

Thomas G. "Tom" Runge '71
Clarence A. Jackson Career Service Award

Thomas G. Runge, the men of Wabash owe you a tremendous debt of gratitude for your tireless service to the College as our Director of Alumni and Parent Relations. Throughout your tenure you have helped us determine the most deserving alumni to receive our highest honors, the Alumni Awards of Merit. When we paused to note that the Clarence A. Jackson Career Service Award "shall be presented to a Wabash alumnus who has distinguished himself by outstanding contribution to his chosen vocation," your name — which you would never put on any list — grabbed our attention. For we realize that you have had not one, but two distinguished careers, and for that we honor you today. At Wabash, where you majored in economics and earned distinction on comprehensive exams, you kept a pretty low profile except at home with your bride, Carol. As a senior, you said that you hoped to have a career in road racing, which never quite materialized. Instead, you chose to fly jets five times faster than the quickest Indy cars. By the time you retired as a Colonel in the United States Air Force, you had served as Flight, Squadron, and Group Commander of F-111 Fighter Wings stationed all over the world. You were a gifted instructor, and you shaped the development of training programs for all F-111 crew members. And you were one of three US Air Force exchange students to attend the Royal Air Force Staff College for leadership development, which resulted in your command of the 492nd Tactical Fighter Squadron at RAF Lakenheath. Your no-nonsense, "cut through the bull" leadership meant successful missions and saved lives. Your bravery, integrity, and work ethic were qualities you balanced with compassion and love for your fellow Top Guns. Why in the world you would retire from such a distinguished career to enter a second career in higher education is anyone's guess, but all at Wabash are glad you did. After some admissions work at Notre Dame and Vincennes, you were hired at your alma mater to develop a model for increasing alumni referrals of prospective students, a program that has been recognized nationally for its success. After one year in that position, you became Director of Alumni and Parent Relations and quickly went to work reshaping the ways in which alumni connect with one another and the College. You re-imagined this Alumni Awards Chapel. You blew up the old reunion model and started from scratch to develop the wildly successful Big Bash Reunion Weekend. You've breathed life (and often, new life) into regional alumni associations. And as one NAWM Board member said, "It has been Tom's vision that has shaped the NAWM Board's transformation from the Wabash College drinking-and-debating society to a board of action and achievement." We would be remiss if we did not pay tribute to the Grunge Report, your daily all-things-Wabash blog, which is not only the most popular of all College blogs, it keeps alumni — where ever they are — connected to Wabash in a deeply personal way. All of us thank you for your ability to bring together disparate groups of alumni working toward a common goal; your wisdom and thoughtful approach to problem solving; and your unwavering love of and respect for Wabash College. Therefore, the National Association of Wabash Men is proud to present you the Clarence A. Jackson Career Service Award. Tom Runge — Some Little Giant!