

# THE EXTRAORDINARY



**CELEBRATING SUCCESS AT STFX**

I grow increasingly proud of the students, faculty, and staff of StFX as each extraordinary event occurs: When we take a leading hand in welcoming a family of Syrian refugees; when our faculty reach into the community to share and exchange knowledge and expertise; and when our students receive national recognition for their accomplishments. This issue, I'm pleased to highlight two of our winning varsity teams, both coached by recipients of the AUS Coach of the Year award (this is Bernie Chisholm's 17th win in his 30-year career!). Across the board, I'm gratified that our community provides me, daily, with so many reasons to be grateful that I am part of it. Should you see or know of something extraordinary at StFX, please e-mail [extraordinary@stfx.ca](mailto:extraordinary@stfx.ca) to let me know about any remarkable people, events, and accomplishments. Thank you – so very much – for making StFX extraordinary.

Kent



Students hoping for a snow day may have been disappointed this January, when 60 centimetres fell on Antigonish – on a Saturday. Some members of the Facilities Management department, anticipating the major clean-up to follow, stayed on campus the entire weekend to ready it for reopening on Monday morning.

That dedication showed in the work of four sets of siblings, who were honoured last week at a breakfast for Academic All-Canadian athletes. It is apparent, too, in the efforts of Greg Tkacz, Chair of the Economics Department, who took over teaching all classes for a colleague handling a family emergency.





Two varsity teams captured AUS titles this past fall: football, and men's cross-country. This is the first league win for the football team since 1996, and comes off the 2014 Presidential Task Force report in which the football program was deemed unsustainable. In the excitement of the Uteck Bowl, the national semi-final game, though, it was easy to forget the struggles the team had faced.

Head Coach Gary Waterman doesn't want us to forget, though: "This hasn't happened overnight. It's been a process." He's spent the past few seasons adjusting the profile of incoming players, recruiting talented student-athletes who are community-minded and passionate about football. Within the program, the culture shift to which Coach Waterman refers can be traced by the details: the Unity Council. Hiring dynamic assistant coaches. Focusing on the academic mission of the athletes. Using the mantra "Hail and Health" to remind the players to latch onto something bigger than themselves. "This university is rooted in tradition," Waterman notes. "That means that we are accountable to something bigger than ourselves."

The Unity Council, of which Co-Captain Hayden Peters, of Inverary, ON, is part, organizes team activities and charity events, and maintains discipline.

**"Every day, you had to prove your worth. The guys bought into that, and I'm proud of them."**

**Gary Waterman**

This year, more than ever, Peters notes the importance of earning your spot. He credits Jim Daly's meticulous attention to detail as the driving force behind the players' recognition of the direct correlation between effort and result. "There was nothing random," he reflects. "Every day, you had to prove your worth. The guys bought into that, and I'm proud of them." Both Coach Waterman and Peters point, though, to the next task: "We've got to set our sights higher," Peters says.

For him, that means a Vanier Cup; for Waterman, that also means academic success for all his players. The team is deep into its winter training now, anchored by the senior captains who ensure that the team is keeping sight of the long-term goals. "In my first year," recalls Peters, "I was mentored by [then senior] Dylan Hollohan. This year, my job is to do the same for someone else." Coach Waterman is confident that the team's commitment to one another, and to all-around excellence, will continue to pay dividends in future seasons.



Bernie Chisholm has coached cross-country for thirty years, and witnessed the impressive growth of the sport in that time – but his philosophy remains simple: "There is no bad weather," he notes. His team trains, no matter what. If you've seen odd markings on the road at Mount Cameron, it's because Coach Chisholm has indicated distances on the pavement for his athletes to run hilly loops. If you've looked out of your window and seen runners battling snowdrifts on the track,

you'll go some distance towards understanding the success of the team, now five-time consecutive AUS champions. "The guys push each other," he says, mildly, before adding that "mediocrity will not make you successful."

**"StFX is a 'gem,' where the cream rises to the top."**

**Bernie Chisholm**

On recruiting trips, he is similarly candid: "That was a good run," he'll tell a prospective StFX athlete. "It's important to recognize their efforts." Coach Chisholm's outlook has been adopted by his three-year captain, Scott Donald. "Guys on the team don't see barriers," he says. "They just get on with it." He points to the athletes' strong relationship with their coach, who insists that "you must coach the individual." Mid-season – together – the athletes and Coach Chisholm reevaluated their training plan to produce an optimal regime for each athlete. "He trusts us to know ourselves," Donald claims. "I think it helps boost our confidence." They trained through the AUS Championships, setting their sights on the bigger goal: CIS.

They placed 7th, in a deep, competitive field. When asked about his athletes' finest accomplishments, though, Coach Chisholm points to their other lives. Seven or eight athletes in the past ten years have gone to medical school, and many former athletes are active recruiters for the StFX program. "I encourage a lot of volunteer work," Coach Chisholm notes. "Just a 90% average isn't going to cut it." The athletes are here, he says, to get a solid education and compete against the best athletes in a competitive conference. StFX is a "gem," he notes, "where the cream rises to the top."



Cole Grbavac was an average high school student. It wasn't until he received his first set of marked midterms that he realized he could be more than average. In November, Grbavac was honoured by the Governor General at a ceremony in Ottawa for being one of the top eight university student-athletes in all of Canada. "Good marks aren't what motivates me," he claims. Instead, he studies what interests him, and what will prepare him for running his own business in the future. And yet, "good" marks have been achieved: last year, he was ranked first in the business program, with an almost 96% average.

**“Good marks aren't what motivates me.”**  
**Cole Grbavac**

Grbavac gets to campus early, every day: he attends class and completes school work before going to practice with the X-Men hockey team, of which he was the Assistant Captain in his third year. Playing hockey, he notes, keeps him organized and provides a necessary outlet. Hockey for Grbavac is similar to the stonemasonry work he does in the summers: "it teaches you how to stick to something, to keep going until you've achieved your goal." One of the proudest moments of his university career was competing for StFX at the 2014-2015 CIS National Championship.

Grbavac's work received further acclaim in January, when he became the recipient of a \$20,000 Frank H. Sobey Award for Excellence in Business Studies. One of six recipients from Atlantic Canadian universities, Grbavac was recognized for outstanding academic performance, entrepreneurial acumen, and remarkable extracurricular and community activities.

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If you have an extraordinary story, let us know!  
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The two winners of this year's Trudy Eagan Women in Business Awards will be part of, Dr. Eagan notes, "the next generation of Canadian business leaders," because they understand the symbiosis between learning and teaching. Meaghan Wright marries her love of visual media with service to her communities. With her twin, she runs a video production business – Mirror Image Media – that has contributed to projects that have greatly enhanced the StFX brand and community. She is the Senior Class Vice President, and volunteers with the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation, the Canadian Cancer Society, and Relay for Life – causes near to her heart. "We're pretty outgoing," Wright says, of both herself and her sister, who lost their mother seven years ago. "So why not use that to try and help other people who are struggling?" Her candidness is endearing and infectious; her work as the StFX coordinator for the Get Real Movement resulted in every varsity and club sport team participating in a video campaign to destigmatize homosexuality. And, both Meaghan and Marie Wright are two of only thirty recipients of the Venture for Canada Fellowship, which enables top university graduates to work with start-ups for two years. "Times are changing," Wright notes. "People are inspired by women in business." Her recent accolades indicate that people are inspired by her.

**“My work with the Society has allowed me to be a mentor to other, amazing women.”**  
**Allison Lemenchick**

Allison Lemenchick has her next steps planned out: in the fall of 2016, she will begin work in the Halifax office of Price Waterhouse Coopers. This career path was shaped by her involvement with the StFX Women in Business Society, of which she is the current President and former Vice President. "Equality is very important to me," notes Lemenchick, "And my work with the Society has allowed me to be a mentor to other, amazing women." When she received Trudy Eagan's call, letting her know she'd won, Lemenchick was "humbled. I'd counted myself out – there are so many deserving women in the School." Lemenchick's service has extended beyond the StFX campus; she volunteers at the L'Arche Community Home, helping and befriending adults with intellectual disabilities. "I wish I'd done it sooner," she says. "It's been one of my best experiences at StFX ... I really got out of the bubble and into the community." Lemenchick, also a coach with Antigonish Minor Basketball, claims that it's important to her to "take what you learn off campus."



An Antigonish native and StFX graduate, Dr. Mary Oxner has always been invested in this community. She's led Service Learning programs that have provided financial education and advice to more than fifteen local community groups, and her classes often have experiential components attached to them. One year, she asked her class to determine the real price of an egg – an assignment that involved visiting a local farm and then studying the poultry industry, the supply chain, the business of farming, and the regulations around egg production.

**“I’m passionate about financial literacy, in all contexts.”**  
**Dr. Mary Oxner**

Dr. Oxner is candid: “I’m passionate about financial literacy, in all contexts.” Prior to and during her sabbatical during the 2014-2015 academic year, and with the support of a SSHRC Outreach Grant, she conducted research; designed workshops, curricula, and educational tools; and interviewed stakeholders in preparation for improving local First Nations community groups’ financial literacy. At the Paqtnkek and Potlokek First Nations, Dr. Oxner taught workshops that were aimed at taking existing expertise and translating it into material that had real-world applicability to these communities. They were a success, largely due to Dr. Oxner’s style of teaching: “I don’t judge,” she notes. Her workshops empowered participants to accurately predict the outcome of any financial decision, which resulted in strong relationships based on trust and respect. She is optimistic that work in this area will continue, particularly in light of other StFX faculty’s research agendas, which focus on First Nations issues in a variety of disciplines and offer opportunities for effective collaboration.

Through her work in and outside of the classroom, Dr. Oxner contributes to what she calls “the StFX difference.” Faculty-student interaction is very high; as a result of this close-knit community, students graduate with many so-called “soft” skills: they are well-versed in teamwork, strong communicators, and proficient collaborators. When students leave StFX, Dr. Oxner hopes they will be achieve their career goals, but more – that they will be involved citizens, capacity-builders who make an impact. Her deep and continued dedication to the improvement of the lives of others demonstrates the value of committed citizenship.

“Theatre,” claims Ed Thomason, Artistic Director of the Bauer Theatre, “is about people coming together to share a story.” Prompted by an e-mail and subsequent talk with Professor Rachel Hurst of the Department of Women’s and Gender Studies about her experiences on campus, Thomason ordered a copy of the play “Slut” from the Feminist Press in New York. “We’ve always tried to do work which will strike a chord for the university community,” he muses. In a shifting culture of awareness and activism, StFX’s production of “Slut”

– a Canadian premiere – offered our community an opportunity to reflect and probe. There were roles for eleven women in the play, and Thomason notes the profound effect the play had on them: they were “radicalized,” he claims – “and that’s what university is like.” Their responses to the work were as authentic as the play; during the Q&A that followed each staging, it was “gratifying” to see how the cast reflected on their own experiences and recognized the play’s role in shifting their self-awareness. “Slut” was

“consciousness-raising,” Thomason says, which is precisely the point of theatre: “It’s unifying, edifying ... it’s a cultural amenity that helps us to know ourselves.” The audience’s questions and comments each night indicated that StFX is not immune to the problems of the world, and that we are fully engaged in the process of understanding and reducing sexual violence. The cast of “Slut” recently travelled to Dalhousie University to stage a condensed production, acting as powerful ambassadors for StFX.



The new Academic Vice-President, Kevin Wamsley, appreciates the deep influence of the Antigonish Movement on the university’s ongoing quest for social justice; of the current administration, he remarks: “We only talk about potential and possibilities.” His position affords him the opportunity to be involved in myriad facets of the university’s inner workings, but notes that he is most excited to be a facilitator. “From this office,” he claims, “I can help enable people to achieve what they want to achieve. That’s exciting.”

**“The faculty and staff do so many extra things to make this community strong.”**  
**Dr. Kevin Wamsley**

Dr. Wamsley came to StFX from Western University, and has been in awe of the “remarkable” level of community engagement here. “The faculty and staff do so many extra things to make this community strong,” he comments. While the town and gown relations are strong in Antigonish, he relishes the opportunity to be part of the process that enhances new ideas in aid of an even more robust, interactive community. “It’s so easy to be part of this team,” Dr. Wamsley notes, referring to the administration and its collective desire to share resources, facilitate and celebrate the wonderful initiatives that already exist, and to help new ideas realize their fullest potential. “This is an intimate campus,” he says. “There are no strangers here.”

**THANK YOU!**  
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 with news!