

Athletics the W&M Way

I take as my text a story Cliff Gauthier, our men's gymnastics coach for the past 41 years, told when he was inducted as an honorary alumnus of W&M during Commencement week 2014. It seems Cliff launched his athletic career as an errant swimmer scared of water. In a tryout race for a swim team, he managed to reach a pool wall, gazed up sensing victory, saw the other swimmers off in the distance, and discovered he had taken a right angle turn into the wrong wall. The coach suggested he try diving. Cliff was not more adept initially at that than swimming, but it did not require a sense of direction. He was determined, worked hard, trained for diving on the trampoline and emerged as both a superb diver and gymnast. He had enormous success as an intercollegiate athlete.

Cliff says athletics helped him overcome his fears and taught him that setbacks often open up new opportunities. He also learned athletics and academics can be complementary.

Coach Gauthier's teams at William & Mary have compiled an 829-326-2 record. This year's team won the Eastern Collegiate Athletic Conference (ECAC) Championship and competed in the NCAA Championships. Perhaps even more impressive, our men's gymnasts have garnered more Academic All-America designations than those at any other university. Since 1974, 30 gymnasts have gone to medical school.

A wonderful aspect of this story is that it's just the way things are at William & Mary. We do athletics right. Our coaches are superb teachers and mentors. Our athletes achieve great results on the fields of friendly strife and in the classroom, and they do it at all levels — from our many club sports through Division I NCAA competition. They learn to overcome their fears and to find opportunity in failure. They learn to work together in teams and what it means to lead.

We offer a wide range of varsity and club sports, so athletes can find a team that fits their personal interests and abili-

ties. William & Mary has 23 varsity sports, more than any other school in our Colonial Athletic Conference (CAA). The Tribe has 45 club sports, the most in Virginia, everything from badminton, crew and ice hockey to rugby and wrestling. This year, there were 442 teams in our seven intramural sports drawn from all parts of the university, plus over 50 wellness and fitness classes per week.

Almost 100 varsity athletes graduated in the Class of '14. They won 15 CAA championship titles over the past four years, and earned degrees in 22 different disciplines. Thirty-three of them earned all-conference honors during their careers, and 29 were inducted into the national honor society for college athletes. Thirty of them earned Provost Awards this year for achieving cumulative grade point averages over 3.5.

Even though there is no place for anyone to hide in our demanding curriculum, W&M varsity athletes still have the best graduation rate in the CAA and in Virginia. The cumulative grade point average for all 500 of our varsity athletes consistently averages above 3.0.

This year, women's gymnastics claimed its fifth ECAC Championship. Over the last two years, women's cross country and track and field have won three of four CAA titles, raising their total to 30 of the 54 league championships awarded in those sports. Tribe football narrowly missed its third NCAA playoff bid in the last five seasons, with a 7-4 record. Men's soccer had a spectacular 10-day stretch defeating two No. 1-ranked teams, earning a spot in the NCAA tournament. Men's basketball came within one basket of the CAA championship title and an automatic NCAA tournament berth. Tim Rusthoven '14 was named the CAA's basketball "Scholar-Athlete of the Year," the third consecutive season a Tribe player has won, and the sixth time in the 12-year history of the award. Tribe varsity baseball, coming off an impressive NCAA appearance in 2013, won the regular season CAA Championship finishing 32-20 overall, and



15-5 in league play, before finishing second in the league tournament.

William & Mary competes just as aggressively at the club level, where students work hard under often-trying conditions for the pure joy of sport. This past year, the club baseball team won their regional tournament and finished second in their division world series, gymnastics went to the national championship, men's rugby won a division championship and women's varsity 4 crew won a gold medal at their regional championship.

Most W&M athletes recall their days of athletic competition with great relish. They learned lessons as Tribe athletes that last a lifetime. Like Coach Gauthier, they sometimes swam to the wrong wall, but learned from their mistakes and bounced back from adversity. They worked hard to achieve their goals and measured themselves against demanding standards, while competing hard within the rules and respecting opponents. And they treasured their bonds with teammates. Along with the rest of the William & Mary family, they delighted in victory. Go Tribe!

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "W. Taylor Reveley III". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

W. Taylor Reveley III
President, College of William & Mary