



PRESS RELEASE

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WORLD TEAM MEMBER VICTORIA FRANCIS TO JOIN LIFE U COACHING STAFF THROUGH THE WOMEN'S SPORTS FOUNDATION TARA VANDERVEER FUND

Marietta, Georgia, September 10, 2019 – Life University has received a Tara VanDerveer Fund for the Advancement of Women in Coaching grant from the Women's Sports Foundation (WSF). Grants were awarded to institutions to support collegiate female coaches on the rise, assisting with living expenses, professional development and mentorship. Life University is one of 10 universities and colleges to receive the grant, which will be designated for a female coaching fellow in women's sports as diverse as field hockey, wrestling, basketball, volleyball, softball, and strength and conditioning.

"We are proud to be a member of the inaugural class of the Women's Sports Foundation Tara VanDerveer Fund recipients," said Jayme Pendergast, Athletic Director at Life University. "We recognize the critical importance of closing the gender gap in the coaching ranks. Coaches support players on and off the field and play a pivotal role in their lives. Seeing more women in these influential roles helps inspire our female student athletes. This grant will allow us to make a significant addition to our already accomplished coaching staff, which in turn provides our wrestling student-athletes with additional support and resources to maximize their performance and their personal development. Coaches serve as a vehicle to deliver our mission of athletic, academic and social growth, and with the generosity of the WSF Tara VanDerveer Fund, we can put one more strong female role model in front of our student-athletes."

Victoria Francis is a current senior world team member and 2020 Olympic frontrunner. While a student at Lindenwood University, Francis was a 4x All-American and 2x National Champion. She was a 2017 Senior World Team Member, earned a Junior World Bronze medal in 2014 and was runner-up at the 2016 Olympic Trials.

The Women's Sports Foundation, inspired by the legendary Stanford University women's basketball coach, created the Tara VanDerveer Fund to directly address the alarming decline of women in coaching. In the 1970-71 academic year, 90 percent of all head coaches for women's college teams were women. By 2017, 45 years after the passage of Title IX, that number had dropped to 40 percent among NCAA sports. While women's representation as head and assistant coaches of women's sports can vary by sport, this underrepresentation is systemic and cannot be attributed to just one sport or division. Furthermore, women of color are particularly under-represented in the coaching ranks, making up just 5.6 percent of



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head coaches of women's sports, and only 3.5 percent of all head coaches, men's and women's teams. [As reported by NCAA in 2017.]

"The lack of female coaches is so alarmingly evident across all levels of education – from youth sports to high school and to the collegiate and professional levels," said WSF CEO Deborah Antoine. "A coach is often one of the most important adults in a young person's life, outside of their family, and the lack of female coaches and mentors has far-reaching consequences for the development of girls. Our Foundation felt it imperative to address this head-on, and who better to honor than the extraordinary Tara VanDerveer."

WSF designed the Fund to honor VanDerveer's legacy by providing schools with the opportunity to create fellowships for aspiring female collegiate coaches, giving them the support needed to jumpstart their careers. The fellowships will emphasize hands-on training and mentorship with established collegiate coaches, as well as professional development and networking in order to identify paths to advancement.

"I'm thrilled for the Women's Sports Foundation's launch of this inaugural class of female coaching fellows," VanDerveer said. "I've seen a lot of positives over my career in advancing women in sport, but the continued decline of female coaches is concerning. This program is a powerful way we can help reverse this trend. Providing avenues for women to pursue coaching is something that is very important to me, and I am deeply honored that the WSF chose to set up this fellowship program in my name. I am excited to see the impact it will have on empowering tomorrow's leaders."

For more information on the VanDerveer Fund and list of grant recipients, please visit: <https://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/media-center/>.

About Life University

Founded in Marietta, Georgia in 1974, Life University is a health sciences institution most known for its chiropractic program, the largest single campus chiropractic program in the world. Life University is regionally accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) to award baccalaureate, master's and Doctor of Chiropractic degrees, and also has programmatic accreditation through the Council on Chiropractic Education (CCE), the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND) and the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE). The mission



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of Life University is to empower students with the education, skills and values necessary for career success and life fulfillment, based on a vitalistic philosophy.

Life University has celebrated athletic achievements both academically and in competition. The Running Eagles have totaled more than 340 All-Americans with more than 100 individual and team National Championships. Offering a variety of sports in men and women's basketball, bowling, swimming, soccer, volleyball, wrestling and rugby, Life U celebrates diversity within the department with the addition of women's lacrosse, cheer, cross country and track.

About The Women's Sports Foundation

The Women's Sports Foundation is a powerful voice, catalyst and convener dedicated to ensuring all girls and women have equal access to sports and physical activity and the tremendous lifelong benefits they provide. Founded by Billie Jean King in 1974, we seek to strengthen and expand opportunities for all girls and women to participate in all sports at all levels through research, advocacy, community impact and a wide variety of collaborative partnerships. The Women's Sports Foundation has relationships with more than 1,000 of the world's elite female athletes and has positively shaped the lives of more than 3 million youth, high school and collegiate student-athletes. To learn more about the Women's Sports Foundation, please visit www.WomensSportsFoundation.org, or follow us at [@WomensSportsFdn](https://twitter.com/WomensSportsFdn) on Twitter, [@womenssportsfoundation](https://www.instagram.com/womenssportsfoundation) on Instagram and at www.facebook.com/WomensSportsFoundation.

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