Messiah College Men’s Soccer
2004 NCAA Division III National Champions
No college or university would proclaim: “We strive for mediocrity.” Rather, colleges and universities across the country pepper their literature with claims of excellence: “Come experience our excellent facilities.” “We are a college that aspires to excellence in all we do.” The pursuit of excellence—or at least statements in that direction—is part and parcel of what it means to be a college. The harder task for us is to move beyond this obvious fact and seek out the basics—the core truths—of what it means for Messiah College to be created and called to excellence.

There is no shortage of external standards of excellence to which we can look for help in this quest: the U.S. News and World Report Best Colleges rankings, the Templeton Foundation’s Honor Roll of Character-Building Colleges, USA Today’s graduation rate for student-athletes—they all provide the College with a sense of our standing among our peers. It is good for us to be subject to the standards of excellence within this landscape, and the Messiah College community is rightfully proud of our consistently high ranking by external evaluators.

Yet it would be shortsighted to abandon our quest after looking at outward standards alone. Messiah College is “in the world but not of what it means to be excellent.”

(Left) The Falcons once again excelled in teamwork, earning another national title.
Common reading program introduces first-year students to important themes

James McBride, musician and author of *The Color of Water*, kicks off common learning experience

During the fall of 2004, Messiah College launched its inaugural common reading program, designed to foster a spirit of community among first-year students and their faculty. Educators selected *The Color of Water: A Black Man’s Tribute to His White Mother* by James McBride as the cornerstone for the pilot program because it speaks to questions of vocation, as well as educational, religious, and ethnic diversity, and other themes that resonate with college students. The common reading program culminated with James McBride’s visit to campus for a live discussion, jazz performance, and book-signing where he spoke individually with many students.

As part of a curriculum redesign for first-year students, the common reading program also acquaints students with the College’s mission. “Over the years, some have asked, ‘Where are students introduced to the basic themes of the College’s mission?’” notes John Yeatts, associate dean of general education and common learning. “General education at Messiah,” he continues, “while allowing the students and faculty a wide choice in what they study and teach, [previously] had no common conversation about what the College thinks is most important.” The book provided a natural bridge and led seamlessly into the common course, Created and Called for Community, a pilot project in which 140 first-year students participated this past spring and all new students will take in the spring semester of coming years.

(Left) Nationally acclaimed author James McBride signs students’ copies of his book, *The Color of Water*, which served as a springboard for the Class of 2008 to discuss issues of identity, values, and faith.
Falcons claim another national championship

Men’s soccer earns third title in two years

The men’s soccer team captured yet another NCAA Division III national championship in the fall of 2004. The Falcons’ third crown in five years once again proved the strength of Messiah’s soccer program and highlighted the importance of head coach Dave Brandt’s team-centered focus — a philosophy that made it possible for this year’s team to thrive despite having many less-experienced players on the roster.

The team’s athletic excellence during the past five years speaks for itself. Posting an 84–8–5 record during that span, Messiah men’s soccer has simply dominated its opposition. The 2004 team notched 17 shutouts and only allowed 8 goals all season. And in that season’s playoffs, the Falcons set an NCAA record by shutting out all five of their opponents.

Coach Brandt’s current overall record of 158–19–10 makes him the coach with the highest winning percentage among all active Division III men’s soccer coaches. Consequently, he was named the 2004 NCAA Division III coach of the year.

The strength of the Colleges sports teams is much more than just talented players and dedicated coaches. As Dave Brandt explains, “Messiah’s athletics program gives student-athletes the chance to be part of something bigger than themselves — a tradition of excellence — within the framework of a Christian worldview.”

Educators continue lifelong journey of learning

Messiah faculty members publish two books

Just as students are encouraged to develop their minds long after graduation, Messiah’s educators are constantly embarking on research in their disciplines. Their scholarship, in return, enriches the lives of students as it is woven into course material.

This year, two books were published that showcase the extensive research and innovation that Messiah’s educators bring to their work.

Writing Performances: The Stages of Dorothy L. Sayers, written by Crystal Downing, professor of English and film studies, explores the works of Dorothy Sayers, an English playwright and fiction writer who was far ahead of her time, bucking modernist trends embraced by both popular culture and Christianity.

Writing the Amish: The Worlds of John A. Hostetler, edited by David L. Weaver-Zercher, associate professor of American religious history, is a collection of essays — some written by Weaver-Zercher himself — on the work of John A. Hostetler, who was born into an Old Order Amish home and later wrote extensively about Amish life.

The Messiah College field hockey and women’s soccer teams culminated incredible seasons, each advancing to the national NCAA III Final Four. Jan Trapp, head coach of the field hockey team, notched her 400th career win.

(Right) Forward Danae Chambers ’05 was named NCAA Division III field hockey player of the year, set a new NCAA Division III single-season point record and career scoring mark, and was featured in the “Faces in the Crowd” section of the January 15, 2005 issue of Sports Illustrated.
Students honor educators’ excellence

At Messiah College, students aren’t the only ones studying. When it comes to grades, students are typically on the receiving end. But each year, Messiah students are given a chance to “grade” their professors, nominating them for the Smith Outstanding Teacher Awards. Named for the late Dr. Robert Smith and his wife, Marilyn, these awards are presented to two educators each year at Commencement. They honor professors who teach with confidence and hope, demonstrate scholarly excellence, model civic engagement, and practice intellectual and spiritual hospitality.

In May 2005, Linda K. Parkyn, professor of Spanish, and Timothy J. Van Dyke, assistant professor of engineering, were honored with these awards in recognition of their dedication and leadership in the classroom.

During the nomination process, one student wrote of Parkyn, “Each of her courses has opened my eyes to new ideas and possibilities, challenged me academically and spiritually, and caused me to evaluate what I will do with my faith.”

Another student nominated Van Dyke, saying, “He has a unique gift for taking extremely complex course material and explaining it thoroughly and clearly. Few professors grade harder. . . . However, none of them grade as fairly.”

Alumni offer perspectives from the real world

Messiah graduates inspire students with stories of their vocational journeys

In April, Messiah students gained new insight into life after college when Messiah College hosted a discussion with six alumni who graduated during the past 30 years. The Alumni Panel on Christian Vocation addressed such topics as vocation, balancing work and family, and the influence of faith in the workplace.

All the panelists encouraged students to broaden their world at Messiah through the College’s many cross-cultural and service opportunities. They also agreed that understanding diversity and being able to relate to other cultures are two characteristics essential in building a successful career in today’s increasingly global community.

The six panelists represented a variety of career fields: medicine, international business, nonprofit, law, finance, and the arts. President Kim Phipps moderated the panel discussion.
and students mingled with the alumni during a reception after the event.

Concluding the evening’s discussion, panelist Melinda (Fisher ’76) Nowak reminded students, “What you do when you graduate from Messiah does not necessarily tell you where you’ll be 30 years later.” In response, there was a collective “amen” from many educators in the audience.

Messiah enhances academics with two new majors
New areas of study explore community from different perspectives

Messiah College added to its breadth of majors this year with two new offerings: criminal justice, and family and consumer sciences.

The criminal justice major is a part of the reorganized Department of Sociology, Social Work, and Criminal Justice and expands on the criminal justice minor. In addition to exploring the traditional topics of criminology and law enforcement, the major will also emphasize restorative justice, which focuses on healing for victims, offenders, and communities. Debra Heath-Thornton, associate professor of criminal justice and sociology, is spearheading the program and says it positions Messiah College students within the growing trend of exploring restorative justice.

A second new major examines communities from a different angle. The family and consumer sciences major was created at Messiah in response to a nationwide shortage of educators equipped to teach such fundamental skills as child development, nutrition, interpersonal relationships, and the management of family resources. Raeann Hamon, chair of the Department of Human Development and Family Science, says, “It’s very exciting to know that we will have Christian family and consumer sciences teachers in public schools. These teachers will help young people to develop the skills necessary to be interpersonally competent and have more successful family relationships.”