

Note: Each rower will be asked to sign a copy of the Rower Responsibilities/Contract that follows and return it to his or her coach, acknowledging familiarity with and commitment to the principles and information in the document.)

# **ROWER RESPONSIBILITIES/ CONTRACT**

To assure that all rowers understand their obligations to themselves, their teammates, and their school and community, each member of Whitman Crew and a parent is required to sign a Rower Contract. The Contract summarizes expectations, rules and responsibilities, and must be signed prior to rowing in the spring season.

The September 2009 version of the Rower Contract is as follows:

## **Walt Whitman Varsity Crew Team Expectations and Rules**

**To Parents and Rowers:** This is a guide that is specific to the Whitman varsity rowing program. Please go through this guide and be fully aware of what is contained within. Please sign at the bottom to indicate that you have read and accept the terms of this guide.

### **Attendance, Priorities, and Attitude**

#### **Attendance**

All on the water practices are mandatory. You are expected to be on time at the boathouse Monday through Saturday. If you drive to the boathouse, realize that parking is very difficult, especially in the TBC parking lot. Lateness due to parking problems will not be excused. If you cannot get to practice on time in your own car/carpool, then ride the bus.

If you are going to miss practice for any reason, it is your responsibility to make sure that your coach knows in advance by e-mail. This includes missing for illness. Please understand that anyone missing practice for any reason disrupts the entire team, as people have to be shifted around, and in some cases, entire boats cannot practice. Parents: please do not schedule doctor's appointments, tutors and the like for your child's during practice hours, except in emergencies.

Practice is held no matter the weather. If high wind or thunderstorms preclude an on-the-water practice, practice will either be held at school, or a land workout will be held at the boathouse. Please listen for any announcements.

**Spring Break:** This week is very important to the final development of the crews for the latter half of the season, and it is vitally important that everyone attend all the spring break practices. You are expected to attend all spring break practices. Understand that if you leave for the week, there is NO guarantee that you will return to the same seat/boat that you were in before you left. Your seat will not be held for you while you are away.

**SATs:** Please schedule your SAT for the first week in May when at all possible. That is an open week in the regatta schedule designed with the SAT in mind. Scheduling for the March/April exam will cause you to miss a race. If you feel that you will need more than one attempt at the test, schedule your 1<sup>st</sup> test for the January/February test date. Junior Year: The eleventh grade is an especially busy one, and one that is very important for college admissions. Please think ahead and take into account the increased workload you will receive from teachers while also practicing and preparing for races.

**AP Exams:** Plan for them. They come in May during the most competitive part of the season. It is vital that you carefully schedule study time so that you can practice and prepare for your exams. You must learn to budget your time and balance your commitments to your schoolwork and to your team. Remember, if you miss practice, you are affecting eight other people who have just as much schoolwork as you do! E-mail your AP Exam Schedule to your coach as soon as it is available.

**Excused Absences:** While all decisions about team operations are left to the coach's discretion, generally excused absences are allowed for academic, family, health or religious reasons. Remember it is the responsibility of the ATHLETE to contact the coach by email as soon as possible to inform them of their inability to attend practice.

**Penalties:** The coach will deal with unexcused absences as he or she best sees fit. Penalties can range from removal from the boat for one practice to expulsion from the team for recidivists.

**Final Comment:** Rowing is unique in its demand for perfect attendance. You have decided to make a commitment to the crew, and your teammates and coaches depend on you to fulfill that commitment.

## **Priorities**

Remember to keep things in their proper place: family comes first, academics come next, and finally everything else. We understand that crew may be one of

several interests you have. Understand, however, that rowing at Whitman makes an unusually high demand of your time and dedication. Make certain you are willing to make that commitment.

We expect 100% effort from you at all practices; if you are unwilling to accept that responsibility, you should consider doing something else.

By now, you should be well aware of the academic demands at Whitman. Remember, you will not be allowed to row if your GPA falls below a 2.0. It is your responsibility to do your schoolwork and to finish it in a timely fashion so that you do not need to miss practice to make it up. Learning to balance and budget your time will be a life long skill, so you might as well learn it now. Of course, extenuating circumstances will be considered, but again, an “I can’t come to practice because I have too much work” is NOT an acceptable excuse. Remember that all of your teammates are facing the same academic rigors as you.

Parents: When considering keeping your child home for whatever reason (including disciplinary) or taking your child away on a trip during the spring season, please be aware that this affects many other families as well. It disrupts the eight other people in the boat, as well as the kids in the other boats, as people will have to be shifted around among the boats. It also is unfair to the parents and families of the other kids on the team who have changed the organization of their lives during the spring season. The key to a successful crew is the unique and delicate blending of the eight rowers and a coxswain in the boat; inserting a new person can cause major disruptions. In many cases, if several people are missing, entire boats cannot practice, the coach’s workout cannot be implemented, and everyone’s time is wasted. Please be sensitive to the unique nature of this team sport.

## **Attitude**

Be considerate of your teammates and coaches. Disrespect, disparaging and abusive comments or other improper behavior towards or about teammates, coaches, and members/coaches of other teams will not be tolerated under any circumstances. Such behavior is incompatible with fostering a harmonious and successful team environment.

Always remember that poor behavior reflects badly on yourself, your team, and your school.

Remember that we are all working together toward common goals.

Team members found to be violating the rules in this section will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action by the coach. The Executive Board will be notified of any action taken.

## **Alcohol and Drugs**

Whitman Crew has adopted the substance abuse policy of Walt Whitman High School. There is Zero Tolerance for students who use alcohol or other illegal substances – they will be removed from the Whitman Crew team for one calendar year. While a 2006 Whitman High School revision of this policy permitted Zero-Toleranced students to return to after-school activities sooner if they completed 100 hours of community service, there is no guarantee that coaches will invite you back to the Whitman Crew team before that calendar year is up even if you complete 100 hours of community service.

### **Substance Abuse**

Rowers using alcohol or other illegal substances (not including tobacco products) violate county, state and national law. By using or abusing substances, a rower puts his/her life in jeopardy as well as disrespecting the other members of the team.

### **Consequences of Substance Use/Abuse:**

#### *ON SCHOOL GROUNDS OR AT SCHOOL-SPONSORED ACTIVITIES:*

Under the Zero-Tolerance Policy of Whitman Crew, a rower who is in possession of, or under the influence of drugs, alcohol, or other illegal substances (not including tobacco products) on school grounds or during a school-sponsored activity will be denied the right to participate in any school-sponsored activity for one calendar year.

#### *OFF SCHOOL GROUNDS OR AT A NON-SCHOOL SPONSORED ACTIVITY*

**First Offense:** Upon verification\* parent/guardian will be notified. Coach/sponsor will hold a counseling session with rower and the rower will be referred to MSAP (Maryland Student Assistance Program). The rower will be required to complete 10 hours of community service within a thirty-day period.

**Second Offense:** Upon verification\* parent/Guardian will be notified. Administrator will hold a conference with the rower and the rower will undergo a professional assessment. The student must complete twenty additional hours of community service in a thirty-day period.

**Third Offense:** Upon verification\* rower will be removed from all stipend extra-curricular activities for the remainder of the school year (this may include classes that involve extra-curricular participation for a grade). In addition, a

parent/guardian conference with administration and sponsors will be held and up to 30 additional hours of community service may be assigned.

All rowers who are subject to these rules will receive an informative packet containing information pertaining to Alcoholics/Narcotics Anonymous. Students who are second-time offenders must give signed verification to their coach, sponsor, or counselor of having attended at least five meetings.

### **\* Verification**

For the purpose of this code of conduct, the term “verification” is defined as any of the following:

- Self-admission of involvement by the rower

- The rower’s own Parent/Guardian admission of student involvement

- Observation of involvement by the sponsor, coach, any Walt Whitman staff member, or the police

**Comment:** Use of these substances is unacceptable and incompatible with your status as a minor, your status as a student at Whitman, and your status as an athlete. You are an athlete spending countless hours building up your strength and fitness. Using these substances negatively affects all the work you have put in. Quite simply, use of these substances has no place on an athletic team. Also, the team is a self-policed unit – you all have to watch out for each other. Ask yourself if you want to go to the starting line of a race knowing one of your crew has been drinking Friday night.

## **Other Items: Practice, Boat Selection**

### **Practice Rules**

Practice is not social hour – no wasting time.

As soon as you arrive at the boathouse, check your seating for the day on the line-up board. From there, take down an oar for the boat you will be rowing in. Do NOT expect someone else to get your oar for you.

Fill up your water bottle and go to the bathroom BEFORE your coach starts practice.

Make certain to properly stretch and warm-up BEFORE practice starts.

Do not interfere with any other team’s practices. This includes talking to people on other teams while they are launching from or returning to the boathouse.

If you see another Whitman boat needing some sort of assistance, help them.

Coxswains are required to set up and break down the coaching launches every day.

Absolutely no horseplay. This includes throwing people off the dock.

Make certain oars are returned from the dock after practice. Do NOT expect someone else to get the oars.

## **Boat Selection**

**Boats:** Our first priority is to select a First Varsity eight. Once this boat is selected, a Second Varsity eight and at the coach's discretion a Varsity Lightweight eight will be chosen; finally a Third Varsity eight will be selected, if there are enough athletes. Fours are not a priority of the program, and fours will only be created in certain circumstances. There is no seniority in boat selection, the best 8 rowers will be placed in the Varsity - even seniors may be boated in the 3<sup>rd</sup> 8, so if you are a senior and do not want to row in the 3<sup>rd</sup> varsity make sure you have properly prepared yourself physically before the season begins.

While we place the most importance on the 1<sup>st</sup> boat, remember that the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> eights also have important roles as well in their own right. Being in one of those boats says nothing about your worthiness as a rower, or as a person, for that matter. We want all of you to always strive to be in the 1<sup>st</sup> boat – having a 2<sup>nd</sup> boat full of people who will do anything to be in the 1<sup>st</sup> boat will only make both boats faster. Also remember that in rowing the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> boats compete against the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> boats from other teams so your competitive chances would relatively be the same.

**Lightweights:** At the coaches' discretion, a lightweight boat may be created for the men's and/or women's team. This enables athletes who are not naturally big to compete on an equal basis with similar athletes. Whitman Crew has a lightweight boat only if we have enough natural lightweight healthy rowers and do not affect the V1 performance. The lightweight boat is equal in status to the 2<sup>nd</sup> varsity boat (i.e. If an athlete does not make the first boat, the coach may put them in the next fastest boat where their size will be an asset). Decisions about which athletes may compete as a lightweight are reached only after careful consultation between coaches, the athlete, the athlete's parents and a physician.

**Spares:** Usually, three spare rowers and a spare coxswain will be kept on each varsity squad and 2 spares and a coxswain on each freshman squad. Spares are required to attend every practice just like everyone else. There is no guarantee that a spare will race at any point during the season. At the same time, spares may be called upon to practice and race at any time in any boat. Depending on performance, spares may work their way in to racing boats during the season.

**Selection Process:** Any and all decisions regarding where an athlete will row are coaching decisions. Understand that selecting a boat is an art, and not a science. There are many factors to consider, some objective, some subjective. We consider erg scores, technical ability, attitude, responsiveness to coaching, the results of seat races, and the ability to blend in with the other athletes already selected for the boat. We also rely on our own instinct – while this is a purely subjective method of selection, it is one we use to a great degree. Things like grittiness, determination on the erg, the desire to always win an erg piece, a run, or to lift more than anyone else is all taken into account. Many times, those who are willing to do what it takes to row in the 1<sup>st</sup> boat successfully will clearly rise to the top on their own. It will often be as clear to the rowers as it is to the coach as to who is deserving of a seat in the 1<sup>st</sup> boat. Creating a line-up that will go fast is a unique blend of many things, and not just the eight fastest erg scores. While performance on the ergometer is an important factor, it is not the only factor considered. We start the selection process on the first day of winter training.

We do not claim to always be correct in selecting the right eight people. However, the line-ups we put out are what we consider to be the best at that time. You should understand this if you are in a situation where you are unhappy about what boat you're in. If that is the case, it is not the time to sulk and be counterproductive. Your job is to make whatever boat you are in go fast. If you continue to do good things on and off the water, we will notice, and you will likely get a shot at a higher boat. Line-ups are never set in stone, and we reserve the right to change anyone's seat at any time.

**Coaching:** The 1<sup>st</sup> Varsity eight is considered to be the "varsity" boat and will be coached by the varsity coach. The 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> eights are considered to be a "junior varsity" crew and will be coached by the Varsity assistant coach. The Lightweight eights are also considered "varsity" boats and will be coached by the varsity coach and/or the Varsity assistant coach.

Our job is to help you achieve your goals. Your job is to show up to practice motivated – to do well, to improve, and to work very hard. We cannot simply give you those traits. We can help you find them, but it is your responsibility to want to be on this team, to work hard, to be dedicated, to want to succeed, to want to improve, and to want to prove to yourself and to others what you're made of. Give us that, and along with your trust, we will do our best to help you attain the goals that you set for yourself through rowing at Whitman. If we cannot trust you to bring to the team what we outlined above, and you don't trust us to help you, then nothing will be accomplished.

**Signed and dated:**

**Rower** \_\_\_\_\_ **Parent** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_