

SEPTEMBER 2020

W&M PAST AND PRESENT SAAC PRESIDENTS

A Response to the Open Letter from W&M Athletics

Tribe Athletics' mission reads, "Athletics is an integral part of the educational experience at William & Mary. Our responsibility is to deliver a holistic experience with high standards of performance; providing an environment **where champions of uncompromising character, fully engaged with campus and the community, prepare to make a positive impact in a complex and changing world.**"

William & Mary's Student Athletic Advisory Committee (SAAC) is a central hub where student athlete leadership is cultivated and a point from which athlete-driven campus and community engagement stems. Historically, SAAC representatives from Men's and Women's Gymnastics, Men's and Women's Swimming, Men's Track & Field, and Volleyball have played central roles in the organization. The shameful move to discontinue 30% of Tribe Athletics' programs in exchange for a mere 12% of cost savings will expel these admirable student leaders from the college, **negatively impacting SAAC, the William & Mary Athletic Department, and the greater Williamsburg community.** These student athletes not only show up for each other and for the community, but they have continuously and disproportionately taken up leadership positions on SAAC's executive board, as presidents, and as vice presidents. In fact, SAAC presidents for eight of the last 11 years came from discontinued programs. With this shortsighted decision, the Athletic Department is **undercutting a long tradition of student leadership that has fostered new and innovative ideas for community building, service, and camaraderie.**

These funding cuts and the way they were made do not reflect the core values our athletic department and university espouse. However, there is still a chance to exhibit the kind of constructive, values-driven leadership William & Mary aims to foster. **We challenge the Athletic Department, the President, the Provost, and the Board of Visitors to reconsider this decision** and explore alternate avenues that empower, rather than alienate, ambitious student leaders who are pivotal to William & Mary's successes in sport, service, and community engagement now and into the future.

The following past and present W&M SAAC Presidents endorse this message:

Presidents who have been struck through are from discontinued programs

- ~~Max Sabert, Men's Gymnastics, SAAC President 2009-2011~~
- ~~Brandon Heroux, Men's Track & Field, SAAC President 2011-2012~~
- ~~Mark Moran, Men's Track & Field, SAAC President 2013-2014~~
- Mary Beth Berg, Women's Track & Field, SAAC President 2014-2015
- ~~Nathan Thomas, Men's Cross Country, Track & Field, SAAC President 2015-2016~~
- ~~Derek Trott, Men's Track & Field, SAAC President 2016-2017~~
- ~~Griffin Antle, Men's Gymnastics, SAAC President 2017-2018~~
- ~~Peter Makey, Men's Gymnastics, SAAC President 2018-2019~~
- Ted Hefter, Football, SAAC President, 2019-2021

SAVE TRIBE SPORTS.