



## SUNY Cortland Wrestling Vision Statement

**Together, we will build Cortland Wrestling into a top Division III wrestling program... and *the* top wrestling program to be a part of.**

**Building Champions on the mat AND in life.**

The “AND” is what defines and differentiates our program. We will not be an “either, or” program. We will be a “both, and” program. We will not sacrifice in one area at the expense of the other. Many feel that an athletic program can choose to focus on either competitive results or developing better people - one or the other. We *know* that the exact opposite is true: you can’t truly focus on one without focusing on both. Amazing humans don’t solely elevate themselves in one area of their lives or they’re not really elevating themselves at all - “a rising tide lifts all boats.”

Those a part of the Cortland Wrestling program know that anything is possible when a group of driven people rally together around a common mission and set of values. Our mission is to teach our student-athletes the blueprint for success throughout their lives, in any endeavor. Wrestling is simply our vehicle for teaching these lessons and winning is the byproduct.

We will intentionally build a strong, positive culture of deep caring amongst our wrestlers and coaches, knowing they’ll need to lean on each other to persevere and rise above the adversity they’ll face, emerging stronger, more confident and more resilient each time. When you help someone else become a champion, you’re helping yourself as well. We will not leave anyone with good attitude and effort behind.

We will build leaders and champions on the mat and in life by constantly putting our wrestlers in challenging situations; maintaining a sharp focus on our **DragonTough** philosophy, core values, and standards of excellence; and by caring about our student-athletes as people first, athletes second.

Our wrestlers will graduate from our program with a tremendous sense of pride, confidence, comradery and preparedness to conquer whatever life throws at them. They’ll feel equipped to achieve any goal they set. This is the ultimate reward, from which they’ll reap benefits for life.

We will relentlessly recruit high-character student-athletes who fit our team culture and have



the building blocks to become great wrestlers, great students and great people. We'll maintain a laser-focus on our goal of 100% retention year-to-year and 100% graduation. Our student-athletes will be engaged and enjoy coming to practice each day. By the time they graduate they'll be fully invested in our program and each other, understand what it takes to be successful in wrestling and in life, and realize they're capable of greatness if they choose to maintain the simple habits that greatness requires.

Our student-athletes will make the connection that what makes you successful in wrestling will make you successful in any endeavor and they will apply that in their academics and other areas of their lives. Our student-athletes will be respectful leaders in the classroom, the school and the community. Our alumni and graduates will recognize the positive impact our program has had on their lives and remain engaged with the program for years to come.

On the mat, our team will produce Mideast Regional champions and All-Americans every year. This competitive success will be a byproduct of the culture we create. Our student-athletes will be committed to training in the off-season, as their schedule allows, and living a championship lifestyle. Our student-athletes will go out of their way to support each other, help each other succeed, encourage each other, and lead and serve each other.

We, as a coaching staff, will be great role models for our program's mission, philosophy and values. Each of us will be empowered to constantly and proactively seek out ways to improve on this model. We will all take ownership of our roles in the program and work to improve ourselves, together, year after year. We'll be ego-less and work together for a common cause. When necessary, we'll challenge each other to get better for the good of the program and our student-athletes.

As the head coach, I take full responsibility for everything in our program - the buck stops with me. Each year I'll intentionally work with our coaching staff to grow professionally and help them develop into better leaders.

This is a lofty vision. It won't happen on its own and it won't happen overnight, but together, we will make this vision a reality over time.



## DragonTough Philosophy

*"To build champions on the mat **and** in life through love, positive leadership and a relentless focus on the process of excellence."*

## DragonTough Core Values

- **Improvement** – constant focus on effort and getting better everyday
  - Embrace failure as a necessary step on the road to success.
  - Focus on the process, not the outcome. Control what you can control.
  - Today, be better than yesterday. Tomorrow, be better than today.
  - There is no “I can’t...” unless it’s followed by “...yet. But I will.”
  - Leave the culture of this program stronger than you found it.
  
- **Accountability** – be the person everyone knows they can depend on
  - Take ownership – no excuses, no finger-pointing, no complaining, no defending.
  - Understand that your decisions and actions impact others.
  - Be a finisher – finish what you start...no quitting.
  - Always compete with class and sportsmanship.
  - Do what you say you're going to do, when you say you're going to do it. Your actions express your priorities.
  
- **Family** – recognize you’re part of something bigger than yourself – “It’s not about you.”
  - Respect each other and your differences.
  - Always serve and always protect your teammates.
  - Offer support before criticism.
  - No such thing as “it’s not my job.”
  - You stand on the shoulders of those around you and those who came before you. No one has ever accomplished anything great “by themselves.”



- **Habits** – consistency is the number one key to success in anything – there's NEVER a shortcut.
  - Practice is everything. Be there everyday.
  - Every single day/rep matters.
  - Your habits dictate your ceiling.
- **Joy** – enjoy the sport, embrace the process, love each other
  - Love the process and the process will love you back. Show it with your attitude, enthusiasm and energy level.
  - Enjoy our time together. We don't ever "have to." We "get to."
  - Take a second to appreciate the journey. Know that the best is yet to come.  
**"It's always a great day to be a Wildcat!"**
  - Always express gratitude.

## **DragonTough Standards of Excellence**

Our program is first, foremost and always about our student-athletes. Our goal is to "Build Champions on the mat and in life" and to do everything in our power to help our student-athletes achieve their collective and individual goals.

To do that, we must maintain Standards of Excellence. These are our baseline expectations for our student-athletes and coaches that we know we must uphold in order to reach these goals.

For many student-athletes these might be higher standards than they've been held to in the past or in other activities so it's critical they understand these Standards:

- **Be early.** Our actions express our priorities. Being early to practice, meetings and buses is an important sign of respect to your teammates and coaches that you recognize you are no more important than anyone else and that you put the team first.
- **Take ownership.** Cortland wrestlers are expected to hold themselves accountable and take ownership for their own actions, efforts, attitude, grades, conduct, successes and failures. Excuses and passing blame (to your parents, professors, friends, girlfriends, etc.) are not part of the Cortland Wrestling Program. Complaining never helps you reach your goals. Anytime you feel like complaining, instead, use your energy to find a



creative solution, focusing on the things you can control.

If you're not willing to take responsibility for yourself, your decisions, attitude, effort and performance in all facets of your life, it will be impossible for you to reach your highest potential!

Taking ownership has other important meanings as well:

- Doing what you say you're going to do, when you say you're going to do it.
- Never saying "it's not my job."
- Doing the right thing. Not the easy thing.
- Making decisions as if you're a leader of this team. Accepting responsibility for those decisions.

Finally, take ownership of your improvement. Our coaches will do everything in their power to support and mentor you to be the best you can be, but ultimately, in wrestling and in life, you're responsible for the progress you make. Don't wait for someone else to make it happen for you – take charge!

- **Never skip.** You're only as good as your habits and every single day and every single rep counts. Practice is everything. Your consistency and habits ultimately dictate your success in anything. The most common pitfall of those who fall short of their goals is telling themselves that missing one practice, one rep or one class doesn't really matter. It does. In short, never skip class, never skip practice, never skip a lift, never skip a rep in practice, never skip your homework, never skip your chores or responsibilities. Champions never skip.
- **Never give up.** Our job as coaches is to constantly challenge you physically and mentally. Our program is designed to push you out of your comfort zone in a safe, supervised environment. Only when we're uncomfortable do we really grow and improve.

As coaches, our promise is that we'll never give up on you and we'll always give you the support you need to get through the challenges and adversity you'll face. Your commitment to your teammates and coaches is that you will not give up or quit on yourself or the team. There is no "I can't." You will get there. You never truly fail unless you stop trying.



- **Always serve and always protect your team.** We often refer to our program as a family. Loving and supporting each other is one of our core values, and true leadership, both as a student-athlete and a coach, springs from service to others.

We expect you to actively look out for each other, lead and serve each other, and push each other to excel. This expectation extends beyond just wrestling activities and beyond the duration of the wrestling season. Often, it's during the difficult times when this type of support becomes most important.

Protecting your team takes many other forms, as well. Your actions constantly reflect upon our program, so we expect you to always protect our culture and reputation by doing the right thing in school, at home, online and in social settings, as well as in practice and competitions.

You will always compete with class and positive sportsmanship. This will be a hallmark of our program. When you win, any celebration will be respectful of your opponent. When you lose, it will be with dignity and maturity. We expect eye contact and firm handshakes with your opponent, their coach and the opposing team, regardless of outcome.

Finally, we expect you to show respect to everyone you come in contact with at all times, including fellow wrestlers, coaches, fans, administrators, trainers, referees, other students, parents, etc. Treat others as you'd like to be treated.