A standout basketball player for the Greyhounds under Andy Laska, Joe O’Brien ’57 served as his assistant coach for nine years before taking the reins of the team. In 17 seasons (1967–85), 12 teams reached the NCAA Tournament, including five consecutive NCAA regional champions (1971–75). He totaled a 321-173 record, earning three New England College Division Coach of the Year Awards. O’Brien also coached the Greyhounds’ baseball (15 seasons) and cross country teams (10 years) and was assistant director of athletics. He was elected to both the Assumption Alumni-Athletics and New England Basketball Halls of Fame.

O’Brien served as president of the National Association of Basketball Coaches from 1983-84 before becoming involved with the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame. O’Brien, who sat on the Hall’s board of directors, would go on to become the Hall’s executive director from 1985 to 1993 and serve as its president and CEO until his retirement in 2001. During his tenure, the Hall experienced tremendous growth in visitation. O’Brien spearheaded dramatic improvements in the Hall’s exhibits, computerization and staffing. He played an integral role in its $100 million expansion and construction of the new facility. O’Brien received the John Bunn Lifetime Achievement Award from the Hall, awarded annually to a person who has contributed greatly to the game of basketball.

O’Brien passed away in 2003. Among his children are AC alumni Eileen ’82 and Roberta ’86.

Fred Barakat ’61, former associate commissioner for men’s basketball, Atlantic Coast Conference

A two-time All-American basketball and baseball player at Assumption, Fred Barakat ’61 was drafted by the New York Knicks and tried out for the San Francisco Giants. For five years he played in the Eastern Basketball pro league while also working as a teacher and coach in New Jersey. He was recruited by Andy Laska back to Assumption, where held numerous coaching, teaching and administrative duties.

After a stint as an assistant basketball coach at UConn, he coached the Fairfield University basketball team for 11 seasons before serving the Atlantic Coast Conference for 26 years until his retirement in 2007. Barakat supervised basketball officials, oversaw scheduling for televised games, directed men’s basketball operations and later managed the prestigious ACC Men’s Basketball Tournament for 16 years.

He was inducted to the Hudson County (NJ), Assumption, Fairfield University and New England Basketball Halls of Fame. ACC Commissioner John Swofford remarked upon Barakat’s retirement, “Fred has served this league with distinction ... his leadership has been exemplary. He has done an outstanding job for our league in a very challenging capacity.” Barakat himself once said, “My definition of success is based on three things: 1) to get the most out of your potential; 2) to gain the respect of your peers; 3) to make a contribution to society. I hope, under this definition, that I’ve been successful.”

Barakat passed away in 2010. He and wife Florence had four children.