Twenty Years Later

by Alan Fernandez ’04

In May of 2004, twenty years after high school, I officially graduated from Menlo’s Professional Studies Program—my older daughter graduated from pre-school the same day! I look back with no regrets on my long personal journey, which included endless lessons in business, leadership, management, communications, and marriage, often coupled with a lingering sense of incompletion without that degree.

As the son of an American diplomat, I lived in Austria, Chile, England, France, Switzerland, and England. I developed an interest early on in business, government, economics, policy, foreign countries, leadership, communications, and more. Lacking a degree created a barrier to entry, which hindered my options some. However, other opportunities served me well. I have worked for start-ups and more well-established and known companies. In May 2006, I took my experiences in business development in technology, publishing and marketing to the field of biotechnology.

Forty-seven years old, successfully married for 17 years and father of two daughters, I find myself centered on a course with infinite meaning. I’m involved in advancing the next medical revolution—stem cell science and the field of regenerative medicine. I work as Director of Development and Public Outreach for the Genetics Policy Institute (GPI), a foundation serving to advance the field. I’m driven to help alleviate human suffering. At GPI, I’m proud to declare, in no uncertain terms, that I’m an advocate for patients and deeply driven by compassion for the randomly afflicted. I see this as my civic duty and obligation to serve as a solution in advancing global progress for those in need.

As a voice of the stem cell community and catalyst of the “pro-cures movement,” the Foundation sees its role in clearing the roadblocks hindering progress. I’m a believer in human relations, working together towards a common goal. We as individuals need to be helping each other for the greater good. For me, I have reached a point in my career where I’m beyond clear that I must serve a greater purpose for all, applying what I’ve learned over time.

The Genetics Policy Institute has emerged as a global leader, well known for its transparent, pure intent.

Our most visible activity is our annual interdisciplinary event, the World Stem Cell Summit. This year, the Summit was held October 3-5, 2011 at The Pasadena Convention Center, Pasadena, CA. It offered a global 360 degree view of the field featuring more than 150 prominent experts discussing the latest discoveries, business models, legal and regulatory solutions, translational strategies and advocacy.

I never expected to be working to advance such an important and interesting global cause. I work with the world’s leading scientists, business people, ethicists, lawyers, patients and more, charting the future of medicine. I am guided by a Max Weber quote:

“It is immensely moving when a mature man—no matter whether old or young in years—is aware of a responsibility for the consequences of his conduct and really feels such responsibility with heart and soul. He then acts by following an ethic of responsibility and somewhere he reaches the point where he says: ‘Here I stand; I can do no other.’” Max Weber

This quote reminds me that we have wonderful opportunities to make a difference, shaping and creating our futures, not just for ourselves, but for the globe.