

Michael Anthony '77

When **Michael Anthony '77** was a sophomore at Westminster, he spent his second semester in Denmark as part of the Experiment in International Living program, which brought together students from local colleges and provided opportunities for overseas learning. It was an experience that would set him on his life's path.

"It was a fabulous, eye-opening experience," says Michael. "In 1974, international travel experiences weren't very common for students. Being part of a small group of students in Copenhagen receiving language training, experiencing another culture, and learning to look at social mores through a different lens, really set the stage for what I wanted to do, which was meet different people and travel the world."

Immediately upon his return, Michael declared his major in business administration-management—a decision that would set the foundation for a 40-plus-year career as a leader in the retail industry.

Michael chose Westminster for a variety of reasons. First, it was a school that met his mother's "educational and spiritual requirements." Plus, several people on his street were Titans. Most of all, it provided an education that was not only high-quality but affordable.

"I spent the weekend on campus with my friend Jeff Fuller '73 and some members of the Alpha Sigma Phi fraternity who gave me an introduction to the school," says Michael. "I really enjoyed it. It seemed like a place that I could have some fun and get a first-rate education in the process. And of course, the standards of the school were important."

While working towards his degree, Michael worked his junior and seniors years as a desk clerk at the old Howard Johnson's hotel on Interstate 80. After school, he took a job as an assistant buyer at Gold Circle Stores in Columbus, Ohio, and while advancing through the merchandising ranks he had the opportunity to travel the world, Asia and Europe in particular.

Michael spent 10 years in that position before accepting a job as head merchant with Lechter's Housewares, a national chain of kitchen-supply stores. In this role he continued to travel as the company went public and experienced steady growth. Eventually he was named president and COO with over 500 stores reporting to him.

Six years later in 1994, he jumped at the chance to become the next CEO of Brookstone Inc. By 2007, he was also named Chairman to the Board. In almost 12 years there, he helped the company grow fivefold in size and increase profits by thirteen times before taking the company private.

Following his time at Brookstone, Michael spent seven years as chairman, president, and CEO of Things Remembered, where he helped to reposition the company by building a leadership team, modernizing the brand, creating a new store prototype, establishing a meaningful web presence, and significantly improving operations. These efforts led to an almost doubling of the company's profits and, eventually, its successful sale.

Today, Michael no longer works full-time, but he's still active in the business world. Currently, he is an investor and partners with private equity in identifying and optimizing business opportunities.

Throughout the years, Michael has maintained a strong commitment to Westminster, particularly with the School of Business. In 2016, he and his wife, Debra, established the Michael F. Anthony '77 Scholarship Fund. This renewable, merit-based scholarship is awarded to an incoming freshman student who graduated from Corry Area High School in Corry, Pa. (Michael's hometown), or second preference, a school district in Erie County, Pa., who is in good academic standing with high academic achievement and demonstrated leadership qualities.

"Years ago my wife and I created a charitable foundation with focus on education," says Michael. "We wanted to establish the scholarship because we felt Westminster is a worthy place to make an investment in."

He and Debra also made a generous gift to Westminster, which helped to build the school's new conference room and make other needed renovations. On a recent visit to the college, Michael got to view the new additions and was impressed with Eric Gaber, lecturer of business, and the work he's done there.

"What they're doing gives students real-life entrepreneurial guidance that will be invaluable in their careers," says Michael. "It's a type of innovative thinking that engages students in a different way, and it's this type of education that makes me want to stay involved and contribute."

Michael is a firm believer in the type of liberal arts education that Westminster provides.

"It has great power," he says. "Westminster teaches critical thinking, problem solving, communication, and leadership. If you can walk away with all four of those, you'll do quite well. These are the types of skills that will help you regardless of what choose to do in your career."

He also believes the type of well-rounded education Westminster provides can help make you an interesting individual.

"After all," adds Michael, "it can't all be about the numbers."