The 2017-2018 men’s basketball season was a tough rebuilding year where the Firebirds lost its two top scorers from the previous year. The Firebirds earned a 7-20 record, with a 5-13 record in conference play, finishing 9th in the conference standings. The Firebirds faired well at home, finishing with a conference home record of 5-6. The tough part was when the Firebirds were on the road, where they went 1-7 without the comfort of the Firebird Nation fans. After starting the season 1-16, with most of those games decided by ten points or less, the Firebirds went on a tear, winning three games in a row and winning four of their next five games. During this win streak, Khalil Jackson and Danny Shand took turns leading the team. Jackson started the win streak on a high note versus New York Institute of Technology (NYIT), scoring a career-high 29 points on a very efficient 9-of-12 from the field to go along with his four blocks, three steals, two assists and eight rebounds. Shand, who led the team in points per-game last year with 13.7, and sophomore spark plug Kevin Cox (at left), both earned double-doubles. Shand scored 18 points and created 12 assists in the game, while Cox scored 15 points to go along with 10 rebounds.
The men’s tennis team finished the 2017-2018 season with an overall record of 7-7 and an East Coast Conference record of 3-2 allowing the Firebirds to extend their streak to seven consecutive years of qualifying for the East Coast Conference Championship Tournament. After a season-opening lost to NCAA Division I opponent Georgetown, the Firebirds went on to win four of their next six games, winning by an average of six points. Leading the Firebird during the year was Senior Rok Bozic (at left) who finished the year with 2 player of the week awards and a 16-5 doubles record. He was named ITA Senior Player of the Year in the East Region for his performances in 2018 defeating all-conference players on his way to the East Coast Conference playoffs. Rok was not only as another other Firebirds received awards. Freshman Sebastian Mermersky won rookie of the week as well as was named to the all-conference 2nd team along with Senior Alexis Baguelin who was also named first team all-conference. Baguelin also won the prestigious Arthur Ashe Leadership & Sportsmanship award for his tennis accomplishments, scholastic achievements and extracurricular endeavors. The award recognizes players who excelled on and off the court as Ashe did during his life. Sportsmanship, leadership and character are important criteria, as is giving back to the community.
The men’s soccer team finished the 2017 season with a stellar overall record of 15-7, anchored by a 7-2 home record. The University of the District of Columbia Soccer Field was a safe haven for the Firebirds as they started the season 4-0 in home games before falling to East Coast Conference rival NYIT, 2-1. Following the home loss, the inspired Firebirds went on to win five of their next six games, the only loss coming against East Coast Conference rival and eventual ECC champion, LIU Post.

The Firebirds made the ECC playoffs for the first time in school history as the No. 3 seed. They obtained the 3rd seed in the playoffs with a fast-pace offense that led the conference in shots. The spearhead of the Firebirds’ attack was Gabriel Torres (pictured above), a sophomore from Salvador, Brazil. Gabriel was selected the East Coast Conference Offensive Player of the Year and numerous honors including Division II Conference Commissioner's Association (D2CCA) East Region Player of the Year, and a spot on the D2CCA and United Soccer Coaches (USC) All-America Team. He earned these awards with one of the most prolific offensive seasons in
league history scoring 20 goals and 12 assists. Gabriel was accompanied by fellow All-Conference First Team teammate Michael Agboola, a junior from London, England, as the leaders of the team. Agboola contributed one goal and one assist on the season as a defender. His outstanding play was rewarded with a spot on the Division II Conference Commissioner's Association (D2CCA) and United Soccer Coaches (USC) All-East Region lists as a Second Team selection. The Firebirds failed to win the ECC Championship falling to LIU Post, 3-0.

The season was not over though as the team was selected for the first time in school history to play in the NCAA Division II Tournament as a No. 5 seed. The Firebirds advanced past the first round of the NCAA tournament with a 3-0 win over Southern Connecticut State, and the winner got the chance to play LIU Post. In the second round of the NCAA tournament, the Firebirds fell short as a last minute goal proved fatal, and the Firebirds fell 2-1 to the LIU Post Pioneers.
The men's lacrosse team once again set the mark for most wins in the program's history with eight wins on the back of a strong 4-1. The Firebirds finished the season with a record of 8-7 and a 1-5 record in the East Coast Conference - a league that had five teams mentioned in the national rankings of the top 20 best lacrosse teams in the whole nation. The Firebirds came out of the gate firing on all cylinders with wins in seven of their first nine games. The biggest win of those games was a 14-9 win over the Molloy College Lions (one of the five teams mentioned in the top-20 poll). They were led by Teilen Celentano who played as a face-off specialist and he was one of the best finishing the season 3rd nationally in ground balls per-game and 4th in face-off winning percentage a game. As well as LaRon Hinton (pictured above), who led the Firebirds with 32 goals (2nd on the team) and a team-leading 22 assists on the season. The game versus Molloy College was an all-around superb performance by the Firebirds and was highlighted by Hinton who scored a game-high four goals and one assist. In addition, junior Syrrus Nash claimed two goals and two assists. The game was a very tight affair, but the Firebirds were persistent and showed their quality in the final two quarters when they scored an impressive eight goals and conceded only one to make sure that their opponents could not fight their way back. The Firebirds narrowly missed the playoffs, but they have a stable base to build on and will look to continue to beat the school wins record for lacrosse.
John Nakpodia’s first season as the head coach for the University of the District of Columbia’s women’s basketball team was a rebuilding year as the Firebirds amassed a record of 4-24 on the season, 2-16 in the East Coast Conference, finishing 10th in the conference. The Firebirds can look at the season as one to learn and grow from as majority of the players were freshmen or sophomores. Among the freshmen were Daeja Quick, who led the Firebirds in steals per-game (2.2) and points per-game (16). The Firebirds started the season 2-1 following a 75-71 win in their first home game of the season vs. Post University. The Firebirds featured three scorers in double-figures, including Daeja Quick with 19 points on 7-of-14 FG shooting. Quick, fresh off of being named East Coast Conference Rookie of the Week, also collected six rebounds, a game-high six assists, and four steals. Also performing well were freshman forward Desiree Gaeckler (11 points and seven rebounds), junior guard Mia-Alexis Lloyd (10 points, four rebounds and a blocked shot). Quick finished the season 4th in the conference in scoring and steals which was enough for her to be named the program’s first to win the women's basketball East Coast Conference rookie of the year award.
The women’s lacrosse team continues to improve as it broke the program record for most assists in a season. The Firebirds finished the season with a 1-13 overall record and a 0-8 conference record. The Firebirds bounced back from an opening away loss and gained their 1st win under new head coach Cassandra Haase with a convincing, 16-9 neutral ground win over Ohio Valley University. This win tied the Firebirds’ highest offensive scoring game in program history. The win saw freshman Shemara Jefferson (at right) contribute five goals, two assists, and seven ground balls to lead the Firebirds. She was followed by another high-scorer, junior midfielder Vanessa Valentine, who added five goals along with one assist and six ground balls. Sophomore goalkeeper Jada Foy started the game and made 10 saves off 13 shots to only concede three goals in the 1st half, helping UDC get off to a tremendous start and allowing them to end the first period up 8-3. The Firebirds were unable to win another game during the season, but they sure made opponents fight for those wins with many games ending the first period within a few points of a tie.
The University of the District of Columbia’s women's cross country team is mostly composed of sprinters and jumpers, but nevertheless, the Firebirds remained competitive with runners finishing higher than other student-athletes that only do cross country. “We constantly had personal bests over the 5k distance across the board, which is indicative of their constant improvement,” Coach Phillips said. The Firebirds finished 8th at the East Coast Conference Championships and were led by Junior Dabrin Snorton who finished with a time of 24:09.39, good enough for 56th place. The Firebirds' best showing of the year came at the New York Institute of Technology Cross Country Invitational. The Firebirds were paced by senior Shayna Hodge, who returned after missing the previous week to run the 5K course in 26:49.99 and place 38th out of 56. Freshman Dajour Jones was in next at 39th place with a time of 26:53.97, and sophomore Temera Duncan was 40th with a time of 27:02.28. A little over two minutes later, another pack of four Firebird runners finished in 47th-50th place. Sophomore Shannell Hibbert led that 2nd pack in a time of 29:25.03, then sophomore Niasia Harding at 29:55.65, then junior Shakeithia Nicholson at 30:33.41, and then Aisha Dozier at 30:33.97.
The University of the District of Columbia’s Women’s indoor track & field team had a solid year as the team finished 6th at the East Coast Conference Championship meet. One of the bright spots was sophomore Shannell Hibbert, who won the 60m hurdles with a time of 9.14. Another win for the University of the District of Columbia Firebirds came by way of the 4x400. The Firebirds, with a team composed of sophomore Temera Duncan, sophomore Shannell Hibbert, freshman Dajour Jones, and sophomore Niasia Harding winning in the finals with a time of 4:01.95. Duncan led the group and posted a time of 1:00.874 before handing the baton off to Hibbert, who posted the second fastest time of all second leg runners. Jones received the baton from Hibbert and proceeded to run her leg, finishing with a time of 1:00.529 and giving away the baton for the last leg of the 4x400 team to Niasia Harding. Harding ensured the team came home with the win by posting a time of 59.292, fastest time of all the Firebirds that ran in the race. The team finished nearly a whole second before the second place team. Another top performer was Shaneika Bowra, who finished 2nd in the 60m dash with a time of 7.78 - ten seconds faster than the time she clocked in at for the preliminaries.
The Firebirds used the momentum from its indoor season and carried it over to the Outdoor Track & Field season, and they continued to get better and faster as the season progressed. UDC competed in four meets: Maryland Invitational @ College Park (March 17th), Ursinus College Invitational @ Collegeville, PA (March 31st), Mary Washington Battleground Relays @ Fredericksburg, VA (April 6th), George Mason University Spring Invitational @ Fairfax, VA (April 14th) before traveling to Williamsville, NY for the East Coast Conference Championships where they finished 5th among all teams in the conference. Sophomore Shannell Hibbert continued to excel, building from her 60m hurdles win in the indoor season, she came out the victor in the 100m hurdles with a time of 15:44. Another Firebird to come out victorious was sophomore Niasia Harding, who won the women’s 400m hurdles with a time of 1:04.82, two seconds faster than the next competitor. Niasia and Shannell allowed for the Firebirds to get a clean sweep of the hurdle events at the championships. The Firebirds continued to show excellence in the relay races building from a win in the indoor season by coming away with second place in both the 4x100m relay (49.68) and 4x400m relay (4:02.41). Sophomore Cierra Roberts had a great showing on the day. Not only was she part of both of the second place relay teams, but she also finished first in the women’s long jump with a distance of 5.47m. UDC will be looking forward to how much these young standout firebird will grow in the future.
The University of the District of Columbia’s women’s tennis team finished the season with an overall record of 4-8 on the year, 4-3 in conference play. The Firebirds got wins over teams such as NYIT (5-4), Daemen (7-2), Roberts Wesleyan (5-4), and Molloy (9-0). The Firebirds struggled at home, falling to 1-5 on the season at home. UDC’s only home win came in a 9-0 shutout victory over visiting Molloy College. UDC started the match ahead 2-0 with Molloy needing to forfeit matches at No. 3 doubles and No. 6 singles. Senior Dominika Hadnadova and reigning ECC Player of the Week, freshman Anastasiia Danylova, earned an 8-1 win at No. 1 doubles, and sophomore Estefania Castrillon and freshman Florence Clercx followed also with an 8-1 win at No. 2 doubles to complete a doubles sweep heading into singles play.
Athletic Department Highlights 2017-18

- Twenty-two student athletes graduated from the University of the District of Columbia in May 2018
- The overall average GPA for student-athletes was above a 3.0
- 9 students earned a 4.0 for the year
- Men’s Lacrosse finished the season with a program high 8 wins and defeated DI rival Hampton University for a 2nd straight year
  - Victor Salinas Furio and Gabriel Torres became UDC’s first Men’s Soccer Academic All-Americans
  - 2 students were awarded the Elite 18; Victor Salinas Furio and Temera Duncan
- Men’s Soccer made ECC championship for the first time
- Women’s Indoor Track & Field dominated the 4x400m Relay Event for 6th straight year
- Student- Athletes engaged in community service ranging from work on community gardens, serving the homeless and underprivileged, contributing to local food banks, and raising money in support of the Make-A-Wish Foundation
- UDC had 24 All-ECC ranked athletes across all sport programs
- Women’s Lacrosse broke 4 new program records
o Women’s Basketball Daeja Quick earns East Coast Conference Rookie of the Year

o Teilen Celentano finished ranked 2 in Division 2 with Faceoff Attempts and 3rd Faceoffs Won

  o Liam Haycock becomes the 4th Firebird to win the ECC Community & Character Award
  
  o 9 Firebirds achieve All ECC First Team honors, 10 Firebirds achieve All ECC Second Team honors, 3 Firebirds win All-ECC Third team honors

  o Men’s lacrosse student-athlete Alan Singleton is 9th in the nation in shooting percentage

o Rok Bozic earns ITA East Region Player of the Year (men’s tennis)

o Senior men’s tennis student-athlete Alexis Baguelin receives Arthur Ashe Leadership & Sportsmanship Award

o Seniors Rok Bozic and Diego Pinto finish 7th in the nation in doubles at the Oracle

o 21 student-athletes receive D2 Athletic Directors Association academic achievement recognition (having 3.5 cumulative GPA or higher).
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