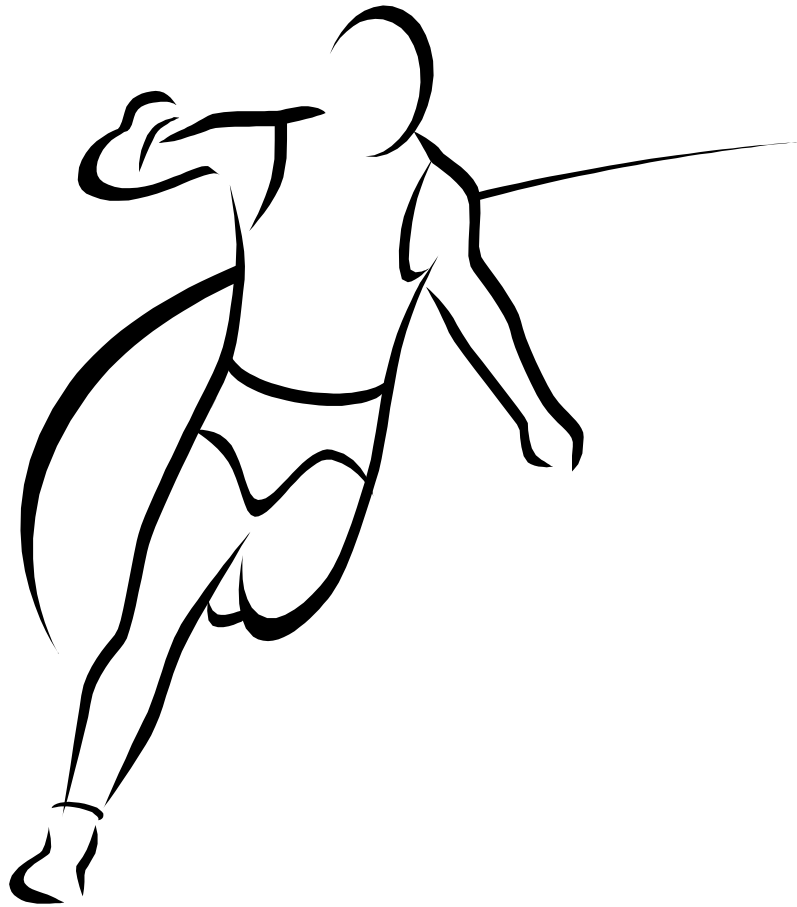


**Philip Dierking**

***From the Starting Line***

**A Bid for the First Year Experience Award**



**Submitted at No Frills 2004  
Presented by Western Washington University  
February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2004**



## *Lining up...*

**"Running is a big question mark that's there each and every day. It asks you, 'Are you going to be a wimp or are you going to be strong today?'" - Peter Maher, Irish-Canadian Olympian and sub-2:12 marathoner**

You hear the announcer make the final warning call and you realize that now, the time has come. Your palms sweaty, you head with all the others over to the starting line, wondering if they have as many butterflies flying widely around inside their bellies as you do. As you take your place among the pack, you glance ahead of you, along the course that you will soon be exploring...and you realize that with all your preparation for today, the upcoming distance that you will be traveling is still very uncertain and unknown to you. But you also realize that the goal you want to achieve right now is the same goal you've wanted to achieve during all those months of practice leading up to this moment...and you know that despite how unknown the course may be, or whatever obstacles lie in front of you, you know what needs to be done.

You hear the announcer's voice once again, this time counting down to the start of your adventure, "Runners at your Ready!...Set!.....BANG!" The gun goes off, and the race has begun!

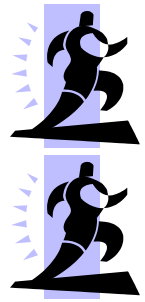
Now, if any of you have ever participated in Cross Country Running or Track and Field before, this pre-race experience of nerves, butterflies, and tension may be ever so painfully familiar to you. Even if you've never run a race in your life before, you've actually probably experienced these very same emotions as well. Any new experience, whether it be trying out a new activity, or moving to a new place, can place you in the very middle of all those nerve-racking situations...knot-in-the-stomach, not knowing where you're going or what you should do, and the familiar sensation that all you want to do is curl up and hide.

For many college freshmen, the initial experience of coming to college for the first time can feel just like this. Who are all these new people? What should I do? Where should I go? Is my roommate going to be nice? Is everyone in my hall going to think I'm not cool enough? So you can imagine that these same feelings were exactly what Philip Dierking was experiencing as he came to Western Washington for the first time. Not only was this his first time at college, but his first time leaving home, which for Phil was way up in Alaska! Fortunately, instead of deciding to just give into the fear and "curl up and hide", Phil decided that he was not going to let his fears and insecurities of being accepted hold him back, and he took off from the beginning to lead the pack!

## *Starting Strong...*

**"Pressure is nothing more than the shadow of great opportunity." -Michael Johnson**

In the beginning of any race, it is critical to your success to make sure to get a good start straight from the beginning. You don't want to over-do it, just like you don't want to over-extend yourself with too many activities, but you need to make sure to take the risk and get a good position at the beginning to hold you over for the rest of the race. This is exactly what Phil did. As mentioned earlier, beginning college, like beginning a race, is nerve-racking. You don't know what to expect, except that whatever is coming, will not always be easy. Because of this, that temptation to retreat back and hide, and not make an effort to



try anything new, for fear of what *might* happen, takes a hold of many people. Philip decided that he didn't want to hide though, and he took the opportunity that the beginning-of-college-awkwardness presented, and made huge steps to step out in front of the pack and take the lead. In the first few weeks of school, Phil started off by deciding to run for Hall Council as a Hall Rep.

Upon seeing that there was no one coming forth to take the position of President, he realized that his hall needed someone to take that responsibility, and he decided to step forward and accept the challenge.

After the Hall Council began, Phil made major efforts to recognize what needed to be done and where things needed improvement.

- Phil made an effort to quickly learn and understand the process of Parliamentary Procedure so he could help teach and organize his council to run smooth and productive meetings.
- Phil also worked with his council to examine the council constitution as a group to edit it so that it allowed the council to work more effectively and smoothly.

Phil also recognized the need for fun, welcoming events and activities within his community to help build his community into a place that the residents wanted to be. To do this, he collaborated with his council members and RA's, just as a runner works with his own team during a race, to organize community events such as:

- Foosball Tournament
- Karaoke Night
- Movie Nights
- Residence Hall Pumpkin-Carving Night
- Capture the Flag
- Super Bowl Party
- Organized WWU's only Marathon Running Club
- Henna night

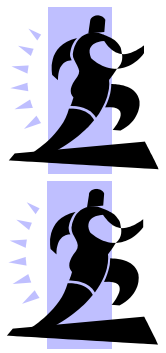
Phil realized that his community needs a variety of events, so he plans to work with his council to create events and activities to reach all audience types, like a residence hall cook-off, concerts, and community clean-ups.

## *Picking up the Pace....*

"It's at the borders of pain and suffering that the men are separated from the boys."- Emil Zatopek

Once in the top group of a race, a runner needs to take a few more risks by putting a little more steam into his engine to take the race pace to the next step. Just as with Phil, who decided to take a few more risks and see how else he could involve and contribute himself to his community. These activities included:

- Peer Conduct Board- Phil listened along with other board members to student's cases who were written up by RA's, and decided on appropriate sanctions for the students.



- Peer Tutor- Phil met weekly with a South Korean Exchange Student and helped tutor him in learning English
- Underwater Hockey Club- A sport that Phil had never heard of until college, but decided to take the risk and give it a try anyways.
- Campus Christian Fellowship (CCF) Member- A weekly group meeting of Christians to sing, have fun, and worship.
- Hall Bible Study- Phil met weekly with members of his hall to explore his religion further.
- HELP-A program where Phil moved into his dorm a few days early in order to help his fellow dorms residents move in by carrying boxes for them and other tasks.

## *Putting Practice into Performance...*

"The will to win means nothing if you haven't the will to prepare." - Juma Ikangaa

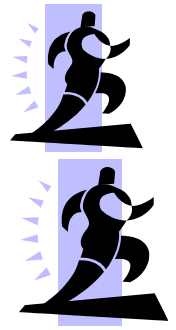
You've been keeping a steady pace, and now you've entered the middle section of the race. It's at this time that you need to start using your strategies that you've been developing in practice to pull yourself out of the group and begin to lead the pack. This tactic is also necessary in life as well, and Phil made sure to do just that. Over the years, Phil has developed an ability for effective communication and organization between people and groups, and after establishing himself within his council and community, he decided to use these abilities to help increase the overall productivity in his activities, and good feelings between himself and his fellow residents.

Just as a runner needs to motivate his team during a race, Phil also made a major effort to keep the members within his Hall Council enthusiastic and motivated as well by:

- Making personal efforts to meet and talk with all his members personally
- Offering any help that they might need with their various council tasks
- Gave each council member individual time to express any ideas that they couldn't get out in meetings.
- Organized meetings to write nominations for "Of the Month" Awards (an award given to people each month for various outstanding performances.)
- Consistently encouraged his fellow residents to attending the Hall Council meetings for their own benefit.

Phil also worked to establish not only communication within his residence hall community, but between his community and other residence halls as well.

- Phil consistently updated and maintained a community bulletin board, which gave information of various events happening around campus, as well as the minutes from previous council meetings.



- Established communication between his residence hall community and other residence halls throughout campus to organize fun events including several halls, such as a multi-residence hall game of capture the flag, in order to give residents a chance to meet people from other residence halls.
- For his Underwater Hockey Club team, Phil took on the responsibility of sending out weekly e-mail announcement to club members.

Also, Phil has been working with one of the Admission Counselors to create an “Alaska Connection” program. This would be a program helping encourage students to come to WWU, which would involve Phil working with other students to develop programs and events for current WWU students from Alaska, and going back to Alaska to make presentations to the high schools there about WWU.

## *The Final Stretch*

*"Tough times don't last but tough people do."-A.C. Green*

You're cruising along at a fast pace, and you're in one of the top positions, and now it's finally come...the final stretch. Your body is tired, but you've come this far and held on this long, and there's no point in slowing down now. You pump you legs faster and faster, and cruise into the finishing shoot. You hear the crowd cheering and yelling as you run by, and suddenly, it's over! You've finished the race! You are overwhelmed with a sense of achievement, and you realize that all those risks were worth it.

While the feeling of achievement that comes from the end of a race is hard to match, one can say that for his first year at college, Phil definitely has earned a sense of achievement in his accomplishments. He's been able to not only involve himself within his school and community in several very fun and interesting ways, but he's also been able to rise up and take leadership positions in these activities as well. Also, just as a runner needs to have a healthy balanced in all forms of his life, so has Phil, with maintaining a 3.65 GPA for his first quarter, and earning recognition by being nominated for School-Wide Exec-Board member of the Month.

For a runner though, it doesn't just stop at the finish line. In fact, a runner sees each individual race is seen as an evaluation on what he or she needs to do next time to improve and run faster. Phil has taken the same attitude. He's been fortunate to have such a great start to school, but he still has a lot of time ahead of him and in fact, the year hasn't even finished! Phil's experiences this year have helped him mature and grow a great deal, and have allowed him to be more confident, resourceful, and enthusiastic about his college experience, in the classroom and out. He won't stop there though. He plans to take what he has and will learn this year, and use it to take on bigger challenges in the years to come. This will range from higher leadership positions within his school and bigger events that reach more students, to opportunities that haven't even presented themselves yet. Whatever they may be, Phil knows he's ready to take them on.

Phil has shown to be a driven student with remarkable enthusiasm, and a love for learning. He's dedicated, focused, and always willing to try and learn new things. He's involved himself within his community this year, and has made plans to continue pursuing bigger challenges in the years to come. It's for these reasons that we feel that Phil deserves the First-Year-Experience Award. He's dedicated to stay in the race till the final stretch, and he knows that to win any race, he needs to take risks at the right time, which is straight from the starting line.



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January 19, 2004

Subject: Letter of Recommendation for Mr. Philip Dierking

To Whom It May Concern:

Philip has worked under my supervision in Peer Conduct Board and SHADO Hall Council since October 2004. As Hall Council President, Philip's responsibilities include: running the both the cabinet and general meetings, organizing programs for the SHADO Community, updating the SHADO Community News Bulletin, maintaining contact between other hall councils to collaborate on various events, and attending additional leadership training opportunities.

I have been impressed by Philips ability to generate new ideas and motivate his peers. He has co-organized a "Foosball Tournament and Karaoke Night" and has collaborated with the other hall councils to arrange a "Ridgeway Community Capture the Flag" game. His dedication to his role in the community has earned him nominations for Exec Board Member of the Month and a spot as the only non-RHA member to be selected to attend the NO FRILLS Conference.

In addition to his involvement in Hall Council, Philip is a Campus Christian Fellowship Member and takes part in a weekly Bible study group. He is also involved in the Underwater Hockey Club and is a tutor to foreign exchange students. Furthermore, Philip has put together an informal running club in his residence hall and is training to run a marathon this year. Despite his diverse and abundant commitments, Philip is dedicated to his academics and has a 3.65 GPA.

Overall, Philip is a motivated and dedicated freshman. He has exceeded my expectations as a supervisor and has been an extraordinary role model in his community. . Philip's organizational skills and energy has contributed to making the SHADO Hall Council very successful. I strongly recommend Philip Deirking for the First Year Experience Award.

Sincerely,

Katharine Gray  
Assistant Resident Advisor of the SHADO Community