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Humans of SCSU

For Southern Connecticut State University's Brian Nill, Cross Country and Track distance coach, coaching isn't just a job; it's a passion and a calling, but most importantly, it's his home.

Now in his 11th year of coaching, Nill has become an essential part of the Owls' Cross Country and Track & Field programs.

Nill began his coaching career right out of college, graduating with an Environmental Earth Science degree in 2015 from Southern. But his ties to Southern run deeper than his degree.

"I've been coming here since I was four, going to alumni meets," Nill recalls. "It's a place I've known my entire life. That's why it stood out to me as a school. It's my second home — and you never want to leave your second home."

Nill detailed that his first year onboard the Coaching staff at Southern was a "crash course," sharing how his first year was filled with a lot of learning and "throwing eggs at a wall and figuring out what wasn't gunna break."

Amidst uncertainty and difficulty, Nill began to shape his coaching philosophies, rooted in growth, support and pushing boundaries.

“When I first joined the coaching staff, the distance program was far from where it is today,” Nill explained, “We’ve just continued to work at that and elevate the program as a whole.”

The results speak volumes for Nill’s team. Under his guidance the men’s team has won three consecutive regional titles, and the women’s team recently earned its first-ever Cross-Country conference title and first regional championship.

However, for Nill the victories off the track and trail are just as special.

“The most rewarding part is bringing in athletes and watching them grow over four years — watching them do something they never thought was possible,” he says. Whether it’s running a personal best time, qualifying for the NCAA’s, or becoming an all-conference athlete, Nill takes pride in being part of his athletes' transformative journeys and watching them break boundaries they never thought was possible.

Nill credits his parents and fellow colleagues for his success and support, detailing how their mentorship and his own experience as an athlete have helped him to shape an empathetic approach to coaching, a skill crucial to have as a collegiate coach.

While the program has evolved in many ways over the years, the tight-knit community between the distance runners has remained constant.

“It’s always been a close group, especially the distance kids,” Nill said. “The dynamics change from year to year, but managing personalities and different group identities is part of the job.”

For Coach Brian Nill, Southern isn't just a place he works, it's where he belongs. As he shapes champions on and off the track, his impact on athletes will continue to run deeper than any medal laced around his athletes' necks.

