

McPhail Named VP of Athletics

Written by Whitney Noble

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Craig McPhail has been elevated to Vice President of Athletics and Club Sports at Lees-McRae College, announced College officials Tuesday. McPhail has served

as Director of Athletics since 2009 and the athletic department has enjoyed a golden age of growth since then, including upgraded facilities and the reinstatement of the Fred I. Dickerson Hall of Fame banquet.

“We are honored and blessed to have Vice President McPhail as part of our Lees-McRae family,” said President Barry M. Buxton. “During his years of outstanding leadership, he has served as assistant athletic director, sports information director, and head cross country coach. Those experiences, along with his tenure as Director of Athletics, have helped him elevate the athletic department in the eyes of our students, alumni, friends, faculty, staff, and competitor institutions. With Vice President McPhail at the helm, we see only good things for the future of athletics at Lees-McRae!”

Lees-McRae’s athletic program has reached many unprecedented milestones under McPhail’s leadership, including the school’s first appearance in an NCAA Division II national championship game during the 2009 men’s soccer season. The Bobcats have captured 11 Conference Carolinas regular season titles in McPhail’s tenure, while advancing to the NCAA postseason 23 times.

“This is nice, however, I have been surrounded with really great people who have supported, encouraged and believed in me along the way, thus allowing this all to be possible,” praised McPhail. “Being the Director of Athletics at Lees-McRae continues to be a privilege for me, I love making a difference in a young person’s life and via intercollegiate athletics is a great platform.”

McPhail has been instrumental in the revitalization of Lees-McRae’s athletic facilities as well, spearheading the effort to install a new outfield fence and banner at the softball complex, refinishing the basketball/volleyball floor in Williams Gymnasium, resurfacing the tennis courts, and installing brand new state-of-the-art sound systems in Williams and at Tate Field. He has also played a pivotal role in securing a charter bus, a new field mower, and building a partnership with Nike to better outfit the Bobcats both on and off the field.

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He has also overseen the installation of new championship banners in the gym, enhancements to the weight room, while hiring a full-time NCAA Compliance director to supervise the CATS (Challenging Student-Athletes to Succeed) program, which has played a pivotal role in the department's improved academic performance.

Perhaps McPhail's greatest accomplishment as Director of Athletics has come in the form of the annual Hall of Fame dinner, which has quickly become a central event in the College's annual Homecoming festivities. McPhail has welcomed 13 new members into the Fred I. Dickerson Hall of Fame in his tenure, with many more to come.

He has represented the College in many capacities over the last 16 years, currently serving on the Conference Carolinas Championships and Awards Committee as well as the Athletic Director liaison for cross country/track and field. McPhail has also served the College as a member of NACDA, CoSIDA, United States Cross Country/ Track Coaches Association, USA Track and Field, Conference Carolinas chair for both cross country and track and field, and was chair of the NCAA Division II Cross Country/Track and Field committee.

As the men's and women's cross country coach for 11 years, his teams showed greatness in and out of the classroom, with 13 conference championships in men's and women's cross country and track and field; McPhail also played an essential role in the re-instatement of the track and field program. He has coached 73 all-conference student-athletes, 31 all-region honorees, and has watched them regularly receive Academic All-America honors over the past decade.

McPhail guided 38 Lees-McRae student-athletes to the NCAA Division II National Championships. In doing so, he has been conference coach of the year 11 times, while earning regional coach of the year honors three times.

A member of several organizations, McPhail serves the community well for the local Young Life Organization, the Banner Elk Christian Fellowship Church and the Special Olympics Torch Run. He also is the organizer for the Woolly Worm Road Race, Step Up for Yellow Mountain and the Turkey Trot.

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He earned his degree in mass communications (journalism) from Winthrop University, with a minor in interpersonal speech. His master's degree in sport management is from Georgia Southern University.

Photo Courtesy: Craig McPhail, LMC Athletics