

## *A Message from the President*

# Ambassador's career illustrates the value of a Whitman education

The cost of education is a subject of urgent discussion these days, as it should be. Rising tuition is a concern for all of us: parent, student, educator, administrator. All too often, however, a corollary question is left out of the dialogue. What is the value of an education at a particular college or university? What exactly does tuition buy, and is the learning experience worth the cost?

Trying to quantify a qualitative experience is no simple task. Nor are numbers the best barometer of an undergraduate education. Yet, as president of Whitman College, I can point to any number of recent achievements in our community as empirical evidence of the value of an education at this college. Let me cite just one of them here.

Ryan Crocker '71, former U.S. ambassador to Lebanon, Kuwait, Syria and Pakistan, has been named ambassador to Iraq, a call he readily embraced. As Edward Abington, the former U.S. consul general in Jerusalem, plainly put it, "(Ryan) prefers the most difficult assignments."

By all accounts, Ryan never shied away from the tough assignments during and immediately after four rigorous years at Whitman either. Emeritus Professor of History Fred Breit recalls a conversation he and Ryan had when Ryan returned to campus in 2001 to deliver the Phi Beta Kappa address.

Ryan recounted to Fred the story of his oral exam for the Foreign Service shortly after he graduated from

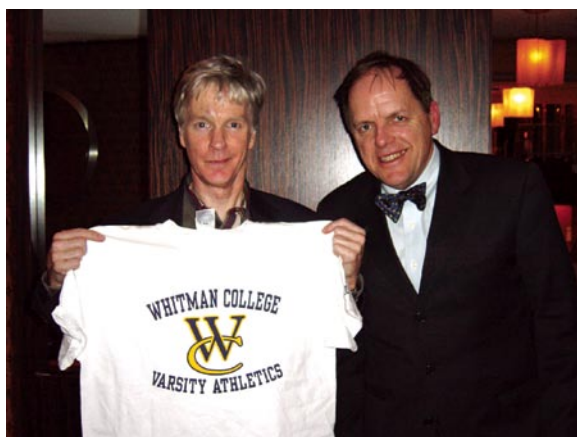
Whitman. At one point, the interviewers threw him a curve. They suggested that there was no such thing as a unique American culture and asked Ryan to respond.

Ryan promptly reminded them that the French poet Charles Baudelaire was greatly influenced by Edgar Allan Poe, and went on to explain how. What's more, according to Fred, "he did it in a way that was instructive, not indignant. It was a brilliant answer, but Ryan's way of handling it was even more exemplary."

Ryan's story speaks volumes, not only about the knowledge one gains at Whitman but also the mindfulness, fluency and decency that this school instills in its students.

How do we at Whitman measure the value of education? We measure it through the shaping influence of the extraordinary learning experience that this college provides.

We measure it by the awareness, passion and sense of purpose that Ryan Crocker, a career ambassador and humanitarian, and countless other graduates of this college bring to the world.



President George Bridges presented Ambassador Ryan Crocker '71 with a Whitman athletics T-shirt when the two met in Washington, D.C., in February.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "George S. Bridges". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

George S. Bridges