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# RICHMOND ASSOCIATION FOR BUSINESS ECONOMICS

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Ed McLaughlin

Vice President & Director of Athletics

Virginia Commonwealth University Athletics

RABE Speaker on Wednesday, September 14, 2022



Ed McLaughlin was named the sixth athletic director in VCU history on July 24, 2012. At his introductory press conference, he wasted little time laying out his vision for the department.

“There are a lot of people in this business, a lot of athletic directors that take jobs, but not a lot of them say when they wake up, ‘We can win a national championship here.’ It’s inspiring, and I think VCU is a place where we can win a national championship.”

Under McLaughlin, VCU Athletics has centered its approach on the student-athlete experience and eight core values: drive to excel, commitment to community, integrity, loyalty and positivity, equity and diversity, collaboration, innovation and student-athlete focus.

“Our culture drives our success, and our core values provide the foundation of our culture. I want the experience of our student-athletes to be the best in the country so they win championships, grow academically and develop into incredible human beings who excel as leaders long after they graduate from VCU.”

A decade into his tenure, VCU Athletics has developed student-athletes, achieved unprecedented academic success and won championships at a historic rate. Along the way, VCU Athletics has moved closer to that national championship becoming a reality.

During McLaughlin’s first nine years, VCU has experienced competitive success unparalleled in the history of the institution. Over that span, the Rams have captured 40 Atlantic 10 Conference team championships, 89 A-10 individual championships and have sent 60 teams and individuals into NCAA Tournament competition.

The baseball program advanced to the 2015 NCAA Super Regionals after winning the Dallas Regional, while the men’s basketball program reached the NCAA Tournament for the ninth time in 10 possible years in 2021. In 2021, the women’s basketball and field hockey programs captured their first-ever A-10 Championships, while the Rams’ tennis programs have claimed 12 of a possible 16 titles during McLaughlin’s tenure. Additionally, the women’s track & field team has amassed a total of seven indoor and outdoor championship since 2015.

An essential part of the student-athlete experience, academics and academic support have been made a point of emphasis during McLaughlin’s tenure with increases to staffing and tutoring for the student-athletes. In the classroom, VCU’s 300-plus student-athletes have performed at record levels since McLaughlin’s arrival in 2012. As of Spring of 2021, VCU student-athletes have combined for a GPA of 3.0 or better in a department-record 13 consecutive semesters. In 2021, nearly 80 percent of VCU student-athletes earned a 3.0 or better, and a quarter achieved a 4.0.

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Externally, the department has increased its revenue gradually each year, surpassing \$12 million in overall revenue and doubling since McLaughlin's arrival. The Ram Athletic Fund also has doubled since McLaughlin's arrival to more than \$3.7 million, to go along with large increases in ticket sale revenue throughout a men's basketball streak that reached 166 consecutive games. In 2015, VCU signed a 10-year agreement with Learfield Sports to outsource multimedia rights for the first time in the department's history, guaranteeing the department \$22 million over the term of the contract. Strong external revenue results coupled with sound financial management turned department budget deficits into balanced budgets during each year of McLaughlin's tenure at VCU.

McLaughlin has focused on facility improvements at VCU to enhance the student-athlete experience, highlighted by the \$25 million VCU Basketball Development Center that opened in 2015. The three-year project to fund, finance and build the 62,700 square foot facility gives VCU's basketball programs one of the top practice facilities in the country. Under McLaughlin's tenure, VCU has added suites, a center-hung videoboard and new sound system at the Stuart C. Siegel Center, added the Academic Center at W. Marshall Street, renovation locker rooms for the Olympic Sport programs and replaced the turf at Cary Street Field. In 2019, the department opened the Baseball Performance Center, a state-of-the-art hitting and pitching facility.

In 2021, McLaughlin unveiled plans for an athletics village that will house new tennis, soccer and track & field facilities, as well as multipurpose field house. McLaughlin and VCU Athletics are also working closely with the Richmond Flying Squirrels and the City of Richmond to bring a new baseball stadium to the site. The village, which will occupy 40 acres on Hermitage Road, sets forth a bold vision for the future of VCU Athletics.

"[Ed] has the vision, the energy and the commitment that we need to continue this upward trajectory that we have enjoyed in recent years at Virginia Commonwealth University," said VCU President Dr. Michael Rao, noting that McLaughlin initially stood out among more than 50 applicants. "He is our ultimate leader for our athletics program, and I have supreme confidence in his ability to take us to the very next level."

A highly regarded member of the college athletics community, McLaughlin has also used his leadership skills to serve student-athletes on a national scale. He served as the chairman of the Atlantic 10 Council of Athletic Directors from 2016-18 and the chairman of the Atlantic 10 Finance Committee from 2014-16. In 2017, McLaughlin was named the NACDA Under Armour 1-AAA Athletic Director of the Year. Beginning in 2018, McLaughlin started a four-year tenure on the NCAA Nominating Committee, one of the most prestigious committees in the NCAA membership.

Prior to VCU, he was elected to the Division I-AAA Athletic Director Association Executive Committee for the 2011-12 term. He has also served as the chair of the College Hockey America (CHA) Directors Committee and as chairman of the NCAA Hockey Rules Committee. From 2008-10, he was the commissioner of the College Hockey America Conference. McLaughlin has also worked as chair of the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference's Committee on Athletic Administration.

McLaughlin spent six successful years as athletic director at Niagara prior to joining VCU. Niagara won more conference championships during McLaughlin's six-year tenure than in the previous 75 years of collegiate athletics at the university. In his first year, McLaughlin headed a department that captured league titles in

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women's soccer and men's basketball, as well as a College Hockey America regular season crown in men's hockey. Off the field, Niagara student-athletes collectively recorded the highest grade point average (GPA) in school history (3.30) during the 2007-08 academic year, and in 2010-11, 70 percent of the school's student-athletes attained a GPA of 3.0 or higher.

From 2004-06, McLaughlin served as Associate Athletic Director for External Affairs at American University. In September of 2004, he gained additional duties as the Executive Director of the Eagles Club. He began his tenure at American in May of 2000 as Assistant Athletic Director for Facilities and Operations and was promoted to Associate Athletic Director for Facilities and Operations in October of 2002.

The Natick, Mass., native joined American after three years at Merrimack College in North Andover, Mass, as an Assistant Athletic Director in charge of facilities, operations and sport supervision. Prior to his stint at Merrimack, McLaughlin spent two years as the director of media relations for the Hockey East Association. A 1995 graduate of Boston College with a Bachelor of Arts in Communications, McLaughlin served as the sports editor of the school's independent weekly student newspaper, The Heights. McLaughlin earned his master's degree in health promotion management from American in May of 2005.

McLaughlin has three children: Hannah, who played Division I college soccer at Clemson, Liam and Rian.

