

# MEET THE GRIFFIN

BY MELISSA V. PINARD

## MASCOT PROFILE

**Name:** To Be Determined

**Height:** 6'4"

**Weight:** 200 pounds

**Position:** Mascot/Ambassador  
of Tribe Pride

**Mentor:** The Phillie Phanatic

**Favorite Movie:** *Sergeant  
Cheerleader*

**Favorite Song:** "One Tribe"  
by The Black Eyed Peas

**Favorite Food:** Asparagus and Cheese

**Favorite Class:** The World of  
Thomas Jefferson

**Likes:** High fives, chest bumps  
and doing the robot

**Dislikes:** People pulling my feathers,  
cheaters and blue colored hens

**Did You Know:** I am half eagle  
and half lion, representing the  
College's ties to both the  
United States and Great Britain.



**F**rom February 2009 until April 6, 2010, William and Mary went through an arduous process to decide on a new member of the Tribe family — the mascot. The result? The Griffin is the College's new mascot and part of the Tribe, which will remain the nickname for William and Mary. One look at the Griffin in person could melt the heart of the most strident fan of Wampo or the Indian warrior ... well, most hearts.

"The Griffin has joined the Tribe," says President Taylor Reveley. "With its arrival, we now have a mascot that unites strength with intelligence, recalls our royal origins, and speaks to our deep roots in American history." [For more from President Reveley on the Griffin, see page 7.]

The Griffin, a mythical creature with the body of a lion and the head of an eagle, made his grand appearance at William and Mary Hall on April 6 and has been showing up at different activities around campus ever since. He was one of 300 unique ideas offered on the College's mascot website ([www.wm.edu/mascot](http://www.wm.edu/mascot)), where 800 individuals submitted ideas, around 50 percent of whom were alumni.

The process began in 2009, when President Reveley appointed a 15-member committee of alumni, students, faculty and staff to coordinate the mascot selection process. With a desire to include as many people as possible, the committee created a website and also utilized other means of communication, including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and a special mascot blog.

"We learned our lesson from the logo committee," says Terry Driscoll, athletic director and mascot selection committee chair. "The goal of this process was to be as open and inclusive as possible."

The committee had its job cut out for it. After narrowing down the 300 ideas to five that worked for the College, the committee sent out a survey in December 2009 with sketches designed by Torch Creative, a company that specializes in team branding, corporate identity and collateral. There were over 11,000 responses to the survey that was sent out and over 22,000 comments.

"We read every single comment," says Susan Evans, director of creative services. "And most people didn't write just one sentence." Evans and her team made regular posts on the mascot blog to keep everyone informed and updated.

"For each concept there were comments from lovers and haters," says Driscoll. "Eventually the committee came to a consensus." Once the decision was made, Torch Creative began to design a logo, while the committee hired Street Characters to create a costume for the Griffin.

In the meantime, there were tryouts for the student performer who would wear the costume. Who better to help with the selection and



PHOTO: STEPHEN SALPUKAS AT THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY

## MASCOT SURVEY

**A breakdown of the 11,183 individuals who completed the Mascot Search feedback survey:**

- 31.0 percent were current students
- 49.7 percent were alumni
- 3.8 percent were parents
- 1.1 percent were faculty
- 1.6 percent were staff or administrators
- 12.8 percent were friends of the Tribe (i.e., not one of the above categories)

## COSTUME FUN FACTS

- Parts of it are machine-washable, which is a good thing after a hot day.
- The person wearing the costume has to be between 5'7" and 5'11".
- The person inside wears a cooling vest, but can only wear the suit for about 25 minutes at a time.
- Costumes can cost up to \$20,000, but the Griffin's was around \$9,600.
- The person does not see through the eyes of the Griffin, but he/she can see.

training of the William and Mary mascot than the original Phillie Phanatic, Dave Raymond? Raymond, who owns Raymond Entertainment Group, gave input into the selection and then spent time training the mascot on how to develop the Griffin's personality. The committee decided it was important to keep that student's identity a secret.

Like most important people, the Griffin has his very own personal assistant. Spencer Milne, who was recently promoted to director of marketing, promotions and ticket services, manages the Griffin's schedule. Currently the fees for a Griffin appearance are \$50/hour for on-campus, \$150/hour for nonprofits and \$250/hour for private events. Proceeds go to funding a scholarship for the students performing as the mascot.

Eventually there will be a mascot team, so more than one student will be able to wear the suit, and the team can rotate handler duties. Right now, Milne acts as the handler, attending events with the Griffin — fielding any questions and making sure he doesn't bump into anything most of the time.

In an exclusive one-on-one interview with the Griffin, he discussed his role on campus and why he loves his new job.

"I hope to unify the campus more around sporting events," says the Griffin. "My favorite part of the job is going around campus acting like I know everybody, and rubbing the Provost's head."



Although he was embarrassed when he knocked over a glass while meeting the Board of Visitors, he says, "No one can get mad at the Griffin."

And it is true. Even the most diehard traditionalists at Olde Guard Day swarmed the Griffin to get their photo taken with him.

He loves posing for photos, and says the most popular questions people ask him include "Are you hot?" and "Where do you see from?" To answer that one, he points to his eyes.

The Griffin has quickly become enamored with the College and says his favorite spot on campus is the belfry in the Wren. And what about those wings? Are they just for show? "I do fly," he says coyly. "But not when anyone is looking." ■

## A HISTORY OF W&M MASCOTS AND NICKNAMES

For more information, visit the Swem Library Special Collections Research Center Wikipedia page at <http://scrc.swem.wm.edu/wiki/index.php/Mascot>.

The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary defines a mascot as "a person, animal or object adopted by a group as a symbolic figure especially to bring them good luck," while the nickname for athletic teams is generally a "descriptive name given instead of or in addition to the one belonging to a person, place or thing."

**1924** The term "Tribe" was first referenced in the 1924 edition of the *Colonial Echo*. Other nicknames that were given to the College's teams during this time period and the years following it include Big Green, Braves and Warriors.

**1927** A 17-foot alligator named "Cal" served as W&M's mascot.

**Late 1930s to 1942** An Indian pony WAMPO was used on the sidelines as a mascot. The pony often carried a rider in full Indian attire. WAMPO's name was derived from "William And Mary POny."

**1947** One sports writer dubbed the W&M football team "The Big Green Indians" during its first postseason bowl bid.

**1953** The team became known as the "Iron Indians" after the name appeared in a *Richmond Times-Dispatch* article.

**Mid-to-late-1960s to mid-1970s** A caricature similar to that used by Major League Baseball's Cleveland Indians was used as a logo.

**1974** A "WM" with feathers logo first appeared in a 1974 football yearbook and then on the helmets of the 1977 football team.

**1978** The Indian images were removed from the athletic logo. The term "Indian" was phased out by the early 1980s. The "WM" with two feathers became the College's official new logo, and the term "Tribe" continued to be used.

**1989** A committee to examine school spirit and tradition was convened to discuss whether the Tribe nickname should be phased out.

**2001-2005** A green costumed character named Colonel Ebirt began serving as an unofficial mascot. The character's name is derived from the word Tribe spelled backwards.

**2006** In May, the National Collegiate Athletic Association determined that William and Mary could keep its Tribe nickname, but had to do away with its logo because it could be offensive. The College appealed the NCAA decision but received notice in August that the appeal had been denied.