Chez Misko ('96 & '98) By: Josiah Buss, BA ’15

Chez Misko set a precedent when he became one of Concordia University Wisconsin’s first athletic training students and he continues to make tremendous strides professionally by helping lead one of the area’s top athletic clubs.

Misko is the Chief Operating Officer of the Wisconsin Athletic Club, a company that in 2016 is celebrating its 40th year in business. He currently oversees all operational aspects of the business, including day-to-day club operations, remodeling and construction projects and leading WAC’s staff, which currently exceeds 1000 employees.

The Wisconsin Athletic Club operates seven full service athletic clubs in the Milwaukee area. It also manages corporate fitness centers for many Milwaukee area businesses. WAC provides a wide variety of fitness services for local businesses, including on-site classes, fitness equipment sales and repairs, and fitness center design just to name a few.

Misko is a proud two-time Concordia University Wisconsin alumnus. After growing up in Greenfield, WI, he chose Concordia because of his great visit experiences, the beautiful campus and to participate on CUW’s wrestling team.

Misko entered Concordia in fall of 1993 intending to pursue a degree in physical therapy. However, under the direction and encourage of Professor and Coach Russ DeLap he became Concordia’s first athletic training student.

It turns out, athletic training was a good fit for him. Misko recalls how exciting his first time running out onto the football field to work with an injured player and thinking, “I really like this!” He also had his own athletic success as part of the Concordia wrestling team; he was a conference champion at 126lbs and participated at the NAIA Nationals.

Misko says Concordia provided him with the educational and practical basis for his future career. He cites Dr. Lois Mueller as one of his mentors, as well as Professor Russ DeLap, who “was the AT program” at that point, Misko recalls.

Two of the classes that Chez believes set him up for future success was Concordia’s LA 105 class (Introduction to Higher Education), which he says taught him how to study most efficiently, and Interpersonal Communication, which helped him develop his communication skills. Misko says those skills are still crucial to him today because, “In my business, it’s all about connecting and communicating with people.”

Misko took advantage of many of the opportunities that Concordia offered and praises the people he was able to spend time with. “It didn’t feel as much like college as a community,” he pointed out. He
remembers getting to know his professors on a personal level, as well as the athletic coaches. As the university’s first athletic training student, he worked almost every sporting event.

May of 1996 brought Misko’s graduation from Concordia with a Sports Medicine/Athletic Training major and a minor in Science. After a semester of graduate school at another college, Delap offered Misko a graduate assistantship at Concordia. He accepted, and began working and studying at Concordia again. In 1998, he graduated with an MBA in Healthcare Administration.

Misko’s connection to the Wisconsin Athletic Club began in 1991, before he even attended Concordia. He started out teaching martial arts and working the front desk at the West Allis location. While attending Concordia he moved into a variety of management position. He eventually was promoted to General Manager and helped to open several new facilities. Misko became the vice president of operations and part owner in 2005 before taking on his current role.

Misko met his wife, Wendy, at Concordia, where she was a classmate and one of the soccer athletes that he worked with as a student athletic trainer. They have two daughters, Mariah and Madison, who are both in high school. His children stay active in a variety of activities including swimming, diving, dance and track. When he has the time, Misko enjoys reading a variety of non-fiction books and working out.

Misko has also made a point of staying connected with Concordia. He is currently serving on the newly formed CUW Alumni Association Council. He has been part of alumni focus groups, fitness symposiums and other events on campus. Misko also helped design Concordia’s Fieldhouse addition in the early 2000s.

He says he often encourages his employees to consider Concordia. “People think it’s a smaller school and don’t realize how much is offered,” he said.

Misko also noted that the WAC welcomes Concordia interns, and encourages students of all programs to embrace their Concordia experience. “Getting involved is important,” he said. “Take advantage of what’s there beyond class and social events.”

He also recommends that students use college as a launching pad to professional life and take the time to apply what they’ve learned in college, as well as to remember to keep their skills sharp when in the workplace.

“The key is not to stop learning,” he said.