

A Year in the Life of Griff

Dear friends,

As we welcome 2018, it's important to take a minute to paws (get it?) and reflect upon the past year. The triumphs. The challenges. The food I've snuck from students when they were looking at their phones. And the belly scratches. Oh, the belly scratches. In short, 2017 was a pretty great year to be Drake's live mascot. And not just "holiday letter" great, but roll-in-the-dirt, see-yourself-on-posters, get-petted-by-Ashton-Kutcher (yes, that happened) great.

The only bed in the Office of Admission

In addition to my important ceremonial duties as Drake's Live Mascot, I also have embarked on a successful side hustle as an admission ambassador in Cole Hall. I'm not really a counselor per se, but I do have a bed under a desk, Friday office hours, and a business card and everything. These "Fridays with Griff" involve a rigorous series of naps and all kinds of petting. I help out by modeling for posters and banners on campus, hanging out with visiting families, and helping stuff admission folders. Wait—no, that last one wasn't me.

Sports! Popcorn! Kids! And kids who drop popcorn!

This year, I've been to too many Bulldog sporting events to count, from basketball, football, and soccer to softball, volleyball, and rowing.

My sports cred was hampered somewhat when my mom brought me to the football field dressed as a pumpkin (it was Halloween, but still.) I now have a sweet, new Adidas jersey to wear, so I'll be back in a big way next season.

Of course, I kept up with the volunteer role I've held since the day I arrived at Drake—rapidly and excitedly cleaning up spilled popcorn from the floor of the Knapp Center during games. My mom doesn't like me to do this, but it's important to give back when you're a celebrity.

One of the best moments happened in March, when the women's basketball team won the Missouri Valley Conference Championship with an undefeated season! I traveled with them to games, and even got some face time on ESPN.

Then in November, I scored a front-row seat at a press conference welcoming our new athletic director, Brian Hardin. He seems great, but I must admit to being most interested in his three adorable little boys. Those kids have potential. And are rumored to sometimes carry Cheerios.

Giving back, and celebrity butt scratches

While my official Drake duties keep me hopping (okay, sauntering), I always make time to give back. I enjoy volunteering as a therapy dog with my friends in the special ed classrooms. I also was the face behind the Griff Gives Back campaign, a huge pet food drive during Drake Relays. We collected 5,184 pounds of pet food for donation!

I got to trade my jersey for a bowtie in April when Drake's Ray Center awarded Ashton Kutcher the Pillar of Character Award. I got some serious butt scratches from Ashton and Mila Kunis at a fancy dinner. It was a huge honor for me to be the evening's celebrity guest.



Drake students. (Did I mention I love them?)

Best of all, this year I got to do a lot of my favorite thing: spend quality time with Drake students. Some of my favorite moments ranged from hanging with excited new arrivals on Welcome Weekend, to helping the Class of 2021 move into Drake. I drew the line at moving futons—that's my buddy, President Martin's, department. I offered stress-relieving Finals Week snuggles and gave goodbye licks as members of the Class of 2017 graduated and left the nest. I was so proud, but will miss them dearly.

I love getting in on what students are doing, like the day students from a Kinesiology class measured my famous #DownwardGriff yoga move using goniometry, which is a measurement of joint angles. (But it felt a lot like petting to me.) I got to take part in one of the biggest days of the year for students—Drake Relays Street Painting. While I do take responsibility for the paint on my snout (hunger struck) the rest was not my fault. Best day ever? I think so. Except for the bath afterward.

Looking forward

As we look ahead to 2018, there are a few important things I'd like you to keep in mind. Namely, which will be the next #CampusBedsForGriff location? And can you ever really have enough beds?

Here's wishing you a new year filled with fun, snacks, joy, and Bulldogs!



Griff
@DrakeUGriff



What's up with the rest of my Bulldog family?

Beautiful Bulldog



CUTE COUPLE ALERT! Me and my pal, Prudence, at the Pole Vault at Capitol Square during Relays. I won't lie—I'm a little jealous of the crown. But it's for the winner of the annual Beautiful Bulldog Contest (her), not the Live Mascot (yours truly).

Spike



There is often some confusion between Spike and I, mostly due to our extreme handsomeness. He is the Drake mascot, and I am Drake's LIVE Bulldog mascot. There are even whispers that he's not an actual dog. I don't care, though—he's my friend, and an excellent snuggler.