agility so I can match up better with the quicker forwards."

Bowman, who earned a BS and MS in Nutrition from Central, has quickly made her mark in the second division, posting solid numbers in each of her three seasons. In her most recent campaign with Townsville, the 6-foot-2 center averaged 19.3 points, 12.2 rebounds, 4.2 assists, and 2.1 steals per game.

That high level of play mirrors what she did with her first NBL One club, Rockhampton, in 2023 and 2024. Even more than her individual contributions, she is proud of what her teams have accomplished.

"We won the NBL One North championship in my second year, and my new club did pretty well this year, so that definitely adds to the fun," Bowman said. "I love playing in the Aussie, and I can't wait to return next year."

In the meantime, Bowman is living and training in Ellensburg. She's also been working as an assistant soccer coach for the Wildcats—an unexpected opportunity that has been a perfect fit.

"They brought me on last winter as a mental preparedness coach who could help the players learn what it takes to play at the highest level," she said. "I'm really enjoying it, and I'm so glad I found an opportunity to work at Central." ■



Photograph courtesy of Boeing Commercial Airplanes.

KEVIN BREMER

Engineering Alum Builds 30-Year Career at Boeing

Electrical engineering alumnus Kevin Bremer enrolled at CWU in the late 1980s, becoming the first member of his family to go to college.

Today, he is the Executive Director, Chief Engineer of Electrical Design for Boeing Commercial Airplanes, where he manages a team of 900 employees across four continents, overseeing and implementing all electrical wiring systems in Boeing-manufactured airplanes.

"There are a lot of technical challenges in this industry, and our team has to make a lot of major decisions," said Bremer ('91), who started his career at Boeing in 1996. "But in all of my jobs here, I have always felt like I was up to the challenge thanks to the technical foundation I built at CWU. It's something I have leaned on for my entire career."

Bremer experienced what most CWU students and alumni say about their time at Central. The small class sizes and one-on-one attention from his instructors was exactly what he needed as a young adult.

"I learned so much from the faculty," he said. "They made the difference for me. The small class sizes and personal approach ended up being what I needed to learn."

As a member of the Engineering, Technology, Safety and Construction department's advisory board, Bremer works with CWU faculty to help raise the program's profile.

"I want to help my old program," he said. "The more we can get Central's name out there, the better." ■



Photograph courtesy of J. Shah.

J SHAH

Biology Alumna Living Out Her Passion

For J. Shah, the landscapes of Central Washington are both workplace and inspiration. A biologist by training, Shah ('15,'22) has built her career around helping people see the overlooked connections between land, water, and the creatures that depend on them.

"I'm passionate about the shrubsteppe, because it feels like a forgotten, beautiful, diverse biome that is fragile, but important and resilient," Shah said in a recent *High Country News* article. "So many individual species have evolved over thousands of years to be able to survive in an arid environment where nothing else can survive."

Alongside CWU Biological Sciences Professor Dr. Clay Arango, Shah's graduate research broke new ground by examining how microplastics move through the Yakima River system.

"I really wanted to look at microplastic distribution in the Yakima River, and I was really interested in how microplastics were entering the aquatic food web," she explained.

Her thesis measured microplastics from the headwaters to the mouth of the river, analyzing not only water samples but also biofilms and macroinvertebrates. The study was later featured in CWU's "Plastic Runs Through It" exhibit at the Museum of Culture and Environment.

Today, Shah's professional life is rooted in the shrubsteppe as an Area Habitat Biologist with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife in Yakima County. She works with landowners, agencies, and communities to ensure fragile habitats are protected.

Shah also brings her work beyond technical reports and regulatory reviews. Through her "Wandering Central Washington" column for the *Yakima Herald-Republic*, she is able to share field-born reflections that blend science with a sense of wonder. ■



Bryson Fico (right) with author J.A. Jance.

Photograph courtesy of Bryson Fico.

BRYSON FICO

L&J Graduate Taps Into His Altruistic Side

CWU Law and Justice alumnus Bryson Fico ('21) recently hit the two-year mark of his nonprofit initiative Pages of Redemption, in which he collects used and unwanted books and donates them to jails around the state.

After years of performing volunteer work, Fico decided to take his community service to the next level in September 2023.

"Over the first five months, I donated more than 700 books to the Kittitas County Jail," said Fico, who now works for a therapeutic court in Eastern Washington. "That first book donation in Kittitas County really helped get things off the ground, and it's been building momentum ever since."

Fico continued to build his network on the west side, partnering with a local Friends of the Library organization to secure additional book donations, leading to agreements with four Puget Sound-area jails: Kent, Des Moines, Enumclaw, and Marysville.

Last summer, Fico signed an agreement with the Wenatchee Public Library that he hopes will help him rebuild his book inventory. Washington-based author J.A. Jance also agreed to donate some of her books.

Once he is able to restock his donated book collection, Fico hopes to start pitching his idea to jails east of the mountains. He believes the benefits of Pages of Redemption will eventually become apparent to other jails in Washington.

"Every donation I make to a jail has the potential to change thousands of lives," he said. "Those books are going to have an effect on inmates for years to come." ■



*CWU Music professors
Brendan Shea and Yerin Kim
have received worldwide
acclaim as a musical duet,
with Shea playing violin and
Kim playing piano.*

Photo courtesy of Ivano Buat.

Making Beautiful Music Together

Married CWU professors have built their lives and careers around a shared love for music

By Kimberly Smith

Central Washington University professors Yerin Kim and Brendan Shea are accomplished musicians and educators on their own, but after years of performing and living together, they've built a joint musical career larger than themselves.

Kim and Shea met at 19 while attending Oberlin College and Conservatory in Ohio, where they shared the spotlight in a piano trio.

"In a way, we grew up together talking about our favorite pieces, composers, dream places to visit, and so on," said Kim, CWU's Director of Keyboard Studies.

After Oberlin, they attended Indiana University Bloomington, before enrolling in the Doctor of Musical Arts program at Stony Brook University in New York. However, it wasn't until 2015, when they were newly married and expecting a child, that they started playing as a duo.

"I was preparing for the Queen Elisabeth Competition in Belgium and had a lot of repertoire to prepare that Yerin graciously helped with," said Shea, a Visiting Professor of Violin and Chamber Music at CWU. "I found working with her was an incredible setting for continued artistic growth."

The two have been performing together as the Shea-Kim Duo ever since, touring across Asia, Europe, and North America. The first part of their third album, "Touch," will be released by the classical recording label Blue Griffin this fall.

Shea explained how they chose the theme for the album: "We really wanted to play the Schubert Fantasie ... The word touch came to mind, since it is so important to playing both

piano and violin, but especially so with the delicate colors of this particular piece."

Finding many different composers and pieces suited to the theme, the couple decided to extend "Touch" into two parts. They took photos for the album in Italy after teaching and performing at the Zephyr music festival there this summer.

"Walking around the gorgeous streets of Torino and seeing how the architecture surrounds the everyday life of people really inspired us," Kim said. "All the pieces in the album depict and evoke different textures, colors, emotions, and as a result a completely different touch when playing our instruments."

Despite their side-by-side educations, both musicians bring different touches (and perspectives) to their performance. Shea focuses on phrasing and energy, while Kim focuses on depth and color. Rehearsing sometimes sparks heated debates, but the end result is worth it. Working together has allowed them to accomplish more than they might have independently.

"We often think of compromise as a watering down of a good idea," Shea said. "If you're in a group of any size with people who are equally inquisitive and excited about the music, it's worth allowing for some flexibility."

Although she insisted that she was always right, Kim ultimately agreed, emphasizing the power of compromise.

"Chamber music has taught me so much about music, people, and myself," she said. "Learning how to listen to others so that you can find joy in creating something that is larger than yourself is life changing." ■



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