Back in the 1950s and 60s, Johnson & Wales’ athletic teams played in undersized high school gyms or fields, and coaches and student-athletes joined in a partnership — doing what they could to make the collegiate experience better.

Now, intercollegiate athletics programs are becoming a staple at all four JWU campuses, with 34 intercollegiate teams (16 in Providence, 10 in North Miami, six in Denver, and two in Charlotte), and the number is growing. The goal of teams, though, remains the same — to provide the intangibles of the workplace through a positive extra-curricular experience.

Teams at the Providence Campus have traveled up and down the East Coast and beyond — to Italy, Great Britain, and Puerto Rico. Denver’s teams have played throughout the Midwest, and the teams from North Miami venture to games all over the Southeast. There have been championship events far beyond the memorable 1971 trip to Hutchinson, Kan. by the Johnson & Wales Junior College men’s basketball team. Nowadays, Providence’s conference champions play at NCAA Division III national tournament sites; places like Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and Cincinnati, Ohio. The Denver Campus men’s basketball team reached the NAIA National Tournament in Missouri in 2005, 2009 and 2010, and North Miami’s golfers have put their mark on the map at NAIA national events in Oklahoma City and elsewhere.

The travel perks and the thrill of competition against some of the nation’s best are nice, but the overall experiences of athletic competition; the dedication to purpose, the teamwork, the camaraderie and friendships made for a lifetime, far outweigh those hours upon hours of practice to get to those magical championship heights.