The man at the helm of the most popular college football team in the country, Brian Kelly ’83, has not forgotten where he came from or what helped him become the head football coach at the University of Notre Dame. His steady ascent to the pinnacle of his profession began at Assumption College.

“The intellectual and spiritual environment at Assumption was critical to my development,” said Kelly. “The close-knit community I experienced at that beautiful campus on Salisbury Street allowed me to grow. The Assumptionists such as Bro. Armand Lemaire, A.A. ’48, and the many other people who touched my life while I was a student helped shape who I am.”

In 2012, Kelly served as the Commencement speaker at his alma mater, and received an honorary doctorate of education. During the address, Kelly spoke intimately about the impact of an Assumption education.

“What I’ve done for the past 20 years is motivate and develop student-athletes,” said Kelly. “You are ready, prepared and have what is necessary to be successful ... You will have adversity, but I’m confident in your ability to handle it because of your Assumption education. ... Decide to do what is best for you. Be good at what you do. Be consistent in what you do, because that will pave the way for great things later.”

Kelly was a political science major and a star linebacker for the Greyhounds’ club football team during his four years here. As captain, Kelly amassed more than 300 tackles during his college career, and led the team to two of their most successful seasons in the College’s history.

After graduation he dabbled briefly in the political arena, but returned to Assumption as a resident director, softball coach and assistant football coach. He moved on to Grand Valley State University in Michigan and won two NCAA Division II national championships. Three years at Central Michigan and three years at the University of Cincinnati – where he won three Big East Coach of the Year awards and led the team to a 12-0 record and a top 10 finish in 2009 – preceded his current position at Notre Dame.

In the fall of 2012, Kelly coached the Fighting Irish to a 12-0 regular season, a #1 ranking and a berth in the BCS National Championship game, before falling to defending champion, Alabama. It was a year of accolades, as Kelly was the consensus 2012 College Football Coach of the Year.

Through it all Kelly fondly remembers his formative years and demonstrated his commitment to his alma mater by endowing a $250,000 scholarship for football players, which was matched by the College to benefit female student-athletes. “I love Assumption College and what it did for me and continues to do each day.”

By Troy Watkins