

[VOTE]

Duke
Dog



A campaign
manager and
his top dog

www.capitalonebowl.com

IN THE JMU COMMUNITY, DUKE DOG HAS NEVER BEEN MORE POPULAR THAN HE IS NOW. His name is on classroom dry-erase boards, buttons and backpacks. Students and faculty members are also coming together to support the university's favorite mutt as he competes against 11 other mascots in the national Capital One All-America Mascot Challenge.

Every week, Duke Dog goes up against other furry challengers and relies on JMU fans to vote for him at www.capitalonebowl.com. At the end of each week, votes are tallied and a winner is declared. The mascot with the best win/loss record, overall votes and best application score will be declared the Capital One All-America Mascot. The winner will be announced during the Capital One Bowl on ABC-TV on Jan. 1.

Though Duke Dog is on JMU's front-line of school spirit, another JMU Duke has got Duke Dog's

back. Everyone's favorite mutt would not be part of this national contest without the support of JMU senior Mike Keown.

Keown is a School of Communications Studies major with a concentration in public relations and a minor in technical and scientific communication. He says that he "came upon the Capital One All-America Mascot Challenge by chance." While completing a project for a TSC course, Keown met and worked with Andy Perrine, JMU associate vice president for marketing and communications. Perrine mentioned the mascot challenge in conversation, and Keown was not only intrigued by the concept but surprised to learn that the previous year Duke Dog had been in the running. In 2003, students in a marketing class filmed and entered a video application for Duke Dog. Through their efforts, Duke Dog was chosen as a first alternate to the 12 national mascot winners.

Keown jumped at the chance to help get Duke Dog entered in the 2004 challenge. He found that the JMU Athletics Department was in charge of the effort, so he approached the department with ideas for the contest. Instead of agreeing to collaboration, athletics officials were so impressed with Keown's ideas, they told him to run with it.

"Suddenly, instead of becoming part of the team, I was the team," laughs Keown.

First, Keown had to complete and enter an application package (which is 50 percent of the mascot's overall judging score). The application consists of three open-ended questions, but before Keown answered them, he did his research. He read other university's previous applications and studied the judges' criteria, including mascot's community service, sportsmanship and originality.

After the paperwork was complete, Keown began working on the video portion of the application. Videos are judged by Capital One and ESPN, and Keown solicited the help of his friend, James Matarese ('05). The duo began in mid-spring with a June 1 deadline. "Everybody helped out, and all I had to do was ask," says an appreciative Keown. "President Rose accommodated us, and even Dean Keener [the JMU men's basketball coach], did interviews for me." The athletics department provided several clips of the Duke Dog performing at games. And the final version of the video shows Duke Dog traveling around campus receiving pep talks from a variety of JMU faculty members and students."

All of Keown's efforts and Duke Dog's hard work paid off. "It was exciting news when we found out that Duke Dog had made the Capital One All-America Mascot Team," says Keown. "As for the application process, though, that was actually the easy part. Now -- getting students, alumni and parents to visit the Capital One Web site and vote -- is the hard part."

For earning his slot on the 12-member Capital One Mascot Team, Duke Dog earned \$5,000 for JMU's mascot program. Of the 12 colleges and universities competing, only two are Division 1-AA football program schools, including JMU.

"Besides the \$5,000 win, Duke Dog is receiving tons of free publicity for JMU," says Perrine. Duke Dog is featured with the 11 other mascots in television commercials on ESPN2 and ABC (from Oct. 11 to Dec. 26). The mascot team is also featured in Capital One VISA marketing and billing envelopes, and the 12 mascots were featured in the Oct. 12 *Washington Post*.

"Marketing and promoting the online vote," is the hardest part of this project," says Keown. "Other schools that we are competing against have bigger alumni numbers, but JMU fans are dedicated, so I have a good feeling."

Keown's application and video make up 50 percent of Duke Dog's total score. The remaining 50 percent of the score is determined by the win/loss record in the online vote.

"When voting officially started on Oct. 11, I sent a bulk e-mail out under the name of Duke Dog at 8 a.m. to remind students that voting had started," says Keown. "The actual voting did not start until 9:30 a.m., but before 9:30, I received about 50 responses from students asking why they couldn't vote yet. Since 9:30 that morning, voting has been unquestionably successful, with Duke Dog on a 6-0 winning streak [as of Nov. 22]."

Keown and Duke Dog have remained busy during the mascot challenge months with constant bookings and appearances by Duke Dog. "We've got to keep the word out," says Keown, who credits the Student Duke Club as his "legs. ... If I need a banner set up, or anything, they will do it."

Keown has used every method of publicity he can think of to get people to vote. He enlisted the help of the beloved D-Hall lunch ladies. Pinned to their blouses are buttons encouraging others to vote for the Duke Dog. *The Breeze* publishes the Monday Duke Dog Challenge. "My family votes every day," says Keown, "My mother and father vote; even my grandparents."

The Capital One All-America Mascot Challenge has become, for the time being, Keown's life, and the rest of JMU could not thank him enough for stepping up and having Duke Dog's back. Not only has it enhanced school pride, but if the Duke Dog wins, the mascot program will receive an additional \$5,000 for the mascot program.

Watch the Capital One Bowl on Jan. 1 and support the Duke Dog, but right now -- GO VOTE!

