

Former Syracuse standout quarterback plans to welcome Alfred University Class of 2016 with important message

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Alfred University (AU) will welcome former Syracuse University, National Football League (NFL), and Canadian Football League (CFL) Quarterback Don McPherson to campus Friday, Aug. 24 as part of Freshman Orientation activities. He will address the Class of 2016 at 8:30 p.m. in Holmes Auditorium, Harder Hall with a presentation titled “Maximize the Experience.”

McPherson, making his third visit to AU, estimates he&s spoken at 220-230 colleges and universities during 25 years on the speaking circuit. AU will be the first campus he&ll visit this academic year. Ironically, he says he didn&t attend his own college orientation.

“It&s one of the sad things about being a student-athlete,” he says. “I did very little with the student body.”

McPherson, elected to the College Football Hall of Fame in 2008, says his college experiences influenced his speaking career as he had opportunities to take in cross-cultural influences and receive a first-hand experience of the impact of sports and media. He says other people told him he&d make a good speaker.

I didn&t choose this profession,” says McPherson, “it chose me. You get a chance to really understand what people are dealing with. That&s the best and one of the most important parts of the work.”

He says he hopes the students understand and recognize that the dialogue around social issues, dating, and sexual violence needs to take place.

“When you start a new academic year, you start to hear the conversation that&s going on with students and what has their interest as the year begins,” says McPherson. “It&s a conversation that they need to be engaged in. It&s about them.”

McPherson attended Syracuse University from 1983-87. He passed for 5,812 yards and 46 touchdowns, setting 22 school records during his career. In 1987, he won the Maxwell and Davey O&Brien National Quarterback awards, finished second in the Heisman Trophy voting, and guided Syracuse to an undefeated regular season and a tie in the 1988 Sugar Bowl.

After retiring from professional football in 1994 (he played for the NFL Philadelphia Eagles and Houston Oilers and the Hamilton (Ontario)Tiger-Cats and Ottawa (Ontario) Rough-Riders in the CFL), he became national director of Athletes in Service to America at Northeastern University&s Center for the Study of Sport in Society in Boston, MA. He later became director of sports in the Society&s Mentors in Violence Prevention Program.

From 2002-07, McPherson served as executive director of the Sports Leadership Institute at Adelphi University in Garden City, NY, on Long Island. He has conducted workshops, created Public Service Announcements, and given lectures on issues such as violence against women, violence prevention, and gender equality and understanding.

McPherson remains active in college football, serving as an analyst for Sportsnet New York and XMSirius Satellite Radio previously working for networks such as BET, ESPN, and NBC.

He has received several honors in recognition of his service, including the Frederick Douglas Men of Strength Award, given by Men Can Stop Rape, Champions for Change, presented by Lifetime Television, The Creative Vision for Women&s Justice, presented by the Pace University Women&s Justice Center, and a Leadership Award from the National Center for Victims of Crime.

Recently, he joined the board of directors of the U.S. National Committee for UN Women.