

By: Senator(s) Johnson, Fillingane, Barnett, Polk, DeBar, Seymour, Thompson, England To: Rules

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 537

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING THE REMARKABLE GROWTH AND  
2 SUCCESS OF THE ATHLETIC PROGRAM AT WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY AND  
3 COMMENDING THESE HIGHER EDUCATION ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

4 WHEREAS, we join the students, coaches, faculty and  
5 administration of William Carey University (WCU) in recognizing  
6 the outstanding accomplishments of the Athletic Program over the  
7 last two years; and

8 WHEREAS, in 2024 William Carey University was honored to  
9 receive the prestigious Halbrook Award, along with students  
10 Abigail Wickham and RJ Stinson. WCU was selected as this year's  
11 Independent College and University recipient based off a five-year  
12 graduation percentage of 82.93% of female athletes with 64.23% of  
13 male athletes for an overall percentage of 73.58% for the period.  
14 Abigail Wickham is a Biology major with a minor in Psychology and  
15 is a member of the women's golf team with a 3.96 GPA. RJ Stinson  
16 is a Physical Education major and member of the baseball team with  
17 a 4.00 GPA; and



18 WHEREAS, the Halbrook Award recognizes colleges and  
19 universities that maintain and achieve high academic standards for  
20 student-athletes, thus encouraging high graduation rates. The  
21 awards program is made possible through endowments from  
22 Representative David M. Halbrook, who served in the Mississippi  
23 House of Representatives for 26 years, and his brothers, John C.  
24 and James G. Halbrook, all from Belzoni, Mississippi; and

25 WHEREAS, William Carey's higher education athletics  
26 accomplishments include the following:

27 • **List of Every Team Ranked in Top 25 in Last Two Years:**

28 2021-2022 Season - Men's Soccer (#16), Men's Tennis (#11),  
29 Women's Soccer (#2), Softball (#11), Women's Tennis (#11), Women's  
30 Golf (#6), Men's Cross Country (RV), Women's Outdoor Track & Field  
31 (#2), Women's Indoor Track & Field (#2);

32 2022-2023 Season - Baseball (#8), Men's Soccer (#10), Men's  
33 Tennis (#8), Men's Golf (#25), Women's Soccer (#5), Softball  
34 (#22), Women's Tennis (#16), Women's Golf (#6), Women's Cross  
35 Country (#13), Women's Outdoor Track & Field (#2), Women's Indoor  
36 Track & Field (#3);

37 • **Halford's 1300th Win:**

38 Head Coach Bobby Halford picked up his 1300th career win,  
39 becoming the 7th coach in NAIA history to accomplish this  
40 achievement, as his Crusaders defeated #1 Southeastern (Fla.) 13-4  
41 in the 66th Annual Avista NAIA World Series at Harris Field.  
42 Halford is currently the all-time winningest coach in the State of



43 Mississippi. Also, during the 2023 season, Carey posted the most  
44 wins in the state with 49;

45       • **Steve Knight as HOF and Winningest Coach in History of**  
46 **State:**

47       Head Men's Basketball Coach Steve Knight was inducted in the  
48 Mississippi Sports Hall of Fame in 2015. His 753 wins makes him  
49 the State of Mississippi's all-time winningest collegiate coach  
50 and currently places him #1 in the NAIA among all active coaches  
51 before the start of the 2023-2024 season;

52       • **Conference Regular Season and Tournament Championships:**

53       2022-2023 SSAC Regular Season Champions: Baseball, Men's  
54 Tennis, Women's Soccer;

55       2022-2023 SSAC Tournament Champions: Women's Soccer, Women's  
56 Tennis, Men's Cross Country, Women's Cross Country, Women's  
57 Outdoor Track & Field, Women's Indoor Track & Field;

58       • **Coaches of the Year and National Staff of the Year:**

59       2023-2024 Season - Cooper Herrington (Men's Cross Country),  
60 Danny Owens (Women's Soccer), Danny Owens, Ryan Weir, Larissa  
61 Caldas, and Shawn Hunter (United Soccer Coaches - Coaching Staff  
62 of the Year), Ryan McKenzie (Men's & Women's Indoor Track &  
63 Field), Tracy English (Women's Basketball), Ryan McKenzie  
64 (USTFCCCA Women's Indoor Track & Field Coach of the Year), and  
65 Malcom Diaz (USTFCCCA Men's & Women's Assistant Coach of the  
66 Year);



67 2022-2023 Season - Bobby Halford (Baseball), Ryan McKenzie  
68 (Women's Indoor Track & Field), Danny Owens (Women's Soccer), Marc  
69 Lux (Men's Tennis), Blake Hegstrom (Men's & Women's Cross  
70 Country);

71 • **New Sports of Swimming and Cheer Teams:**

72 WCU will have three new sports starting during the 2024-2025  
73 year with the addition of Men's & Women's Swimming & Competitive  
74 Cheer. Currently Carey has over 350 athletes that comprise its 18  
75 intercollegiate varsity sports, two junior varsity sports, and one  
76 co-ed club sport;

77 • **Number of All-Americans and Academic All-Americans:**

78 2022-2023 NAIA All-Americans - 44;  
79 2022-2023 NAIA Scholar Athletes - 47;  
80 2022-2023 SSAC All-Americans - 169;  
81 2022-2023 SSAC All-Academic - 116;

82 • **Archery Awards and the Nations #1 Shooter:**

83 Samantha Roberts' performance at USA Archery's Indoor  
84 Nationals will send her to Louisville, Kentucky, on March 14 to  
85 compete with the top 8 archers in the Indoor Final. She placed  
86 1st in Compound Collegiate, 1st Place Compound U21, and finished  
87 fifth overall;

88 • **National Champion Runner-Ups in Two Sports:**

89 Currently this year, Women's Soccer and Women's Indoor Track  
90 & Field finished as Runner-Up at the NAIA National Championships.



91 Men's Indoor Track & Field placed fourth overall at the NAIA  
92 National Championship;

93       • **Commissioners Cup for Seven Years in a Row:**

94       William Carey has brought home the SSAC Commissioners Cup  
95 seven years in row except for the 2019-2020 season due to COVID.  
96 The Commissioners Cup is given annually to the member institution  
97 with the most successful all-around sports program for the year.  
98 Points are awarded based on how a team finishes in the regular  
99 season (M&W Soccer, Volleyball, M&W Basketball, M&W Tennis,  
100 Baseball and Softball) or the Conference Championship (M&W Cross  
101 Country, Competitive Cheer, M&W Indoor Track & Field, M&W  
102 Swimming, M&W Outdoor T&F and M&W Golf). There are bonus points  
103 for winning conference tournaments in sports that also crown a  
104 regular season champion and for sponsoring sports above the  
105 minimum of six. Percentages are calculated based on the potential  
106 points earned by each institution in the sports it sponsors;

107       • **Mississippi's First Baseball National Champion:**

108       The William Carey baseball team captured Mississippi's first  
109 Baseball National Championship when they brought home the title in  
110 1969;

111       • **Tennis Sportsmanship Award:**

112       The Intercollegiate Tennis Association (ITA) announced the  
113 selection of William Carey University as the winner of the 2024  
114 ITA NAIA Women's Team Sportsmanship Award; and



115           WHEREAS, it is with great pride that we acknowledge the  
116 excellence of this flag ship University and its leadership in  
117 higher education and athletics in the State of Mississippi:

118           NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF  
119 MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That  
120 we do hereby recognize the remarkable growth and success of the  
121 Athletic Program at William Carey University and commend these  
122 higher education accomplishments, extending the best wishes of the  
123 Legislature for future success.

124           BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to  
125 William Carey University President and CEO Dr. Ben Burnett and his  
126 athletic staff, forwarded to the Board of Trustees of William  
127 Carey University, and made available to the Capitol Press Corps.

