

WestWord



WESTWORD STAFF

This *WestWord* is brought to you by the students of the spring 2025 PREL 451 Publication Design and Editing class, advised by Nancy Semotiuk, chair of the Department of Communication.

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A REFLECTION ABOUT WESTWORD 2025

BY ASHLEY OLSON, STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

Spring is a time for bright opportunities and new adventures. Our department has gone through changes—including a new major in digital communication this year.

In this year's *WestWord*, we are specifically highlighting the varied and unique experiences of the members of our department. As the *WestWord* staff, our vision is to inspire our community to connect and spend time with the amazing people around them.

We also want to bring special attention to all the wonderful people who have helped us bring this vision to life in our publication. Nancy Semotiuk, our chair and friend, has guided us through the process.

Other faculty, staff and students who live (metaphorically) in the Canaday Technology Center have helped us put together this magazine.

We are a tight-knit group of communicators. Some of us will remain local and continue to support our beloved WWU. Others of us will find ourselves in places and jobs we never could have imagined. No matter where we go or what we do, we know that a communicator's biggest strength is bridging connections in whatever community they encounter. As you read the stories of these individuals, we invite you to consider how your own experiences fit into your community.

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ADVENTISTS AND MEDIA

BY STACY WISENER, STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

On Friday afternoon of Homecoming Weekend, Lynelle Ellis, associate professor of communication and director of the Center for Media Ministry, presented a lecture titled “Seventh-day Adventists and the Movies,” a riveting synopsis of the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its views on television and movies.

The relationship between the church and media is a familiar topic to Ellis, who received her Ph.D. in communication with a focus on the intersection of faith and media. This lecture topic shares the same title as her doctoral thesis, and Ellis included descriptions of the studies from her thesis research, including articles from historic SDA journals and statements from church leaders.

Ellis began the lecture by asking the audience whether or not they had

heard the old Adventist saying, “If you go into a movie theater, your angel will not go in with you,” to which everyone in the audience nodded in unison and raised their hands.

The prime suspect of this warning? Ellen G. White. In a part of a document she wrote, White touched on the responsibility of a husband to his family; more specifically, that a husband should discern all of the places he chooses to take his family and whether or not their angels would be comfortable entering that space, citing a live theater house (not a movie theater) as one example. Ellis further explained that the person who mainly influenced SDA thinking about movies was Frances M. Wilcox, editor of *The Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald* from 1911-1944.

The misunderstanding and double standard that church leaders held

in regards to television and media grew. Adventists could not watch movies in the theaters, but they could watch them three months later when they could be rented to watch at home. Yet, Adventists were at the forefront of the new age of television, developing the first Christian television program in 1951. This promotion of one type of media and degradation of another caused confusion for many Adventists.

Ellis believes, as Adventists, it is important to understand our history so we can know how to shape our future. White’s original statement was for husbands to use discernment when making decisions for their families. Ellis’ message is for us to do the same and learn to understand how to live faithfully while also navigating in a world surrounded by media.

Photos courtesy of Justin Singer



Ellis presents her lecture during alumni weekend

WEAVING STORIES, CHANGING LIVES

WWU faculty and students behind the award-winning short film.

BY ANDRES ESPINEL, STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

Josie Henderson,
assistant professor of
technology



Lynelle Ellis, director of the Center for Media Ministry and associate professor of communication



Matthew Webster, WWU studio operations manager

Communication researchers Maxwell McCombs and Donald L. Shaw once said, “The media doesn’t tell people what to think; it tells them what to think about.” This phrase not only echoed in the mind of Josie Henderson, assistant professor of technology, but it also inspired her to write and co-produce the short film *Color of Threads*.

The 24-minute short presents the turbulent world of 1909 Pendleton, Oregon. It follows four women striving to secure a job at the Pendleton Woolen Mill and build a future for themselves in the post-Civil War American frontier.

The idea first took shape when Henderson was a communication student at WWU. However, it was during her pursuit of a master’s degree in cinema, religion, and worldview—through a class taught by Lynelle Ellis, director of the Center for Media Ministry and associate professor of communication—that the story was refined. Henderson said, “Originally, the show was four men in Boston—four men from different backgrounds—but after doing research with Dr. Ellis, I found that women carry viewership for shows like that, period dramas.”

Henderson used her love for storytelling, period dramas, and her desire to create a narrative that could help America. Writing *Color of Threads* helped her to answer the question of “How could you take a product and help a specific group of people with it?” she said.

Matthew Webster, co-producer and WWU studio operations manager, said, “Working with other WWU alumni was what made this film happen. Josie and I were in the

same cohort in our master’s, and we did a lot of research together. Rachel Scribner, on the other side, was amazing as our wardrobe designer. Her background as an assistant in the drama program really came into play, creating the look of our characters and doing intensive research with local historical societies.”

However, *Color of Threads* didn’t have an easy start. “Honestly, I thought it was bold when I first read it,” Webster said. He described the three-year production process as a “rollercoaster.” But, through consultation and a deeper understanding of their capabilities, the team shaped it into what viewers enjoy today.

As Webster mentioned, an all-star team composed of Ellis, Henderson, and Webster, alongside Jerry Hartman, professor of visual arts, worked tirelessly from February 2022 through June 2023 in pre-production to make *Color of Threads* a reality.

The team is proud of the influence and hard work of 15 undergraduate and seven graduate students who helped produce this film. “This was really exciting and a great opportunity for them to work alongside and learn from industry professionals,” Ellis said. “I’m so proud of all of our students who helped make this wonderful short film.”

For Ellis, *Color of Threads* sets a benchmark for future initiatives at the Center for Media Ministry. As a WWU product, the film, which has won six awards and been showcased at 11 film festivals, including two international festivals in Europe, could be considered “A delight and honor for all of us at Walla Walla University,” she said.

HEADING TO LAW SCHOOL

LORELEI HARBOUR, GLOBAL COMMUNICATION



Halfway through my undergraduate studies at WWU, I decided to pursue law and change my major. As I considered which discipline would best fit my interests and help me develop the right skills for law school, a friend told me to consider global communication.

As soon as I looked into the required classes and talked to the professors, global communication seemed like the obvious choice. The major teaches communication skills while focusing on the world around us.

Instead of learning about how to communicate with the person next to you, we are taught to think about

different cultures, religions, languages, and walks of life. Classes like Multicultural Communication, Communication Theory, World Religions, and Interpersonal Communication have all pushed me to think below the surface, connect with people different from me, and expand my worldview.

The required year abroad puts this practice into action. My time in Spain immersed me in a new language and culture, giving me the experience of a lifetime, one I will treasure forever. Global communication is a major step in adventure, inspiration, and the development of a world-wide community.

CONFIDENCE IN COMMUNICATION

KASI IRVINE, STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

Kasi Irvine, junior strategic communication major and legal studies minor, first heard about the WWU Department of Communication while she was attending Walla Walla Valley Academy.

Irvine originally went into business to pursue public relations. However, within the first two weeks of her freshman year, Irvine knew she was meant to be a communicator. "I wanted to tell more stories and I fell in love with writing," she said. Strategic communication allows her to do both.

For Irvine, understanding how media and communication interact is invaluable. Introductory courses such as Media Law form the foundation to understand

law and ethics within communication, which will give her a better understanding while working with public figures in the future.

Irvine is on the WWU University Relations team, managing their social media accounts. Irvine's experience led her to reflect on her own media usage. "We are in a high consumer culture where it is easier to consume other people's lives rather than live your own," she said.

Nowadays society is immersed in the digital era. Irvine wants to specialize in public relations so she can make positive impacts through social media.



ACTING THROUGH LIFE

JOB CONSTANTINO, DRAMA MINOR



Job Constantino, drama minor, is an entertainer at heart. His passion for acting was ignited during his kindergarten's production of "Mary and Joseph." Since then, he kept acting. Constantino's continued love of acting led him to wwudrama.

Acting has helped him learn how to carry himself on and off the stage. Constantino credits the drama courses he has taken for developing his skills in speaking to large crowds, especially the course Introduction to Acting, taught by Jerry Entze, drama instructor.

Constantino hopes to obtain his master's in social work to become a therapist.

He believes his experience with acting will help him as a therapist, because his process of learning about the characters he plays will help him to better empathize and connect with others.

Constantino wants to continue acting after he finishes his schooling, since working as a therapist will offer him flexible hours to do so. He encourages those interested in theater, whether it be acting or singing, to check out the drama program. Constantino believes everyone can benefit from wwudrama.

TWO PASSIONS COMBINED

MADLINE STONE, PRE-SPEECH PATHOLOGY

Madeline Stone, senior music major with a vocal concentration, completed her associate degree in pre-speech pathology in 2023. While some might think these two areas of study don't overlap, Stone believes music and speech pathology are interconnected.

Speech pathologists help patients who need assistance in learning how to speak, swallow and, in some cases, learn the basic functions of communication. Stone's chosen topic for Research Writing class—music and speech therapy—led her to discover how they can go hand-in-hand, specifically in helping people on the autism spectrum. This helped her understand the vastness of speech pathology.

"No one even knows how much you can do with it," Stone said. She sees that language isn't something you learn once, but develops throughout your whole life. By studying music alongside speech pathology, she is able to understand that development and better assist her patients.

After graduating this fall, she will be attending Loma Linda University next spring to study speech-language pathology, with an end goal of conducting more research in music therapy.



THE FUTURE OF C

DATA COLLECTED BY EMILY WICAL, STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

>1.8 MILLION

people are employed in communication-related roles in the U.S.

GENDER PAY GAP

Women earn 92¢ for every \$1 earned by men



SALARIES

General U.S. averages and actual salaries can vary based on the industry, location, company size, and your specific skill set (like data analytics, writing, digital strategy, etc.).

CAREER STAGE

\$45,000 **ENTRY-LEVEL (0-2 YEARS)** \$60,000

\$65,000 **MID-LEVEL (3-7 YEARS)** \$90,000

\$90,000 **SENIOR-LEVEL (8+ YEARS)** \$130,000

\$120,000 **TOP ROLES (EXECs)** \$180,000

SEATTLE, WA

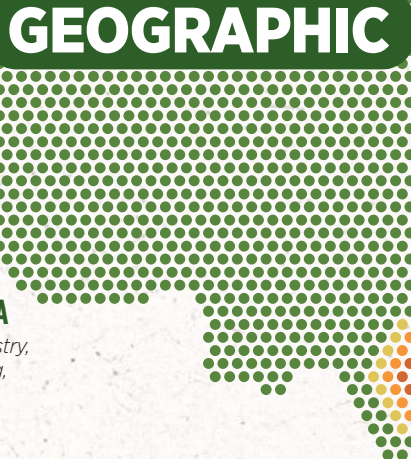
Tech, sustainability comms, nonprofits

SAN FRANCISCO, CA

Tech comms, corporate branding, startups.

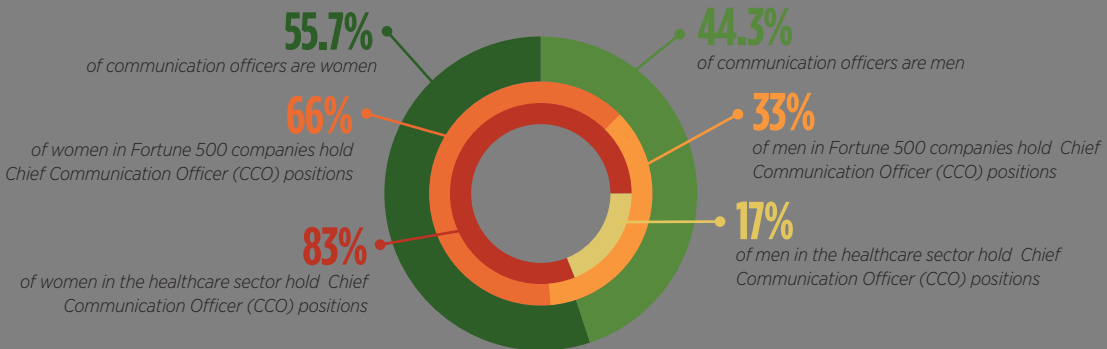
LOS ANGELES, CA

Entertainment industry, media, advertising, digital marketing



COMMUNICATIONS

LEADERSHIP ROLES



GROWING CAREER FIELDS



HOTSPOTS

CHICAGO, IL
Media, advertising,
corporate HQs

NEW YORK CITY, NY
Media capital, PR agencies,
publishing, corporate comms,
nonprofits

WASHINGTON, D.C.
Government comms,
public affairs, NGOs,
international organizations

AUSTIN, TX
Tech startups, digital marketing,
and content creation

HELP US FUND THE ROSA RODRIGUEZ JIMENEZ MEMORIAL COMMUNICATIONS ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP

BY NANCY SEMOTIUK, CHAIR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

Walla Walla University has established the Rosa Rodriguez Jimenez Memorial Communications Endowed Scholarship to support female students who demonstrate exceptional promise and passion in the field—and I invite you to join us in making it a reality.

The endowment is designated to award annual scholarships to female students with a major in communication. Students must demonstrate both academic merit and financial need.

Jimenez graduated in 1985 from what was then Walla Walla College with a bachelor of arts in communications and began working for her alma mater. Rosa spent 25 years working for WWU, and during her career she worked in grant writing, donor recognition, university relations, and as a project manager. For many years she edited the alumni journal, *Westwind*, and became a beloved and reliable

voice from home. She also spent two years as interim vice president for university advancement.

Our goal is to raise \$19,000 to establish the Rosa Rodriguez Jimenez Memorial Communications Endowed Scholarship, so that this scholarship can be awarded annually to a deserving female communication student.

An endowed scholarship will provide consistent, long-term support—empowering recipients year after year to pursue their academic and professional dreams from a Christian worldview without the burden of overwhelming debt.

You can support the Rosa Rodriguez Jimenez Memorial Communications Endowed Scholarship by going online at wallawalla.edu/give, then selecting “Other Fund” and adding “Rosa Rodriguez

Jimenez Scholarship.” Or, send a check with the same memo to:

Walla Walla University
Advancement Office
204 South College Avenue
College Place, WA 99324



Photo courtesy of Chris Drake



(L to R): Kasi Irvine, Stacy Wisener, Luz Bentley, Andres Espinel
Not Pictured: Julianna Tkachuck, Seth Wolberg

STUDENTS HONORED WITH LAMBDA PI ETA INDUCTION

BY STACY WISENER, STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

This spring, the Department of Communication inducted six students into Lambda Pi Eta, the official honor society of the National Communication Association. Faculty select students who have shown outstanding achievement in communication courses for induction into Nu Zeta, WWU's local chapter. The official induction ceremony took place on May 16, in the Blackbox Theater of the Canaday Technology Center.

THE DRAMA ON WWUDRAMA

DATA COLLECTED BY ASHLEY OLSON,
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

Theater continues to play an important role
at WWU, and this is how we got here:



1892

Founding of Walla Walla College



1949

"Kollege Daze," earliest known student-written
production by the Associated Students of
Walla Walla College

1961

Donnie Rigby, professor of speech communication,
directs "Heidi," in Columbia Auditorium for 15th
annual AGA-sponsored "Hour of Charm"



1971

Village Hall becomes the home of drama



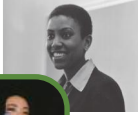
1973

Academic credit available for
participation in drama



1992

Rigby retires; Rodney Vance hired



1995

Vance leaves; Kimberly
Howard hired one year later



1997

The Festival of One Acts becomes routine, one of
the longest running performance events on campus



1999

Howard leaves;
Marilynn Loveless hired



2001

Drama club established



2004

The Black Box is named the Donnie
Rigby Stage and opens with a production
of "An Evening with Mark Twain"



2007

Loveless leaves; David Crawford hired



2014

The Festival of One Acts becomes The Festival
of Shorts with the addition of short films



2019

Crawford leaves;
Jerry Entze hired as adjunct professor



2020

Two virtual productions streamed on
Zoom: "10 Ways to Survive Life in a
Quarantine" and "Bad Auditions"



2021

Donnie Rigby passes away at 91; She gave
over 31 years of service to WWU

2025

Going on 64 years, we have the longest
running drama program among all Adventist
universities in North America

GRADUATING SENIORS

"Let all that you do be done in love."
- 1 Corinthians 16:14

"He's one toy short of a happy meal."
- Greg Brothers

"The magic you're looking for is in the work you're avoiding."

"A shot is worth a thousand words and a fortune."
- My Contemplation of Choices



LUZ BENTLEY
Strategic Communication
Next Step: Teaching career



CAIDYN BOYD
Global Communication
Next Step: Graduate school after a gap year



MEGAN CARREON
Strategic Communication
Next Step: Marketing job

STEVAN CRARY
Film, TV, and Media
Next Step: Producing, writing, and directing

"Always make your past self jealous."
- Erin M. Kentucky

"A producer is like a chef -gathering ingredients, finding the right recipe, and making sure nothing burns."
-Walter Mirisch

"Life's short, talk fast."
- Lorelai Gilmore



ANDRES ESPINEL
Strategic Communication
Next Step: Marketing and business field for a year, then a master's in public relations



SAMANTHA GRECOV MOLINA
Film, TV, and Media
Next Step: Marketing intern at Baker Boyer Bank



LORELEI HARBOUR
Global Communication
Next Step: Gonzaga University School of Law in fall 2025

ORS CLASS OF 2025

“Enjoy the Journey.”



AVA KRICK

Pre-Speech Pathology

Next Step: Degree in Speech Pathologist

“If at first you don’t succeed, flying might not be for you.”



CAEDEN ROGERS

Strategic Communication

Next Step: WWU University Relations Supervisor

“Strong people stand up for themselves, but stronger people stand up for others.”



JOCELYN SEATON

Digital Media & Design

Next Step: Marketing Management

“Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the life you have imagined.”
- Henry David Thoreau

ABIGAIL THREADGILL

Pre-Speech Pathology

Next Step: Master’s in Speech-Language Pathology

“We didn’t know we were making memories, we just knew we were having fun.”

- Winnie the Pooh

“One must always be careful of books and what is inside them for words have the power to change us.”

- Clockwork Angel

“Look at your life through heaven’s eyes.”

- Prince of Egypt



NATHANIEL VAN KIRK

Film, TV, and Media

Next Step: Summer internship at Advancement Film in Loma Linda



STACY WISENER

Strategic Communication

Next Step: Public relations specialist

LAUREN VIZARRA

Strategic Communication

Next Step: Not sure yet, but planning to follow God’s lead



Lauren on the Pont de Caille



Lauren in Anney, France

IT'S ALL FRENCH TO ME

BY LAUREN VIZCARRA, STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

When you sign up to live in France for 13 weeks, you shouldn't be surprised that you live, breathe, and even dream in French for those weeks. Your teachers talk to you in French, you're expected to speak to each other in French, and every piece of writing they give you—from meal menus to class schedules—is written (you guessed it) in French.

As a strategic communication student, I am required to attend a year's worth of language classes. I chose to learn French, never thinking I'd get a chance to actually go to France through Adventist Colleges Abroad in my senior year.

Learning a language has never been my strong suit, but I found myself very excited to learn French in its origin country. It was hard work, but I was grateful that I had the opportunity to study a foreign language.

But, after several weeks of intense study, that excitement started to

wane. After four straight hours of language lessons in the morning, with often two more in the afternoon, four days a week—I felt like my efforts were incongruous with my skill level.

Then one day, I met some French-speaking young men who were visiting our campus for a conference. I was surprised when they greeted me enthusiastically in the cafeteria. "We want to practice our English," one of them said.

Delighted to be able to take a break from French, I thought of simple questions I could ask them in English. Thinking about the types of questions we learned to answer in French, I began asking them what their favorite colors, animals, and fruits were. When they got confused, I would list words in those categories in French. "You know, like bleu, blanc, et rouge!" I said. Suddenly, they understood and

attempted to respond with words for colors in English.

"Your French is so good!" several of them said.

The truth is, I didn't believe my French was any good, but their kindness and willingness to let me stumble through their language made a difference in how I saw my language journey. Maybe if they were willing to mess up, but kept trying to learn my language, I could do the same in theirs.

That night, I ate dinner in the cafeteria with my new friends who helped me overcome some of my language insecurities. Waving goodbye after the meal, I knew that I would probably never see them again, but their impact—helping me gain confidence—would stay with me forever.

BY STACY WISENER, STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

The Department of Communication is excited to have launched a new bachelor of arts in digital communication.

Designed for those passionate about visual storytelling, this degree reflects the department's commitment to preparing students for success in today's evolving media landscape.

The major offers real-world experience through hands-on training in film, audio, social media, and other digital media. Students will gain essential skills to think critically, craft innovative messages, and connect with diverse audiences across various digital platforms.

The curriculum includes courses such as Essentials of Filmmaking, Audio

Production, Media and Culture, plus students are required to complete both an internship and a senior project to gain industry knowledge.

For more information on digital communication at WWU, please visit wallawalla.edu/comm.



(L to R): Lynelle Ellis, Matthew Webster, Kiersten Ekkens, Nancy Semotiuk, Linda Crumley

ROOTED IN ESSENTIALS, YET ALWAYS REACHING FORWARD

Each year, the students in our Publication Design and Editing class select a theme to guide their work on *WestWord*. For the 2025 issue, they chose three words that seem especially fitting: adventure, inspiration and community. These themes do more than shape the pages of this publication—they capture the essence of who we are as a department.

This spring, we celebrate our graduating seniors who are ready

to launch into the world full of talent and drive. Come fall, we'll open our classrooms to a new group of students, who bring fresh perspectives, new voices and boundless enthusiasm to our campus.

We remain inspired by our students' growth, their bold ideas, and the vibrant community in which we continue to #buildfaith together. Whether students are stepping into their first college class, acting in a play, or walking across the

graduation stage, they are, and always will be, part of our story.

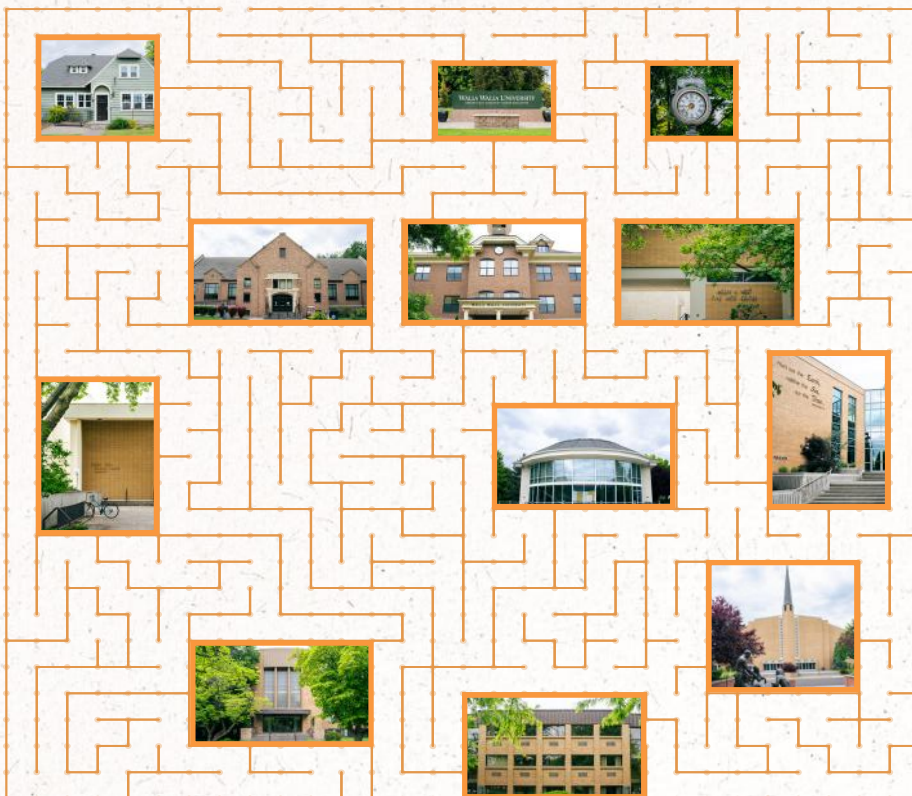
Adventure. Inspiration. Community. These aren't just themes for the magazine—they reflect the energy and spirit of our students and our department. We're proud of what our students have created, and we can't wait to see what comes next—for them, for us, and for all the stories still to be told.

—NANCY SEMOTIUK
Chair, Department of Communication

Walla Walla University
204 South College Avenue
College Place, WA 99324



↓ Start Here!



BACK TO THE CTC

FIND YOUR WAY

★ Welcome Home!