

Student athletes show the way to success – hard work and determination

I recently returned from a meeting of the National Collegiate Athletic Association, and I was impressed with the number of Division II presidents who were actively engaged in the meeting. The focus on the successes, opportunities and challenges facing our student athletes was informative. As a former vice president for student affairs, I especially enjoyed the involvement and perspectives of the student athletes who participated in the governance of the association. They spoke with passion, purpose and eloquence about the privileges and challenges unique to student athletes. They were inspiring.

It is not easy being a student athlete. Our student athletes often maintain very hectic schedules, relying on perfecting time management skills and a relentless focus on prioritizing as they attempt to balance classes, study, workouts, practices, games, team travel, internships, campus leadership responsibilities – and for many, jobs – which means fewer social events and not a whole lot of “me time.” In fact one of the issues discussed at the meeting was helping student athletes find balance amid a growing number of “voluntold” activities (activities that are not mandatory but are strongly encouraged, and in which nonparticipation may result in consequences). In the end, at FHSU, the drive, determination, and character of each of our student athletes pays off. But don’t take just my word for it – check out the 2016-17 evidence:

- 16 individuals earned All-America accolades in their respective sports.
- FHSU enjoyed its most successful fall season overall in school history and ranked seventh nationally in the Learfield Directors’ Cup at the end of the fall sports season.
- Football made a bowl game appearance and finished 8-4 for the second consecutive year. FHSU picked up its first-ever win in a postseason game by winning the Heart of Texas Bowl 45-12 over Eastern New Mexico. The team had 14 All-MIAA performers and four All-Americans. (And of course the many accolades of fall of 2017 included an undefeated 11-0 regular season earning our first MIAA Championship, first NCAA Playoff appearance since 1995 and the most wins by a team in school history – breaking the previous record of 8.)
- Volleyball finished the year 25-9 and fourth in the MIAA standings, its highest finish since joining the conference in 2006. The 25 wins tied for second most in the program’s Division II history. Five players earned All-MIAA honors and Crystal Whitten earned All-America honors.
- Men’s soccer won the Central Regional of the NCAA Tournament and made the national quarterfinals for the third consecutive year. FHSU served as host of the NCAA Super Regional. The team had 12 All-MIAA selections and Luis Torres earned All-America honors. (In the fall of 2017, the team earned its first MIAA championship and made its sixth consecutive appearance in the NCAA tournament).
- Women’s soccer made its deepest run in the NCAA Tournament in program history, advancing to the Central Regional Championship against Central Missouri. FHSU shared the

MIAA regular season title with Central Missouri. The team had 11 members named All-MIAA.

- Women's cross country qualified for the NCAA Championships for the first time in 20 years and placed 18th nationally. The squad had four All-MIAA performers.
- Men's cross country finished fourth in the MIAA and had one All-MIAA performer.
- Women's basketball posted its sixth consecutive 20-win season in 2016-17, going 22-8 overall. The team had four All-MIAA selections.
- Men's basketball had another successful season, going 18-11. Rob Davis earned All-America honors, averaging 21.4 points per game, and three Tigers were named All-MIAA.
- Wrestling had four national qualifiers and six All-MIAA performers. Jon Inman was national runner-up at 197 pounds, while Brandon Ball finished sixth at 141 pounds, each earning All-America honors. Head Coach Chas Thompson was named the MIAA Coach of the Year.
- Men's track and field spent time in the national rankings for the indoor season, and Dillando Allotey and Brett Meyer earned All-America honors in the 200 meters and 800 meters respectively for the indoor season. Dean Cronin won the national title and gained All-America status in the 800 meters for the outdoor season. Meyer also was an All-America performer in the 800 meters for the outdoor season. T.J. Dozier was an All-America performer in the discus for the outdoor season.
- Women's track and field spent time in the national rankings for the outdoor season. Micki Krzesinski (10,000 meters), Alexcia Deutscher (javelin), and Kelly Wycoff (400 meters) were All-America performers for the outdoor season.
- Tennis reached 10 wins in a season for the ninth time under head coach Brian Flax and the team had three All-MIAA selections.
- Women's golf finished eighth at the MIAA Championship. Hannah Perkins qualified for the NCAA Regional and NCAA Championships as an individual.
- Men's golf finished 11th in the MIAA. Two players finished in the Top 15 at events at least once this season.
- Baseball and softball each had two All-MIAA selections, and former baseball student-athlete Giles Fox was the recipient of the FHSU Torch Award as the outstanding graduating senior of 2017.

I really admire our student athletes and am thankful for an outstanding coaching staff, caring faculty and a community that believes wholeheartedly in our students. Our athletics program is another great example of how FHSU creates an environment of heart and home!