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In Defense of Colby Athletics

It has been one of the banes of my existence to have to periodically defend athletic programs and the students who enjoy the healthy competition offered by athletics at schools like Colby.

Carl Witthoft '77 ("NESCAC's Obsession with Athletics," winter 2006 *Colby*) would have a valid argument—if he were addressing his concerns toward Division I and, to a lesser degree, Division II schools. These schools provide athletic scholarships for specific sports to students whose graduation rates are unacceptable. This is certainly not the case at Colby where the graduation rate for student athletes is consistent with the entire student body and where many athletes play more than one sport.

One can define recruiting in many ways. The Admissions Office at Colby makes a concerted effort to recruit students from all over the world. This effort to recruit students from foreign countries, students of color, and students from different socioeconomic backgrounds is strongly supported by the president of the College, the Board of Trustees and, I believe, by most of the alumni.

It might also be helpful for the writer to know that the Athletic Department, the athletic committee of the Alumni Council, President William D. Adams, and, I am sure, many faculty are also concerned and committed to encouraging student athletes to take advantage of the many enriching opportunities offered at Colby.

As a result of these concerns, a mentoring program has been established whereby alumni, in a panel discussion format, discuss the many advantages for student athletes to broaden their horizons by becoming involved in the myriad of opportunities at the College and in serving others in the Waterville community.

I will end my response to Mr. Witthoft by assuring him that he does not have to worry about the way the 32 athletics programs (17 for women and 16 for men) are being administered at Colby. Many of his concerns are being addressed in a positive and proactive way.

I am pleased and proud to say from my

observations, the Greek philosophy of mind/body is alive and well on Mayflower Hill.

Ed Fraktman '53

Alumni Council Athletic Committee
Newton, Mass.

As a graduate of Colby and a four-year member of the football program, I was disappointed to read Carl Witthoft '77's letter. While I believe it's healthy to consider the role of athletics in the Colby experience, I found Mr. Witthoft's letter short on facts and long on misinformed intellectual arrogance.

With respect to his point that the College "elevat[es] average athletes . . . to hero status," and that students who possess copies of "strength training manuals" are held in higher esteem than those who carry texts from the canon, I counter with personal experience: at Colby there's no evidence of hero worship. Rather, I found that student athletes generally believe they have something more to prove in the classroom. I often felt the burden of demonstrating academic ability rather than the benefit of status associated with playing a sport.

Regarding Witthoft's comment that "the mere fact that coaches are traveling countrywide to view and rate athletes gives lie to the claim that these athletes' interest in Colby is academically related," again I think the writer misses the point of both the original article ("Playing the Field," fall 2005 *Colby*) and the positive reality of athletics as a nationwide marketing tool for the College. Colby coaches are selecting from a much wider range of candidates than ever before in an effort to find top students who are also athletes; in effect, athletics is a mechanism that widens the scope of candidates for the Admissions Office. This is a direct, positive step towards the College's challenge of becoming a more diverse campus.

Lastly, what I found most haughty in Mr. Witthoft's letter was his tacit criticism of a parent who proudly acknowledged his son's participation in Colby football. Perhaps Mr. Witthoft will be relieved to know the program placed six members on

the NESCAC Fall All-Academic Team. I regard them as embodiments of College's mission to educate the whole person. We should commend that, not criticize it.

Tony Pasquariello '99

New York, N.Y.

Carl Witthoft '77 presents a very one-sided view of athletics in his recent letter.

As a four-year member of the squash team, I chose Colby not only because I would be able to play on the team (as Mr. Witthoft points out, I am apparently quite a sub-par athlete who could not compete at the Division I level) but because of the very strong economics department. I decided when I was a senior in high school (a very good all-girls school in Boston) that I wanted to be an economics major. I also was in contact with the squash coach and both aspects of Colby drew me to the school and made my choice very easy.

What Mr. Witthoft is suggesting is that a student applying to College should not show their particular strengths and skills and demonstrate how they can be distinguished from other applicants. Colby is about diversity, and we need athletes as well as physics majors, future doctors, politicians, and artists, among others. Furthermore, some parents really enjoy those "eight Saturdays in the fall" when they come to Colby to share something their child enjoys.

Cate Young '04

Boston, Mass.

Colby Was the Right College

Capturing the essence of a person's spirit in words is a daunting task, particularly when the writer must rely on reflections from others. *Colby* editor Gerry Boyle caught the twinkle in the eye and ever-present smile of our son, Nick Currey, in his column (winter 2006 *Colby*).

The last year of Nick's life was focused on getting well and getting to Colby. He never lived without hope, and Colby and the many kind people waiting for him there were a major reason for his feeling of hopefulness. We would like to extend a special thanks to Janice Kassman, Colby's dean of students and vice president for

student affairs, for the many gifts and words of encouragement she gave Nick during his illness.

We know that Nick is not the only Colby student to fall victim to the tragedy of Ewing's sarcoma. Shortly after Nick died, we decided that a fitting tribute and memorial to him would be a fund to support research to find a cure for the disease that took his life. We hope that our efforts will hasten the arrival of the day when no young person's life ends prematurely because of Ewing's sarcoma. In pursuit of that goal, we have established the Nicholas Currey Ewing's Sarcoma Research Fund with CureSearch National Childhood Cancer Foundation (NCCF). The fund will be used exclusively to fund Ewing's sarcoma research projects selected by us in consultation with leading oncologists.

We would welcome donations to the fund from the Colby community. Donations in honor or memory of Nicholas (or Nick) Currey will be deposited in the fund. Information about ways to donate to CureSearch can be found at CureSearch's Web site (www.curesearch.org).

After reading the *Colby* article, Nick's aunt commented, "You know he picked the right school." Thank you, Colby community, for embracing our son.

Nancy and Ralph Currey P'09
Ridgewood, N.J.

She'll Take Marilyn Manson

After reading the article on Cecily Von Ziegesar '92 and her *Gossip Girl* books, I felt the usual twinge of envy most old English majors must experience when yet another alum writes a book. . . not so fast, though. I then read a scathing review of the *Gossip Girl* books and their ilk by Naomi Wolf in the *New York Times*, listing all the ways in which the girls consider themselves to be far superior to lower class individuals, obsessed with couture fashion, and are generally appalling in every way.

Of course I had to see for myself, and after reading one I now can say I agree completely with Ms. Wolf's review, rather than the glowing report in *Colby*. You say these books are all about "living

vicariously?" God, who would want their child to aspire to that lifestyle? I'd sooner buy my daughter Marilyn Manson's autobiography than have her read any of Von Ziegesar's books. Naomi Wolf's article says Von Ziegesar calls her books "aspirational;" I prefer the term "gag me with a silver spoon."

Sarah Graves Stelfox '87
Bragg Creek, Alberta

A Conservative Rebuttal

It is not unexpected for Dr. Douglas Archibald to lament ("Being a Liberal," winter 2006 *Colby*) that his effort to institutionalize the liberal point of view at Colby may be at risk. Clearly the College owes him some peace of mind by requiring all Colby students to register on MoveOn.org immediately. Perhaps he could lead a workshop for incoming freshmen, who are apparently to the right of the faculty, on why they should pursue the liberal agenda.

Colby should find a faculty member who can prepare a response to Archibald that reminds Colby's academic community and parents that the purpose of the College is not to teach what to think, but how to think.

Charles A. Morrissey, Ph.D. '56
Associate professor
Pepperdine University
Malibu, Calif.

Someone of authority on Mayflower Hill has decided it's constructive to allow Professor Archibald prime *Colby* space to personally attack the President and Vice President of the United States, the military (I served in the Navy), the war against terrorists, and the tax and economic policies of today. The freedom given Mr. Archibald to throw his liberal personal opinions like "reckless, dishonesty, pander to the rich, and indifference to the poor" in *Colby* can only divide Colby alumni.

But I'll try to be more positive. I feel sorry for Mr. Archibald. Since the '60s, he has been marching out front of his liberal friends as sort of a band leader. The trouble is that every time he waved his baton left, part of his band of followers

went right. Now after 45 years, he finally has turned around and discovered no one is following him. As he says—very depressing! So Mr. Archibald, in your own words, it's time to "move-on."

Charles B. Twigg '57
Wellesley Hills, Mass.

Professor Douglas Archibald's epistle, is a classic portrayal of a 1960's radical leftist malcontent. Too frequently these self-assessed victims of American dynamics flee to the safe repository of academia. They fear measurement as Dracula fears light and strive for irrelevancy and anonymity in the assured mediocrity of tenure.

Archibald's hysterical distortion is a right of self expression. However, any form of rebuttal seems unacceptable to the growing tyranny of Colby's liberal elite.

Rush Oster '61
Bradenton, Fla.

A Key Contributor

Thank you very much for your wonderful story on the work that my students and I are doing with boys in the greater Waterville area ("Growing Boys," winter 2006 *Colby*). Unfortunately, your story neglected to mention a key person in this effort: Jennifer Radcliffe '06.

Jen was a key member of the Boys to Men class last spring in which we did our first work with local boys, inviting them to a day-long conference here at Colby. She expressed interest in working with a boys group this fall, and she and Keegan Albaugh '07J have been the co-leaders of the Winslow group profiled in your story. Jen has been instrumental in developing the curriculum we've been using, and she's been a consistent and invaluable presence at the group meetings. She deserves to be acknowledged for her commitment and dedication to this project.

Mark B. Tappan
Professor of Education and
Human Development
Waterville, Maine