

President Briggs  
under a pile of Vikings



# BEING BERRY ... BOLDLY

President makes comical case for alumni giving



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DAVID COE

"I ALWAYS KNEW HE HAD IT IN HIM to do something like that video," said **David Coe (08C)** about President Steve Briggs throwing caution – and dignity – to the wind in issuing a one-of-a-kind video challenge to "young alumni" that stressed the importance of making an annual gift of any size to their alma mater.

Last spring, Briggs literally put his money where his mouth is – from the bottom of a pile of Viking football players – when he offered a match of up to \$25 per person for gifts made before July 1, 2017, by alumni who graduated since his arrival at Berry 11 years ago (2007-2017). His President's Challenge video delivered the message in grand tongue-in-cheek fashion as he gathered Blue Hen eggs in coveralls, drove the class bus in a tuxedo, cut "doughnuts" on a riding mower, encouraged drivers on the Hermann circle to "Honk if you love Berry" while sporting a cobalt-blue wig, and skimmed leaves in the Ford reflecting pool – zinc oxide-covered nose, tacky aloha shirt and all.

"The video was actually very funny seeing Dr. Briggs in all those different costumes and situations," said Coe, who donated to the student emergency fund that supports Berry students in crisis. "I remember taking it home to my wife and telling her, 'Hey now, this is actually a catchy video. I will donate because of this. It's only \$5.'"

Everyone who viewed the video, envisioned by Alumni Development Director Jennifer Schaknowski and created by Ryan Simmons (07C), was invited to visit Berry's crowdfunding portal ([www.berry.edu/funder](http://www.berry.edu/funder)) to make a gift directly to a cause of their choosing. Several hundred accepted his challenge, helping push the percentage of young alumni giving at Berry to new heights in the 2016-17 fiscal year. In the process, they provided significant support for some very special projects in each of Berry's four schools, as well as athletics, student aid and other causes. They also sent an important signal to the outside world that Berry's younger alumni really do believe in their school.



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KELSEY TAYLOR

Impressed that the president took time out of his busy schedule to make the video, she looked closely at the crowdfunding options and

#### WHY'D THEY GIVE?

"I know that, looking on Facebook after watching the video, a lot of my alumni friends were commenting about how much they loved seeing Dr. Briggs being funny and goofy to catch our attention," said **Kelsey Taylor (13C)**.

Impressed that the president took time out of his busy schedule to make the video, she looked closely at the crowdfunding options and

decided to give to her alma mater for the first time.

"I liked that you could give to specific areas at Berry instead of a general fund where you don't know where your money is actually going," she said, adding, "I feel fulfilled as a young alumna giving back to my school that is still near and dear to my heart."

The video made a big difference to **Kyle Fitting (14C)**, who found that it "reminded me of everything positive in my Berry experience and just served as my reminder to give back so that others could have similar experiences to my own."



"... reminded me of everything positive in my Berry experience ..."

KYLE FITTING

The same was true for **Carson Kay (16C)**, who said she wasn't surprised to see Briggs mowing the lawn or

working with chickens because he's so immersed in campus life. But seeing the president in the reflecting pool made her laugh, and his on-camera offer of a match sealed the deal for her to become a donor.

"On a graduate-student budget, I worried my meager donation would barely scratch the surface," she explained. "However, knowing that my donation would be



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CARSON KAY

matched made me feel I could help make a small difference. I felt honored and humbled to give back to the community that gave me so much."

On the other hand, the video had little to do with **Blake Bannister's (12C)** participation in the challenge. Outreach from his former coach, Paul Deaton (91C), brought him on board.

"I applaud Dr. Briggs and the President's Challenge. I hope it is met with great success," said the former

captain of men's cross-country and track. "For me, simply connecting with my coach and being aware of his needs did the trick."

Briggs declined to announce how much his President's Challenge cost him out-of-pocket because the goal of the effort was to emphasize the act of giving rather than the amount.

"Speaking on camera is one of my least



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BLAKE BANNISTER

favorite things to do, as you can tell from the bloopers segment," Briggs chuckled. "But we wanted young alumni to remember why they loved Berry, and I had worked with Ryan when he was a student making the *Kickin' It Around Berry* video, so I knew it would be off the wall. The best moment was being able to lay out flat in the reflecting pool when the day was done.

"I really appreciate all of the young alumni who accepted this challenge. If you loved your time here and want Berry to thrive, I hope you'll participate in some small way every year."

**Editor's Note:** *The President's Challenge video (and bloopers) can be viewed at: [www.berry.edu/presidentschallenge](http://www.berry.edu/presidentschallenge).*

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PRESIDENT STEVE BRIGGS



President Briggs and "Betsy"