

LESSONS OF COMPETITION

Competition is all around us, in the work world, athletics, politics and even in the classroom. Washburn graduate Arthur Fletcher understands the importance of competition and encourages the teaching of that quality through athletics. "I'm a great advocate of not only sports but of the competitive spirit that I experienced on the football field and on the track in high school and at Washburn," says Fletcher. "I learned to transition competitiveness from athletics to the classroom and into the political and business arena."

The importance of competition is something that is taught through experience and many times that experience comes from athletic competition. That's why Fletcher says he felt it was important to support the Washburn football stadium renovation project. "I think the stadium is a fixture of support that makes a commitment to students that the campus, alumni and community support their learning experience," says Fletcher. "I hope that as people walk past the stadium's memorial columns and they see the names and the pictures on there that they get a feeling of commitment." Fletcher wanted to encourage that feeling and that is why he supported the stadium project by purchasing a column in his name. "I hope that when young people see the pictures and names on the columns they will go back and look up the name and find out who that person was and learn from that person's experiences."

After graduating from Washburn, Fletcher taught school in Kansas where he also served as the Vice President of the Kansas Republican party. He then moved to California and taught in the Berkley School system where he played an active role in desegregating the school system.

Later Fletcher moved to Washington State and became Project Director for the East Pasco Higher Horizon, where he trained 380 heads of household to work in the Hanford Atomic Facility. While training them, he also taught them how corporations could develop neighborhoods. His training became a model for neighborhood economic development and was instrumental in taking people on welfare and encouraging them to create coops that would sponsor area development. At the same time, President Nixon was championing a campaign called Black Capitalism and recruited Fletcher to be the Assistant Secretary of Labor for employment standards. During his work with Nixon, Fletcher says he used his position to break the lock from discrimination that prevented minorities and women from excelling. Fletcher has been described as the father of affirmative action. He held his labor position through five presidential appointments. Fletcher is currently heading up a project called Friends for America's Future United which he says has a mission to make sure the America's future remains true, strong, secure, stable, prosperous and promising.

Through all of his work Fletcher says that competition played an important role in his success. "Competition taught me to think quickly and to do well under pressure," says Fletcher. Now at 79 years old Fletcher says it is a lesson that he has utilized all of his life. "It really all started at Washburn and I have continued to use the lessons of competitiveness every inch of the way," says Fletcher. "I hope Washburn students will utilize that same lesson."