The Campaign for Lafayette College

Campaign Provides Major Boost for Athletics

By Mandie Housenick

When Lafayette College announced the Live Connected, Leaf Change fundraising campaign in 2008, the goal for the athletics department was lofty. The school had raised over $20 million by the campaign’s end in December 2018. 

Director of Athletics Bruce McCutcheon never wavered when he heard the number—and good reason. The long-time athletic director, who officially retired after nearly three decades in mid-February, knows what the generous, selfless, and caring alumni are capable of: “Always had great faith in not only meeting that goal, but exceeding it,” McCutcheon says. “That is because of the generosity of our alumni. I was very confident that it would be successful.”

So far, $41.5 million has been raised, and it has benefitted the athletics department in countless ways. The biggest changes can be seen in several facilities on campus, scholarship endowments, and the endowment of the head football coaching position.

Travel budgets have expanded, which included the new mechanical systems, new pool tank finish, upgrades to spectator seating, improved lighting, and an upgraded new time testing system. It is now known as the Westenker Naturatorium. The Kirby family, who has given generously over the years, including providing support for the Alan P. Kirby Sports Center in 2000, contributed $2 million to establish the head football coaching position during the Live Connected Leaf Change campaign. That gift supports football coaches’ salaries, scholarships, strength and conditioning coaches and programs, sports medicine, and academic support.

“In my view, there are two key ingredients for athletic success: talent acquisition, and you need scholarships and recruiting dollars to help you do that,” McCutcheon says. “The second key is developing talent, and that’s where coaching comes in. Our football endowment player will have the opportunity to play in honor of Harlan every year.”

Many local alumni and friends have contributed to the success of the athletics program at Lafayette. McCutcheon handed over the reins to Bruce McCutcheon in 2008, the goal for the athletics department was lofty. The school had raised over $20 million by the campaign’s end in December 2018. 

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Most recently, a group of dedicated alumni contributed $1 million to establish the Leopard Champions Fund, a general scholarship for Lafayette athletes. The fundraising initiative was spearheaded by Josh Azar, director of athletic development.

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Career Success Begins Here

By Katie Neitz

When Mike Summers was in college in the mid-1980s, he wasn’t what you’d call a “regular” at the career services office. That’s not to say students of that era were. Internships, resume workshops, and interview prep—all that comes on a standard career-services menu—were not the norm. It was up to Summers to arrange his own internship, polish his résumé, and rehearse his “biggest strength” and “biggest weakness” responses.

“Every career office wants students to have multiple professional experiences before they enter the workforce,” Summers says. “Those experiences are layered on top of a rigorous academic experience. I want to offer support to help students meet those expectations.”

That’s what drove Summers in his role as assistant vice president of Career Services, a position he began in August. His goal is twofold: 1) increase the number of students who engage with the office to offer support to help students meet those expectations.

Support initiatives: Experiential learning opportunities, specifically internships and InternShift, are critical to our students’ success beyond Lafayette. “If you can connect a student with an internship opportunity they can’t accept because it is unpaid or underpaid. Since the goal of the College is to one day have a ‘need-blind’ admissions process, or, in other words, I can never have a student decline an opportunity because it is unpaid or underpaid. Support from alumni, parents, and friends makes it possible for Lafayette to provide internship opportunities to help offset those expenses.”

Nurturing relationships: “As an office we can hardly do anything we want to help students, but we can’t do more without the support of our alumni.” Summers says. “I value those relationships and want to foster them. I look forward to what the future holds for Lafayette.”

Lafayette welcomed brothers of the Alpha Omicron chapter of Phi Kappa Tau fraternity to campus last October to recognize their efforts in establishing the Victor Partridge and Edwin Washington Phi Kappa Tau Scholarship Fund. Phi Kappa Tau brothers brought their passion for equal rights to life when, in 1956, they invited two African American students, Victor Partridge and Edwin Washington, to join the fraternity. When the national fraternity refused to allow Alpha Omicron to accept Partridge and Washington, the chapter advocated for a constitutional change to allow chapters to initiate brothers of their own choosing, regardless of race. Unfortunately, the amendment failed. As a result, in a unanimous vote, the brothers of Alpha Omicron resigned from the national fraternity and formed a local fraternity, Delta Sigma. Two years later, the national Phi Kappa Tau organization reconstituted, and the brothers returned to Phi Kappa Tau. Phi Kappa Tau was disbanded at Lafayette in 1953, but one brother, Henry Ryder ’57, launched an effort to grow a small fund that had remained in supporting students. Ryder was able to garner support from fellow Phi Kappa Tau brothers and grew the account to more than $22,000 to establish the Victor Partridge and Edwin Washington Phi Kappa Tau Scholarship Fund. “I am proud of the brothers who supported this effort in 1956,” explains Ryder. “They had the fortitude to stand by what was right. Equality no, Victor and Ed were trailblazers, even though I know Ed would humbly disappear. This scholarship exemplifies, what I believe, is the finest hour of the fraternity’s long history. They took a stand for something they believed in. Today, I am equally proud of the brothers who are helping to support this scholarship.”

Ryder and his fellow fraternity brothers returned to campus last fall to present a check to Lafayette College to create the scholarship, Washington, who was on campus for the first time in nearly 60 years for the event, attended with his wife and daughter. In his remarks, he said, “I thank Lafayette College for fostering an environment in which seeking social justice is encouraged, supported, and as we see today, recognized.”

The Phi Kappa Tau scholarship couldn’t come at a more opportune time in the College’s history. With the launch of President Alison Byrnes’ Strategic Direction for Lafayette College, which is focused on affordability and distinction through growth, the Phi Kappa Tau scholarship will help to ensure that Lafayette is affordable for outstanding applicants, regardless of their financial means. As with all scholarships, which are available to applicants regardless of race, the Phi Kappa Tau scholarship will also enable students to learn with and from peers of diverse backgrounds. “The historic stand that the Alpha Omicron brothers took to champion inclusivity during the pre-Civil Rights Act era is a viewpoint with admiration by our community,” said President Byrnes during her remarks. “I appreciate the way in which you are finding opportunities to continue to partner with Phi Kappa Tau brothers to bring the best to Lafayette.”

Learn More

OFFICE OF DEVELOPMENT, 307 MARLDE HALL, EASTON, PA 18042, 610-330-5042
LIVECONNECTED.LAFAYETTE.EDU | GIVE ONLINE.DEVELOPMENT.LAFAYETTE.EDU/GO/GIVE