

The Championship Approach

By Sarah Goodman

“You don’t have to spend much time with Coach Anderson before you hear him mention ‘the championship approach,’ a simple phrase to describe holding yourself to the highest possible standard in all facets of life.”

Varsity basketball player Ryan Frankel ‘16 explained the motto of MIT’s Men’s Basketball Head Coach. Anderson’s athletes find the values he espouses as a coach and person are one in the same. “As a basketball program our shared values are passion, hard work, accountability, toughness, and family,” said athlete Ryan Frankel ‘16. “We came up with these as a team, but I think they encompass everything Coach Anderson lives by as a coach and as a person in his everyday life.”

Anderson extends his embodiment of “the championship approach” off the court and into other arenas of the MIT community as Housemaster of Tang Hall and Physical Education Instructor in swimming, squash, and ice skating.

“I first met Larry during IAP 2013 when I was enrolled in a beginner’s swim class which he was instructing,” said Ph.D student Yashovardhan Chati. “Larry was helpful in me getting rid of my fear of water.” Whether it be anxiety about water or trepidation on the ice, most of the PE classes Anderson instructs involve a component of fear, demanding a particular tone and demeanor of the teacher. “Coach Anderson is extremely encouraging,” said PE squash student Shalni Kumar ‘19. “He makes sure to pick up on specific issues we are having with technique, providing us with personal instruction.”

The environment Anderson creates in his PE classes supports students in their exploration of new activities. “I feel like I now have the courage to have an open mind in college and beyond,” said Kumar, who has gone on to join campus groups such as Ultimate Frisbee Club since taking PE with Anderson. “Coach Anderson taught me to enjoy new experiences here on campus. Now in my free time I can play squash with other players in my living community. Becoming a jack of all trades through PE classes could allow me to join in on all kinds of activities around campus, thereby integrating myself into the buzzing student life at MIT.”

Anderson’s personal touch and people-centric mindset is what Chati, also an office bearer in Tang Hall, says is a strength of his. Nearly three years after taking PE swimming, Anderson still checks in with Chati to ask how he is progressing in the pool. Anderson reminds the Tang Hall government to think about how their duties and goals should be driven by serving their residents. “I believe this message of his can be applied to any position of responsibility,” said Chati. “Often, in a hurry to execute our tasks we forget the main reason behind our work.”

“[Anderson] wants us to be A+ basketball players, A+ students, and A+ people,” said Frankel. “He teaches us that in all things we do we should do them the right way, even if it’s not always the easy choice.” Frankel strives to apply this motto to everything that he does and sees his teammates taking this mentality and extending it into their behavior beyond the court as well.

Whether a PE student or varsity athlete, Coach Anderson is teaching MIT students to approach each day as champions so they can graduate on the top of their podiums.