

## INFORMATION ITEM #2

### Fallen Cougars: The WSU-WSC WWII Commemoration Project (R. Sun and T. Bond)

#### Background

Led by Associate Professor of History Raymond Sun and in partnership with Interim Dean of Libraries Trevor Bond, the mission of the WSU World War II Commemoration Project is to revive and complete President Holland's original vision of honoring Washington State College (WSC)'s war dead, but this time in digital form accessible to a twenty-first-century audience. By presenting the photos and life stories of the generation of Cougars who died in the fight against fascism and militarism, the project aims to restore the humanity and the spirit of these approximately 250 WSC war dead, transforming them from names on a plaque to young individuals that contemporary Cougars and the public can readily relate to. It is thus intended to serve both as a scholarly resource and as a means to advance public understanding and appreciation for the service and legacy of these former Cougars in this defining moment of American and world history.

In the initial year of the project (Fall 2017 to Spring 2018), Dr. Sun supervised approximately one dozen student volunteers drawn from his two-semester class on the Second World War. Using the materials in the MASC War Records collection, as well as additional sources such as the WSC student newspaper (The Daily Evergreen), yearbook (The Chinook), local and regional newspapers, and military records websites, each student compiled a short life history of a serviceman who died or was killed in either the European or Asia-Pacific Theaters. Each history included information about their life prior to attending WSC, their experience at WSC, and their military service, culminating in the circumstances of their death. When possible, the reports also discuss how they were remembered or memorialized by their family and community.

From 2019 to 2024, research continued with new undergraduate volunteers and paid graduate student researchers. Fallen Cougars aspires to commemorate each of the approximately 250 WSC World War II war dead. Today, the group has concluded its research and created a database commemorating each of the Fallen Cougars.

#### WSU Pullman Veteran's Memorial

Opened in 2000, the WSU Veterans Memorial, immediately east of Thompson Hall on Veterans Way, honors nearly 400 WSU students, faculty, and staff who died serving the United States in war. A series of bronze plaques set among stones bear the names of those killed in World War I, World War II, the Korean, Vietnam, Persian Gulf wars, and the Global War on Terrorism.

Acclaimed New York artist and architect George Trakas originally designed the monument. His vision was to create something contemplative in nature, timeless in scope, and capable of individually recognizing the hundreds of WSU lives lost in war. Known as an environmental sculptor, Trakas also helped design Terrell Mall.

### **Recognition and Recasting**

As Dr. Sun and his students began utilizing newly available data to research the individuals' names on the memorial, they discovered a handful of discrepancies in spellings, preferred names, and, most importantly, Fallen Cougars who had inadvertently been left off the original memorial.

Recognizing the significance of the project, the Provost's Office, Pullman Chancellor's Office, and WSU Foundation partnered with the Fallen Cougars team to begin the process of honoring the incredible Cougs who had to cut their studies short in service to their country. In 2025, each of the Fallen Cougars will be presented with a Certificate of Academic Achievement. Additionally, the team is working to recast all the plaques currently on the memorial with the updated information provided by Dr. Sun's team.

Later in the year, WSU Pullman will host a ceremony unveiling the newly updated memorial. We are also preparing for meaningful outreach to the families of the Fallen Cougars to share both the completed reports and their student's Certificate of Academic Achievement.